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THE HISTORY OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM 1971 - 1973

PART I

By

WILLARD J. WEBB

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AUTHORITY

This volume is the final one in a series comprising the official history of the actions and activities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff relating to the war in Vietnam. It has been prepared by historians in the Historical Division of the Joint Secretariat in accordance with professional standards of historiography. Since the content of the volume has not been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is to be construed as descriptive only and not as constituting the official position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on any subject.

Harold D. Neeley
HAROLD D. NEELEY
Colonel, USAF
Secretary, JCS

FOREWORD

The series of volumes entitled The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam provides an account of the activities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with regard to Vietnam from 1945 to the final withdrawal of US military forces in early 1973. The first volume describes the beginning of the US involvement through the Geneva Conference in 1954, and the second volume carries the story on through 1959. The third volume, in three parts, traces the great expansion of the US commitment resulting in full-scale war in the years 1960-1968. The fourth volume covers the period 1969-1970--the adoption of the policy of Vietnamization and the beginning of the withdrawal of US forces. This, the final volume, in two parts, describes the continuing US withdrawal and the negotiation of a political settlement and concludes with the final withdrawal of all US forces in the period January through March 1973.

This volume was planned and written by Mr. Willard J. Webb, Chief of the Special Projects Branch, with the assistance of Mrs. Helen Bailey, Mr. Lee Nash, and Mr. William Tobin. Mrs. Bailey did the research and wrote initial drafts of Chapters 3, 4, and 6. Mr. Nash did the research and wrote the initial draft of Chapter 1 and did much of the research for Chapter 7. Mr. Tobin did the research and wrote the initial draft of Appendix 1. Final revision and historical editing proceeded under the direction of Dr. Robert J. Watson, Chief of the Historical Division. Mrs. Janet W. Ball, Editorial Assistant, directed all aspects of the final preparation of the manuscript for publication.

Help was received from many sources during the preparation of this volume. The extensive research in the official JCS files that was required would not have been possible without the willing support of Mr. Sigmund Musinski and his staff of the JCS Records and Information Retrieval Branch, Documents Division, and the assistance of Mr. John Knold and Mr. Ross Anderson of the Declassification and Archival Branch, Documents Division. Special thanks are also due to Mr. Amos Good and his staff in the Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Major Robert Kimmet, USA, of the NSC staff for assistance with the records of their respective offices.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

The documentary sources that provide the basis for this history are almost exclusively contemporary with the events described and are found primarily in the master files of the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Other sources included records maintained in the Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and in the Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5), Joint Staff. Limited access was granted to the minutes of the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG), the crisis management body of the National Security Council, for the period March through August 1972.

The security classification of all information in this volume is derivative. Each paragraph is marked in accordance with the most highly classified source used in that paragraph. Since many of these documents are, in fact, already downgraded in accordance with automatic procedures, the paragraph classifications reflect the actual status of the documents as of 1 January 1979. The classification of the documents cited in the footnotes, however, is the original classification since none of the files for the period of the volume had been formally reviewed for downgrading and declassification.

The security classification of all citations in this volume indicate the applicable downgrading procedure when it was indicated on the original document, and the following brief explanation is provided for the convenience of the reader. All classified JCS documents through May 1972 were marked with a group designation: Group 1, not subject to automatic downgrading or declassification; Group 3, automatically downgraded but

not automatically declassified; and Group 4, automatically downgraded and declassified after 12 years. All citations in the volume indicate the group where it was available. Beginning in June 1972, a new general declassification schedule entered into effect, and all JCS documents, unless specifically exempted, are subject to the following downgrading and declassification schedule: TOP SECRET documents are downgraded at 2 year intervals and declassified after 10 years; SECRET documents are downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL in 2 years and declassified in 8 years; and CONFIDENTIAL documents are declassified in 6 years. All documents cited in this volume dated in June 1972 and thereafter and that have no indication other than the basic security designation are subject to the general declassification schedule. Those exempted from automatic downgrading and declassification are indicated in the citations by an "EX" following the classificatin, e.g. "(S-EX)."

With regard to the citation of command histories, the classification preceding the title is that for the entire volume. That following the title and preceding the page numbers is the classification of the information actually used when it differs from the overall classification, e.g. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. V-11.

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INTRODUCTION

(U) As the year 1971 began, the US involvement in Vietnam was over twenty years old and US troops had been fighting there for more than six years. To that point, 44,249 members of the US armed forces had lost their lives in hostile action in a war that had cost the United States an estimated $104.4 billion.* Moreover, the war had stirred great political dissent at home and reaped public criticism of the United States around the world from friends and enemies alike.

(U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff had participated in the decisions on Vietnam from the very start of the US commitment. At each stage in the deepening involvement, they gave the Secretary of Defense and the President their opinions and recommendations and, once the combat phase began, they directed the operations. But the ultimate objective in Vietnam was a political one and, in the final decisions, political rather than military factors prevailed. This was true not only in the period when the United States gave only assistance and advice but subsequently when the United States was engaged in ground and air combat in Vietnam.

(U) The US commitment in Vietnam dated back to 1950 when the United States began a program of economic and military aid for Indochina. The military portion was

*The casualty figure is from (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. F-14. The cost figure is the estimated "full costs" for the six year period 1965-1970 from (U) DOD Comptroller, The Economics of Defense Spending, A Look at the Realities, July 1972, p. 149.

channeled through the French to assist in building indigenous Indochinese forces to oppose the communist-controlled Viet Minh who were fighting to oust the French from Indochina. President Truman and his advisers, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had hoped this aid would prevent Indochina from falling under communist domination. The initial contingent of a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), consisting of 38 US Army, Navy, and Air Force officers and men, arrived in Vietnam during August 1950.

(U) Despite the US assistance, the French position in Indochina deteriorated during the next several years. An international conference of concerned nations meeting in Geneva considered the Indochina problem during the spring and early summer of 1954. The resulting Accords, signed on 20 July 1954, confirmed the independence of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which France had already granted, and provided for an end to hostilities throughout all three Indochinese states. With regard to Vietnam, the Geneva Accords divided the country along the 17th Parallel with the Viet Minh regrouping to the north and the French forces to the south. No new foreign military personnel or equipment would be introduced into Vietnam and an International Control Commission would ensure compliance. Further, the question of a final political settlement for all of Vietnam was to be resolved by internationally-supervised elections two years hence. The United States did not sign the Accords, but did pledge to respect them.

(U) The Geneva Accords ended the French control of Indochina. Thereafter, in Vietnam, pro-Western factions formed the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) below the 17th Parallel under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem while, to the north, the Viet Minh established the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam headed by Ho Chi Minh. But the communists did not abandon their objective of taking over all of Vietnam, and the insurgents remained active in the south. As a consequence, the provisions of the Geneva Accords for political settlement in Vietnam were never implemented, and Vietnam remained divided. The United States provided the Republic of Vietnam military assistance under the terms of the Accords. The objective was to build an indigenous South Vietnamese armed force that could meet both the continuing internal insurgency and the external threat from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

(U) The latter years of the decade of the 1950s brought a period of relative calm to Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam appeared to be succeeding in controlling the communist insurgency. But beneath this calm, the insurgents, now called the Viet Cong, were carefully organizing and planning and by 1957 had launched a campaign of terrorism and subversion. Encouraged and supported by Ho Chi Minh and his government to the north, the Viet Cong slowly, but steadily, increased their activities and were ready for full-scale warfare against the Republic of Vietnam by the beginning of 1960. Evidence of this turn of events came in January 1960 when the Viet Cong successfully attacked a RVN regimental command post in Tay Ninh.

(U) In the succeeding months, the Viet Cong pressed ahead with their campaign and the situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate. The Geneva Accords had restricted the presence of foreign military personnel in Vietnam and, to this stage, the United States had meticulously limited the number of military advisers sent to Vietnam. Now, however, the United States increased military assistance to the Republic of Vietnam, supplying additional equipment and more advisers, and soon all pretense of compliance with the Geneva restrictions was abandoned.

(U) Still the military situation deteriorated and, in November 1961, President Kennedy approved greatly expanded assistance for South Vietnam on condition that President Diem would carry out various internal political and social reforms. Specifically, the United States undertook actions to increase the airlift available to the South Vietnamese, to improve air reconnaissance and air-ground support, to supply better coastal surveillance and control, to enhance the RVN intelligence capabilities, and to train paramilitary forces. Although no US combat forces were involved, US advisers, for the first time, began to accompany RVN forces on combat missions. Consequently, the United States experienced the first casualties as the result of hostile action in Vietnam in 1961.

(U) The President's November 1961 decisions governed the pattern of US involvement in Vietnam well into 1963, and the United States sent vast quantities of materiel and increasing numbers of US advisers. The rapidly expanding US presence in Vietnam required revised command arrangements, and on 8 February 1962

the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV), replaced the MAAG. The new organization was a subordinate unified command under the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), who in turn reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the new commander, COMUSMACV, exercised operational command over all US military forces in Vietnam.

(U) President Diem never carried out the promised internal reforms, and any military progress achieved in South Vietnam by 1963 was dissipated by the growing political turmoil and opposition to Ngo Dinh Diem. The dissatisfaction culminated in a coup and the assassination of the South Vietnamese President on 1 November 1963, but the removal of Diem did not bring political stability to the Republic of Vietnam. The Viet Cong took advantage of the situation, increasing military activity throughout South Vietnam, and North Vietnam stepped up assistance to the insurgents in the south.

(U) To meet the worsening situation, the United States augmented existing efforts and undertook additional ones during the early months of 1964 to assist the Republic of Vietnam. Specifically included was support for the South Vietnamese pacification program to win control of the countryside. It was at this point that the United States began to consider possible retaliatory action, including air strikes, against North Vietnam.

(U) General William C. Westmoreland, USA, who became COMUSMACV on 20 June 1964, immediately requested almost 5,000 additional forces and more cargo aircraft and helicopters to give the RVN forces increased logistics and airlift support. The request was quickly approved with the added troops arriving in Vietnam during the period August 1964 through February 1965. When the movement was complete, the United States had more than 23,000 men in Vietnam.

(U) Meantime, on 2 August 1964, and again two days later, North Vietnamese patrol craft had attacked US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin off Vietnam. In retaliation, the United States carried out air strikes against targets in North Vietnam. In further reaction to the North Vietnamese attacks, President Johnson asked the Congress for and received, with only two dissenting votes, authority "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."

(U) During the fall of 1964, political instability in South Vietnam continued and the Viet Cong showed no letup in their drive to take over the country. A Viet Cong attack on 1 November on Bien Hoa Air Base outside of Saigon, which killed four US servicemen and wounded 72 more, brought an immediate recommendation by the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff for reprisals against North Vietnam. President Johnson did not approve such action, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC proceeded with plans for both retaliatory strikes and an extended air campaign against North Vietnam to check the continuing flow of war materiel to the south.

(U) By the beginning of 1965, the communists seemed headed toward victory in South Vietnam. Political turmoil hindered the effectiveness of the Republic of Vietnam, and the Viet Cong clearly held the initiative. They controlled one quarter of the population and half of the territory of South Vietnam. No longer restricting themselves to hit-and-run tactics, they were beginning to operate in regiment-size forces, portending a more intense phase of the war. Materiel support of the Viet Cong flowed in by land and sea from the north in increasing quantities, and captured

documents and other sources indicated that policy direction and strategy came from Hanoi as well. Moreover, by January 1965, though still undetected by the US and South Vietnamese forces, regular North Vietnamese units were in the south for the first time. Clearly, stronger action would be needed if South Vietnam was to be prevented from falling under communist domination.

(U) On 7 February 1965, the Viet Cong shelled a US adviser compound and airfield at Pleiku, killing eight US military personnel, wounding 108 others, and destroying 20 US aircraft. This time a JCS recommendation for reprisal was heeded, and the United States responded with air strikes in the lower portion of North Vietnam, the movement of a HAWK missile battalion to Vietnam, and the evacuation of all US dependents from Vietnam. Another Viet Cong attack against a US installation at Qui Nhon three days later brought the US decision for a sustained bombing campaign against the north. After several delays, regular bombing of North Vietnam began on 2 March 1965. Nicknamed ROLLING THUNDER, the initial missions were against military targets in the southern portion of North Vietnam.

(U) Facing the threat of continuing Viet Cong attack of US installations, as well as possible North Vietnamese reprisals against the ROLLING THUNDER bombing, General Westmoreland wanted US combat troops to protect US personnel and installations. Accordingly, in mid-February 1965, the United States began deployment of combat forces to Vietnam. In the following several months, both US Marine Corps and Army troops were sent, raising the US force level in Vietnam to more than 50,000 men by early June. In July, further deployments were approved to provide a force of approximately

187,000 men by the end of the year. Accompanying this buildup came the decision to commit US forces to combat operations in South Vietnam. As early as 22 April 1965, a small patrol of US Marines and RVN troops engaged in a fire fight with the Viet Cong near Da Nang and by June US forces were regularly participating in search and destroy missions.

(U) From mid-1965 through early 1968, the United States waged a full-scale war in South Vietnam and a gradually expanding air campaign against the north. In that period, US troops strength rose to almost 500,000 men and the ROLLING THUNDER bombing grew from initial strikes against military targets in the lower part of North Vietnam to unlimited bombing throughout the entire country except for prohibited areas around Hanoi and Haiphong and a buffer zone along the Chinese border. During these years, the United States followed a policy of gradualism with the escalation proceeding in steps. At each one the President, usually against the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, limited the US commitment only to decide some months later that additional US forces or expanded bombing, or both, were needed to force the enemy to cease his aggression. But, by the time these actions were implemented, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had similarly increased their strength.

(U) Nonetheless, the military situation in South Vietnam by the beginning of 1968 had been turned around. The US and South Vietnamese forces now held the initiative. They had pushed enemy main forces back to border areas, and enemy control of the population and territory had been slowly but steadily reduced. Even so, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese showed no readiness to give up the struggle. Both public and

private peace initiatives by the United States had been bluntly rejected in the years 1965 through 1967.

(U) Dramatic evidence of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese determination came in February 1968. During the Tet holiday, enemy forces launched massive surprise attacks throughout South Vietnam. The offensive was quickly repulsed at great cost to the enemy, but the sudden show of enemy strength, combined with the shock the offensive engendered in the United States and around the world, proved a psychological victory for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. Public disenchantment in the United States with the war, which had grown steadily as the US combat involvement increased, reached new heights.

(U) President Johnson now decided on a major change in US policy. In late March 1968, he halted further large troop deployments to South Vietnam, limited the bombing of North Vietnam, and called for negotiations to end the war. Further, to preclude his quest for peace from becoming involved in th forthcoming US presidential campaign, President Johnson decided not to seek reelection. Accordingly, the bombing of North Vietnam was restricted to the area below 20° north and the United States and North Vietnam began talks in Paris in May. The talks quickly deadlocked on procedural matters, and in a further effort to stimulate meaningful negotiations, President Johnson suspended all bombing of North Vietnam on 31 October 1968, five days before the US presidential election. At that time, he also announced the expansion of the talks to include both the Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF), the political arm of the Viet Cong.

(U) Richard Nixon assumed the presidency in January 1969 convinced that the United States must end its involvement in Vietnam. The ever spiraling expenditures required by the US presence there were needed for other programs and the American public no longer supported the war. The one question, and a major one, was how to to withdraw from Vietnam without sacrificing South Vietnam to communist domination. President Nixon decided upon a two-faceted approach: the United States would proceed with negotiations in the hope of reaching a political agreement; failing that, the United States would rely on Vietnamization--building up the South Vietnamese forces to assume the combat responsibility while gradually withdrawing US military forces. Accompanying this policy decision came a slight, but subtle, change in the US objective in South Vietnam. No longer did the United States call for defeat of the Viet Cong-North Vietnamese aggression and attainment of a "stable non-communist government" in South Vietnam. Rather the United States now sought the "opportunity" for the South Vietnamese to determine their own political future free from "outside interference."

(U) In implementation of this new policy, the United States proceeded with the Paris talks throughout 1969 and 1970 and made several secret initiatives as well, but North Vietnam showed little interest in a negotiated settlement. Consequently, the United States moved forward with Vietnamization. Improvement of the South Vietnamese forces was accelerated and, in July 1969, the United States began the first withdrawal of forces and had removed slightly more than 205,000 by the end of 1970.

(U) Now, at the beginning of 1971, the United States was well on the way to reducing its combat involvement in Vietnam. In the months ahead, the United States

would undoubtedly proceed with the negotiations and, in the absence of a political agreement, would press on with improvement of the RVN forces while continuing its troop withdrawals. But despite the reduction of forces, the United States was no nearer to ending the fighting or achieving free choice for the people of South Vietnam to decide their own future than when the combat commitment was undertaken. The enemy was, apparently, willing and ready to carry on the war as long as necessary to achieve his goals. Obviously, something was needed to dissuade him from prolonging the fighting. One possibility was action to stem the continuing flow of supplies from North Vietnam. Since a return to the bombing of North Vietnam was unlikely for political reasons, there was the alternative of destroying the supplies as they moved through Laos and Cambodia. This had been the purpose of the US and RVN invasion of Cambodia during May and June 1970, and some sort of similar operation into Laos was a prospect in the coming months.

CHAPTER 1

LAMSON 719: GROUND ATTACK ON THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL

(U) One of the many factors that made the war in Southeast Asia so difficult and frustrating was the lack of defensible borders throughout the area. Consequently it was relatively easy for communist forces from North Vietnam to penetrate South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in a number of places to deliver supplies and reinforcements to the Viet Cong (VC) and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).

(S) During much of the US involvement in the war in Indochina, the North Vietnamese used three major lines of communication (LOC) to support their forces in the Republic of Vietnam. From October 1966 to January 1970, communist forces relied heavily on the port of Kompong Som (Sihanoukville) to bring supplies through Cambodia into the southern part of RVN. This supply route was closed with the establishment of Lon Nol government in March 1970. A second major LOC ran from ports in North Vietnam down the South China Sea to many points on the South Vietnamese coast, but by the fall of 1970, MARKET TIME operations had effectively interdicted this sampan-borne source of supply. The one vital link left in 1971 between enemy troops in the south and resupply from the north was their mountain trail network through the Laotian panhandle.[1]

(S) Although it was called the Ho Chi Minh Trail, this supply route was in fact a spidery, ever-changing,

1. (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9125 to CINCPAC, 301347Z Jan 71, JCS IN 74184.

network of paths and primitive roads, which extended from North Vietnam (NVN) through southern Laos into South Vietnam and Cambodia. The Ban Karai and Mu Gia passes were two important entry points for the trail into Laos. From there supplies moved southward by many different routes, under the cover of dense tropical foliage, to the first large base area in Laos, Base Area 604, near the village of Tchepone, located about 40 kilometers west of the South Vietnamese border on the old French Route 9. Supplies from Base Area 604 then moved southeast into Base Area 611 or south to Base Area 612 near Saravane, or to other large depots, and from there into South Vietnam and Cambodia.[2]

(~~S~~) With the closing of the ports in Cambodia, it became evident that the enemy intended to step up the use of the routes through Laos. During the spring of 1970, the communist forces intensifed military activity in southern Laos, seizing Attopeu and Saravane and threatening the pro-government guerrilla forces holding the Bolovens plateau, apparently with the intention of making use of additional routes farther west of the border of South Vietnam. In the north, fighting was inconclusive as usual, but the enemy's intention to make greater use of the Laotian supply line was shown by a southward shift of supplies within North Vietnam, evidently in order to build up stock-piles from which to support a "crash" logistical campaign. In September the enemy began repairing the roads leading from southern North Vietnam to the base areas of northern Laos. Bulldozers and work crews were seen at Ban Karai pass and at Tchepone. To staunch the

2. (~~S~~) Ibid. NY Times, 5 Feb 71, 11.

flow of supplies down the trail, a US air interdiction program, COMMANDO HUNT V, began on 10 October, with planes striking targets just west of the passes leading from NVN into Laos. This program reduced the flow of supplies southward, and the movement of trucks in the Laotian panhandle fell below the 1969 rate. But more than air power was needed to close the trail.[3]

Planning for a Cross-Border Operation

(~~TS~~) A ground operation against the Ho Chi Minh Trail began to take shape in November 1970, when Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, USN, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, asked CINCPAC to provide a plan to meet possible major enemy efforts in Indochina, including the Laotian panhandle, over the next six months. CINCPAC (Admiral John S. McCain, Jr. USN) replied that in Laos the enemy was planning to reopen and expand his supply routes to Cambodia and RVN. The NVA had already resumed use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and CINCPAC anticipated a massive dry season logistics effort during the next six months. He offered two plans to counteract these enemy efforts. The first consisted of coordinated operations between Laotian, Thai, and South Vietnamese forces, operating inside their own national boundaries, to destroy the enemy and prevent him from expanding his supply capability in Laos. The second was contingent upon the degree to which the Royal Laotian Government observed the 1962 Geneva Accords that had established the neutrality of Laos. If the Laotian government was willing to "denounce and abrogate" the Accords, then CINCPAC called for a

3. (~~S~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9125 to CINCPAC, 301334Z Jan 71, JCS IN 74184. (~~S NOFORN~~-GP 1). COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. III-105, III-214 - III-227.

combined operation by the Royal Laotian and Royal Thai Governments together with South Vietnamese forces inside the Laotian panhandle to cut the trail and destroy enemy security forces in the eastern sector of southern Laos.[4]

(TS) Available documents do not indicate how CINCPAC's two plans were received in Washington. It appears, however, that the plan for a Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) operation into Laos, despite its political delicacy, was tentatively approved. Early in December CINCPAC asked General Creighton W. Abrams, USA, COMUSMACV, to start planning in coordination with General Cao Van Vien, Chairman of the Joint General Staff, for major Republic of Vietnam Army (ARVN) ground operations into the Laotian panhandle with maximum US air support. The plan COMUSMACV submitted to CINCPAC provided for

> a coordinated air-ground attack . . . to sever the enemy LOC at Tchepone . . . and deny to the enemy the logistic corridor vital for continued prosecution of the war in RVN, Cambodia, and the southern Laos panhandle areas. A multi-regimental task force will attack to seize the Tchepone area, conduct operations within Base Area 604 to destroy enemy stockpiles and facilities and block major routes both north and south of the Tchepone area.

(TS) The COMUSMACV plan called for an operation of four phases, lasting approximately three months and terminating during "the monsoon transitional period." Phase I, consisting of preparatory operations, would take place entirely within South Vietnam. United States ground forces would participate by

4. (TS) Msg, CJCS 15006 to CINCPAC, 071926Z Nov 70. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 100556Z Nov 70.

securing a forward operating base and airfield in western Quang Tri Province from which to support RVN operations in Laos. During Phase II the RVNAF task force would enter Laos and seize Tchepone, supported by all available tactical air, gunships, flak suppression missions and artillery. ARC LIGHT (B-52) saturation bombing missions would be conducted in Base Area 611 and both north and south of Tchepone in Base Area 604. In Phase III RVNAF forces would destroy enemy forces, stockpiles, pipelines, and facilities. Phase IV, the withdrawal, would be conducted either along Route 9 or by new attacks to the southeast into Base Area 611. During this last phase, "stay-behind" guerrillas and other forces would be inserted into Laos to hamper the enemy's efforts to rebuild his logistic structure. No US ground forces were to be used inside Laos, but helicopter troop and cargo lift and helicopter gunship support would be provided as needed. General Abrams thought these proposed operations, "striking at the heart of the logistic/infiltration network in the Laos panhandle, would substantially disrupt the enemy timetable for 1971 and significantly impact on his effort in 1972."[5]

(~~C~~) Admiral McCain wholeheartedly endorsed the plan. "It offers," he told Admiral Moorer on 15 December 1970, "an excellent opportunity to strike the enemy where he least expects it, to destroy his re-supply effort at the heart of the system and establish a blockade across the land and river routes that have heretofore been untouchable on the ground."[6]

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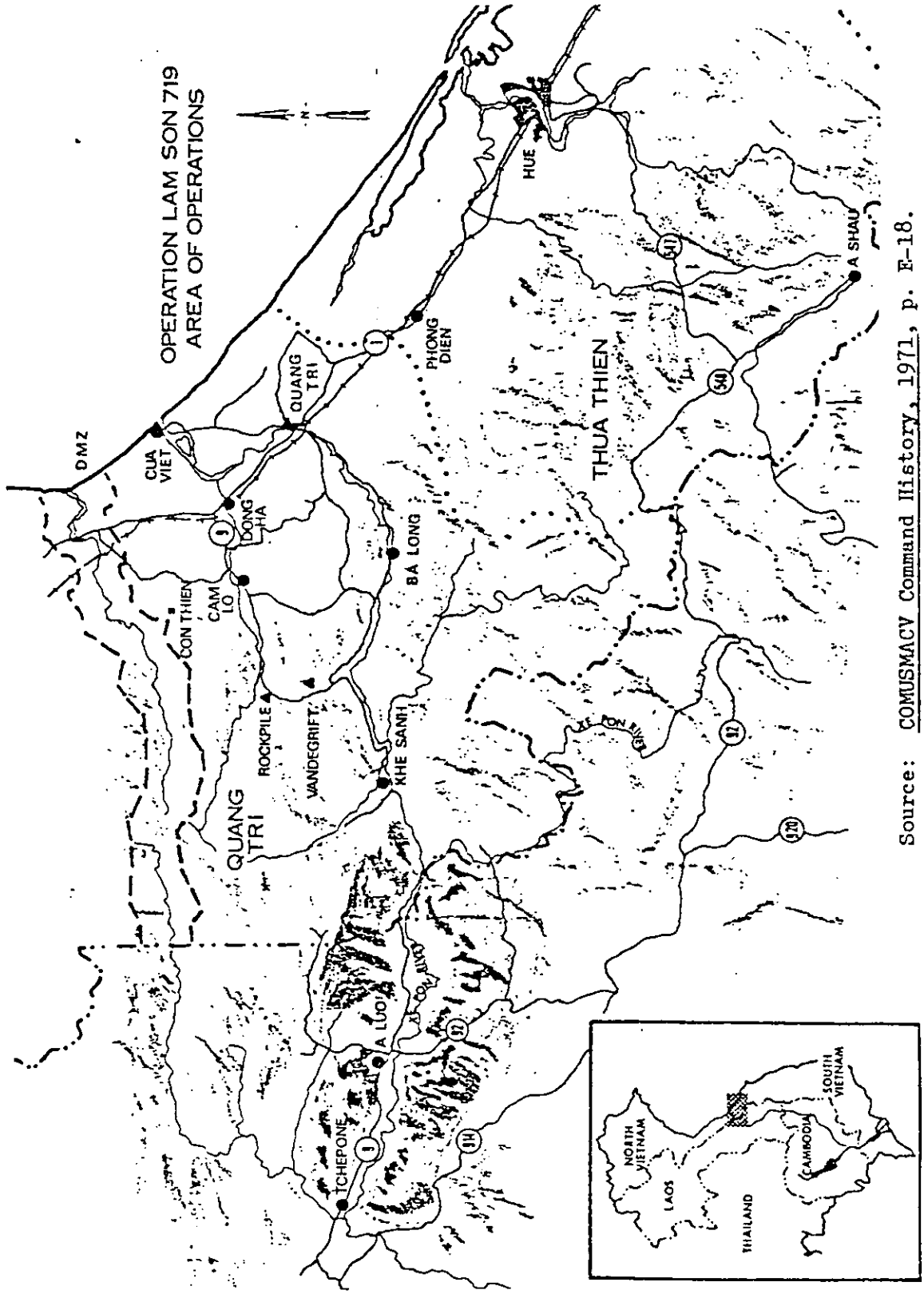
5. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 15808 to CINCPAC, 120952Z Dec 70.

6. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 150236Z Dec 70.

MAP 1



Source: COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. E-18.

(TS) The plan for the Laotian operation was discussed in the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG), together with a possible RVNAF attack into Cambodia against enemy base areas in the Chup Plantation area and special operations against North Vietnam. President Nixon concurred in general terms with the Laotian action, directing appropriate planning to continue, and both Nguyen Van Thieu, President of the Republic of Vietnam, and General Vien had approved the plan by early January 1971. Consequently, on 4 January, Admiral Moorer requested Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird to approve the operation. He noted that, as US troop strength and air assets decreased, the RVNAF would be increasingly committed to security within South Vietnam. "Hence, this may be the last opportunity available to the RVNAF for a cross-border, dry season operation" into the Tchepone logistics hub.[7]

(TS) During a trip to South Vietnam, Secretary Laird met on 11 January 1971 with President Thieu, who told him that a military operation in the Laotian panhandle would shorten the war. President Thieu's only reservations dealt with the public justification, and he was especially concerned that Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma not appear to disapprove of or reject the proposed RVNAF actions.[8]

(TS) A COMUSMACV briefing team explained the Tchepone operation to Washington planners on 18 January, and the Chairman again asked the Secretary

7. (TS) CM-488-71 to SecDef, 4 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71. (TS-GP 1) SM-449-71 to SecDef, 4 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, Jan-Jun 71.
8. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1958 to COMUSMACV, 210105Z Jan 71.

of Defense to approve the plan, which he called "pivotal" for current dry season contingency operations in Southeast Asia. The Secretary gave his approval on 19 January 1971 provided no US ground personnel were employed outside South Vietnam and so long as no ARC LIGHT missions were flown north of the Provisional Military Demarcation Line (PMDL) in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) or in North Vietnam. Admiral Moorer then informed CINCPAC that "the concepts for and outline of the Tchepone Operation have been reviewed and concurrence with RVNAF execution is granted."[9]

(~~TS~~) The issue of Laotian approval for the Tchepone operation was a difficult diplomatic question. Premier Souvanna Phouma's public position on the proposed ARVN operation would have to be based on careful consideration of his own position relative to the 1962 Geneva Accords as well as possible North Vietnamese and Chinese reactions. Secretary of State William P. Rogers had given specific instruction to Ambassador George M. Godley on how to approach Souvanna Phouma to prevent his public disapproval of the operation. But when Souvanna Phouma was told of the upcoming ARVN operation in the Laotian panhandle, instead of giving approval, he wanted to know why the operations were not

9. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-516-71 to SecDef, 19 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, Jan-Jun 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1475 to CINCPAC, 192121Z Jan 71. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not as a body formally review or concur in the Tchepone operation, the Chairman furnished each of them with copies of the relevant documents. There is no reason to assume that this operation, or others like it, was approved by the Secretary of Defense without the knowledge and tacit approval of all of them.

planned for the tri-border areas and the highlands south of Route 110. Moreover, he was concerned about the duration of the operation, and he said the size of the ARVN force would cause him great difficulty within Laos because of the reported excesses of the SVN troops in Cambodia. He concluded that he must publicly protest the operation, and he would expect the South Vietnamese to withdraw within a week or two. He feared that if he did not vigorously protest, then the Chinese would act in the north.[10]

(~~TS~~) Because of Souvanna Phouma's reaction coupled with opposition from the Department of State, a number of questions were raised in Washington about the Laotian invasion. As Admiral Moorer related to CINCPAC on 26 January, these included: could the ARVN conduct the thrust without US helicopters and what was the latest date that the operation could be cancelled without entering Laos? The thinking behind the second question was that planning might continue for Phase I pending a final decision on the actual crossing into Laos. The President definitely wanted to go ahead with the Chup Plantation operation in Cambodia, but wanted to know what "we can do" in northern Cambodia if the Tchepone plan was not carried out. Admiral Moorer responded that a Tchepone operation was superior to any action further south. The President agreed "from a military point of view" but then asked: "If you compare a northern Cambodian operation not to Tchepone

10 (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, USecState to Dr. Kissinger, "ARVN Operations with Tchepone," 22 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, Jan-Jun 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2075 to CINCPAC, 262240Z Jan 71.

but to nothing, which do you prefer?" Admiral Moorer sought the comments of the field commanders on this question.[11]

(TS) In view of Souvanna Phouma's attitudes, General Abrams recommended cancellation of the Laotian operation on 27 January and opposed substitute ones elsewhere because they would be of no more than nuisance value. There was no point, he said, in continuing preparations for Phase I any longer, and he was planning to cancel them on 290200Z January 1971. He continued to emphasize, however, the importance of Tchepone to the enemy. "North Vietnam is almost totally dependent on the LOC network in Laos for movement of men and materiel into RVN, southern Laos, and Cambodia," he advised CINCPAC, and "almost all the LOC's network pass [sic] through the Tchepone area." Admiral McCain endorsed the recommendation for cancellation although he noted that only a ground campaign could permanently disrupt NVA LOCs in southern Laos. "Thus if it is to be U.S. policy to support the 1962 agreement on Laos and not to support ARVN operations in southern Laos we must accept that . . . NVN will be capable of supporting NVA/VC forces in SVN and Cambodia for an indefinite period of insurgency and low intensity combat," he concluded.[12]

(TS) Admiral Moorer acknowledged the field commanders' comments immediately on 27 January, stating that the problem with regard to the Laotian operation" is primarily a political one." "We are working

11. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2075 to CINCPAC, 262240Z Jan 71.

12. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, COMUSMACV 9103 and 9106 to CINCPAC, 270620Z and 271145Z Jan 71, JCS IN 64715 and 65507. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 271153Z Jan 71, JCS IN 65273.

hard on the problem," he continued, requesting further views based "on military considerations alone." He asked for a prompt reply for use in a meeting with the President that same afternoon. On that basis, COMUS-MACV gave unqualified support to the operation, and CINCPAC called it "an exceptional opportunity to inflict the maximum damage against enemy personnel, materiel, and psychological posture."[13]

(~~TS~~) The President met with the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of the Central Intelligence, and the Chairman on the afternoon of 27 January to discuss proposed ARVN operations in Cambodia and Laos. All of them fully supported the Chup Plantation operation in Cambodia, but opinions remained divided on the proposed Tchepone operation. The Secretary of State pointed out that there would be an impact on the Laotian political situation that could affect the survivability of Souvanna Phouma; Chinese reactions might be triggered; and an unsuccessful operation would influence the South Vietnamese elections. In addition, he feared an uproar in Congress and the press. The Secretary of Defense and the Chairman held, on the contrary, that "great benefit would accrue from the success of the Tchepone Operation." The President ordered that all actions connected with Phase I proceed. Regarding subsequent phases, he withheld his decision, though he made it clear that any cancellation of these must come from Washington.[14]

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13. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2126 to CINCPAC and COMUS-MACV, 271421Z Jan 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9108 to CINCPAC, 271550Z Jan 71, JCS IN 65670. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 271644Z Jan 71, JCS IN 65787.

14. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2225 to CINCPAC and COMUS-MACV, 280125Z Jan 71. (According to Richard Nixon in

(~~TS~~) Secretary Laird again asked the Chairman for possible alternatives to the Laotian incursion. The Chairman told him on 29 January that there was "no direct substitute for the Tchepone Operation in terms of anticipated results and effect on the enemy," but he did submit a list of possible alternative proposals, including additional operations in northeast Cambodia and Special Guerrilla Unit operations in Laos, together with the augmentation of current and approved operations. Two days later the Chairman gave the Secretary another list of options, which included extensive CIA participation. But his opinion was the same: there was no substitute for the execution of the Tchepone operation.[15]

(~~TS~~) Just before Phase I was scheduled to begin, "high level interest" was expressed about the danger of increased US casualties resulting from the planned operation. Admiral Moorer passed this concern to the field, and General Abrams replied that he expected only a slight increase in US casualties "in view of the limited enemy capacity in the area at this time and the limited scope of the mission assigned to the US force."[16]

his Memoirs, p. 498, he authorized "a major military operation to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail by attacking enemy forces in Laos" at a meeting on 18 January 1971 with Admiral Moorer, Secretary Laird, and others. No other record of such a meeting or such clear-cut approval was found in the official files available at the time this account was prepared.)

15. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-544-71 to SecDef, 29 Jan 71; (~~TS~~GP 1) CM-549-71 to SecDef, 31 Jan 71; CJCS File 091 Laos, Jan-Jun 71.

16. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2550 to CINCPAC, 300100Z Jan 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9132 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 310610Z Jan 71, JCS IN 75671.

(TS) Still the decision to cross the border into Laos was delayed. In accordance with President Nixon's authorization on 27 January Phase I, to secure an operating base in South Vietnam, began on 30 January, while discussions on the military and political ramifications of moving into Laos continued among President Nixon and his advisers. Both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC assured the Chairman that Phase II could still begin by 8 February and neither recommended delaying it. Finally, on 4 February, the Chairman authorized US support of the RVNAF in Phase II and later phases extending through 5 April so that the move into Laos could continue on schedule. The operation was subsequently named LAMSON 719.[17]

(TS) In light of recent public statements that no US personnel operated inside Laos, the Secretary of Defense was particularly anxious that no US ground combat troops take part in the Laotian operation. To avoid even the appearance of such participation, Mr. Laird decided on removal of the very few US personnel carrying out reconnaissance intelligence collection, or exploitation operations in Laos as part of the PRAIRIE FIRE anti-infiltration effort. The Chairman ordered their extraction from Laos by the beginning of Phase II, and all had been removed by 7 February.[18]

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17. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2927 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 012313Z Feb 71, JCS IN 80628. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9158 to CINCPAC, 020830Z Feb 71, JCS IN 80628. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 021255Z Feb 71, JCS IN 81073. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3106 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 022238Z Feb 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3244 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 041600Z Feb 71.

18. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3360 to CINCPAC, 052332Z Feb 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 060242Z Feb 71, JCS IN 93322. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9200 to CINCPAC, 070817Z Feb 71, JCS IN 95986.

Deteriorating Press Relations

(TS) In the meantime, late in January, General Abrams proposed a measure that strained the never very cordial relations with the press corps in South Vietnam. He believed that the beginnings of Phase I of the Laotian operation would "cause press speculation and misinformation" and endanger the security of the entire action. Therefore he suggested a news embargo of the Tchepone operation until significant contact was established by the ARVN in Phase II. He also proposed positive action in the form of "a complete briefing" on 29 January to inform the press of the rationale for the operation. The briefing would explain the importance of cutting enemy supply lines and emphasize the limited nature of the incursion. He thought that "by taking the US press into our confidence, we have a better chance of the story holding until we can lift the embargo."[19]

(TS) Admiral McCain endorsed both the embargo and the briefing for the press. He himself had been concerned over a muckraking tendency in the US press, which he feared would promote additional Congressional restrictions on operations in Southeast Asia and have an unfavorable impact on the military budget. The press would obtain information of a cross-border operation of this scale in any event, whether briefed or not, he argued, and he thought the briefing would be "a major factor in increasing the probability that the media obeserves the embargo."[20]

19. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 0775 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 240802Z Jan 71.

20. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 260143Z Jan 71, JCS IN 62020.

(TS) Admiral Moorer aproved COMUSMACV's approach for dealing with the press and COMUSMACV announced to the press corps on 29 January that:

> All military operations in MR 1 are embargoed immediately except for those operations contained in the MACV daily release. . . . The embargo will remain in effect until further notice and will be lifted as soon as military security permits. Your cooperation is solicited. This announcement constitutes part of the embargo and is not for publication.

Shortly thereafter, officers of COMUSMACV's headquarters briefed the press. After describing the enemy infiltration system and explaining the rationale for the operation, the briefing officers outlined the actions planned in Phase I. They said that US and ARVN troops would secure Route 9 and then conduct operations north and south to destroy enemy forces and supplies. No mention was made, however, of Tchepone or the ARVN push into Laos. The briefers promised every cooperation in covering the action once the embargo was lifted and cautioned that "security and surprise" were critical to the success of the operation.[21]

(U) The press reaction was immediate and might, perhaps, have been predicted. General Abrams' hopes for press cooperation in holding the story were disappointed. The New York Times on 31 January 1971 quoted a London Observer article about the news embargo and linked it with "speculation" that South Vietnamese troops had invaded Laos.[22]

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21. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2394 to CINCPAC, 290148Z Jan 71. (TS) Msg, COMUCMACV 9118 to CINCPAC, 291130Z Jan 71. (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9125 to CINCPAC, 301347Z Jan 71, JCS IN 74184.

22. NY Times, 31 Jan 71, 1.

(~~TS~~) Moreover, with the institution of the embargo in Vietnam, reporters turned to sources in Washington for information. The pressure grew so strong that on 30 January Admiral Moorer asked General Abrams about the possibility of a partial lifting of the embargo. The field commander was opposed, considering it "absolutely imperative for the safety and security of this command and the success of operations underway that the strict embargo as now in effect be held." He wanted to maintain this censorship until substantial contact had been made with the enemy in Laos, and no immediate change was made in the handling of press coverage of LAMSON 719.[23]

(U) Nevertheless, the press persisted in prying information out of Washington officials. One example was a report by Marvin Kalb of CBS news on 2 February who cited "reliable sources" as follows:

> The current operation involves overall 25,000 South Vietnamese troops and 9,000 American troops all supported by massive U.S. air power. The initial military objective is said to be the clearing of Highway 9 running east to west across the northern part of Vietnam. Both American and South Vietnamese soldiers are fighting in this part of the operation. Then the South Vietnamese are supposed to continue along Highway 9 into Laos towards the communist controlled town of Sepone (Tchepone), a focal point for North Vietnamese men and supplies moving

23. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2614 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 300526Z Jan 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9122 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 300820Z Jan 71, JCS IN 73289. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2634 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 300947Z Jan 71.

> from north to south. . . . President Nixon under Pentagon pressure gave his final approval last Wednesday [27 January].[24]

(S) In view of these developments, it became evident to the Washington Special Actions Group that the censorship could not last much longer. In extended discussions on 3 February, Admiral Moorer presented COMUSMACV's position, but the other members of the Group felt that the embargo had become unmanageable and unproductive. Accordingly, Admiral Moorer directed General Abrams to lift news blackout at 1630 Saigon time on 4 February (040830Z). President Thieu concurred and the embargo was removed as directed.[25]

(TS) Even then the reporters' problems were not over. In contrast to the almost unlimited mobility given them by travel aboard US military craft within the borders of RVN, the press was dependent in Laos on the far less numerous Vietnamese helicopters operating in support of ARVN troops in LAMSON 719. Finally, with Secretary of Defense approval, COMUSMACV authorized newsmen on 23 February to fly aboard AC-119 and AC-130 gunships over Laos. He also set aside one of the US helicopters dedicated to supporting the ARVN for US press use with the ARVN supplying English-speaking escort officers. These measures fell short of the

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24 (C-GP 4) Msg, JCS 3099 to COMUSMACV 022217Z Feb 71.

25. (TS) Msg, JCS 3224 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 040106Z Feb 71. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9170 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 040432Z Feb 71, JCS IN 86155. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 9174 to CINCPAC, 041030Z Feb 71, JCS IN 86992.

freedom allowed inside South Vietnamese borders but did give the newsmen an opportunity to follow operations in Laos.[26]

Operation DEWEY CANYON II

(TS) While the decisions on the Laotian incursion were still being formulated in Washington, the Chairman urged CINCPAC to "drive ahead with Phase One actions on schedule. We do not want to convey either to the enemy or to our own people that we are not going to conduct the full operation." Accordingly, Phase I, began at 0001 local time on 30 January. United States troops pushed west along Route 9 from Vandegrift base camp toward the old Marine Corps base at Khe Sanh and conducted the other necessary maneuvers to secure western Quang Tri Province.[27]

(TS) Phase I was designated DEWEY CANYON II after an earlier USMC operation, but the Chairman objected to use of that name. Not only was this to be a predominately South Vietnamese operation, he said, but such a title implied that US ground combat troops were simply repeating the old search and destroy operations. He suggested the use of an appropriate Vietnamese designation, but by this time, the name

26. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9264 to CINCPAC, 120110Z Feb 71, JCS IN 14830. (S-GP 1) Msg, SecDef 4539 to COMUSMACV, 221921Z Feb 71. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9427 to SecDef, 231550Z Feb 71, JCS IN 35905.

27. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2443 to CINCPAC, 291423Z Jan 71; (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9141 to CINCPAC, 311145Z Jan 71. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. E-24 - E-27.

had already been released to the press. DEWEY CANYON II, however, applied only to US actions during Phase I, while the Vietnamese operations in Laos were called LAMSON 719.[28]

~~(C)~~ Operation DEWEY CANYON II proceeded according to plan. An assault airstrip was operational at Khe Sanh by 3 February, and Route 9 was secure to the Laotian border by 5 February. Behind this cover of US troops, the better part of two South Vietnamese divisions assembled at Khe Sanh in preparation for assaults across the border. Enemy reaction to Phase I was light and sporadic. There were no major ground contacts and only 14 enemy KIA reported.[29]

(U) In all 20,000 South Vietnamese and 9,000 US troops participated in DEWEY CANYON II. Reports of the operation were not released by COMUSMACV, of course, until 4 February when the US command lifted its six-day news blackout to announce that DEWEY CANYON II was under way. The operation was described by COMUSMACV as a reaction to a "North Vietnamese buildup threatening the western regions of Military Region I." The US role, according to the COMUSMACV announcement, was to clear the roads leading to the frontier, to repair abandoned airstrips, to provide air cover and highway security, and to airlift South Vietnamese troops to the area.[30]

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28. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2788 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 311622Z Jan 71. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9144 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 010720Z Feb 71, JCS IN 77597.

29. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. E-24 - E-27.

30 Washington Post, 4 Feb 71, 1; 5 Feb 71, 1. NY Times, 4 Feb 71, 1. Lester A. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia, Vol. 6, 1971 (1973), p. 25 (hereafter Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam).

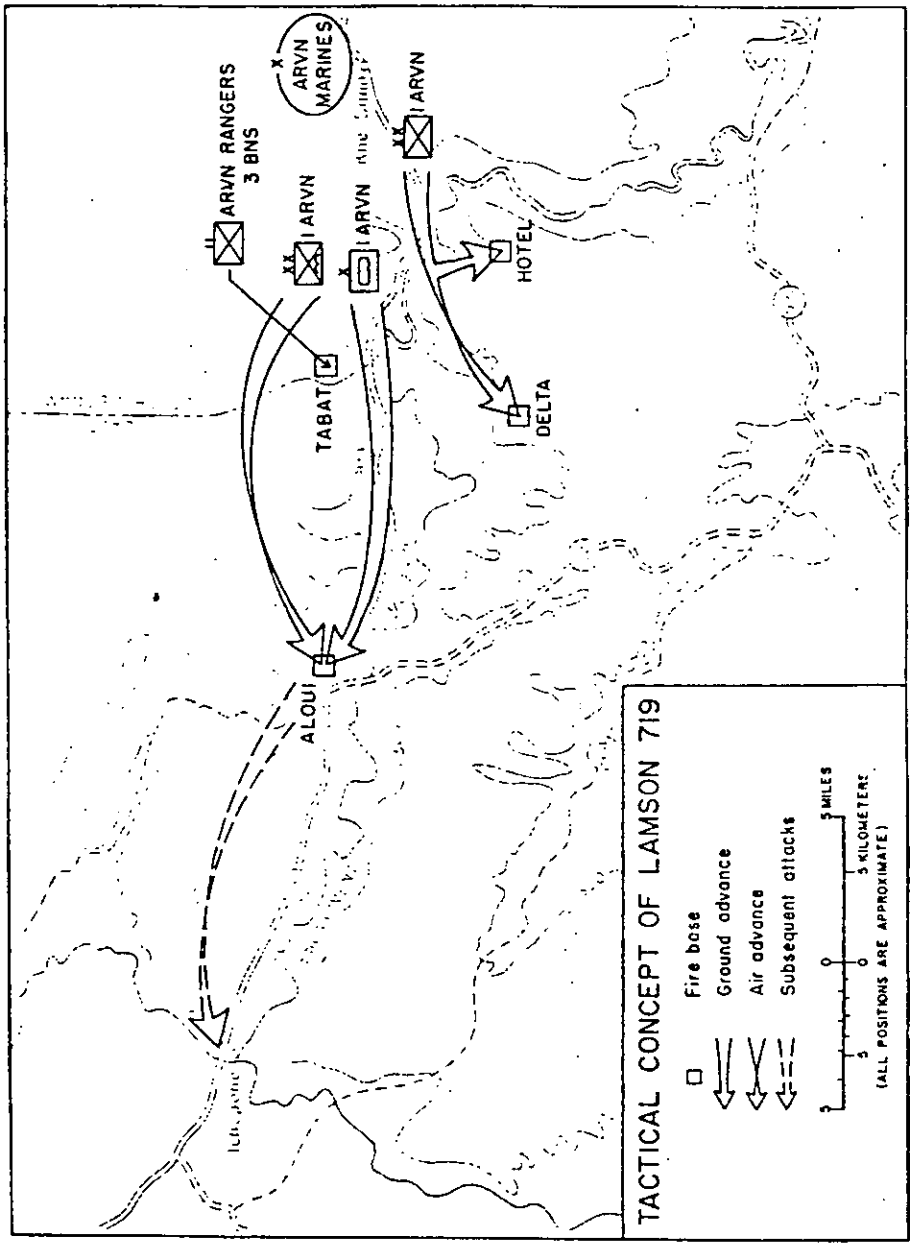
Entry into Laos

(~~S~~) Phase II, the actual push into Laos, began as scheduled on 8 February. The plan was for the 1st ARVN Airborne Division, with the 1st Armored Brigade attached, to launch a ground and airborne attack along Route 9 to seize Aloui, which would then serve as the launching point for the final assault on Tchepone, some 15 miles to the westward. Meanwhile, the 1st Infantry Division would advance in parallel south of Route 9 to protect the left flank of the main force, and the ARVN Rangers would protect the right flank by establishing fire bases north of Route 9. (See map, p. 33.) The airborne operations went off successfully, but the armored force ran into difficulty because, contrary to expectations, the condition of Route 9 seriously hindered the movement of vehicles, while the adjacent terrain and vegetation made it impossible for armor to operate off the highway. Nevertheless the initial objective, Aloui, was taken on 10 February by an airborne force, which then succeeded in linking up with the armored task force moving along Route 9.[30]

(~~TS~~) The armored brigade was unable to keep Route 9 open for ground resupply and all units, including the armor brigade itself, had to depend on US helicopter support for resupply. As the operation progressed, enemy antiaircraft fire grew heavier, and helicopters landing and taking off were subjected to fire from small arms, rocket launchers, mortars, artillery, and 12.7mm machine guns. The North Vietnamese initially employed

30. (~~S~~) Armor in Vietnam Monograph, Fort Knox, Kentucky, nd, pp. 29, 30. (U) LTG John J. Tolson, Air Mobility, 1961-1971, Vietnam Studies, Dept of the Army, 1973, pp. 240, 241.

MAP 2



Source: LTG John J. Tolson, Air Mobility, 1961-1971, Vietnam Studies, Dept. of the Army, 1973, p. 239.

weapons and troops already present in the operational area against the RVNAF forces, using many of their service troops in a combat role. Initially the enemy had about 22 combat battalions in or near Base Areas 604 and 611, with an estimated strength of 11,000 to 14,000, and an additional 10,000 personnel in administrative units, and South Vietnamese forces were outnumbered about 1.5 to 1 in combat troops and 2 to 1 overall.[31]

(U) Public announcements of the incursion into Laotion territory were made in Saigon and Washington on the day it began. President Thieu made it clear that the South Vietnamese troops were not seeking to occupy Laotian territory, calling the operation limited in time as well as space and stressing that he had no wish to interfere in the internal affairs of Laos. The purpose of the incursion was to disrupt "the supply and infiltration network of the Communist North Vietnamese in Laos, which territory has for many years been occupied by North Vietnamese Communists and used as a base to launch attacks on our country." It was, he said, a "necessary act of legitimate self-defense of South Vietnam against the Communist North Vietnamese aggressors." Rather than an expansion of the war, President Thieu called this action one "taken to help end soon the war in Vietnam and restore peace in this part of the world."[32]

31. (~~C~~) 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), Final Report--Airmobile Operations in Support of LAMSON 719, 8 February-6 April 1971, p. I-12. (~~TS~~) OASD/SA, "LAM SON 719 --Preliminary Evaluation," 2 Apr 71.
32. Washington Post, 8 Feb 71, 1.

(U) The Department of State made a similar announcement the same day. A Department spokesman stressed that the incursion was aimed at protecting the security and safety of US forces in South Vietnam, weakening the enemy's ability to mount offensives, and strengthening South Vietnam's ability to defend itself as US forces were withdrawn. He gave assurance that the operation was not an enlargement of the war and was fully consistent with international law. He did admit that the Laotian Government had been "critical of the current military action," but he also pointed out that Vientiane had held North Vietnam most responsible for the continued violation of Laotian neutrality.[33]

(U) Premier Souvanna Phouma had indeed carried out his intention, indicated earlier, to protest the incursion. In a statement made on 8 February, he asserted that there was no justification for the South Vietnamese invasion of his country, even though he acknowledged that the North Vietnamese had been using that part of this country for years as a supply route into South Vietnam. He appealed for the withdrawal of all non-Laotian troops, lamenting that "once again . . . foreign troops belonging to countries and governments that have pledged to guarantee and defend the sovereignty, neutrality and inviolability of Laos have chosen to deliberately use our territory as a field of battle."[34]

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33. Washington Post, 9 Feb 71, 1. NY Times, 9 Feb 71, 1.

34. (U) "Statement by the Royal Government concerning the South Vietnamese Incursion into Laos, February 8, 1971," Royal Embassy of Laos News release, 10 Feb 71.

(U) In Washington, high ranking officials of the Administration moved quickly to assure the Congress that the Laotian incursion was not an expansion of the war. On 9 February Secretary of State Rogers briefed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Secretary Laird appeared before the Armed Services Committees of both Houses. In each case they assured the Congressmen that the Administration did not intend to send US ground combat troops into Laos even if the South Vietnamese troops encountered difficulties there. Secretary Laird publicly declared that the incursion would not widen the war, but on the contrary would shorten it. It would, he said, insure the success of Vietnamization and make possible the withdrawal of additional US troops.[35]

(U) The initial reaction of the Senate to the incursion was relatively quiet. Long time supporters of the US involvement in Southeast Asia, such as Senators John C. Stennis of Mississippi and Henry M. Jackson of Washington, voiced approval, while Senator J. William Fulbright of the Foreign Relations Committee only expressed "very grave reservations" about this course of action.[36]

(U) Scarcely had Secretaries Rogers and Laird finished explaining LAMSON 719 to the Congress than stories in the press began surfacing about US ground combat troops in Laos. On 10 February, US papers quoted members of Troop D, 7th Battalion, 17th Air Cavalry that 100 or more US ground troops had been fighting in Laos for three days. On 11 February,

35. NY Times, 10 Feb 71, 1, 15. Washington Post, 10 Feb 71, 1.
36. Ibid.

Howard Tuckner of ABC reportd that he had seen an American bathing with South Vietnamese troops 25 miles inside Laos. That same day, Walter Cronkite reported that US Special Forces were accompanying some of the South Vietnamese forces flown into Laos in US helicopters. The White House Press Secretary promptly issued denials for each of these stories and assured the public that there would be neither US ground troops nor advisers participating in the South Vietnamese operation across the border.[37]

(~~TS~~) Meanwhile, in the early stages of Phase II of the operation, General Abrams was satisfied. He reported to Admiral Moorer that the performance of the ARVN troops was "a very good and professional one. Their kill ratio is on the order of ten to one . . . ." Still movement westward toward Tchepone was slower than anticipated. The assault along Route 9 to Tchepone had been planned to take three days, but Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam, the South Vietnamese commander of the operation, moved much more deliberately. On 13 February, therefore, President Thieu ordered ARVN forces to move no farther west for another three to five days in order to consolidate their present position and to destroy supply depots in the area they then occupied. This pause was deemed advisable because of the difficulty of armored movement along Route 9, the unexpected enemy strength, weather conditions that hindered aircraft operations, and the need to build up supply reserves further. Nonetheless, General Vien, Chief of

37. Washington Star, 10 Feb 71, 1. ABC Evening News, ABC-TV, 11 Feb 71. CBS Evening News, CBS-TV, 11 Feb 71; NY Times, 12 Feb 71, 4.

the Joint General Staff, hoped that the South Vietnamese troops would reach the high ground leading to Tchepone by 21 February.[38]

(U) General Lam was considerably more optimistic in his public pronouncements. He told the press on 15 February the main part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail had been cut. "We hold the part they need to resupply their troops to the south," he declared. Enemy casualty figures since 8 February were given as nearly 450 enemy killed and about 30 tanks destroyed and large quantities of supplies captured. In fact, the South Vietnamese attributed the slowness of their advance into Laos to the discovery of so many enemy supply caches.[39]

US Air Support

(~~TS~~) Throughout the initial ARVN operations in Laos the United States provided both tactical air and B-52 support, and on 11 February the Chairman authorized an increase in the US monthly TACAIR sortie level as needed to support both LAMSON 719 and the Chup Plantation operations, so long as expenditures remained within FY 1971 funding levels. With regard to B-52 operations, a problem had arisen because the enemy had established troop concentrations and AA sites in an area north of Tchepone that lay between the existing Special ARC LIGHT Operating Areas. General Abrams considered the bombing of this area "essential to ARC LIGHT employment in support of Operation LAMSON 719."

38. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9301 to CJCS, 141435Z Feb 71, JCS IN 19400. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9287 to CINCPAC, 130843Z Feb 71, JCS IN 17892. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9323 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 161140Z Feb 71, JCS IN 21698.

39. NY Times, 16 Feb 71, 1.

He requested authority from American Embassy Vientiane and CINCPAC on 17 February to extend ARC LIGHT strikes into the area. Six POW camps were located in this area, and General Abrams also asked that the operating restriction around them be reduced from 3,000 to 1,500 meters. Ambassador Godley refused to authorize the additional strikes, stating that "the existing ROE permit flexible enough response to tactical emergencies considering the potentially severe political repercussions associated with destruction of POW camps."[40]

(~~TS~~) General Abrams then turned to the Chairman for authority to conduct these air strikes, and Admiral McCain strongly supported the request. The Director of Central Intelligence reported little indication that the POW camps in the area were still occupied, and Admiral Moorer and the Secretaries of State and Defense all supported the requested bombing without restriction. Accordingly, Admiral Moorer requested Ambassador Godley to reconsider his decision. Evidently the Ambassador did so, for on 20 February, CINCPAC approved the bombing of the area in question for the duration of LAMSON 719.[41]

(~~TS~~) At the same time COMUSMACV was asking for authority to extend the range of ARC LIGHT strikes,

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40. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3830 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 112059Z Feb 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to AmEmb Vientiane and CINCPAC, 171107Z Feb 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, AmEmb Vientiane to COMUSMACV, 180504Z Feb 71.

41. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9352 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 190400Z Feb 71, JCS IN 27587. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 191000Z Feb 71, JCS IN 28186. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4455 to AmEmb Vientiane 192352Z Feb 71. (~~TS~~-Gp 1) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 201726Z Feb 71, JCS IN 31248.

he proposed to increase their intensity as well. He predicted that LAMSON 719 could become "one of the most decisive operations of the Southeast Asia conflict" and asked that immediate action be taken to develop a capability to sustain 40 sorties per day through May 1971. General Abrams also wanted a capability to increase the daily rate beyond 40 sorties should the situation warrant it. Admiral McCain supported the proposal, pointing out that the enemy decision to make a decisive effort against the ARVN in the Laotian panhandle would produce the kind of heavy enemy troop concentrations that presented an ideal target for B-52 saturation bombing and that the additional sorties could be critical to the success of the ARVN forces. The Chairman authorized the requested surge on 21 February.[42]

LAMSON 719 Continues

(~~S~~) On 17 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff wired their encouragement to the South Vietnamese commander of LAMSON 719, citing his superb leadership and splendid performance. They sent a similar message to the commander of the forces operating against the Chup Plantation in Cambodia, a parallel operation which had the same purpose of disrupting enemy logistical facilities.[43] The North Vietnamese intensified their resistance in Laos, however, and a major battle was

42. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 3971 to CINCPAC, 201215Z Feb 71, JCS IN 30900. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 202335Z Feb 71, JCS IN 31633. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 4503 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 211625Z Feb 71.

43. The Chup Plantation operation (TOAN THANG 01/71) had been launched on 4 February 1971. It is described fully in Chapter 5.

fought on 19 February 1971, when the 39th Ranger Battalion was attacked by an estimated 400- to 500-man enemy force. After a fierce fight the Rangers were driven from their position with losses of 178 men killed or missing and 148 wounded, although they claimed to have killed 639 of the enemy.[44]

(U) Back in Washington, Administration spokesmen were still optimistic. White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler reported that President Nixon thought that the operation was going well, and the Press Secretary denied reports that the traffic on the Ho Chi Minh Trail had in fact increased since the beginning of the incursion into Laos. He insisted that the main objective of LAMSON 719, disruption of the enemy logistics network, was being met. Across the Potomac at the Pentagon, Jerry W. Friedheim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, now explained that Tchepone itself was not the principal objective of the operation. "I realize that that particular city gets written about because it sits in the middle of Route 9," he said, "but this is an airmobile operation with a great deal of flexibility permitted and it would be incorrect to pick out a specific single geographic point and call it the objective."[45]

(U) In South Vietnam President Thieu announced that LAMSON 719 had been instrumental in preventing an intended North Vietnamese plan to invade the five northernmost South Vietnamese provinces in an effort to seize territory to improve their bargaining position in Paris. Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser

44. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 4258 to CINCPAC, 180052Z Feb 71; (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. E-27.

45. (U) Washington Post, 23 Feb 71, 1.

for National Security Affairs, told members of Congress that the drive into Laos had cut several of the North Vietnamese routes into that country.[46]

(U) On 23 February, Secretary Laird issued a statement that the operation across the border was proceeding on schedule and that its purpose of cutting of the communist supply lines was being achieved. He warned newsmen to expect tougher, more difficult fighting in the area in the future. The next day he said that the drive had been deliberately slowed in order to assess the enemy reactions, and not in response to North Vietnamese counterattacks. The Director of the Joint Staff, Lieutenant General John W. Vogt, Jr., USAF, reinforced this view at the same news conference. He declared that the enemy had not stopped the South Vietnamese movement along Route 9. Secretary Laird reemphasized the objectives of the operation by declaring that "the key thing is to disrupt the logistic supply routes. I believe that this operation, even if it were to terminate, and there is no fixed time limit on it now, has been successful in disrupting the logistic supplies." He, too, stated that Tchepone, as such, had never been a objective.[47]

(~~TS~~) By 22 February, after two weeks of hard fighting, Tchepone still had not been taken. On that day, US Ambassador to South Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, and General Abrams met with President Thieu and the South Vietnamese President outlined a new approach. He wanted to abandon the original plan for a ground advance from Aloui along Route 9 in favor of an airborne effort. On or about 25 February, two airborne

46. NY Times, 21 Feb 71, 1; 24 Feb 71, 1.
47. NY Times, 24 Feb 71, 1; 25 Feb 71, 1. Washington Post, 25 Feb 71, 1.

brigades would make an assault with heavy B-52, tactical air, and helicopter support. Once the objective was taken, and the area cleaned out, President Thieu then favored withdrawing through Base Area 611.[48]

(~~TS~~) Enemy actions, however, did not fall in with the South Vietnamese plans. On 25 February, the North Vietnamese launched an armor attack against ARVN troops at Fire Base 31, moving their Soviet-made T-34 tanks over concealed routes into final asault positions without being discovered. At daylight the tanks and supporting infantry attacked forcing the South Vietnamese to abandon a major position guarding their right flank.

(~~TS~~) The enemy also continued to build up his combat forces and doubled his strength to about 28,000 by the end of February. The North Vietnamese then outnumbered the 8,500 ARVN combat forces more than 3 to 1. Ultimately elements of five NVA divisions, twelve infantry regiments, at least two battalions of an armor regiment, and at least nineteen antiaircraft battalions were brought into the area from North Vietnam, the Republic of Vietnam, and other parts of Laos.[49]

(~~TS~~) By the end of the month ARVN troops had still not reached Tchepone. General Abrams reported that:

> the fighting in LAMSON 719 continues to be characterized by sharp solid contacts. While some ARVN units have sustained heavy casualties, the enemy is taking a tremendous beating in terms of personnel and material

48. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9407 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 221355Z Feb 71, JCS IN 33504.

49. (U) LTG John J. Tolson, Air Mobility 1961-1971, Vietnam Studies, Dept of the Army, 1973, pp. 241, 242. (~~C~~) 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), Final Report--Airmobile Operations in Support of LAMSON 719, 8 February-6 April 1971, pp. 1-12. (~~TS~~) OASD/SA, "Lam Son 719 - Preliminary Evaluation," 2 Apr 71.

> casualties. ARC LIGHT, TACAIR, and helo gunships are assisting the ARVN in exacting a significant toll. The ARVN performance to date continues to be gratifying. The displayed willingness to fight, to fully commit their resources and to take necessary steps to insure success have been amply demonstrated.

On 1 March both President Thieu and General Vien expressed determination to carry through with the campaign, and President Thieu again put forth his suggestion for an airborne seizure of Tchepone.[50]

(~~TS~~) Even though the objective of Tchepone had not been attained, the effects of LAMSON 719 were beginning to tell on the enemy supply chain by early March. In the current dry season 14,000 tons of supplies had moved out of Base Area 611 compared to 17,000 tons in the same period of 1970. This traffic was being channelled into more western supply routes, especially Route 914 west of Tchepone, and Admiral McCain recommended that Route 914 also be cut. "The opportunity remains great," he concluded, "for LAMSON 719 to deal a crushing blow to the enemy's future combat capability in the South." Subsequently General Abrams met with General Vien and emphasized that the flow of supplies must be stopped. This included cutting Route 914. "A major battle, which might even be the decisive battle of the war, must be won."

(~~TS~~) Meantime heavy fighting continued. From 24 February through 3 March the enemy harassed ARVN resupply and MEDEVAC efforts by ground attack and antiaircraft fire, and South Vietnamese search and

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50. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9500 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 281239Z Feb 71, JCS IN 45545. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9017 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 011225Z Mar 71, JCS IN 46629.

destroy missions encountered multi-company enemy forces. Enemy antiaircraft measures made resupply and troop movement operations extremely difficult and often required gunship escorts for single ship missions. Surface-to-air missiles also were encountered in this area for the first time.[51]

The Push on Tchepone

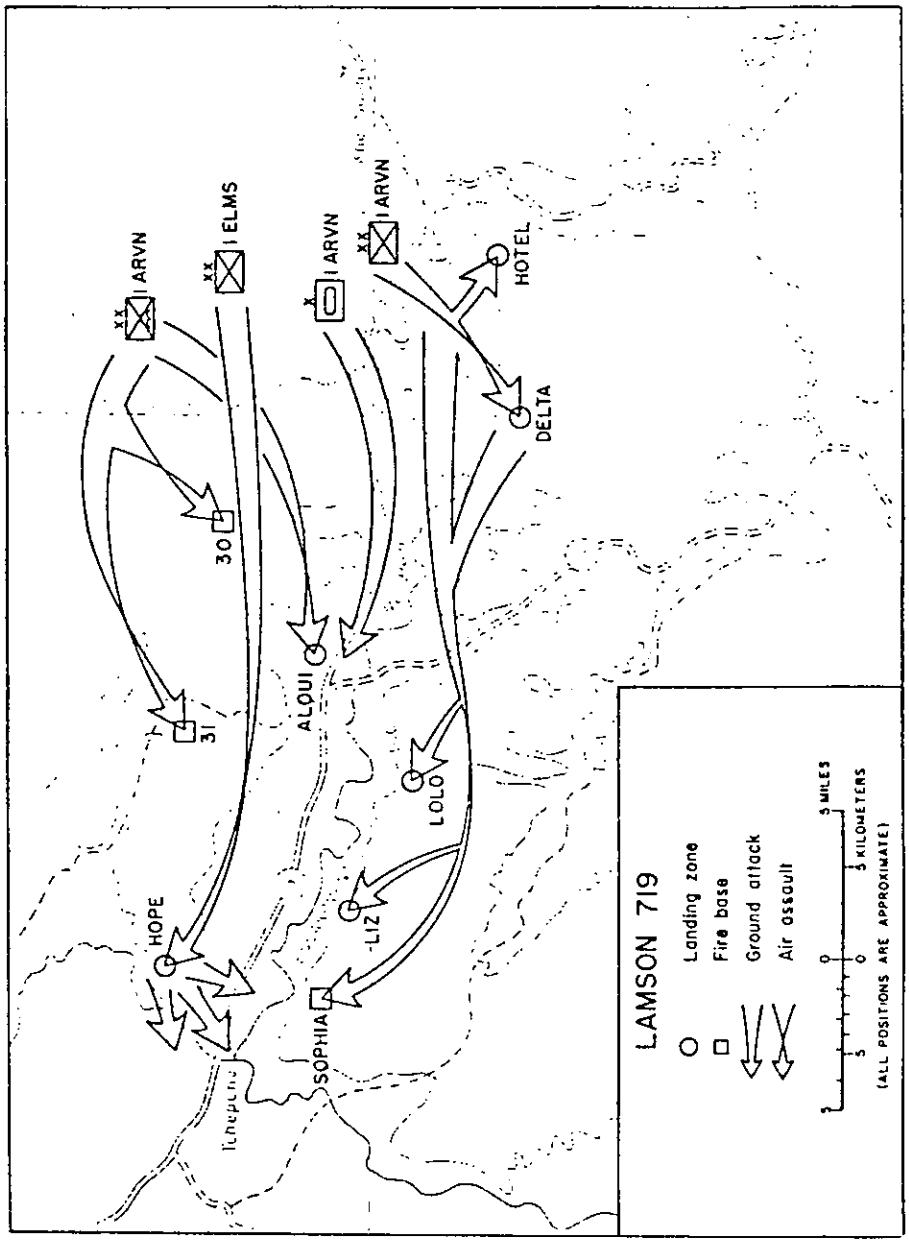
(U) In accord with President Thieu's revised plan of action, the ARVN abandoned the ground advance along Route 9. From 3 to 6 March, the southern force, the ARVN 1st Division, launched a series of successful airmobile assaults westward along the escarpment south of Route 9, into landing zones LOLO and LIZ and Fire Base SOPHIA WEST. To the north another airborne force of two infantry battalions from Vietnam, in one grand swoop of 65 kilometers, took landing zone HOPE just five or six kilometers from Tchepone. From HOPE the ARVN forces moved against Tchepone, securing the announced objective of LAMSON 719 on 6 March. (See map, p. 46.)[52]

(U) Even before the South Vietnamese troops reached Tchepone, President Nixon appeared to be satisfied with the progress of LAMSON 719. At his 4 March news conference he told reporters that

> General Abrams tells me that in both Laos and Cambodia his evaluation after three weeks of fighting is that--to use his terms--the South Vietnamese by themselves

51. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 032311Z Mar 71, JCS IN 52031. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV to Sutherland, 061014Z Mar 71. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~C~~) p. E-27.
52. Tolson, Air Mobility, 1961-1971, p. 242.

MAP 3



Source: LTG John J. Tolson, Air Mobility, 1961-1971, Vietnam Studies, Dept. of the Army, 1973, p. 243.

> can hack it and they can give a better account of themselves even than the North Vietnamese units. This means that our withdrawal program, our Vietnamization program can continue on schedule, and we trust even ahead of schedule, assuming that there is more progress in Laos.[53]

(S) Ambassador Bunker was also pleased with the ARVN operations. On the day Tchepone was at last entered, he told the Secretaries of State and Defense, in a statement that had General Abrams' concurrence, that the operation had demonstrated its value even though it had not matched the planned scenario. The objective was not Tchepone but the enemy supply network, he continued, and:

> enemy southward traffic has been viturally eliminated on Routes 9 and 92 and greatly reduced on 914. The enemy has been forced to accept combat away from the territory of South Vietnam. As General Abrams has said, we once fought the NVA 9th Division around Saigon, and we are now fighting it in Cambodia; we once fought the NVA 308th and 320th divisions around Hue and Danang, and they are now being fought in Laos.[54]

(TS) With the seizure of Tchepone, Phase III of LAMSON 719 began. Company-sized patrols, supported by the ARVN fire support bases, US artillery from

53. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1971 (1972), p. 387 (hereafter cited as Public Papers, Nixon, 1971).

54. (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9097 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 061010Z Mar 71, JCS IN 57739.

across the border in South Vietnam and a 24-hour US tactical air cover, located and destroyed supply depots around Tchepone. By 9 March, General Lam announced that his forces held three of the main junctions along the North Vietnamese supply routes--Tchepone itself, Ban Dong on Route 9 halfway between Tchepone and the border, and Muong Nong about 30 kilometers south of Ban Dong.[55]

(~~TS~~) The ARVN troops now continued operations in the LAMSON 719 area, defending their positions in Laos against increasingly heavy enemy artillery and rocket fire. Elements of the 1st Division physically interdicted Route 914, the key supply route south and west of Tchepone, for about two days beginning 16 March, and additional ARVN and VNMC units inserted into LAOS during this phase of the operation raised RVNAF strength to about 17,000. But this additional strength was partially offset by continued enemy reinforcement. Another North Vietnamese regiment and division headquarters were tentatively identified, raising the number of enemy combat battalions opposing the RVNAF to about 47. Thus the South Vietnamese combat troops were outnumbered about 2 to 1 as Phase III drew to an end in mid-March.[56]

(~~TS~~) On 11 March COMUSMACV asked for an extention of US support for the Laotian operations beyond 5 April; CINCPAC endorsed the extension. The Chairman authorized General Abrams only "to continue discussions

55. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9134 to CINCPAC, 081130Z Mar 71, JCS IN 60079. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971 (1973), p. 35.

56. (~~TS~~) OASD/SA, "Lam Son 719 - Preliminary Evaluation," 2 Apr 71.

with the SVN to insure them of full U.S. support and to influence the operation according to your good judgement " Earlier, the Secretary of Defense had direced that General Abrams keep LAMSON 719 a basically RVNAF operation and not let "a situation develop in which the GVN could charge the US with either depriving the RVNAF of implicitly agreed upon support or coercing the RVNAF into military operations which are contrary to the better judgements of the GVN."[57]

Withdrawal from Laos

(~~TS~~) Admiral Moorer took this opportunity to emphasize to General Abrams that he, the President, and Dr. Kissinger all wished to avoid the appearance of a premature withdrawal from Laos, and they hoped that the South Vietnamese would not develop

> such a momentum in their movement to the east that they appear to be bugging out or that they fail to take full advantage of this opportunity to damage the enemy. . . . The SVN have met the best that the NVN have to offer and have gotten the better of the fight. . . . We must be careful to guard against allegations from the press and others that the SVN are being forced to retreat.[58]

57. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9171 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 111150Z Mar 71, JCS IN 66626. (~~TS~~) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 111933Z Mar 71, JCS IN 67371. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6037 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 112104Z Mar 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6049 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 112220Z Mar 71. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Support for LAMSON 719," 11 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Laos - LAMSON 719.

58. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6049 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 112220Z Mar 71.

(~~TS~~) On the following day, 12 March, President Thieu met with Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams to outline his plans for the remainder of LAMSON 719. He wanted to continue current operations along Route 914 and the area around the hub where Routes 914, 92, and 922 joined and to attack Base Area 611 and the Ashau valley. Generals Lam and Vien, he said, wanted to withdraw the troops for a rest and then go back into Laos into Base Area 611 and the Ashau, but he foresaw "international difficulties" in pulling out and then returning. His solution was to stay in Laos by rotating units and temporarily withdrawing some of them. Both the Ambassador and General Abrams thought President Thieu's approach was not only militarily sound but took into account the need for a good public image after the operation was concluded.[59]

(~~C~~) At just this time the enemy increased his efforts against South Vietnamese forces in Laos. Initially, the enemy had not reacted to the thrust against the Tchepone area. Soon, however, enemy forces began to concentrate against the 1st ARVN Division positions south of Route 9. Enemy troops grew notably more aggressive as ARVN troops withdrew from SOPHIA WEST and LIZ to positions around SOPHIA EAST and BROWN. On 14 March NVA forces mounted an attack against LOLO, at first by fire, then with infantry. On the night of 15-16 March, they drove the SVN forces out of LOLO.[60]

(U) The following day in Washington, Secretary Rogers reminded the press that the Laotian operation

59. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9184 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 120905Z Mar 71, JCS IN 68538.

60. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9291 to CJCS, 191235Z Mar 71, JCS IN 83247.

was temporary and flexible. "We think to date the operation has been successful," he stated. "The total success of it will depend on subsequent events. But I think up to the present time it has achieved the purposes that we started out with."[61]

(~~TS~~) The major question in the minds of US officials in mid-March concerning LAMSON 719 was how long the South Vietnamese would and could continue the operation. On 16 March, Admiral Moorer told Secretary Laird that "Phases I and II can be said to be completed, and Phase III is in progress." The original plan had called for the action to continue until "the monsoon transitional period," and the Chairman hoped that the month and a half remaining before that time would permit "full execution" of Phase IV, including an attack into Base Area 611.[62]

(U) On that same day, 16 March, General Lam told Lieutenant General James W. Sutherland, USA, the US commander in MR 1, that although redeployment of some troops would occur earlier, Phase III would not terminate before 10 to 15 April, when Phase IV would begin. General Lam's plans, however, still made no provision to continue the interdiction of Route 914 nor to move eastward through Base Area 611. The South Vietnamese commander's comments provoked Admiral Moorer to observe that "the redeployment of RVNAF forces as outlined . . . could add fuel to the current pessimistic press reports claiming a rout of Vietnamese units from Laos. . . . we run the risk of losing most of our high-level

61. Dept of State Bulletin, 5 Apr 71, p. 483.
62. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-702-71 to SecDef, 16 Mar 71, CJCS CM Chron File.

political support for prosecuting LAMSON to a successful conclusion, and of undermining widespread confidence in the success of Vietnamization to date."[63]

(TS) On 18 March, General Abrams reminded General Vien that "after much hard fighting, with no question of the significant military results achieved so far, there was still much to be gained by reinforcing efforts in LAMSON 719." He suggested again "the infusion of fresh troops to maintain the initiative and to preclude the adverse psychological and political potential of the enemy claiming victory and the press claiming defeat of the ARVN forces in Laos." But the South Vietnamese were not convinced by these entreaties, and President Thieu moved ahead with the withdrawal plans. In his judgment the basic mission in Laos had been accomplished. The ARVN troops had had a strenuous and successful campaign and required rest and refitting, and he was apprehensive that the enemy might launch a significant attack on Khe Sanh.[64]

(TS) President Nixon was as anxious as his military leaders for the South Vietnamese to continue the Laotian operations and avoid the appearance of a hasty withdrawal. As Admiral Moorer related to Admiral McCain and General Abrams on 18 March, the President hoped some actions could still be conducted in Base Area 611, at a minimum, by the reinforcement or rotation of troops. The President believed that if the press was able to create an impression that the ARVN

63. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9259 to CINCPAC, 171045Z Mar 71, JCS IN 77535. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6505 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 172317Z Mar 71.

64. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9273 to CINCPAC, 181218Z Mar 71, JCS IN 80062.

withdrawal was in fact a rout, then President Thieu's prestige would be seriously impaired, both internally and externally. That same day, Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., USA, the Military Assistant to the President, who was visiting South Vietnam, confirmed President Nixon's position. General Haig told General Abrams that "Washington would like to see the ARVN stay in Laos through April."[65]

(~~TS~~) At a meeting the following day with General Abrams, Ambassador Bunker, and General Haig, President Thieu was still professing to consider a rotation of troops, but because of the unexpected enemy strength and the rate of ARVN casualties he had already directed the withdrawal of South Vietnamese forces from Laos, a process that would take until 5-8 April. Toward the end of this period he wanted to execute a three-battalion raid against logistical targets at Muong Nong. President Thieu remained confident of the success of the operation, stating that he would work out the details of the raid with Generals Lam and Vien on 20 March.[66]

(U) While the South Vietnamese were thus withdrawing, President Nixon strongly defended the Laotian incursion in an interview with Howard K. Smith of ABC broadcast from the White House library on 22 March. During the six-week duration of the operation, he said, the North Vietnamese

> have had chewed up great amounts of ammunition, great amounts of materiel that otherwise would have

65. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 9274 to CJCS, 181555Z Mar 71, JCS IN 80359. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6565, to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 182135Z Mar 71.

66. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 9294 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 191325Z Mar 71, JCS IN 82397.

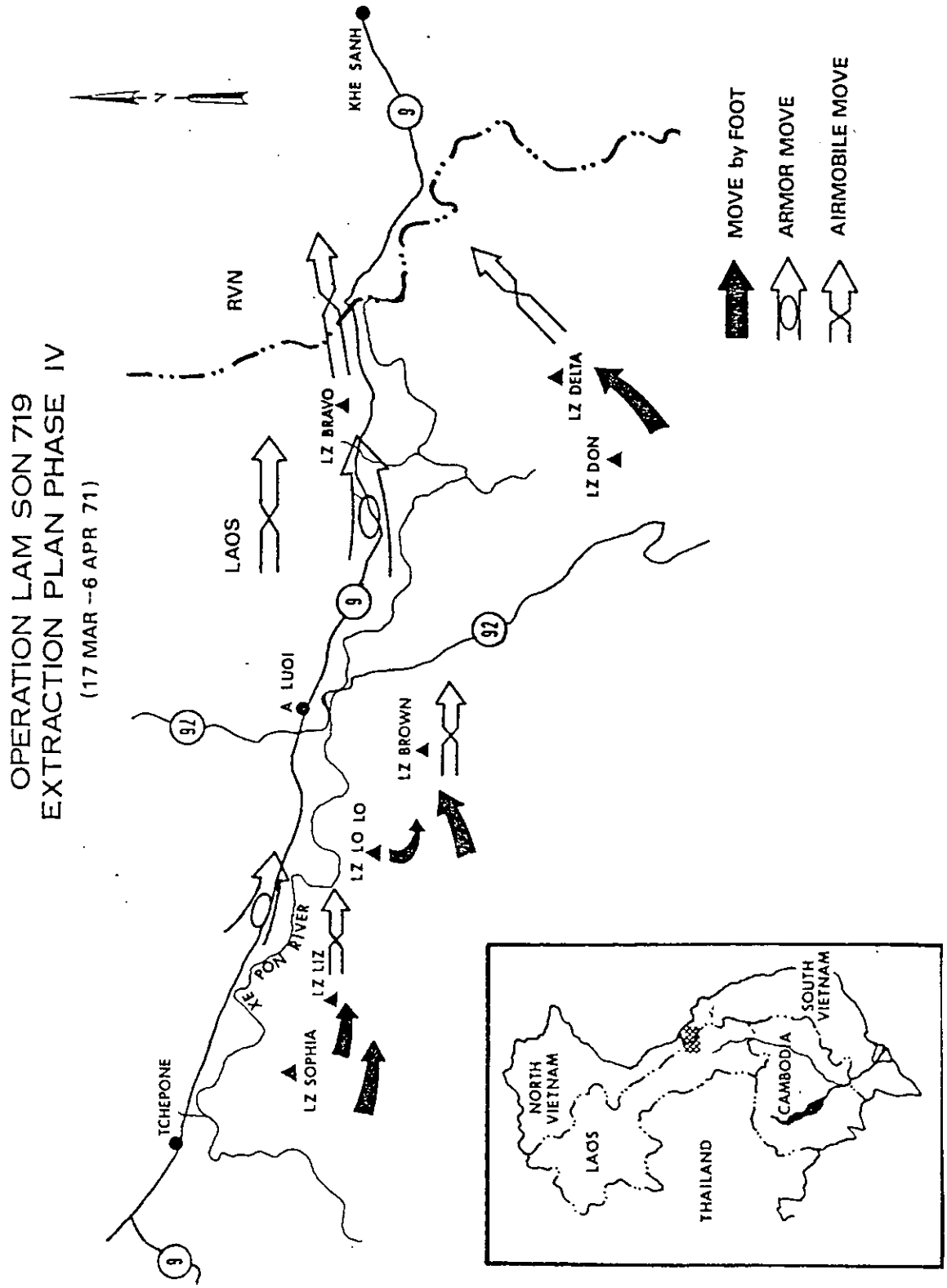
> gone south and would have been used, incidentally, against many Americans fighting in South Vietnam--and also in that 6-week period the South Vietnamese have developed a considerable capability on their own and considerable confidence on their own. They are better units to handle the situation as we withdraw."

The President cited General Abrams' expert opinion that "18 out of 22 battalions conducted themselves with high morale, with great confidence, and they are able to defend themselves man to man against the North Vietnamese." At the same time he pointed out that press coverage of the operation had "shown only those men in the four ARVN battalions of 22 that were in trouble. They haven't shown people in the other 18 battalions. That is not because it has been deliberate. It is because those make news." It was much too early to pronounce final judgment on the operation, but he did assure the American people that "the American withdrawal will continue . . . [and] the danger to America's remaining forces has been reduced."[67]

(Ø) The South Vietnamese withdrawal from Laos, the fourth and final phase of LAMSON 719, began on 17 March when the ARVN armored task force began to return to Vietnam along Route 9. (See map, p. 55.) The enemy attacked and inflicted heavy losses on the withdrawing force, reducing some units to "ineffective combat status." An ambush on 19 March caused extensive damage to armored and wheeled vehicles and the resulting debris littering the road further hindered the withdrawal. All other RVNAF units were extracted by helicopter and these troop lifts were subjected to extremely heavy antiaircraft fire. This fire became

67. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, p. 451-453.

MAP 4



Source: COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. E-32.

so intense that artillery pieces had to be spiked and left behind rather than risking helicopters and crews to save them, and some South Vietnamese troops had to withdraw on foot to break contact for extraction. The last elements of the ARVN 1st Division were out of Laos on 21 March and all South Vietnamese units had withdrawn by 24 March. LAMSON 719 was not officially terminated, however, until 6 April, and after the final troop withdrawal, the South Vietnamese did plan and carry out some raids into Laotian territory. As will be subsequently described, these raids presented the United States with a real difficulty.[68]

(U) On 24 March, Secretary Laird announced that LAMSON 719 was being brought to a close because of the "tremendously vicious and violent reaction on the part of the North Vietnamese and also the fact that the South Vietnamese feel that they have carried out a primary objective of the operation--that is, to disrupt the logistic supply routes." A day earlier Mr. Friedheim had acknowledged that some South Vietnamese units had not performed as they should, but concluded that the South Vietnamese troops had won the overall battle.[69]

Continued US Support

(~~TS~~) When the original agreements for support in LAMSON 719 were negotiated, US support was firmly committed only through 5 April. There was nothing hard

68. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. E-33. (U) Tolson, Air Mobility, 1961-1971, pp. 242-244. (TS) OASD/SA, "Lam Son 719 - Preliminary Evaluation," 2 Apr 71. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9378 to CJCS and CINCPAC 242000Z Mar 71, JCS IN 92768.
69. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971 (1973) p. 39.

and fast about this date, but to extend US support much beyond it required additional negotiations. On 11 March Secretary Laird authorized General Abrams to negotiate with President Thieu for US support beyond 5 April. The Secretary also wanted Admiral Moorer's evaluation of the options still available. In reply, the Chairman summarized the accomplishments through 16 March and recommended, along with General Abrams, that the remainder of LAMSON 719 as well as the Chup Plantation operation in Cambodia "must be directed toward inflicting unabated, maximum damage on the enemy by destruction of his installations, by the application of maximum firepower against his troop dispositions and supporting weapons."[70]

(~~TS~~) The South Vietnamese withdrawal, under circumstances suggesting a precipitate retreat in the face of superior forces, made it necessary to reopen the question of US support for future operations in Laos. On 26 March, Secretary Laird asked the Chairman "what, if any, further phase of LAMSON 719 should be undertaken after the current authority expired on 5 April." The Secretary realized that the tactical decisions on when and how to carry out such actions must rest with General Abrams and the South Vietnamese. He believed, however, that the complete withdrawal of South Vietnamese troops from Laos had created a new situation and, if they were to be sent back there, "resource commitments and political imperatives" would require a new

70. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Support for LAMSON 719," 11 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Laos - LAMSON 719. (~~TS~~) CM-702-71 to SecDef, 16 Mar 71, CJCS CM Chron File.

study and a decision at the Washington level before any US support could be provided.[71]

(TS) Admiral Moorer passed the Secretary's request to General Abrams, who, in reply urged full US air support for the remaining operations in Laos planned as part of LAMSON 719. Admiral Moorer relayed this reply to Secretary Laird on 29 March adding various justifications. The Chairman considered that the attack on the enemy logistic system in Laos had succeeded thus far and should be continued to the end of the dry season in order to realize maximum benefit; that failure to continue US support would imply a lack of confidence in the RVNAF and in Vietnamization; and that a successful attack on enemy logistics, by helping to stabilize the military situation, would facilitate further US redeployments.[72]

(TS) On 3 April, the Chairman again asked the Secretary of Defense for authority to continue US support of Laotian operations beyond 5 April. Secretary Laird ultimately authorized continued US support of Vietnamese cross-border operations in Laos through 15 May 1971, provided they were approved by General Abrams. He stipulated that US forces should minimize the use of US helicopters for troop lift and logistics missions and put maximum reliance on South Vietnamese air resources. "In this way," he declared, "I believe

71. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Planning for LAMSON 719 and TOAN THANG 01/71 NB," 26 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Laos - LAMSON 719.

72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7334 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 270046Z Mar 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-759-71 to SecDef, 29 Mar 71; CJCS File 091 Laos LAMSON 719. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 281100Z Mar 71.

we will bolster the confidence of the South Vietnamese in their own capabilities to carry out these operations in the future."[73]

(TS) Looking beyond the current US support operations, Secretary Laird had noted the "large role" played by US commanders in the decisions related to LAMSON 719 and the Chup Plantation operation. This was appropriate, he commented, in view of the great importance of US support in the Laotian operation, but he wanted to know what the proper US role should be in the decision making process for future operations as US participation decreased. Admiral Moorer replied that "within the bounds of good judgment and common sense, our efforts should continue to foster [in the South Vietnamese] a feeling of independence as well as a natural desire to make their own decisions." The degree of US participation in decision making was dependent upon the degree of US support, and the Chairman saw it becoming more selective as Vietnamization and US withdrawals progressed. Even at the end, however, there should be some US role in plans involving unilateral RVNAF actions, such a role being limited, in his opinion, "to an advisory capacity to assist as necessary and to help preclude obvious miscalculations."[74]

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73. (TS) CM-777-71 to SecDef, 3 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 71. (TS-GP 1), Msg, COMUSMACV 9487 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 030940Z Apr 71, JCS IN 24388. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Planning for Operations Following LAMSON 719," 3 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 Laos-LAMSON 719.

74. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Planning for LAMSON 719 and TOAN THANG 01/71 NB," 26 Mar 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-833-71 to SecDef, 16 Apr 71; CJCS File 091 Laos-LAMSON 719. (Why Admiral Moorer waited three weeks to reply to the Secretary is not indicated in available documents.)

Further Raids into Laos

(TS) While these discussions were taking place in Washington, plans were proceeding in Vietnam for additional raids on enemy installations in Laos. In fact, two cross-border, airmobile raids were conducted in late March and early April against Ho Chi Minh Trail installations. Plans for the first of these, a raid on Muong Nong, were agreed upon by General Lam and Lieutenant General Sutherland, on 21 March. The raid force, consisting of two battalions, would receive US B-52 and 24-hour tactical air support, and would last from two to five days. The proposed operation had already been reported to Washington and had been endorsed by President Nixon, who declared that "the conduct of the Muong Nong raid is vital if we are to end LAMSON 719 on an upbeat note and give the South Vietnamese a credible image as a continuous threat to the enemy.[75]

(TS) Despite President Nixon's general approval of this new foray into Laos, US air support required a specific decision by the Secretary of Defense in accord with the instructions given the Chairman by Secretary Laird on 26 March. Two days later, on 28 March, the Chairman presented Secretary Laird with the ARVN plan to raid Muong Nong in Base Area 611 now scheduled for 29 March. The US participation in the operation would consist of B-52 strikes, 24-hour coverage of FAC aircraft, and helicopter support including both "slicks" (troop carrying helicopters) and gunships. A South Vietnamese force of 450 men would operate for about

75. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9346 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 221044Z Mar 71, JCS IN 87239. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6820 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 211823Z Mar 71.

three days in the objective area to destroy supplies and disrupt the flow of materiel. In approving the plan, the Secretary of Defense warned that the operation must be described as a "raid" from the beginning, in order to avoid giving the press a pretext for repeating the allegation made during the earlier withdrawal that ARVN troops were being forced out of Laos.[76]

(TS) General Lam and General Sutherland cancelled the Muong Nong raid on 29 March, however, when an overflight of the proposed area revealed intense AAA fire along the approaches to the landing zone and surrounding the objective area. The two commanders anticipated that execution of the operation would have produced unacceptable casualty levels. General Lam proposed instead that the raid be shifted elsewhere in Base Area 611 to Cua Viet, and the raiders landed there on 31 March. The raid produced 85 enemy killed by air, one killed in action, and a moderate amount of supplies destroyed. The raiders were extracted on 1 April. President Thieu announced the Cua Viet raid on 31 March, declaring that "Operation Lam Son 719 is still going on, and the South Vietnamese army is still on the attack despite the pullback of some units into Vietnam."[77]

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76. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7334 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV 270046Z Mar 71. (TS) CM-751-71 to SecDef, 28 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, Jan-Jun 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7395 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 290313Z Mar 71.

77. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9434 to CJCS and CINCPAC 290845Z Mar 71, JCS IN 11273. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9442 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 300735Z Mar 71, JCS IN 13461. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9447 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 310350Z Mar 71, JCS 15805. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9452 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 310622Z Mar 71, JCS IN 16029. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9459

(~~TS~~) A second raid, similar to the first, was staged on 6 April. One hundred fifty RVNAF troops landed in Laos with US air support. When the raiders were extracted seven hours later, they reported 15 North Vietnamese killed, as well as destruction of 20 weapons and 10 tons of rice. This raid was the last military action in LAMSON 719. On 6 April the Secretary of Defense officially ended the use of the name LAMSON 719 by US personnel, effective with the extraction of the South Vietnamese troops from their Laotian raid.[78]

Results of the Operation

(U) The media were quick to react to the ARVN withdrawal from Laotian territory. Most of the stories were unfavorable. Newsweek, for example, reported that

> the North Vietnamese mounted what Defense Secretary Melvin Laird described as a "tremendously vicious and violent" counterattack, and soon the ARVN was rushing pell-mell for home, at least four weeks ahead of schedule. By the end of last week, according to a knowledgeable source in Saigon, all branches of the Ho Chi Minh trail were back in operation, just as though LAM SON 719 had never taken place.

The New York Times reported that:

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to CJCS and CINCPAC, 010227Z Apr 71, JCS IN 18156. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9465 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 010715Z Apr 71, JCS IN 18567. NY Times, 31 Mar 71, p. 3.

78. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9497 to CINCPAC, 050420Z Apr 71, JCS IN 27008. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9006 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 051220Z Apr 71, JCS IN 27567. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9010 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 060340Z Apr 71, JCS IN 28899. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9013 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 061048Z Apr 71, JCS IN 29504. NY Times, 7 Apr 71, p. 9. (S-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9194 to CINCPAC, 062027Z Apr 71.

> It was a test, and now most South Vietnamese veterans frankly admit that their forces failed. They had no chance, these men say. . . . What has dramatically demoralized many of the South Vietnamese troops is the large number of their own wounded who were left behind, begging for their friends to shoot them or leave them hand grenades so they could commit suicide before the North Vietnamese or the B-52 raids killed them.

Life reported

> . . . Operation Lam Son 719 ended in a rout. . . . there is no question that the North Vietnamese sustained much greater losses than the ARVN. Yet by all appearances the NVA drove the invading forces out of Laos with their tails between their legs.

All the networks broadcast footage of South Vietnamese soldiers clinging to the skids of evacuation helicopters. The withdrawal phase of the operations was generally charactrized as a South Vietnamese defeat. The stories were based on the heavy contact experienced by the South Vietnamese troops, but their implications went beyond what the individual reporters and sources could observe.[79]

(U) In response to this kind of coverage, President Thieu, at a rare press conference on 31 March, spoke out against press reports that "the redeployment of the Vietnamese troops from Laos is a defeat--disorder, disaster." He maintained that the operation was "the biggest victory ever." He told his airborne forces: "You have caused a psychological breakdown to the Communists, you have hurt their morale seriously."

79. Newsweek, 5 Apr 71, p. 25. NY Times, 28 Mar 71, 1, 14. John Saar, "An Ignominious and Disorderly Retreat," Life, 2 Apr 71, p. 24.

The decision to end LAMSON 719 in March was, he said, "a decision of the Vietnamese and we ended it because we judged the objectives of the operation to have been achieved."[80]

(U) President Nixon assessed LAMSON 719 in his 7 April 1971 speech, which announced continued troop withdrawals. It was, he said, evident that Vietnamization was succeeding. He drew three specific conclusions:

> First, the South Vietnamese demonstrated that without American advisers they could fight effectively the very best troops North Vietnam could put in the field.
>
> Second, the South Vietnamese suffered heavy casualties, but by every conservative estimate the casualties suffered by the enemy were far greater.
>
> Third, and most important, the disruption of enemy supply lines, the consumption of ammunition and arms in the battle has been even more damaging to the capability of the North Vietnamese to sustain major offensives in South Vietnam than were the operations in Cambodia 10 months ago.[81]

(~~C~~) General Abrams reported soon after the conclusion of the operation that "although it is too early to make a final judgement, LAMSON 719 may well prove to have been a pivotal point in the Indochina conflict." It demonstrated to the enemy that his remote sanctuaries were vulnerable and that he must position troops for their defense, well away from

80. NY Times, 1 Apr 71, 1, 12.
81. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, pp. 523-524.

South Vietnam's population centers. As the enemy massed his forces to oppose the ARVN, he exposed them to allied ground and air power, and he lost heavily in both men and materiel. The ARVN had itself gained experience in the command and control of large combat formations. The operations, according to General Abrams, "underlined the progress which has been made in Vietnamization. The RVNAF continued to demonstrate an ability to carry the fight to the enemy, outside the boundaries of South Vietnam. They have shown an ability to mount a complex, multi-division operation, in conditions of difficult and unfamiliar terrain, adverse weather and against the best forces that determined enemy could muster."

(C) The six weeks' exposure to heavy enemy contact and new enemy tactics, General Abrams said, taught a number of lessons for the RVNAF improvement and modernization program. Unified command over all forces engaged in an operation; proper security of plans and orders; combined training for all units; careful and complete planning for withdrawal; aggressive use of armor once committed; location of fire support bases within mutually supporting range--all these were shown to be important. Other lessons were that the B-52 could be effectively used as a close support weapon but that helicopters were of limited value in a support role and had to be supplemented with a ground LOC.

(C) General Abrams also reported significant damage inflicted on the enemy by LAMSON 719. The ARVN, he said, claimed 18,000 enemy dead compared to 1,530 of their own. The enemy he continued, had lost 4,000 individual weapons, 2,000 crew-served weapons, 500,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 20,000 tons of other

ammunition, 528 vehicles, 200,000 gallons of POL, and 1,200 tons of rice. Intelligence reports estimated that the equivalent of 16 enemy maneuver battalions had been eliminated and 75 to 80 of an estimated 110 tanks destroyed. General Abrams believed that the North Vietnamese loss of supplies through destruction, capture, and expenditure had drastically depleted already limited stocks in the area. Already there was evidence that the volume of enemy supplies reaching South Vietnam and Cambodia was less than one-fourth that for the same period of the preceding year.[82]

(U) Secretary Rogers gave a cautiously optimistic final public evaluation of LAMSON 719 to a British interviewer, concluding that

> General Abrams has told us--and I have great respect for his judgment--that some of the units in South Vietnam fought exceptionally well and their morale is good. They're very proud of the fact that they were able to invade a territory that's been controlled by the enemy for many years--5 or 6 years--and do it reasonably successfully.[83]

82. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 131115Z Apr 71, JCS IN 43904.

83. Dept of State Bulletin, 31 May 71, p. 687.

CHAPTER 2

POLICY AND STRATEGY, 1971-EARLY 1972

(U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff no longer sought expanded military operations in South Vietnam during 1971 and early 1972. The United States was withdrawing from that Southeast Asian country, and the removal of US forces, which had begun in mid-1969 and increased in 1970, accelerated during 1971 and the early months of 1972. At the start of 1971, more than 335,000 US troops remained in South Vietnam. During the course of the year, however, the United States took approximately 177,000 men out of Vietnam; by mid-year, no US forces participated in major ground combat operations; and when the enemy launched his April 1972 offensive, US strength, stood at less than 100,000 men. Although the United States was rapidly reducing its commitment in South Vietnam, there were continuing pressures for even greater reductions in force and activity levels. From within the Government came demands for faster withdrawals in order to reduce Southeast Asian expenditures, and public and Congressional critics of the war wanted expedited reduction of the US commitment in Vietnam. As a consequence, the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave considerable attention in this period to the determination of the size and schedules for the successive redeployment increments and to reconciling requirements, particularly air sortie rates, with available resources--matters that will be treated in later chapters. But, despite this pressure for larger and faster US withdrawals or, perhaps, because of it,

the President and his principal advisers conducted a series of assessments and reviews during 1971 and early 1972 of US policy and strategy in South Vietnam and the situations in Cambodia and Laos. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, of course, participated in these efforts.

A Vietnam Review, April-July 1971

(U) United States policy toward Vietnam remained unchanged in 1971, President Nixon told the Congress in his foreign policy report on 25 February 1971. The "one irreducible objective" was "the opportunity for the South Vietnamese people to determine their own political future without outside interference." To accomplish this purpose, the President said, the United States would continue to pursue a negotiated settlement. But, failing in that, the United States would proceed with the transfer of combat operations to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces and the withdrawal of US troops.[1]

(U) To accomplish this policy, COMUSMACV not only trained and prepared the South Vietnamese forces for the combat mission , but also continued to exert as much pressure as possible on the enemy within existing resources. These resources had declined dramatically by the beginning of 1971 and the South Vietnamese had taken over a large share of the ground war as US units increasingly restricted themselves to support and air operations.

1. Richard Nixon, "Second Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy," 25 Feb 71, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1971 (1972), pp. 219-345.

(U) Events in the spring of 1971 made it apparent that the drawdown of US forces and resources from South Vietnam would continue. On 7 April 1971, President Nixon announced another reduction in US strength. Citing the recently completed LAMSON 719 operation, he declared that Vietnamization had succeeded. Consequently, the United States would remove 100,000 additional troops between 1 May and 1 December 1971, reducing US strength to 184,000. "The American involvement in Vietnam is coming to an end," the President said. "The day the South Vietnamese can take over their own defense is in sight." Although the President did not publicly so state, all US ground personnel would be out of offensive combat operations by the summer and the United States would no longer have a combat reserve in South Vietnam. Heretofore, the United States had retained air and ground reserves in Vietnam capable of assisting the Vietnamese either against an attack or in an offensive of their own. By December, however, the Vietnamese would be more nearly on their own.[2]

(TS) In addition to the accelerated withdrawal of forces, budget considerations also affected US strategy and operations in South Vietnam in 1971. On 21 April 1971, the Secretary of Defense furnished the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Military Departments with the following planning guidance for the forthcoming FY 1973-1977 Defense program, including planning assumptions for South East Asia:

2. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, pp. 522-527

	End FY 1971	End FY 1972	End FY 1973
Maneuvers battalions	33	5	0
Tactical air sorties (per month)			
Air Force	10,000	5,000	0
Navy	3,600	1,800	1,800
Total	13,600	6,800	1,800
B-52 sorties (per month)	1,000	1,000	300
Military manpower	254,700	100,000	43,400[3]

(TS) The continuing US withdrawals as well as the limitation of funds would have an effect on operations in Vietnam, and shortly before the Secretary of Defense issued the budget guidance, he had asked for a review of military strategy for Vietnam. On 12 April 1971, he had noted that, since the last JCS assessment on this matter in July of the previous year, a number of major developments and trends had become evident. He listed: the sharp reduction of US forces, with a further reduction already announced by the President; the sustained improvement of the RVNAF and its recent successful operation in Laos; the continuing decline in the size and effectiveness of enemy forces and the reduced level of combat; and the economic, political, and pacification progress in South Vietnam. Accordingly, the Secretary wanted the Joint Chiefs of Staff to reassess US strategy in light of these changes. Although the review should focus on the period mid-1971 through mid-1973, he instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff not to ignore the longer term. It was important, he told them, to consider fully the constraints

3. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., 21 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2458/780, 23 Apr 71, JMF 555 (21 Apr 71) sec 1.

within which the United States must operate. The costs of any proposed strategy must be borne within available resources, and proposals for the RVNAF should not require significant added financial or manpower resources.[4]

(TS) The President at the same time wanted a complete assessment of the situation in South Vietnam covering the period from the current time through 1972. Accordingly, on 15 April 1971, Dr. Kissinger initiated a NSC review of Vietnam, tasking the Vietnam Special Studies Group and its member agencies to prepare a number of preliminary studies. Included were an estimate of possible enemy strategies, to be prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, and development of alternative RVNAF improvement packages,[5] the responsibility of the Department of Defense. Dr. Kissinger's tasking included several studies on political and economic matters in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, including a projection of economic stabilization prospects for the area, an assessment of possible regional cooperation, and an analysis of the political situation in South Vietnam.[6]

(S) The Senior Review Group considered several of the preliminary studies on 27 April, including the Central Intelligence Agency paper on the enemy options

4. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2339/342, 14 Apr 71, JMF 907/520 (12 Apr 71).

5. The RVNAF improvement aspects of the Vietnam assessment are covered in Chapter 6.

6. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not participate in the preparation of the economic and political papers nor did any action result from them. Hence consideration of them has not been included herein. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USec State, DepSec Def, DCI, and CJCS, 15 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/739, 16 Apr 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 1.

and probable strategy choices during the given period. The Agency foresaw the following options: continued protracted war; a major offensive in Military Region 1, in Military Region 2, or in Cambodia; simultaneous offensives in both Military Regions 1 and 2; simultaneous offensives in Military Region 1 and Cambodia; or a major offensive throughout South Vietnam and in Cambodia. The Central Intelligence Agency believed that all of the options, except the last, were possible during the 1971-1972 dry season (October 1971 through May 1972). Summing up, the Central Intelligence Agency foresaw "progressively higher levels of combat over the next 12-18 months," probably focused upon MR 1, which was close to enemy supply lines, and MR 2, where the balance of forces was favorable to the enemy. By the early part of the next dry season (October-December 1971), North Vietnam could support an offensive in either region. By the middle of the season, the enemy would be able also to support an offensive in Cambodia or a simultaneous offensive in MRs 1 and 2. By June 1972, MR 1 and the highlands of MR 2 were the "most likely area for offensive action."[7]

(~~TS~~) Dr. Kissinger found the CIA estimate "helpful" as far as it went, but wanted it refined. He was concerned about the possible outcomes of the various options. He hoped to be able to advise the President not only on what the enemy might do, but also what the remaining US and South Vietnam forces could do if the

7. (~~S~~) CIA Intelligence Memorandum, "Hanoi's Options and Probable Strategy Choices During the Period from April 1971 through December 1972," 26 Apr 71, Encl to Att to (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCS 2472/739-2, 30 Apr 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) J-5 Memo for Record, "NSC Senior Review Group Meeting on 27 April 1971 Concerning Vietnam Assessment (U)," 29 Apr 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/739-1, 3 May 71, same file.

enemy executed these options. Admiral Moorer volunteered to have an estimate prepared that would answer these questions.[8]

(TS) The study promised by Admiral Moorer was prepared by the Joint Staff and submitted to the Senior Review Group for a meeting on 24 May 1971. The Joint Staff reviewed the seven possible enemy options advanced by the Central Intelligence Agency and concluded that the enemy could meet the manpower requirements for all of the options. Logistics, however, would be the principal constraint on enemy capabilities. The Joint Staff believed an enemy offensive in the northern part of South Vietnam was possible as early as October 1971. Moreover, the Joint Staff expected the North Vietnamese to attempt "at least one dramatic tactical victory" in South Vietnam or Cambodia during 1972 in order to improve NVA morale and diminish US and RVN resolve.

(TS) In assessing the friendly situation and courses of action, the Joint Staff used a US force level of 184,000 on 1 December 1971 in accordance with the President's 7 April announcement. For the later period, three alternative forces were projected: 150,000 on 30 June 1972 declining to a MAAG level (roughly 50,000) by 30 June 1973; 100,000 on 30 June 1972 reducing to a MAAG level by 31 December 1972; and 50,000 on 30 June 1972 remaining at that ceiling. Within these varying force levels, the Joint Staff listed approaches available to the allies: to meet the

8. (TS-GP 1) J-5 Memo for Record, "NSC Senior Review Group Meeting on 27 April 1971 Concerning 'Vietnam Assessment' (U)," 29 Apr 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/739-1, same file.

varying enemy threats by temporarily redeploying RVNAF units from low-threat areas or from the General Reserve, by permanently redistributing RVNAF forces, or by deploying ROK forces; to conduct a preemptive offensive; or to accelerate further the improvement of the RVNAF.

(TS) After comparing enemy capabilities against friendly courses of actions, the Joint Staff concluded that the forces remaining in South Vietnam on 1 December 1971 could meet the assumed threat without a major redistribution through normal use of the RVNAF General Reserve. It appeared unlikely, therefore, that the enemy could significantly set back pacification progress or RVN security prior to that time. Thereafter, the situation in South Vietnam would vary in accordance with the alternative US force structure assumed. At the 150,000 level, the enemy threat could be met through normal use of the General Reserve; at 100,000, the enemy could be contained with "some difficulty" by permanently strengthening selective RVN forces in Military Regions 1 and 2 and using the General Reserve in those regions as required; at 50,000, the threat could be met in 1972 but with increased risk because of major reductions in US support available to the RVNAF. Regardless of the US force size, the Joint Staff considered air power crucial to allied success and advocated an aggressive air interdiction program, at least through the 1972-1973 dry season.

(TS) With respect to enemy courses of action, the Joint Staff concluded that, although an attack in Military Region 1 in 1972 was the easiest course for the enemy to support, chances for success were limited. The enemy would be engaging not only the best of the

RVNAF forces but also forces that could easily be reinforced by the RVNAF General Reserve. Prospects for the enemy were better in Military Region 2, where the RVN forces were "less capable." A simultaneous enemy offensive in both Military Regions 1 and 2, though unlikely, could cause "political reprecussions" in both Saigon and Washington. An offnsive in Cambodia, for which the enemy had only marginal capabilities, could increase the direct threat to the lower portion of South Vietnam. The Joint Staff concluded with a caveat that the conclusions were not valid for 1973 and might in any case be invalidated by political developments, which had not been considered.[9]

(~~TS~~) The Senior Review Group considered the Joint Staff assessment on 24 May 1971. The members decided that further studies were needed, which should focus on the two lower alernative US manpower figures assumed by the Joint Staff (100,000 and 50,000); by implication at least, the 150,000-man strength was rejected. The VSSG working group was instructed to prepare a new paper to analyze probable enemy strategies; the adequacy of friendly forces to meet each strategy (in terms of deficits or surpluses of battalions); the ability of the currently planned RVNAF to meet the probable threats through temporary redeployments with mid-1972 US force levels of 100,000 or 50,000; and ways of improving the RVNAF to cope with the situation in 1972. The Department of Defense was to study alternative force structures for the 100,000 and 50,000 manpower levels. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were to submit by

9. (~~TS~~) JCS RVN Assessment, May 1971, Encl to Att to (TS-GP 3) JCS 2472/739-6, 27 May 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 2. The record indicates that the assessment was prepared by the Joint Staff and submitted directly to the Chairman, without being formally

10 June 1971 a study of ARVN cross-border actions that might be taken in 1972 to disrupt enemy supply activities in southern Laos and Cambodia.[10]

(TS) The study of alternative US force structures was undertaken by the Joint Staff at the request of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). On 2 June 1971, the Director of the Joint Staff gave the Assistant Secretary illustrative models for US structures at levels of 50,000 and 100,000 in mid-1972. The models assumed alternate mission priorities of "support" or "retrograde." The former placed emphasis on the provision of combat and service support for the RVNAF while the latter stressed increased combat service support for accelerated retrograde of US materiel at the sacrifice of combat support, adviser, and intelligence functions. The Director cautioned the Assistant Secretary that the models were illustrative only and relayed the COMUSMACV position that while a mid-1972 force level of 100,000 could be met with acceptable risks, a 50,000 level could not. The Director's paper was sent to the SRG members on 8 June 1971.[11]

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considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There is no indication how the assessment was transmitted to the Senior Review Group.

10. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, DepSecDef, DCI, and CJCS, 26 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-4, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 1.

11. (TS-GP 1) Memo, Actg ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 27 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-7, 27 May 71; (TS-GP 3) DJSM 1023-71 to ASD(ISA), 2 Jun 71, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/739-7, 21 Jun 71; JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 2. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Dr. Kissinger et al., 8 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-11, 10 Jun 71, same file, sec 3.

(TS) On 8 June 1971, the NSC staff circulated a VSSG working group summary paper on the Vietnam assessment, as requested by the Senior Review Group on 24 May 1971. The group first reviewed the probable threat to South Vietnam in 1972. Although enemy intentions were not known, it was probable that the tempo of enemy action would exceed that of the previous three years. The paper set forth as the "most probable" enemy option in 1972 the conduct of a major multi-battalion offensive of 5 to 10 days' duration in Military Region 1 while continuing protracted war throughout the remainder of South Vietnam and in Cambodia; the worst case was a multi-battalion attack simultaneously in Military Regions 1 and 2 or in Military Region 1 and in Cambodia, though the working group believed such possibilities were only marginally feasible.

(TS) The working group next analyzed the relation between these threats and the balance of forces and projected a shortfall in friendly main force strength in Military Region 1. The RVNAF would need a permanent force augmentation there even for protracted war. On the other hand, if friendly forces in Cambodia operated effectively enough to hold the enemy to protracted war in Military Regions 3 and 4, the RVNAF should have a surplus amounting to as much as one division in Military Region 3 and up to 1 1/2 divisions in Military Region 4, in addition to the current 18 battalion general reserve. On balance, it seemed likely that the RVNAF might be able to cope with the most probable enemy threat, but should the worst threat develop, loss of substantial areas in Military Region 1 and Military Region 2 was likely.

(TS) The summary paper concluded with a discussion of possible improvements in the RVNAF to counter the shortfalls in Military Regions 1 and 2. It considered qualitative improvement of existing forces, redistribution of existing units, and possible increases in the RVNAF to 1,200,000 men, but no conclusions or preferences on the alternatives were included.[12]

(TS) The Senior Review Group resumed its discussion of the threat in Vietnam on 9 June 1971. Dr. Kissinger expressed the belief that the recent discussions had provided "a much better understanding" of present and projected situations. The Senior Review Group agreed that the threat facing the RVNAF at probable US force levels in 1972 (that is, 100,000 or 50,000 men) was serious and that urgent measures must be taken to strengthen further the South Vietnamese forces. Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard agreed to provide a final set of alternatives for RVNAF improvement for Presidential consideration.[13]

(TS) On 10 June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to Secretary Laird's request for a study of possible RVNAF cross-border operations against enemy supply activities in southern Laos and Cambodia. They assumed that the war would continue more or less as before

12. (TS) Memo, Director, Program Analysis, NSC Staff to members of VSSG, 8 Jun 71, Encl to Att to (TS-GP 1) JCS 2472/739-12, 14 Jun 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 3.

13. (TS-GP 1) Memo for Record by BG Adrian St. John, Chief, Strategic Plans and Policy Div., J-5, "NSC Senior Review Group Meeting on 9 June 1971 Concerning 'Vietnam Assessment' (U)," 11 Jun 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/739-15, 14 Jun 71; (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to DepSecDef, USecState, CJCS, and DCI, 15 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-17, 16 Jun 71; JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 4.

through 1972, that the RVNAF would continue to improve, and that monthly air sortie rates would be maintained at the following levels: tactical air, 10,000 in FY 1972, 8,000 in FY 1973; B-52, 1,000 through both FYs; gunship, 700 for 1972, with the 1973 rate still to be determined. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that additional funds would be required to support these sortie levels.

(~~TS~~) In presenting their alternatives for cross-border operations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff observed that the ideal method of shutting off enemy supplies would be to interdict them "at or near the source," meaning North Vietnam; however, they recognized that such an operation was out of the question. The three alternatives that they submitted for actual consideration were as follows:

1. A major offensive into southeastern Cambodia, followed or accompanied by one into northern Cambodia, plus multi-battalion raids into southern Laos and unconventional warfare in Laos and northern Cambodia at present or higher levels.

2. Same as the preceding, except for omission of the offensive into northern Cambodia.

3. Continued operations at reduced levels in the border areas of southern Cambodia, with small-scale raids against specific targets in border areas of southern Laos and northereastern Cambodia and continued unconventional warfare in Laos and northern Cambodia.

(~~TS~~) Of the three, the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred the first, but observed that it would probably become infeasible in early 1972 because of limited resources. The second was less desirable, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered it the most effective

choice possible in 1972. They dismissed the final alternative as not prudent since it would foster a long-term decline in RVN security.[14]

(U) The Secretary of Defense forwarded the JCS study to the Senior Review Group, stating that it was intended to supplement the earlier Joint Staff assessment. No action, however, was taken by the Senior Review Group on this study.[15]

(~~TS~~) Also on 10 June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense their review of military strategy in Southeast Asia as requested on 12 April. They took note of the favorable developments that the Secretary had cited: the progress of allied forces, the improvement of the RVNAF, the decline of enemy strength, and the general improvement in the situation in Vietnam. Nonetheless, they pointed out, the enemy retained the capability to continue offensive and defensive operations, and there was no evidence that the North Vietnamese had relinquished their goals of unification of Vietnam and domination of all of Indochina. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assumed that the Peoples Republic of China and the Soviet Union would continue to supply materiel and training assistance and advice to North Vietnam. In an assessment of possible enemy operations in the FY 1972-1973 period, the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave much the forecast as

14. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-270-71 to SecDef, 10 Jun 71 (derived from JCS 2472/739-8), JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 2.

15. Memo, SecDef to USecState, CJCS, DCI, and Dr. Kissinger, 22 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-20, 23 Jun 71, same file, sec 4.

the one contained in the earlier Joint Staff assessment--continued protracted war with periodic "high points" in South Vietnam and Cambodia and, possibly, a major offensive in late 1972 or early 1973.

(TS) As to allied capabilities for the same period, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that US redeployment was proceeding at a faster rate than had been assumed during the planning for RVNAF development. As currently projected, US withdrawals during the next several months would reduce US forces to a point where the ground troops could only defend the remaining US forces and installations. They added, however, that the RVNAF combat elements, together with US combat and air support remaining through December, could still meet the threat in South Vietnam, support operations in Cambodia, and interdict enemy lines of communications. Under the planned redeployments from 1 December 1971 to the fall of 1972, US capability would be reduced "dramatically." At a force level of 100,000, the US combat support for the RVNAF would be restricted, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated. Below a 60,000-man level, US support would be "minimal." The Joint Chiefs of Staff also warned that the air activity levels prescribed in the Secretary's budget planning guidelines of 21 April were inadequate.

(TS) In considering military strategy for Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff maintained that continued effective air interdiction would be essential. In addition, they said, any adequate allied military strategy must include ground interdiction operations "at the maximum level of intensity" reasonable with the resources available. They then provided three military strategies, designated I, II, and III, which differed

primarily in the level of interdiction envisioned. All three provided for continued in-country operations by national forces, supplemented in each case by one of the three proposals for RVNAF cross-border operations as already set forth by the Joint Chief of Staff.[16] Of the three combinations the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred Strategy I, which called for the highest level of military activity, through the third quarter of FY 1972, and thereafter Strategy II, with a somewhat lower level. They also recommended provision of US air support levels of 10,000 monthly tactical air sorties in FY 1972 and 8,000 in FY 1973 and 1,000 monthly B-52 sorties throughout both fiscal years. Additional costs for these air activity levels, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, should be offset with supplemental funding.[17]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense evidently disapproved the JCS recommendations, which received no further consideration.[18] Meantime, on 18 June 1971, the Deputy Secretary of Defense provided the other members of the Senior Review Group the final set of alternatives for RVNAF improvement as he had agreed to do on 9 June. The Deputy Secretary summarized the Group's general agreement that the enemy could support protracted war with associated high points throughout 1972. The greatest threat was toward the northern part of the Republic of Vietnam (Military Region 1), although offensives in Military Region 2 or in Cambodia were

16. See pp. 79-80.

17. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-269-71 to SecDef, 10 Jun 71, Encl A to JCS 2339/342-1, 5 Jun 71, JMF 907/520 (12 Apr 71).

18. OSD files indicated that JCSM-269-71 was referred to the ASD(ISA) who, subsequently, determined that no further action was required.

also possible. This threat, coupled with continuing US redeployments, would result in "a potentially significant shortfall" of South Vietnamese units in the two northern military regions of South Vietnam. This situation could lead to a short term enemy success in that area, such as the capture of a major population center or the defeat of a major ARVN unit, and, in turn, to a temporary reversal of progress in Vietnamization and pacification. To prevent such an occurrence, the Deputy Secretary presented three alternative methods of strengthening the RVNAF:

> 1. Continued efforts to improve the RVNAF, plus temporary redeployment of forces from the General Reserve (normally based in Military Region 3) to meet the projected threat in Military Regions 1 and 2.
>
> 2. Same as the preceding, plus a permanent increase in the forces allotted to Military Regions 1 and 2 within the current ceiling of 1.1 million men, by moving forces from other Military Regions or by inactivating units elewhere to make men available for new units in those Regions.
>
> 3. Expansion of the RVNAF to 1.2 million men, permitting the creation of two new divisions from the 100,000-man increase.

The Deputy Secretary also presented two US redeployment options for 1972: withdrawal at an approximate rate of 12,500 men per month to reach a level of 100,000 by the end of FY 1972 and a 50,000 to 100,000 level at the end of the first quarter of FY 1973; or withdrawal at a monthly rate of 17,700 achieving a 50,000 to 70,000

strength by the close of FY 1972. The latter was preferred by the Secretary of Defense.[19]

(~~TS~~) On 23 June 1971, Admiral Moorer suggested to the Secretary of Defense another possible means of reducing the enemy threat to Military Regions 1 and 2. He relayed a suggestion by COMUSMACV to create a buffer zone around Military Region 1 in order to deny the enemy free access to its northern portion. The zone would extend from the DMZ to 18° north and into the Laotian panhandle, and tactical air would be employed within this zone to eliminate surface-to-air missile sites, antiaircraft artillery installations, airfields, and transshipment points. Although Admiral Moorer judged the concept "militarily feasible" and believed that it could increase the security of the northern portion of the Republic of Vietnam, he forwarded it to the Secretary only for information. He doubted that it could be implemented because of the current "domestic and political situation." The Secretary concurred in this opinion a few days later, and the suggestion received no further consideration.[20]

(~~S~~) After consideration of the Senior Review Group's assessment of the military situation in Vietnam, the President decided on 3 July that the United States would provide additional support to strengthen the RVNAF. He selected the second alternative set forth in the Deputy Secretary of Defense's 18 June paper; the United States would provide quality improvement in

19. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Dr. Kissinger, CJCS, USecState, and DCI, 18 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-19, 21 Jun 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 4.

20. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-995-71 to SecDef, 23 Jun 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Actions Which Would Reduce the Risks to MRs 1 and 2, RVN (~~TS~~)," 29 Jun 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 71.

RVNAF plus reallocation of forces within the regions of South Vietnam. The President directed immediate implementation of this decision, but he did not act at this time on the question of the rate of US redeployment, which the Deputy Secretary had raised.[21]

(U) Finally, after nearly three months of effort, the NSC Vietnam assessment was complete, but it brought no changes in US strategy. In fact, the United States had reached the point where it no longer had a choice of military strategies in Vietnam. United States troops no longer participated in offensive ground operations, and US influence on strategy was restricted to the conduct of air operations, the provision of combat support for the RVNAF, and leverage on the South Vietnamese through the amount of assistance furnished for improvement and modernization of their forces.

A Review of the Cambodian Situation

(~~TS~~) Assessment of policy and strategy for the war in 1971 could no longer be restricted to South Vietnam alone. The previous year had seen the conflict move into neighboring Cambodia when US and SVN forces had invaded that country to flush out enemy forces and bases. Although all US forces were withdrawn by 30 June 1970, RVNAF operations in Cambodia with US air support, proceeded throughout the remainder of 1970 and during 1971. Moreover, the United States continued the air interdiction operations in Laos that had begun in 1964, and the RVNAF with US support launched the massive LAMSON 719 attack into Laos in February 1971 (described in the preceding chapter). Now the war had

21. (~~S~~-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 118, 3 Jul 71, JMF 001 (CY 1971) NSDMs. For implementation of the President's decision for improvement of the RVNAF, see Chapter 6.

spread to both Cambodia and Laos--a factor that US officials had to consider in any review of the situation in the spring of 1971.

(TS) In April 1971, just a few days prior to his call for the Vietnam assessment, the President also directed an "on the ground" investigation of the military situation in Cambodia. Dr. Kissinger informed the Secretaries of State and Defense on 8 April 1971 that the President wanted a "small elite team" of not more than three persons to study the capabilities of the Forces Armees Nationales Khmeres (FANK) and their proper role in the Vietnam war.[22]

(TS) The assessment team, consisting of three Department of Defense representatives,[23] visited Cambodia and submitted its findings to the Secretary of Defense on 14 May 1971. The team reported that, during the past year, the enemy had been deprived of his Cambodian sanctuary and forced to withdraw over half of his forces from MR 3 in South Vietnam to protect supply lines in Cambodia. Already the ARVN had seized the initiative by deploying troops into Cambodia, forcing the enemy onto the defensive. The FANK, however, had not been able to gain the offensive, and much smaller NVA forces held the initiative over a much larger FANK. Of more concern to the assessment team was evidence that the NVA was undertaking to build up the small communist group in Cambodia (the Khmer Rouge)

22. (TS) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Secs State and Def, "Assessment of Military Situation in Cambodia," 8 Apr 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 1.

23. The representatives comprised an officer from the Plans and Policy Directorate, J-5, of the Joint Staff; a military officer from the office of the ASD-(ISA); and a civilian from the office of the ASD(ISA). (TS) JCS 1730 to CINCPAC, 182245Z Apr 71.

and other dissident elements into a strong Khmer Communist Party. This effort posed the danger of a civil war in Cambodia that would tie down the FANK and threaten the existence of the noncommunist government. Such a danger was more to be feared than possible NVA high point attacks in Cambodia.

(~~TS~~) The team noted the light tempo of combat in Cambodia. Eighty-five percent of the FANK had defensive missions and operations were short ranged. The team considered only 35 percent of the Cambodian forces trained and ready for combat. Artillery and air support was inadequate and satisfactory communications and transportation systems did not exist. The team predicted that the period through November 1972 would be used by both sides for preparation.

(~~TS~~) The team believed that the government of Premier Lon Nol had failed to mobilize its resources to carry out its strategy, which called for securing its hold on the main centers of population and extending control as its military and economic strength increased. If the Cambodian Government did not meet its goals within approximately a year, the team warned, the probability of success would decrease "with each passing day." Cambodia's three major needs were for a training capability, an adequate logistics base, and an overall strategic plan. Proper US support was also essential. So far, the team complained, the objective of US policy in the country appeared to be to maintain a "low profile," rather than preserving the Cambodian Government. It would also be necessary for the United States to develop adequate measures of progress against

military objectives, such as had been done in South Vietnam.

(TS) The assessment team also examined the US Military Assistance Program (MAP) for Cambodia. The United States had initiated this effort the previous year and the current objective was the creation of a FANK of 220,000 men by the end of FY 1972. But the team found some conflict over this goal. The US Military Equipment Delivery Team (MEDT), the agency responsible for administering the program in Cambodia, favored the 220,000-man force; the US Embassy, on the other hand, opposed it as requiring too large and conspicuous a US advisory effort.[24]

(TS) On 7 June 1971, the Senior Review Group, after hearing a presentation of the findings of the team, discussed the Cambodian situation at some length. The Department of State representative spoke of a need to determine US objectives in Cambodia and warned of political constraints against a large US presence there. Army Chief of Staff, General William C. Westmoreland, representing the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, described Cambodia as having military potential but stressed the need for a larger US aid effort, including an increase in the small US advisory force there. Dr. Kissinger commented that Cambodia had not made effective use of the assistance already furnished. After some further discussion, the Group reached the following decisions:

24. (TS) Report of Assessment Team, "A Department of Defense Assessment of the Military Situation in Cambodia, 18 April 1971-15 May 1971," n.d., Att to memo of transmittal to SecDef, 14 May 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 1.

1. The Joint Chiefs of Staff would prepare a military assistance plan aimed at improving the logistics and training capabilities of the FANK and supplying additional equipment. The plan would include an examination of strategy alternatives and would give particular attention to the extension of control by the Cambodian Government over the countryside.

2. The United States would emphasize to the Cambodian Government the vital need to strengthen Cambodian military capabilities and to improve operational effectiveness.

3. The question of the number of US advisory personnel in Cambodia would be resolved in light of the military assistance plan. Neither a high nor a low "profile" was desired as such; the size of the advisory group would be based upon the need, tempered by the possibility of stationing some advisors outside Cambodia or, at most, assigning them to Cambodia temporarily.

Three days later, the Secretary of Defense formally tasked the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the preparation of the plan requested by the Senior Review Group, specifying that the proposed aid program should use the planning figure of 220,000 already approved.[25]

25. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, DepSecDef, and CJCS, 11 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2366/54, 14 Jun 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 1. (~~TS~~-GP 3) ASD(ISA) Memo for Record, "SRG Mtg on Cambodian Assessment," n.d., Att to JCS 2366/54-1, 15 Jun 71, same file, sec 2. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 10 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2366/52-1, 11 Jun 71, JMF 880 (CY 1971).

(TS) In preparing their response, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had available a CINCPAC report of a conference held at COMUSMACV's headquarters during the period 14-18 May 1971 on the situation in Cambodia. The conference had reached much the same conclusions as the Department of Defense assessment team. The enemy was currently following a protracted war strategy in Cambodia, attempting to restore lines of communications and to interdict major highways to isolate population centers. Should the enemy be able to rebuild depleted stockpiles in Cambodia, he would probably conduct "limited offensive operations" to secure his "logistical lifeline" throughout the eastern part of the country. The conferees agreed that the FANK needed both technical and military assistance, which, however, should aim at providing unsophisticated and basic equipment such as the Cambodians could use and maintain.[26]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense on 30 June 1971 recommended programs and actions designed to improve the "productivity of US efforts to assist Cambodia and increase effectiveness of the Cambodian Armed Forces." They cautioned that the task was an "extremely ambitious undertaking."

(TS) With respect to the strategy for Cambodia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff used the one developed the previous fall and approved by the President on 26 October 1970 in National Security Decision Memorandum 89.[27]

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26. (TS-GP 1) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 23 May 71, Att to JCS 2366/51, 26 May 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 1.

27. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 311-312.

Hence the preservation of the Government of Cambodia was judged militarily beneficial to Vietnamization as long as the costs were limited and US forces were not committed to Cambodian defense. Consequently, US efforts would focus primarily on Vietnamization in South Vietnam, while providing economic and military assistance to Cambodia and encouraging RVN and Thai forces to assit the Government of Cambodia in defending its territory.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff recalled that support of Cambodia with Military Assistance Program (MAP) funds began in May 1970. Current planning provided for a MAP-supported FANK of 220,000 men at the end of FY 1972, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted a recommended force structure to meet that goal, together with a paramilitary force structure of 143,000 men. The Department of Defense had asked the Congress for $200 million in FY 1972 MAP funds for that purpose, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff now doubted that such an amount would be sufficient. They expected final MAP costs for Cambodia for FY 1972 to be between $325 and $350 million. They suggested that pressure on the MAP budget might be alleviated by using AID funds where appropriate. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also submitted plans for training the FANK, for logistic support of the Government of Cambodia, for counterinsurgency programs in Cambodia, and for improvement of FANK operational capabilities.

(TS) More US personnel would be needed to administer an expanded Cambodian MAP, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended 179 additional personnel (83 US military, 2 US civilians, and the remainder third country nationals) for the Military Equipment Delivery

Team. Moreover, they proposed 450 additional personnel (all US military except for 40 contract personnel) in South Vietnam to support the US assistance effort in Cambodia. These increases would raise the number of personnel involved in Cambodian MAP to a total of 202 in Cambodia and 790 in South Vietnam.[28]

(S) On 15 July 1971, the Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff of his agreement with their interpretation of US strategy as approved in NSDM 89. At the same time, he believed that several aspects of their submission needed refinement. With regard to the JCS plans for the FANK, Mr. Packard wanted improvement of Cambodian training cadre stressed rather than use of third country facilities and personnel. "The development of early Cambodian self-sufficiency in training," he said, "should be a defined goal of the program." At the same time, he warned the Joint Chiefs of Staff that it was unlikely that additional MAP funds for Cambodia, over and above the $200 million budget request, would be approved. He also viewed the JCS proposals for additional personnel to administer the MAP for Cambodia as "a major change in the character of the assistance program and US involvement. He feared that such increases would receive unfavorable Congressional and public reaction. He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to revise their proposals to reflect his comments.[29]

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28. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-311-71 to SecDef, 30 Jun 71, Encl to JCS 2366/54-3, 30 Jun 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 2.

29. (S-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 15 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-4, 16 Jul 71, same file, sec 2A.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed their Cambodian proposals and presented the results to the Secretary of Defense on 30 August 1971. They reduced the projected funding requirements for a FANK structure of 220,000 to $275 million and recommended that the FY 1972 Cambodian MAP be funded at that level. Since this figure was $75 million above the current Department of Defense budget request, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested several possible reductions in case additional funds could not be provided. These included postponement of various costs to FY 1973 or FY 1974, seeking a transfer of AID funds to the Cambodian MAP, or reducing the FANK manpower goal to 177,000. The number of personnel required to administer the Cambodian MAP was reduced to 402 in South Vietnam while the number in Cambodia was maintained at 202. The number of US personnel, however, could be reduced to 468 (106 in Cambodia and 362 in South Vietnam) by using FANK mobile training teams and third-country nationals. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also revised the plans to improve the FANK in conformance with the Deputy Secretary's guidance concerning self-sufficiency and use of Cambodian facilities and potential. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested a decision on Cambodian assistance by 1 October in order to draw up a "realistic program definition and funding estimates" for the FY 1973 Cambodian MAP before 1 December 1971.[30]

(Ø) No decision on the Cambodian program had been made by 1 October, but on 16 October, Secretary Laird informed the Secretary of State that he had reviewed

30. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-392-71 to SecDef, 30 Aug 71, Encl to JCS 2366/54-6, 23 Aug 71, same file, sec 3.

the JCS recommendations on Cambodia and reached several tentative decisions. Training facilities, within Cambodia and outside, would be established to provide training for a FANK of 220,000 men to be attained by December 1972. For this purpose, eight more persons would be required for the MEDT in Cambodia. A logistics assistance program for Cambodia would be authorized, using third-country contract personnel. Deputy COMUSMACV General Fred C. Weyand, USA, as the US military representative to the Tripartite Committee, would be responsible for improving the effectiveness of military operations in Cambodia.

(C) The estimated cost of this program for Cambodia was approximately $252 million, or $52 million more than the amount in the budget. The Secretary of Defense planned to authorize actions within his department to reduce the shortfall to $40 million, and he asked the Secretary of State for a "firm commitment" to provide this $40 million from funds under Department of State control. Otherwise in order to keep within the $200 million ceiling, it would be necessary to reduce the manpower goal for the FANK to "about 180,000 men," delaying the projected timetable for extension of FANK control of the countryside.[31]

(TS) Secretary Laird's letter served as the basis for discussion of the Cambodian assistance program at a meeting of the Senior Review Group on 18 October 1971. Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard reiterated that $250 million was required for a 220,000-man force in FY 1972, although "it may be possible to adjust somewhat." The Senior Review Group agreed that $310 million FY 1972 economic and military assistance (without breaking

31. (S-GP 4) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 16 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-8, 19 Oct 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 4.

down that figure) in the President's budget request was essential to achieve US objectives in Cambodia. Further, the Group set a planning goal of a trained Cambodian force of 220,000 by January 1973. Since it was uncertain how much military assistance the Congress would approve for Cambodia for FY 1972, the Senior Review Group asked the Department of Defense to analyze three alternative military assistance programs for FY 1972 at levels of $200, $225, and $250 million, indicating the differences in program composition and in offensive FANK capability at the end of FY 1972.[32]

(C) The Secretary of Defense submitted the analysis of the three alternative MAPS to Dr. Kissinger on 20 October. A funding level of $250 million, which the Secretary recommended, would support a force structure of 220,000, allowing the Government of the Khmer Republic to consolidate control throughout the southern part of the country. At the $225 million level, attainment of the 220,000 goal would have to be postponed until 1973, with resulting increase in costs in that year. A $200 million program would require a reduction of the force objective to 185,000,

32. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SpecAsst to Pres for NSA (signed by BG Haig) to USecState, DepSecDef, DCI, and Admin. AID, 20 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-10, 22 Oct 71; (TS-GP 4) Memo for Record by Dir East Asia and Pacific Region, ASD(ISA), "Senior Review Group Meeting--Cambodian MAP and Supporting Assistance," 20 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-11, 20 Oct 71; (TS-GP 3) Memo for Record by Chief Far East-Southeast Asia Div, J-5, "NSC SRG Meeting on Cambodia," 19 Oct 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/54-12, 22 Oct 71; JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 4.

jeopardizing the ability of the Cambodian forces to extend control over the countryside.[33]

(~~TS~~) In the end, no further funds for the FY 1972 Cambodian MAP were approved. On 1 December 1971, the Secretary of State informed Secretary Laird that, even though Congress had not yet completed action on appropriations for FY 1972, it appeared that no additional funds would be available for the Cambodian MAP. Hence, Secretary Rogers continued, "we should plan on a MAX figure ov $200 million." Nor did the Nixon Administration ask the Congress for further MAP funds for Cambodia, apparently anticipating that such an action would elicit adverse reaction. In fact, even the $200 million figure was not accepted by the Congress, which approved only $180 million in MAP funds for Cambodia in FY 1972.[34]

The Management of Military Assistance in Cambodia

(U) Not only the amount of military asistance for Cambodia, but the procedures and organization for the administration of this assistance as well caused

33. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, 20 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-13, 1 Nov 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 4.

34. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 1 Dec 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-14, 6 Dec 71, same file. (~~S~~) ASD (ISA), Internatmonal Security Assistance Progra}, Military Assistance Program, ngressional Presuntation FY 1972, 9 Mar 71; (~~S~~) ASD(ISA) Security Assistance Program, Milivary Assistqnce Program and Foreign Military Sales, Congressional Presentation FY 1972, 18 Mar 72; OASD(ISA) Files. (U) Interview, Willard J. Webb with F.X. Nelson, Defense Security Assistance Agency, OASD(ISA), 16 Jul 75.

problems within the US Government. This matter was hinted at during the SRG consideration of Cambodia in the JCS recommendations for greatly increased numbers of personnel to support the military assistance effort in Cambodia and in the Deputy Secretary of Defense's direction to limit the number to the minimum necessary. But the question of control and supervision of the military assistance program for Cambodia was more involved and of longer standing.

(~~C~~) To administer the US military assistance in Cambodia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended and the Secretary of Defense had approved in December 1970 the creation of the Military Equipment Delivery Team (MEDT). In their recommendation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had urged a team of approximately 110 personnel, but the Secretary approved only 60, stipulating that no more than ten might be assigned in Cambodia initially. The Secretary recognized that actual experience might demonstrate a necessity for a larger team, implying that he was willing to consider requests for expansion of the team after it was functioning.[35]

(~~TS~~) A joint State-Defense message of 8 January 1971 informed the US Ambassadors in Cambodia and South Vietnam and CINCPAC of the activation of the Military Equipment Delivery Team with an initial strength of 60 people. Of these not more than 16 would be assigned to Cambodia, including six already there; the remainder, including the Chief, would be located in South Vietnam, with temporary duty authorized in Cambodia as needed and as agreed to by the Chief of the US Diplomatic Mission in Phnom Penh. Interagency discussions were under way regarding supervision of the MEDT. Since the

35. (~~TS~~-GP 1) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 315-316.

previous fall, the Political-Military Counselor of the Embassy in Phnom Penh had served as the Special Representative of CINCPAC for Military Assistance and that arrangement would continue. The MEDT members permanently stationed in Cambodia would be assigned to the US Embassy for duty on the staff of the Political-Military Counselor. The military command channel would run from the Secretary of Defense through CINCPAC to the Chief of the MEDT.[36]

(TS) Subsequently, on 27 January 1971, CINCPAC submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff terms of reference for the Military Equipment Delivery Team developed by representatives from his headquartrers, from COMUS-MACV, and from the US Embassy in Phnom Penh. An accompanying joint table of distribution provided for an initial strength of 60 for the team with an eventual authorization of 113.

(TS) The proposed terms of reference set forth the mission of the Military Equipment Delivery Team as the administration and direction of the military assistance program for Cambodia. The team would be headed by a chief who would serve "under the military command of CINCPAC" and would be immediately subordinate to him. At the same time, the MEDT chief would function "under the supervision of" and "have direct access to" the Chief of the US Diplomatic Mission in Cambodia and would keep him fully informed regarding plans and activities of the MEDT. Irreconcilable differences with the Chief of the Diplomatic Mission would be referred by the Chief of the MEDT through appropriate channels "to higher authnority" for settlement.

36. (TS) Msg, Joint State-Def Msg (State 3780) to Phnom Penh, Saigon, and CINCPAC, 8 Jan 71, JCS IN 32557.

(TS) The proposed MEDT terms of reference named COMUSMACV as the coordinating authority to insure that US military assistance to Cambodia was compatible with the Vietnamization program. The MEDT chief was to coordinate closely with the commander in South Vietnam. The Counselor for Political-Military Affairs, US Embassy Phnom Penh, under the overall supervision of the Chief of the US Diplomatic Mission, would continue to serve as the CINCPAC Special Representative for Military Assistance; in that capacity he was authorized direct communication with CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, and the Chief of the Military Equipment Delivery Team.[37]

(TS) While these terms of reference were in the last stages of preparation, CINCPAC and Mr. Emory C. Swank, the US Ambassador in Phnom Penh, exchanged a series of messages on the relationship and responsibilities of the Military Equipment Delivery Team within the US Diplomatic Mission. The Ambassador suggested the MEDT terms of reference be revised to specify that the Chief of the US Diplomatic Mission was responsible for and controlled the military assistance program for Cambodia and that all aspects of the program would be coordinated with the Chief of the Diplomatic Mission or his designated representative before implementation. Admiral McCain, however, did not consider it appropriate to outline the responsibilities of the Chief of the Diplomatic Mission in the MEDT terms of reference. Ambassador Swank concurred in that position provided

37. (TS-GP 1) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 27 Jan 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-2, 1 Feb 71, JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 1.

their message exchange "is considered to constitue part of the agreement," and CINCPAC agreed.[38]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred in both the joint table of distribution and the terms of reference and forwared them to the Secretary of Defense for approval on 23 February. They told him that the joint table of distribution reflected their earlier view that approximately 110 personnel would ultimately be needed to supervise the military assistance program for Cambodia. As the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, was reduced in strength, many functions currently performed by that command in support of Cambodian military assistance would have to be assumed by the Military Equipment Delivery Team, which therefore would need additional personnel.

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff brought to the Secretary's attention the message exchange between CINCPAC and Ambassador Swank concerning the functions of the MEDT and its relationship with the US Diplomatic Mission in Cambodia. Since these messages could be considered as abridging the responsibilities of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not consider them to be a part of the terms of reference.[39]

(S) On 16 March 1971, the Secretary of Defense approved the MEDT terms of reference (with minor editorial changes) and the table of distribution. He

38. (S) Msg, Phnom Penh 286 to CINCPAC, 23 Jan 71, JCS IN 57899. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to Phnom Penh, 242142Z Jan 71, JCS IN 60137. (TS-GP 1) Msg, Phnom Penh 337 to CINCPAC, 26 Jan 71, JCS IN 62906. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to Phnom Penh, 270351Z Jan 71, JCS IN 64495.

39. (S-GP 4) JCSM-81-71 to SecDef, 23 Feb 71, Encl A to JCS 2366/44-3, 16 Feb 71, JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 1.

authorized CINCPAC in coordination with the US Ambassador in Cambodia to enlarge the team up to the strength provided for in the joint table as necessary for support of the Cambodian military assistance program. Adjustments to the existing limit of 16 MEDT members in Phnom Penh would be "subject to approval of the Secretary of Defense in coordination with the Secretary of State without reopening the issue of the terms of reference." On the same day, Secretary Laird sent the Secretary of State the terms of reference and the table of distribution. He added that the Department of Defense considered the message exchange between CINCPAC and Ambassador Swank "an acceptable field interpretation of the language of the TOR though not actually constituting a formal part of the TOR." He also informed Secretary Rogers that the terms of reference would become effective four days later.[40]

(S) A week later, the Secretary of State wrote to Secretary Laird: "It is difficult to understand why, on a matter of this importance, we should be presented with a document which is proposed to become effective four days after receipt by us." He was willing to concur in the terms of reference with the understanding that the message exchange between CINCPAC and Ambassador Swank was "an authoritative confirmation" of the language used in the terms of reference. If the message exchange was not so accepted, then he would have to insist on certain changes in the document to reflect accurately the status of the Chief of Mission as

40. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 16 Mar 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-4, 17 Mar 71, same file, sec 2. The SecDef ltr to SecState was not found, but it is discussed in the above SecDef memo to CJCS and in (TS-GP 3) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 23 Mar 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-5, 24 Mar 71, same file.

defined by Presidential directives. The two most significant changes would make the Chief of the Military Equipment Delivery Team "a part of" the US Diplomatic Mission and would require the entry into Cambodia of all MEDT personnel of the rear echelon to be subject to authorization by the Ambassador, rather than in "coordination with" the Ambassador as set forth in the terms of reference.

(S) The Secretary of State concurred "generally" with the joint table of distribution, noting that certain passages in the statement of functions appeard to be open to misunderstanding. Specifically, he referred to a sentence that gave the Chief, MEDT, responsibility for "operating" the forward element of the Team, whereas the joint State-Defense instruction of 8 January stated that this forward element would be assigned to the Embassy Phnom Penh for duty on the staff of the Counselor for Political-Military-Affairs/Special Representative of CINCPAC for Military Assistance.[41]

(S) Secretary Laird replied on 9 April that Ambassador Swank had received the MEDT terms of reference and table of distribution in draft on 15 January; no subsequent changes had been made in these drafts except a few suggested by the Ambassador. As for messages between CINCPAC and the Ambassador, Mr. Laird considered them "useful field interpretation of the standard language used in such Terms of Reference" and accepted them as such, but nothing more. Mr. Laird believed that the MEDT Chief's functions and relationship to

41. (S-GP 3) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 23 Mar 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-5, 24 Mar 71, JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 1.

both the Ambassador and CINCPAC were spelled out clearly in the document as written.[42]

(S) The Secretary of State still would not accept the Defense position. On 25 April he insisted to the Secretary of Defense that the exchange of messages between the Ambassador and CINCPAC must constitute an integral part of the MEDT terms of reference. He based his position on a Presidential letter of 9 December 1969 which specified that the chief of a diplomatic mission should direct and coordinate the activities of all elements of the mission. Secretary Laird, in reply, felt that the Secretary of State was making too much of the matter. After all, they had both agreed on the "fundamental aspects" of the MEDT, including its relationships to the Ambassador and to CINCPAC. The existing arrangements for the MEDT, which appeared to be working satisfactorily, were, in Secretary Laird's view, in accord with the Presidential letter cited by Secretary Rogers. In the light of the crucial importance of military assistance to Cambodia, Mr. Laird urged that present arrangements continue and that the general issue of the control of military assistance groups be left for later consideration. Following a return from an overseas trip, the Secretary of State, in a letter of 19 May, accepted Secretary Laird's position on the matters at issue.[43]

(S) Despite this agreement, it appeared almost immediately that the current arrangements for the

42. (S-GP 4) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 9 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-6, 28 Apr 71, same file.

43. (S-GP 4) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 25 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-6, 28 Apr 71; Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 27 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-7, 29 Apr 71; Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 19 May 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-8, 21 May 71; JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 2.

MEDT were not satisfactory. On 22 May 1971, Admiral Moorer complained to the Secretary of Defense that Ambassador Swank was hampering the activities of the MEDT. Placing a "very narrow" interpretation on his instructions that the United States should maintain a "low profile" in Cambodia, the Ambassador had imposed "stringent limitations" on the number of US military personnel in Cambodia. The table of distribution, as Admiral Moorer pointed out, which had been accepted by the Secretary of State, gave the MEDT a total strength of 113. The Chief of the MEDT had recommended that 93 of these be permanently assigned to Cambodia as of 1 August. But the Ambassador had restricted the number of permanently stationed military personnel in Cambodia to 16, and would agree to the addition of only seven more by 1 August. The field commanders believed, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed, that the military assistance program in Cambodia could not be properly executed under these limitations. Admiral Moorer urged that Secretary Laird take up the matter with the Secretary of State.[44]

(~~TS~~) As mentioned above, the Senior Review Group, in consideration of the Cambodian assessment on 7 June, agreed that the size of the US Military Assistance Group in Cambodia would be resolved in the context of the decision on a military assistance plan for that country. "Neither a high or a low profile is a principal objective," Dr. Kissinger said, but rather provision of the required personnel to do an effective job.[45]

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44. (~~S~~-GP 1) CM-919-71 to SecDef, 22 May 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-9, 25 May 71, same file.

45. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, DepSecDef, DCI, and CJCS, 11 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2366/54, 14 Jun 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 1.

(S) Before the Senior Review Group could act, the Secretary of Defense brought the matter of increased personnel for the Military Equipment Delivery Team to the attention of the President on 21 June. He recommended that, of the 113 authorized personnel for the team, at least 50 should be based in Phnom Penh, including the Chief who was still in Saigon. Transferring the Chief of the MEDT to Phnom Penh would eliminate the need to designate the Counselor for Political-Military Affairs to the Embassy as the CINCPAC Special Representative for Military Assistance in Cambodia. Mr. Laird appreciated the importance of maintaining a low military profile in Cambodia, but considered it imperative to deploy the additional personnel to carry out military assistance responsibilities.[46]

(S) The Secretary of State did not concur with Mr. Laird's proposal and so informed the President on 28 June. He told the President that Ambassador Swank had recently recommended an increase in personnel from 16 to 23 to supervise the delivery of military assistance material to Cambodia. Moreover, at any one time, an average of five (and at the present time there were 30) additional MEDT personnel were on temporary duty in Cambodia to assist in MAP duties. Secretary Rogers believed these numbers were sufficient. He also noted that the Senior Review Group would shortly be considering a paper prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff which he understood would contain recommendations on the future size of the MEDT in relation to strategy for

46. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Administration and Supervision of the Military Assistance Program for Cambodia," 21 Jun 71, CJCS File 091 Cambodia, Jul-Dec 71.

Cambodia. Any decision on MEDT personnel, Secretary Rogers believed, could await the SRG strategy review.[47]

(TS) The President's decision was relayed to his two Secretaries on 1 July 1971. The President authorized an expansion of the MEDT in Phnom Penh to 50 persons, as Secretary Laird had desired. At the same time, he directed the Secretary of Defense to coordinate with Ambassador Swank the introduction of the additional personnel. The President also desired that the Counselor for Political-Military Affairs in the US Embassy continue as the CINCPAC Special Representative for Military Assistance in Cambodia and that "his position in the Embassy staff be strengthened commensurate with the role of coordination of all security related programs."[48]

A Review of US Activities in Laos

(S) During the spring of 1971, US officials also reviewed developments in Laos as they affected the war in Vietnam. No US ground forces operated in Laos, but over the years, the United States had supported various irregular operations there. [redacted] The President and his advisers discussed this matter at San Clemente on 31 March 1971 and decided that an interagency ad hoc

47. (S-GP 1) Memo, SecState to Pres, 28 Jun 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2366/44-10, 1 Jul 71, JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 2.

48. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Secys of State and Def, 1 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-11, 6 Jul 71, same file.

committee should study the problem. Accordingly, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff designated Major General Frank B. Clay, USA, Deputy Director for NSC Affairs, Plans and Policy Directorate, Joint Staff, to chair a committee with representatives from the Departments of State and Defense, the CIA, and the NSC staff. The committee would prepare recommendations for actions necessary to support irregular forces in Laos.[49]

(TS) General Clay submitted the committee report on 19 April 1971. The committee set forth US ojectives in Laos as the maintenance of the present neutralist government in that part of Laos that permitted a buffer area between China and North Vietnam on the one hand and Thailand on the other. In addition, the United States wished to interdict NVN lines of communication and base areas in Laos to support Vietnamization in South Vietnam. In pursuit of these goals, US military assistance to Laos had expanded from $12.5 million in FY 1963 to $258 million for FY 1971. With this increase, "the complexion of US operational involvement had changed from the guerrilla to a more conventional form of warfare."

(TS) [redacted]

49. (S-GP 1) CM-792-71 to MG Frank B. Clay, 8 Apr 71, JMF 895 (7 Apr 71) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) Interagency Ad Hoc Cmte Study, "US Support for Military Activities in Laos (S)," 19 Apr 71, JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70), sec 1A.

[redacted] The United States provided logistic support, through the military assistance program, for the regular Lao forces and for irregular third country forces in Laos. This support was normally provided by the Deputy Chief, JUSMAG Thailand, but on occasion, the Ambassador requested support directly from CINCPAC, the Central Intelligence Agency, or the Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense in Washington. [redacted]

(TS) The committee failed to reach a clear agreement on the means of bringing order to this somewhat chaotic situation. A majority of members favored establishing a forward element of MACV in Udorn to review plans and coordinate operations, or, alternatively, a military assistance coordinator at Udorn who would coordinate both operations and logistic support. Other alternatives suggested by the committee were a coordinating committee at Udorn; a CINCPAC representative, disguised as a Defense Attache in Vietnam, to coordinate activities in Laos; or a full-fledged military assistance command in Laos.

(TS) No system existed for regularly budgeting and funding the costs of irregular operations in Laos. [redacted] The committee believed that existing arrangements could be

made to work satisfactorily if requirements were known sufficiently in advance. The members added a warning, however, that any additional funds provided for Laotian operations would come at the expense of existing Department of Defense programs.

(TS) [redacted] This support was furnished by USAF aircraft or by the air forces of Laos or Thailand (RLAF or RTAF), both of which were supported by US military assistance. [redacted] monthly sortie requirements in Laos were projected at 2,500 through FYs 1972 and 1973, whereas tentative Department of Defense fiscal guidance assumed averages for all of Southeast Asia of 10,200 in FY 1972, dropping to 5,300 in FY 1973. [redacted] It was therefore recommended that these forces be provided with additional aircraft (T-28s) and pilots through the military assistance program and that additional USAF A-1 aircraft be provided to operate from Thailand.

(TS) Logistic support in Laos, like funding, was a divided responsibility. The Department of Defense supported the regular Lao forces and [redacted] The committee proposed that the Department of Defense gradually assume responsibility for providing standard military equipment and supplies for all friendly forces in Laos by FY 1973 [redacted]

(TS) The force available for operations in Laos was being enlarged by the establishment of a force of 24 Special Guerrilla Units (SGUs) in Thailand. [redacted] But the committee considered that the necessary training could be provided within existing personnel ceilings, supplemented as necessary by personnel on temporary duty.

(TS) The committee concluded its report with an expression of concern over the lack of strategic guidance for operations in Laos. There seemed to be two opposing trends at work: a greater US involvement in Laos coinciding with a general deescalation of US activity in Southeast Asia generally. The committee recommended a review of US policy goals for Laos, both short- and long-term, with a view toward resolving this conflict. The members also called for a military assessment of the relative value of enlarging the irregular forces operating in Laos as compared with improvement of the regular forces of both Laos and Thailand.[50]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded the committee report to the Secretary of Defense on 3 May, together with their comments on it. They "generally" concurred with the conclusions and recommendations of the report. To improve the coordination of US support for operations in Laos, they favored a structure "somewhat between" the options of a MACV Forward at Udorn and a Military Assistance coordinator at Udorn. With respect to air support for operations in Laos, the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred the committee's proposal

50. (TS-GP 1) Interagency Ad Hoc Cmte Study, "US Support for Military Activities in Laos (S)," 19 Apr 71, JMF 895 (7 Apr 71) sec 1A.

to expand the RLAF and RTAF forces, but they opposed any increase in the USAF A-1 force in Thailand, which would "adversely affect Vietnamization." The policy review recommended by the committee they judged to be "of particular importance" in determining the proper course of action in Laos.[51]

(S) On 8 June 1971, the Secretary of Defense resolved the question of coordinating machinery for operations in Laos. He directed CINCPAC to relocate the Deputy Chief, Joint US Military Assistance Group, Thailand (JUSMAGTHAI), to Udorn to provide "closer supervision" of the Laos assistance program and to serve as "the nucleus of a possible military assistance coordinator" at Udorn. CINCPAC was to draw up a detailed plan for the establishment and operation of the new coordinator. Subsequently, the Secretary directed that the military assistance coordinator for Laos continue to use the title Deputy Chief, JUSMAGTHAI, even after relocation in Udorn. Mr. Laird feared that a change in the title to Military Assistance Coordinator for Laos might cause "undue apprehension about the true nature of our limited support effort." Thereafter CINCPAC prepared the requested plan and, on 20 August 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed its implementation. Later, staffing and terms of reference for the office were approved on 5 February and 4 April 1972, respectively.[52]

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51. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-190-71 to SecDef, 3 May 71, Encl to JCS 2344/177, 3 May 71, JMF 895 (7 Apr 71) sec 1.

52. (TS-GP 4) Msg, SecDef (DEF 3860) to CINCPAC, 081700Z Jun 71; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2344/177-2, 29 Jun 71; (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 120855Z Jul 71, JCS IN 25767; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 5541 to CINCPAC, 20 Aug 71; JMF 895 (7 Apr 71). (TS-GP 4) JCS 2478/607, 6 Nov 71; (TS-GP 4) Msg,

(Ø) Meantime, on 8 June 1971, the Secretary of Defense had forwarded copies of the committee report, together with the JCS comments, to the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, the Director of Central Intelligence, and Dr. Kissinger. He informed them of his action to establish a military assistance coordinator. But even more important than better management of military aid, Secretary Laird thought, was a thorough review of US policy toward Laos. He felt that the United States must avoid increased commitment to Laos, which would be inconsistent with the US policy of withdrawing from Vietnam.

(Ø) Pending the outcome of such a strategy review, Mr. Laird wrote, the Department of Defense was implementing within existing military personnel ceilings the committee's recommendations for improvement in programming, funding, logistical support, and training. Air support would be provided for friendly forces in Laos from within programmed resources. He was confident that programmed attack sortie levels would be adequate, especially if supplemented with additional T-28 or other trainer aircraft for the RLAF and RTAF and with contractual air support for theater air and helilift, including medical evacuation.[53]

JCS 3872 to CINCPAC, 5 Feb 72; (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 3886 to CSA, 5 Feb 72; (S-GP 4) JCSM-138-72 to SecDef, 4 Apr 72, App B to JCS 2478/607-1, 14 Mar 72; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7308 to CINCPAC, 4 Apr 72; JMF 895/037 (6 Nov 71).

53. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecState, Att Gen, CJCS, DCI, and Dr. Kissinger, "U.S. Support for Military Activities in Laos (Ø)," 8 Jun 71, JMF 895 (7 Apr 71) sec 1.

In February the Joint Chiefs of Staff had provided the SecDef an assessment of the requirement for additional T-28s for the Southeast Asian allies. They

(TS) Despite the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Interagency Committee, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Defense for a review of policy toward Laos, none took place. The Secretary of Defense did ask the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 8 June 1971 for "an assessment of the relative merits of expanding irregular forces operating in Laos" as contrasted with qualitative improvement of regular Lao forces. But, before the Joint Chiefs had prepared the assessment, the Senior Review Group and the Washington Special Actions Group agreed on 10 August 1971 that emphasis in Laos whould be placed on the Special Guerrilla Unit Program for the near term. As a result, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not proceed with the requested assessment, nor was there any further US Government consideration of policy toward Laos during

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had told him that there was "no acceptable close air support off-the-shelf replacement" for the T-28 aircraft that met the basic need for a cheap, effective, and easy to maintain weapon system. Consequently, on 8 April 1971, the Secretary of Defense approved a T-28D inventory of 18 for Cambodia, 86 for Laos, and 60 for Thailand. At that time he asked the Secretary of the Air Force to review available aircraft to determine if better and cheaper alternative planes might be provided the Southeast Asian allies. On 13 October 1971, the Secretary of the Air Force reported that no one aircraft among available alternatives was "clearly superior from an operational standpoint" and recommended modification of USAF T-28As to fulfill near-term MAP requirements. (S-GP 4) JCSM-65-71 to SecDef, 11 Feb 71, Encl to JCS 2339/337, 8 Feb 71; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecArmy, SecAF, and CJCS, 8 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2339/337-1, 12 Apr 71; JMF 907/460 (8 Feb 71) sec 1. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, 13 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2339/337-4, 26 Oct 71, same file, sec 3.

the remainder of 1971 or in the first several months of 1972.[54]

Public Opinion Pressure in 1971

(U) Another factor that President Nixon and his advisers had to consider in their Southeast Asia policy reviews during 1971 was public opinion. Following the withdrawal of US forces from Cambodia in June 1970, open dissent with the war had dropped off and remained relatively quiet throughout the rest of 1970. In early 1971, however, public criticism once again began to mount.

(U) The first stirrings of renewed dissent came in the Congress. On 27 January 1971, Senator George McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, and Senator Mark Hatfield, Republican of Oregon, both avowed critics of the war, introduced an amendment to a Selective Service bill to require withdrawal of all US troops from South Vietnam by the end of 1971. Although the Senate had turned down a similar measure the year before, a new Gallup poll showed increased support for the proposal. Seventy-three percent of those contacted, as contrasted with 55 percent the previous September, now favored withdrawal.[55]

(U) Further support for US withdrawal from Vietnam was reflected in a decision by the Senate Democratic Caucus on 23 February 1971 calling for complete withdrawal of all US troops from Vietnam. The Caucus

54. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 8 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2344/177-1, 9 Jun 71; (~~S~~-GP 1) 1st N/H of JCS 2344/177-1, 19 Jan 72; JMF 895 (7 Apr 71) sec 1. (~~S~~-GP 4) CM-1301-71 to SecDef, 8 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2344/185, 14 Jan 72, JMF 895 (8 Nov 71).

55. NY Times, 28 Jan 71, 8; 31 Jan 71, 3.

proposal, however, provided a longer period than the McGovern-Hatfield amendment, requiring completion by 31 December 1972. Just over a month later, on 31 March 1971, the House Democratic Caucus endorsed the withdrawal date set by its Senate counterpart. Adopted after sharp division, the vote of the House group was a compromise; the final resolution substituted for an earlier proposal to complete the withdrawal by the end of 1971.[56]

(U) Meantime, in a further expression of displeasure with the President's Vietnam policy, Senator Jacob Javits, Republican of New York, had introduced legislation in February to limit the President's authority to commit forces to combat. The proposed bill would allow the President to use US troops to meet emergencies but not to continue the use for more than 30 days without Congressional authorization. Another indication of the Congressional dissatisfaction with Vietnam policy came on 30 March when Senator J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, announced that the committee would hold hearings on "how to end the war."[57]

(U) On 7 April, President Nixon announced the withdrawal of another 100,000 US troops from Vietnam,[58] but the announcement did not mollify Congressional critics. They wanted a definite date for the end of the US commitment, and in succeeding days, three more Senators announced support for the 31 December 1971 deadline. Senators Clifford Case, Charles Mathias, and Edward Brook, all Republicans, endorsed the

56. NY Times, 24 Feb 71, 19; 1 Apr 71, 1.
57. NY Times, 11 Feb 71, 17; 31 Mar 71, 1.
58. See Chapter 3, p. 147.

legislation introduced earlier by Senators McGovern and Hatfield.[59]

(U) Public dissent also resumed during the spring of 1971. The Laos incursion in February, surprisingly, provoked little protest, but the approach of better weather brought anti-war groups back into the streets. In March, a coalition of anti-war and civil rights organizations announced plans for a series of demonstrations duzing April and May.[60]

(U) A group of 9,000 anti-war veterans launched the planned protests on 19 April 1971. For five days they held rallies in Washington, lobbied in Congress and discarded medals won in Vietnam in a ceremony in front of the Capitol.[61]

(U) Then, on Saturday, 24 April, an estimated 200,000 protesters gathered in Washington and marched down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol. There they listened to their spokesmen call on the Congress to stop the war since President Nixon had failed to do so. Several members of Congress spoke, including Senator Vance Hartke and Representatives Bella Abzug and Herman Badillo. The overall tone of the rally was restrained and it was entirely peaceful. On the West Coast, a companion demonstration took place in San Francisco, and more than 150,000 protesters marched to Golden Gate Park. That demonstration was marred by violence when militants seized control of the speakers' platform.[62]

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59. Lester A. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, U.S. Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia, Vol. 6, 1971 (1973), p. 104.

60. NY Times, 4 Feb 71, 19; 9 Feb 71, 16; 10 Feb 71, 13; 11 Feb 71, 15; 28 Mar 71, 16.

61. NY Times, 21 Apr 71, 11; 22 Apr 71, 28; 24 Apr 71, 1.

62. NY Times, 25 Apr 71, 1, 6.

(U) Following the rally in Washington, many of the demonstrators remained in the city, camping in West Potomac Park. They carried out small demonstrations during the period 26-30 April on Capitol Hill and at various executive agencies. This action was preliminary to plans by the "Mayday Tribe" for mass civil disobedience, including blocking of highways and bridges to prevent government workers from getting to and from work.[63]

(U) President Nixon commented on the planned protest at a press conference on 1 May. He recognized the right of peaceful demonstration, adding, however, that the thousands of Government employees also had a right to go to their offices without interference. "We will not be intimidated," he said, and should illegal action occur "we are prepared to deal with it. . . .we will arrest those who break the law." The following morning police ordered 30,000 demonstrators from their encampment in West Potomac Park.[64]

(U) The disruption of the camp did not deter the Mayday Tribe and mass demonstrations followed on 3, 4, and 5 May. On 3 May, more than 7,000 protesters battled with police for more than six hours in attempts to block traffic and thwart Government operations. On the following two days, the protesters held mass rallies at the Justice Department and the Capitol. During the three days, over 12,000 people were arrested. Many were detained without proper forms and all were placed in a fenced football practice field because of the lack of adequate detention facilities.

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63. NY Times, 1 May 71, 13. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971, p. 181.

64. Nixon Public Papers, 1971, p. 606. NY Times, 3 May 71, 1.

The mass arrest procedures were quickly challenged and, on 4 May, a D.C. superior court judge ordered the police to release those not charged with a specific offense, and a Federal appeals court upheld that ruling the following day. Eventually, almost all charges against the protesters were dropped entirely.[65]

(U) The antiwar demonstrations then faded. On 6 May a scheduled march on the South Vietnamese Embassy drew only 60 people, but the protest leaders vowed to carry on their efforts. On 8 May, demonstrators in support of the war marched "for victory" in Washington led by the Reverend Carl McIntire. Police estimated the crowd at 15,000 persons.[66]

(U) With the subsiding of the mass protests, the focus of public criticism of the war returned to the Congress. There the McGovern-Hatfield amendment, calling for withdrawal of all US military forces from Vietnam by the end of the year, awaited action by the Senate. But in a victory for the Administration, the Senate rejected the amendment on 16 June by a 55 to 42 vote.[67]

(U) The defeat of the McGovern-Hatfield amendment was almost completely obscured from public notice, however, by a furor arising over the release of the Pentagon Papers. On 13 June 1971, the New York Times had begun publishing a series of articles and documents based on a secret Department of Defense study

65. NY Times, 4 May 71, 1; 5 May 71, 1; 6 May 71, 1. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971, pp. 184-187.

66. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971, p. 183.

67. NY Times, 15 Jun 71, 3; 17 Jun 71, 1.

of US policy in Vietnam. The study, known as the Pentagon Papers, had been prepared in 1968 and traced US involvement in Vietnam from 1940 through 1968. The Secretary of Defense immediately labeled the Times' action a violation of security regulations and the Justice Department sought court action to halt further publication. On 15 June, a US district court judge did order a temporary halt pending a hearing. Meantime, members of Congress began to demand that the Nixon Administration make the study available to the Congress.[68]

(U) Efforts by the Department of Justice to prevent further publication of the Pentagon Papers did not succeed. On 23 June, the Second US Court of Appeals ruled that the New York Times could resume publication. In the meantime, articles about and excerpts from the secret study had begun to appear in various other papers, including the Washington Post, the Boston Globe, the Chicago Sun-Times, the St. Louis Post Dispatch and the Christian Science Monitor. Thereafter President Nixon ordered release of the 47 volumes of the study to the Congress and, eventually, the Department of Defense declassified all of the study except four volumes dealing with secret negotiations.[69]

(U) The attention given the Pentagon Papers did not divert the war critics in the Congress from further efforts to force a deadline on the Administration. On 21 June 1971, Senator Mike Mansfield introduced another amendment to the Selective Service bill calling for the withdrawal of all US troops from Vietnam within nine

68. NY Times, 13 Jun 71, 1. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971, pp. 121-123.
69. Ibid., pp. 124-134.

months if US prisoners of war were released. The Senate adopted the Mansfield amendment the next day, marking the first time the Senate had voted a definite deadline for an end of US military involvement in South Vietnam.[70]

(U) The House of Representatives defeated the amendment by a vote of 219 to 176, and the matter went to a Senate-House conference. The resulting compromise was a much weaker version. Containing no specific deadline, the conference amendment was worded as an expression of Congressional views rather than policy direction. It declared it to be

> the sense of the Congress that the United States terminate at the earliest practicable date all military operations of the United States in Indochina and provide for the prompt and orderly withdrawal of all US military forces at a date certain subject to the release of all American prisoners of war. . . .

This compromise was eventually approved by both the House and the Senate and sent to the President in September.[71]

(U) Still the Senate critics of the war pressed for a specific deadline. On 28 September, Senator Mansfield introduced another amendment, this time to the Department of Defense procurement authorization. The new amendment was similar to the previous one, differing only in that it called for withdrawal of all US forces within six months instead of nine. The Senate quickly adopted the amendment and passed it on

70. NY Times, 22 Jun 71, 1; 23 Jun 71, 1.
71. NY Times, 29 Jun 71, 1; 31 Jul 71, 1; 22 Sep 71, 1.

to the House on 30 September. The latter body on 10 November approved a weaker version declaring it to be the policy of the United States to withdraw all forces from Indochina by "a date certain" subject to the release of all US prisoners of war.[72]

(U) Upon receiving the bill with the amendment, President Nixon announced that he would disregard the troop withdrawal deadline. "The so-called Mansfield amendment," he said, "does not represent the policies of this Administration." Such legislative actions, he believed, only hindered the search for a negotiated settlement. Subsequently, in December 1971, an attempt to amend the foreign aid bill to include a six-month withdrawal deadline failed.[73]

(U) The anti-war movement attempted more mass demonstrations during the fall of 1971 but with less success than in the spring. Vietnam Moratorium Day protests occurred on 14 October in several cities and colleges. Then on 26 October, more than 800 protesters marched in Washington with 300 arrested when they attempted a sit-down in Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House during the evening rush hour. The last demonstration of any size in 1971 was a march and rally of more than 20,000 people in New York on 6 November.[74]

(U) Neither the public protests nor the Congressional efforts during 1971 to end the war produced any discernible action by the President to change the Vietnam policy. Yet, this unfavorable public opinion

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72. NY Times, 28 Sep 71, 3; 1 Oct 71, 9; 20 Oct 71, 1; 11 Nov 71, 1.

73. Nixon, Public Papers, 1971, p. 1114. NY Times, 16 Dec 71, 1.

74. NY Times, 27 Oct 71, 10; 7 Nov 71, 81. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971, p. 189.

created a continuous pressure and a background against which every Vietnam decision was made, and public opinion, undoubtedly, had some influence in all the Vietnam reviews in 1971 whether admitted or not.

Reassessments in Early 1972

(S) The lengthy Washington reviews of the situations in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos during the first six months of 1971 brought no revisions in US objectives in those countries. Consequently, US operations in Southeast Asia during 1971, as described in Chapter 5, proceeded without basic change except for accommodations to the accelerating drawdown of US troops and tightening US budget strictures. By the end of the year, however, there were increasing indications of an enemy offensive, and the NSC staff decided once again to assess the situation in South Vietnam to assist the President in various approaching decisions. Accordingly, the Vietnam Special Studies Group was directed to revise the Vietnam assessment prepared the previous May,[75] particularly the section dealing with the enemy threat, the control and main force situation, and the status of RVNAF improvement. The new assessment was prepared by an interagency task force chaired by a representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was based on information supplied by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded the updated assessment to the Secretary of Defense on 10 January 1972 for transmittal to the Vietnam Special Studies Group. Admiral Moorer pointed out to the Secretary that, although the assessment did not have

75. See above pp. 73-75.

"the formal concurrence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," it had been noted by them and the military Services.[76]

(TS) The updated assessment indicated that the enemy situation had developed as anticipated although some enemy deployments threatening South Vietnam, expected during the period October through December 1971, were only just then occurring. The new assessment reviewed the seven possible enemy options identified in the earlier study, and the resulting conclusions were much the same as those reached some six months earlier. The updated assessment still considered that the enemy had the manpower to execute any of the options, but that logistics remained a constraint. An attack in Military Region 1 would be the easiest option for the enemy to support, but chances for success of this option appeared limited. The enemy would face the best South Vietnamese troops, which could be reinforced by the RVNAF General Reserve. An attack in Military Region 2 might have a better chance of temporary success, since reinforcement of the widely dispersed RVNAF units would be more difficult. Simultaneous offensives in both Military Regions 1 and 2 could cause "political repercussions in Saigon and Washington" and set back Vietnamization at least temporarily, while an offensive in Cambodia would give the enemy freer access to border base areas and increase the direct threat to the lower half of South Vietnam. But these options, as well as an offensive in both Military Region 1 and in Cambodia, represented the margin of enemy capabilities.

76. (S-GP 3) Memo, Dir of Program Analysis, NSC Staff to VSSG, 16 Dec 71, Att to JCS 2472/790, 28 Dec 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-1440-71 to SecDef, 10 Jan 72; JMF 911 (16 Dec 71).

A simultaneous attack in Cambodia and throughout South Vietnam was judged beyond the enemy's capabilities throughout CY 1972. No single option could be pinpointed, but it seemed probable that the enemy would attempt at least one "dramatic tactical victory" in 1972.

(TS) The new assessment showed that the allied progress reported in May 1971 had continued over the past six months although the rate of progress had slowed somewhat. The strength of friendly forces had declined, but not to the extent envisioned in May 1971. Certain ROK forces expected to return home had remained in South Vietnam, and some RVNAF reserve elements, formerly in Cambodia, had returned to South Vietnam. Consequently, there were 233 allied maneuver battalions in South Vietnam on 1 December 1971, a decrease of 24 from 1 May 1971. There had also been a slight gain in the "control situation" during the past six months. A loss of control by the Republic of Vietnam in Military Region 1 had been more than offset by gains in Military Regions 3 and 4, while there had been no change in Military Region 2. The Pacification program had also made progress despite losses in one or more provinces in each Military Region. RVNAF improvement had continued, with new units being created ahead of schedule. Further, a new RVNAF division had been activated in Military Region 1, and two brigades of the Vietnamese Marine Corps division of the RVNAF General Reserve had been moved there.

(TS) After comparing enemy capabilities against friendly courses of action, the assessment team concluded that the allied forces remaining in South Vietnam on 1 July 1972 could meet the expected threat

without a major redistribution of forces through normal use of the RVNAF General Reserve. It was unlikely, therefore, that the enemy could achieve "lasting significant setbacks" to pacification or security in South Vietnam prior to 30 June 1972. After that date, and assuming a 60,000-man US force level, the enemy threat could be met but with increased risk. The use of combined US and RVNAF air power against both enemy forces assembled for offensive action and enemy infiltration systems was considered "crucial" to allied success.

(TS) Once again the evaluation for 1972 would not carry over into 1973. By then, the enemy would have the benefit of another Laotian dry season to infiltrate men and materiel and the US capability would have declined further. How the situation developed in 1973 depended on factors that could not be adequately determined at that time: the effectiveness of US air interdiction, the success of RVNAF preemptive operations in Laos and Cambodia, RVNAF ability to maintain the MARKET TIME barrier, and the degree of improvement in Cambodian forces. Moreover, political and economic developments in Southeast Asia could seriously affect the military situation.[77]

(S) The Senior Review Group considered the updated assessment on 17 January 1972 and requested further evaluation of the military situation in South Vietnam and measures designed to improve US and RVNAF capabilities in light of the enemy threats expected through 1 July 1972. Already, however, the paper had been overtaken by events. The President had announced on 13 January that US forces in Vietnam would be reduced to

77. (TS-GP 3) Updated RVN Assessment, 10 Jan 72, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/790-1, 19 Jan 72, JMF 911 (16 Dec 71).

69,000 by 1 May 1972, thus altering the balance of forces and throwing into question the conclusions of the assessment. Admiral Moorer furnished some information to the Secretary of Defense to be used in responding to the SRG request of 17 January, but it appears that no further action was taken to revise the assessment.[78]

(S) During this same period, the Secretary of Defense had set his staff to reviewing US strategy for Southeast Asia after completion of Vietnamization. A task force in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) considered several alternative strategies for the FY 1973-1976 period, concentrating primarily on the requirements for South Vietnam. The Secretary of Defense forwarded a summary of this analysis, in the form of a draft memorandum for the President, to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, and several Assistant Secretaries of Defense for comment on 22 January 1972.

(S) The OSD task force saw the paramount US interest in Vietnam and mainland Southeast Asia as the retention of US credibility as a national power through demonstration of its capability and will to keep commitments and implement the Nixon Doctrine. United States objectives in South Vietnam were the development of a South Vietnam capability for defense against a communist takeover; release of all US prisoners and an accounting of the missing in Indochina; a ceasefire for Southeast Asia; and withdrawal of all US forces from Vietnam.

78. (S) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, DepSecDef, and DCI, "Vietnam Assessment," 19 Jan 72; (TS-GP 3) TP for Actg DepSecDef and CJCS for SRG Mtg on 17 Jan 72, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/790-1, 19 Jan 72; JMF 911 (16 Dec. 71). (TS-GP 3) CM-1479-72 to SecDef, 24 Jan 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 72.

It was doubtful that either the Congress or the American people would be persuaded to accept the continuing outlay of US resources in mainland Southeast Asia at present levels. Political realities precluded either a primarily US or US-supported military solution in Vietnam. North Vietnam, however, showed no indication of abandoning its objectives of controlling South Vietnam, reuniting Vietnam, or extending its sphere of influence over all of Indochina.

(C) With regard to the future, the task force was not optimistic. It did recognize that "Vietnamization has worked militarily and US ground combat forces should not be needed in mainland Southeast Asia beyond the end of FY 1972 for other than political/negotiating purposes." Despite this success, however, no mainland Southeast Asian country, with the possible exception of Thailand, could support the force the United States had helped develop. The RVNAF, even with US efforts to keep it austere, had continued to develop in sophistication in order to deal with the enemy threat. Moreover, current assistance programs would not provide the full interdiction and communication capabilities deemed necessary. Nor did the task force believe that regional cooperation could replace US support in Southeast Asia. Although economic and military coordination was slowly developing among the mainland Southeast Asian countries, adequate regional military arrangements did not yet exist. In addition, there would be heavy financial cost involved in continuing US support to the Southeast Asian allies, amounting probably to some $15 billion in military and economic aid for the period FY 1973-1976.

(C) Three alternative strategies were presented for FY 1973-1976:

1. Total withdrawal of all US forces from Vietnam by the end of FY 1973, with no subsequent military assistance to South Vietnam or other mainland Southeast Asian countries. Estimated cost of this alternative was $5.6 billion.

2. Measured withdrawal, with redeployment of all US combat forces, retaining some 10,000 troops for military assistance and technical support, plus continued economic and military assistance including the use of US out-of-country bombing capabilities, if required. Estimated cost was between $12.9 and $17.9 billion depending on whether a cease-fire developed.

3. Delayed withdrawal, including not only economic and military assistance but retention of certain US combat forces (approximately 60,000 men) through FY 1974. Estimated cost was $14.9 to $20.2 billion.

(~~C~~) The task force did not consider the alternatives as mutually exclusive; it would be possible to change from one to another as the situation dictated. The measured withdrawal strategy seemed most likely to meet US goals in Southeast Asia at that time. By withdrawing all combat forces, the United States would place "squarely on the South Vietnamese" the responsibility for defending their country while still providing South Vietnam the means for this task. In addition, the measured withdrawal option would clearly signal to Hanoi further US willingness to reduce its direct involvement in the war and would eliminate US combat casualties and reduce the cost for support of US forces in South Vietnam during the period in question. Domestic objections to US military forces remaining in

Vietnam could be answered by stating that this presence was negotiable.[79]

(~~C~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the alternative strategies and told the Secretary of Defense on 9 February 1972 that a clear-cut estimate of the future situation in Indochina could not be made at that time. The formidable problems facing South Vietnam, the uncertainties about the amount and extent of US support, the question of the South Vietnamese will to persist, the resilience of the communist infrastructure in South Vietnam, and the enemy's demonstrated ability and willingness to pay the price for perseverance--all of these cast doubt upon the long-term prospects for survival of the Government of Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirmed their support for a balanced 1.1 million-man RVNAF structure until hostilities ceased or were considerably diminished. They also recognized that South Vietnam could not sustain nor the United Sttes support a force of that size after the end of the hostilities. They did believe, however, that there would be "a continuing requirement" for US advisory personnel and US air support "in the foreseeable future."

(~~C~~) After these general observations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff proceeded with specific comments on the strategy paper. Among other things, they suggested elimination of inferences that Vietnamization would be "successfully concluded in all aspects" by the end of FY 1972. They appreciated the fiscal problems facing the United States, but noted that

79. (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., 22 Jan 72, Att to JCS 2339/351, 24 Jan 72, JMF 907/520 (22 Jan 72).

the cost of the delayed withdrawal strategy, the most expensive alternative, was relatively slight when compared with "the US investment in Southeast Asia over the past 9 years." Moreover, they believed that the ultimate success of Vietnamization could hinge on continued US support of South Vietnam.[80]

(~~S~~) Subsequently, on 14 February 1972, Admiral Moorer forwarded to the Secretary of Defense comments by CINCPAC on the strategy alternatives. The field commander proposed an additional alternative, which he called "calculated withdrawal." The object was to retain as many US troops in Vietnam as possible until the South Vietnamese had demonstrated their ability to cope with the threat. CINCPAC recognized that the decision to reduce US forces to 69,000 by 1 May 1972 was probably irreversible, but he urged that subsequent redeployments be tailored to a "cut and try" approach, instead of making a commitment to the rapid drawdown postulated in the task force's alternatives.[81]

(~~S~~) The Secretary of Defense did not submit the alternative strategies for Southeast Asia to the President, nor is there any record of further action on them. The Secretary did on 9 March 1972 issue planning guidance for Southeast Asia force and activity levels for FY 1974-1978, directing that this document serve as the basis for consistency in all plans for US operations in Southeast Asia. The Secretary's guidance provided for a US force structure of 43,400 men in South Vietnam at the end of FY 1973. A year later the

80. (~~S~~-GP 4) JCSM-50-72 to SecDef, 9 Feb 72, Encl to JCS 2339/351-1, 5 Feb 72, same file.
81. (~~S~~-GP 4) CM-1542-72 to SecDef, 15 Feb 72, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Jun 72.

US forces would decline to 25,000 and remain at that level through 1978. The Secretary also directed a gradual decline in US tactical air and B-52 actions in Southeast Asia with these operations to be terminated by the end of FY 1975.[82]

(S) Later, on 16 March 1972, CINCPAC submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a "political/military assessment" of the situation in Southeast Asia. In sum, he believed that North Vietnam would continue to threaten friendly nations in Southeast Asia during the coming years. Consequently, the United States should provide all possile diplomatic, political, economic, and indirect military assistance in order to create a neutral buffer, composed of Laos and Cambodia, between North Vietnam and Thailand while concurrently giving highest priority to maintenance of "a strong South Vietnamese armed force" and to building a similar counter-balancing force in Thailand. Also essential, the commander said, was "a credible off-shore U.S. deterrent military capability in the Philippines, Okinawa, Korea, Japan and Guam." Again, no action resulted on this assessment, though the Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed their appreciation for it, telling CINCPAC that they would use it in developing "the many studies" concerning Southeast Asia then in progress.[83]

(U) As had been the case with the reviews during 1971, the updated Vietnam assessment in January 1972 and the subsequent OSD strategy reappraisal brought

82. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, et al., 9 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2458/824, 13 Mar 72, JMF 555 (9 Mar 72).

83. (TS-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, 16 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2339/355, 22 Mar 72; (U) Msg, JCS 6328 to CINCPAC, 20 Apr 72; JMF 907/300 (6 Mar 72).

no changes in either US policy or operations in South Vietnam. Undoubtedly both the President and Secretary Laird found these efforts helpful as background for their respective decisions on troop redeployments, force and activity levels, and peace initiatives, but no specific actions or directives resulted from these deliberations. With the forces and resources remaining in South Vietnam by March 1972, the United States had little flexibility left to alter either its policy or strategy there.

CHAPTER 3

UNITED STATES AND FREE WORLD TROOP WITHDRAWALS IN 1971

(U) The United States in 1969 had adopted the policy of Vietnamization to strengthen the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam, allowing them to assume the combat mission of the war as US troops withdrew from Vietnam. United States redeployments began in mid-1969 and proceeded steadily thereafter. In 1969, President Nixon had announced three US redeployments--25,000 in June, 40,500 in September, and 50,000 in December--on a "cut and try" basis. Then on 20 April 1970, he announced a longer-range program calling for the withdrawal of 150,000 US troops from South Vietnam to be completed by the end of April 1971. This redeployment was to consist of three additional increments with the timing and pace determined by the existing military situation and the status of diplomatic negotiations. By the end of 1970, the United States had completed two of the three increments and withdrawn 90,000 men of the 150,000 total.

(U) In all during 1969 and 1970, the United States had redeployed five increments comprising 205,500 men, leaving an actual strength in the Republic of Vietnam on 31 December 1970 of 335,794 US troops within an authorized strength of 344,999. In the absence of progress in the peace negotiations, the scheduling and size of the first four redeployment increments had been based solely on the military situation and the progress of the RVNAF. But with the fifth increment in the latter part of 1970, budget and manpower limitations

within the Department of the Army became an important consideration in the withdrawal planning. Thereafter financial and manning constraints, as well as the progress of Vietnamization, would determine the rate of US redeployments. While withdrawals in 1969 and 1970 had been accomplished without major adverse effects on COMUSMACV's operational plans or logistic capability, the point had been reached by the beginning of 1971 where careful planning and coordination would be needed to insure retention in South Vietnam of balanced combat forces and the orderly retrograde of equipment.[1]

United States Redeployments, January-April 1971

(C) Between 1 January and 30 April 1971, the United States carried out Increment 6, nicknamed KEYSTONE ROBIN CHARLIE, withdrawing 60,000 more troops from South Vietnam. This withdrawal, which had been planned in 1970, completed the 150,000 redeployment announced by the President on 20 April 1970. In all, 41,848 US Army, 5,600 US Navy, 373 US Air Force, and 12,179 US Marine Corps personnel departed South Vietnam during the four months. In the course of this increment, the US Army 1st Cavalry Division headquarters and two brigades returned to the United States, leaving only the Division's 3d Brigade and various support elements in Vietnam. Other major US Army units in KEYSTONE ROBIN CHARLIE were the remaining brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (-), the 5th Special Forces Group, and one battalion of the 173d Airborne Brigade. The Marine Corps withdrew

1. For the planning and accomplishment of US redeployments during 1969 and 1970, see The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, Chapters 4 and 10.

the major portion of the III Marine Amphibious Force, reducing its strength in Vietnam by half. With the completion of Increment 6, authorized US strength in South Vietnam stood at 284,000 while actual strength sank to 272,073.[2]

Planning for the Next Presidential Announcement

(U) Even though there had been no decision or public announcement of further troop reductions beyond the 150,000 to be withdrawn by April 1971, both the American public and the US Congress expected the redeployments to continue. Accordingly, the first months of 1971 saw a continuing review by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense of the matter of additional US troop withdrawals in anticipation of another Presidential announcement upon completion of KEYSTONE ROBIN CHARLIE. It was unlikely that the Joint Chiefs of Staff could reverse or even slow the momentum of US redeployments, but they did face a number of difficult questions in carrying out their responsibility to insure the safety of those US troops remaining in Vietnam and to protect the goals of the Vietnamization program.

(~~TS~~) Despite the lack of any Presidential decision on redeployments beyond April 1971, the Secretary of Defense had set forth budget guidelines on 5 June 1970 for US force and activity levels in Vietnam for FY 1971 through FY 1973. With regard to force levels, he had directed assumption of a US strength of 260,000 men by 30 June 1971 (end FY 1971) lowered to a 25,000-man MAAG structure with a 19,000-man supplement by the end of FY 1973. But subsequent budgetary and manpower decisions

2. ~~(S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, ~~(C)~~ pp. F-4, F-6 - F-9, J-16.

during 1970 convinced the Joint Chiefs of Staff that even an authorized strength of 260,000 could not be attained. They had brought this matter to the attention of the Secretary of Defense on 17 December 1970, showing how budget and manpower restrictions had necessitated changes in earlier planning factors. Consequently, they said, the 5 June 1970 force goals could no longer be met. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, with one exception, recommended a revised US force structure in Vietnam for the end of FY 1971 of 255,000 men (198,000 Army, 11,600 Navy, 44,700 Air Force, and 700 Marine Corps) in place of the 260,000 figure previously approved by the Secretary. For the end of FY 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, again with one dissenter, called for a US structue of 200,000 (152,800 Army, 8,400 Navy, 38,100 Air Force, and 700 Marine Corps) in South Vietnam. The lone dissenter in both instances was the Army Chief of Staff, General William C. Westmoreland, who believed that his service could meet such levels in Vietnam only through serious degradation of force levels elsewhere, including NATO.[3]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense had deferred a decision on the JCS recommendations pending a visit to Vietnam in January 1971, but he did assure the Joint Chiefs of Staff that funds to maintain their proposed manpower strengths were included in the FY 1972 budget recommended to the President. Thereafter, on the last day of 1970, the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved Program Budget Decision 505, which provided funds to support a US Army force level in Vietnam of 198,000 at end of FY 1971, as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of

3. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 392-402.

Staff, but only 115,000 by the end of FY 1972, instead of the 152,800 proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[4]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense did travel to South Vietnam in January 1971. During the course of the visit, he, General Abrams, and Ambassador Bunker met on 11 January with President Thieu, who raised another matter to be considered in redeployment planning. He suggested that the bulk of any additional US redeployments in 1971 be delayed until after the South Vietnamese elections scheduled for the forthcoming August and October. Mr. Laird was noncommittal in reply, indicating that he would raise the matter with President Nixon and US "military leaders."[5]

(TS) Despite Secretary Laird's earlier promise, he did not make a decision on Southeast Asia force and activity levels upon his return from Vietnam in January 1971, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded further comments on this matter on 16 February 1971. They informed the Secretary that the field commanders concurred in the JCS recommendations of the previous December for total US forces of approximately 200,000, including 151,945 US Army troops, in South Vietnam at the end of FY 1972. This level, according to the field commanders, would be sufficient to reinforce the RVNAF, prevent a serious setback to Vietnamization, and meet contingencies that might develop. It would also provide US military resources to encourage the Republic

4. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2339/333-2, 6 Jan 71, JMF 907/323 (7 Nov 70). (TS-GP 3) JCS 2472/695-1 (p. 44), 27 Jan 71, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70).

5. (TS) Memo of Conversation, 11 Jan 71, Att to Memo, MilAsst to SecDef to CJCS, 19 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 71.

of Vietnam to continue combat and combat support assistance to the Government of Cambodia, assistance considered essential to the eventual success of Vietnamization.

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff acknowledged a "severe" impact on the US Army in supporting an end FY 1972 manpower authorization of 151,945 in South Vietnam, stating that additional funds and manpower would be required beyond that included in Program Budget Decision 505. Nevertheless, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that "at this point in time," the stated requirements of the field commanders were "prudent planning goals." They promised another assessment of the matter by 30 April 1971 and urged maintenance of the flow of draftees at a high level through the first half of 1971 in order to maintain the option of a 200,000-man strength in Vietnam at the end of FY 1972.[6]

(~~TS~~) Meantime, on 10 February 1971, the Deputy Secretary of Defense had issued tentative fiscal guidance for FY 1973-1977 that projected a US force structure in South Vietnam at the end of FY 1972 of 153,600, including 115,000 Army, 8,400 Navy, 29,600 Air Force, and 600 Marine Corps men. Thereafter the Secretary of Defense directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 February to use these figures for future planning. They were well below what the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders had recommended, and the Army strength was the same as that in Program Budget Decision 505, one which the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered inadequate. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out these discrepancies to the Secretary

6. (~~TS~~ GP 3) JCSM-59-71 to SecDef, 16 Feb 71, Encl to JCS 2472/695-1, 27 Jan 71, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70).

on 3 March 1971, reiterating that a US force level of 200,000 in Vietnam at the end of FY 1972 was a prudent planning goal at that time.[7]

Contingency Planning for a Cease-Fire

(TS) In late 1970 and early 1971, the possibility of a political settlement and a cease-fire arose, adding another factor to be considered in the planning of further US withdrawals. On 18 November 1970, a few weeks after President Nixon had offered a cease-fire in place,[8] Secretary Laird had asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a contingency plan for accelerated US redeployments on a schedule that would provide a secure withdrawal of US forces and an orderly turnover of the US combat role to the Republic of Vietnam based on a cease-fire to take place on 1 January 1971. He wanted the plan prepared "on a close-hold basis," without even the participation of the field commanders.[9]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff had submitted an appropriate outline plan on 12 December 1970. All combat troops would be redeployed by 31 December 1971; a "rollup" force would be retained until the spring of 1972 to dispose of facilities, materiel, and supplies; and a "shortfall" force to offset South Vietnamese deficiencies until completion of the RVNAF

7. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, et al., 10 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2458/769, 12 Feb 71; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-95-71 to SecDef 3 Mar 71, Encl A to JCS 2458/769-1, 26 Feb 71; JMF 550 (10 Feb 71). (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 23 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2472/695-2, 26 Feb 71, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70).

8. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, p. 499.

9. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 18 Nov 70, Att to JCS 2472/688, 19 Nov 70, JMF 911/374 (18 Nov 70).

improvement and modernization program would redeploy in the period between 1 January 1972 and 1 July 1973. By the latter date, US forces in Vietnam would be reduced to a MAAG and MAAG supplement[10] and if required, the MAAG and its supplement could be withdrawn by October 1973.[11]

(~~TS~~) Secretary Laird approved the plan on 30 December for planning purposes, but considered it only one option. Since the President had made clear US willingness to negotiate an agreed timetable for complete troop redeployments as part of an overall settlement, Mr. Laird asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to study a more rapid redeployment schedule, in which all US troops, including the rollup and shortfall forces, would be withdrawn by 31 December 1971 with retention of a MAAG and MAAG supplement or a Defense Attache Office. This time, at the request of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary authorized participation of the field commanders in the planning.[12]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff furnished the Secretary of Defense their second cease-fire redeployment plan on 30 January 1971. It contained four variants, differing only in the size and functions of the MAAG structure retained in Vietnam upon completion of the US redeployment. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the plan had "significantly undesirable features," including disruption of the Vietnamization

10. The MAAG supplement would provide intelligence, communications, and other support functions not organic to the MAAG.

11. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-570-70 to SecDef, 12 Dec 70, Encl to JCS 2472/688-1, 9 Dec 70, JMF 911/374 (18 Nov 70).

12. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 30 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2472/688-2, 31 Dec 70, JMF 911/374 (18 Nov 70).

program and the development of the RVNAF. Therefore they recommended that the plan be considered only as an illustrative outline for accelerated US withdrawal in the event of a cease-fire. Subsequently, both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV prepared redeployment contingency plans for a possible cease-fire. No such development was forthcoming in 1971, however, and there was no occasion to use any of these plans.[13]

COMUSMACV Plan 208

(TS) While in Saigon during January 1971, Secretary Laird directed General Abrams to prepare on a very close-hold basis a contingency plan to reduce US troops in South Vietnam to a level of 60,000 by September 1972. General Abrams completed the plan, Contingency Plan 208, on 8 March 1971 and a team from his headquarters presented it to the Secretary of Defense on 16-17 March 1971. The field commander based his plan on a number of assumptions, including the following three with implications for the security of his command beyond 1 January 1972: (1) current and planned cross-border operations would further reduce the capability of the Viet Cong-North Vietnamese Army to conduct major offensive action against the Republic of Vietnam; (2) there would be no major political upheavals in South Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia; (3) tactical air sortie rates of 10,000 and 8,000 per month through FY 1972 and 1973, respectively, would be available, together with 1,000 B-52 sorties per month in both fiscal years.

(TS) Contingency Plan 208 would retain sufficient US troops in the Republic of Vietnam during the summer

13. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-43-71 to SecDef, 30 Jan 71, Encl to JCS 2472/688-3, 27 Jan 71; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-78-71 to SecDef, 19 Feb 71 (derived from JCS 2472/688-4); JMF 911/374 (18 Nov 70).

and fall of 1971 to provide stability during the South Vietnamese congressional and presidential elections, as President Thieu had requested; would allow acceleration of retrograding of US supplies and equipment; and would facilitate the redeployment of the equipment of one Thai brigade. Under the plan, US troop redeployments would average a little more than 13,300 per month for FY 1972, and resulting US force levels would be: 255,000 by 30 June 1971, 233,000 by 31 October 1971, 95,00 by 30 June 1972, and 60,000 by 31 August 1972. The level of 95,000 on 30 June 1972 would be far below that called for in the tenative fiscal guidance issued by the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 10 February 1971.[14]

(~~S~~) On 18 March, COMUSMACV provided CINCPAC additional comments on future force withdrawals in response to Admiral McCain's request. As redeployment progressed beyond 1 May 1971, he said,

> the ability of U.S. ground forces to influence the situation in RVN will rapidly decrease and an increasing share of the burden will have to be assumed by the RVNAF. As each subsequent increment redeploys flexibility essential to accommodating changes falls off rapidly and the total spectrum of redeployment actions requires precision and coordination.

With the removal of the bulk of US ground troops by late 1971, General Abrams observed, the US role would

14. COMUSMACV CONPLAN 208 is not found in JCS Files, but it is discussed in: (~~TS~~) CM-722-71 to DJS, 19 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71; and (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-145-71 to SecDef, 26 Mar 71, Encl to JCS 2472/725-1, 25 Mar 71, JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71).

then be limited to the "dynamic defense" of US installations, protection of equipment and supplies to be retrograded, and assistance in RVNAF improvement. He thought that US force levels as of 1 July 1972 might vary anywhere between 153,000, as provided in the Deputy Secretary of Defense's tentative fiscal guidance, and the 90,000 set forth in his contingency plan. He doubted, however, that forces larger than those in his plan could influence the situation. Moreover, General Abrams believed that in the current "U.S. national environment" US forces remaining in South Vietnam by September 1972 would be down to what he had proposed. Therefore he recommended approval of Contingency Plan 208 for detailed planning with a 1 September 1972 force level goal varying from 60,000 to 90,000 spaces. He also recommended planning for and initiation of necessary long lead-time actions to accomplish transfer and retrograde of excess equipment and stocks, the retention of sufficient air assets in Southeast Asia throughout FY 1972 and FY 1973, and continuation of the "single air war concept" throughout the period.[15]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the COMUSMACV views in executive session, and Admiral Moorer informed both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC on 19 March 1971 that, although the Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized the necessity of taking cognizance of political realities, they believed their recommendation to higher authority on US troop redeployments should be based "primarily" on military considerations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff

15. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 181020Z Mar 71, JCS IN 79909, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

wanted to get an early decision on US troop redeployments through 31 December 1971, but with a public announcement by the President for only the withdrawals in the period May through October 1971.[16]

Further JCS Recommendations

(S) Meantime, on 17 March, the Secretary of Defense requested further JCS consideraton of US redeployments from Vietnam in preparation for a Presidential announcement in April. He wanted evaluation of three alternatives: (1) COMUSMACV contingency Plan 208, providing for a US force in South Vietnam of 95,000 by 30 June 1972 and 60,000 by 31 August 1972; (2) a withdrawal of approximately 12,000 spaces each month reaching a MAAG/MAAG supplement structure of 43,000 by the end of calendar year 1972; (3) the tentative fiscal guidance of 10 February 1971 with the objective of a US structure of 153,600 in Vietnam by the end of FY 1972.[17]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff sought the views of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV before replying to the Secretary. General Abrams reiterated his support for his Contingency Plan 208 with a US force level between 60,000 and 90,000 by 1 September 1972. Admiral McCain, however, recognized the dilemma of reconciling military requirements and political realities and proposed deferral of a final decision on end FY 1972 force levels until a further assessment could be made in late 1971. Pending such a reappraisal, he recommended a "purely military position" supporting a 200,000 force level at the

16. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6729 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 19 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

17. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 17 Mar 71, Att to JCS 2472/725, 17 Mar 71, JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71).

end of FY 1972, as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders in February,[18] with reduction to about 120,000 by the end of December 1972. Moreover, he thought any announcement should cover only redeployments through October 1971.[19]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted their response to the Secretary of Defense on 26 March 1971. They outlined for him the varying levels of the three alternatives as well as required air sorties to support those levels. They also presented the Secretary a fourth alternative, the "MACV/CINCPAC/JCS Planning Goals," which was the force recommendation presented by them in February, providing for an end FY 1972 force structure of approximately 200,000 (199,000 in this instance). The Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned Secretary Laird that all four withdrawal alternatives involved extremely high risks unless supported by adequate air sorties. They did not favor the adoption of any of the four, but did present the following minimum essential US force levels in South Vietnam through 1971, which corresponded exactly with Contingency Plan 208 figures for 1971: 255,000 on 30 June, 233,000 on 31 October, and 199,000 on 31 December. They recommended the necessary air sorties to support these force levels and requested provision of additional funding and manpower as necessary. Finally, they urged announcement of redeployment plans only

18. See above , pp. 137-138.

19. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 232342Z Mar 71, JCS IN 91002; (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 220310Z Mar 71, readdressed as CINCPAC 232341Z Mar 71, (info CJCS), JCS IN 91011; CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

through 31 October 1971 and no decision on redeployments beyond 31 December 1971.[20]

(TS) Three days later, on 29 March 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff met with Secretary Laird and discussed two additional redeployment proposals: one of 100,00 troops between 1 May 1971 and 1 January 1972, and the other of 150,000 troops between 1 May 1971 and 1 May 1972. In this discussion, as Admiral Moorer told CINCPAC and COMUSMACV several days later, Secretary Laird indicated that future US redeployments would proceed at a rate of at least 12,500 per month.[21]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the field commanders both their 26 March recommendations and a description of the additional alternatives discussed with the Secretary on 29 March. On 1 April, Admiral Moorer supplied the Secretary of Defense with COMUSMACV's comments on these alternatives. He concurred in the JCS position, which reflected his own Contingency Plan 208. In addition, he considered the alternative to withdraw 100,000 US troops between 1 May 1971 and 1 January 1972 excessive since this would redeploy 15,000 more troops than proposed in Contingency Plan 208. The withdrawal of 150,000 US forces between 1 May 1971 and 1 May 1972, on the other hand, would be manageable, the General believed, since it would actually redeploy 5,000 less troops than Contingency Plan 208 during the same period. General Abrams also supported periodic

20. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-145-71 to SecDef, 26 Mar 71, Encl to JCS 2472/725-1, 25 Mar 71, JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71).

21. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7576 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 31 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7525 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 30 Mar 71, CJCS msg files.

short term redeployment announcements in preference to one covering a longer period.[22]

The President's Decision

(U) On 7 April 1971, President Nixon made the long anticipated redeployment anouncement, stating that he was increasing the rate of US troop withdrawals. Between 1 May and 1 December 1971, 100,000 more US troops would leave South Vietnam. At the same time, he called upon Hanoi to engage in serious negotiations to end the war and to agree to the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of war. Despite heavy pressure to name a date for ending US involvement in Vietnam, the President declined to do so, explaining that such action would throw away the principal bargaining counter to win release of US prisoners as well as remove the enemy's strongest incentive to end the war by negotiation and give enemy commanders information to plan attacks against remaining US forces at the most vulnerable time.[23]

(~~TS~~) The President did not follow the military advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in this redeployment decision. He chose an option that was both larger and faster than any considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The President's decision would result in a US strength of 184,000 men in South Vietnam by 1 December 1971, whereas the Joint Chiefs had only reluctantly recommended a figure of 199,000 as the minimum level by 31 December 1971. The nearest thing to the President's

22. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-766-71 to SecDef, 1 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Apr-Jun 71.

23. President's Address to the Nation, "Report on the Situation in Southeast Asia," 7 Apr 71, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1971 (1972), pp. 522-527.

option considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff was the withdrawal of 100,000 troops in the period May through December 1971, a possibility that both COMUSMACV and the Joint Chiefs of Staff judged "excessive." Evidently, as had been the case in 1969 and 1970, political realities influenced the President to decide on redeployments larger than those recommended by his principal military advisers.

(TS) Two days later, on 9 April 1971, Secretary Laird confirmed the President's announcement, authorizing troop levels in South Vietnam of no more than 254,700 on 30 June 1971, no less than 205,000 on 1 October, and no more than 184,000 on 1 December 1971. Several days later, he informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that although the President had not announced US troop redeployments for the period after 1 December 1971, he had committed himself to continuing the current pace of withdrawal until US troops were reduced to the size of a MAAG.[24]

US Redeployments, May-November 1971

(C) Following the President's decision on 7 April, the Services, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV planned and carried out, with JCS approval, the 100,000-man withdrawal in three increments. Increment 7, nicknamed KEYSTONE ORIOLE ALPHA, removed 29,300 troops during the period 1 May-30 June 1971; Increment 8, KEYSTONE ORIOLE BRAVO, 28,700 between 1 July and 31 August 1971; and Increment 9, KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE, 42,000 from

24 (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 9 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/725-2, 12 Apr 71, JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71). (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2339/342, 14 Apr 71, JMF 907/520 (12 Apr 71).

1 September through 30 November 1971. ALPHA consisted of 15,030 Army forces, 516 Navy, 985 Air Force, and 12,769 Marine Corps; another 821 in-country Marine Corps spaces were transferred to the Air Force. The total Marine Corps reduction of 13,590 consisted of the II Marine Amphibious Brigade, the 1st Regiment of the 1st Marine Division, two attack fighter squadrons of the 1st Marine Air Wing, and remaining combat support and combat service support elements. This withdrawal left only 546 US Marines in South Vietnam on 30 June 1971 and ended the active combat role of the US Marine Corps in South Vietnam. Major Army units in KEYSTONE ORIOLE ALPHA were two battalions of the 23d Infantry Division and one of the 101st Airborne Division (airmobile).[25]

(~~C~~) The 28,700 US forces withdrawn in KEYSTONE ORIOLE BRAVO were made up of: 21,769 Army troops including two combat brigades, the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (mechanized) and the 173d Airborne Brigade (-); 1,122 Navy forces associated with three landing craft repair ships, 5,700 Air Force personnel representing one tactical reconnaissance squadron, two tactical airlift squadrons, four tactical fighter squadrons, and one special operations squadron; and 109 Marines.[26]

(~~TS~~) There was some delay in approval of the troop list for KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE because of a question over the final destination of one Air Force unit, the 480th Tactical Fighter Squadron. The Air Force wanted to return the unit to the United States while CINCPAC wanted it moved to Thailand. Subsequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the troop list so the

25. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~C~~) pp. F-9 - F-11.
26. Ibid., (C) p. F-11.

redeployment increment could proceed on schedule, holding the question of the Air Force squadron in abeyance. Eventually, on 6 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified the field commanders that the 480th Tactical Fighter Squadron would return to the United States. Meantime, KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE was proceeding and by 30 November the following forces had left South Vietnam: 35,000 Army troops (two infantry brigade headquarters, six infantry battalions, two armored cavalry squadrons, ten artillery battalions, 12 aviation companies, and five engineer battalions), 1,400 Navy forces (the in-country portion of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5, elements of logistics support units, and spaces associated with miscellaneous staff and unit drawdowns), and 5,600 Air Force personnel (two tactical fighter squadrons, two tactical airlift squadrons, and one special operations squadron).[27]

(C) The withdrawal schedules for KEYSTONE ORIOLE, BRAVO, AND CHARLIE allowed the maximum flexibility in logistics planning while at the same time assuring political stability in South Vietnam during the election period. The completion of KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE on 30 November 1971 accomplished the 100,000 withdrawal announced by the President on 7 April 1971 and brought actual US strength down to 178,266, well below the

27. (~~TS~~-GP 3) MJCS-274-71 to SecDef, 11 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/725-6, 14 Sep 71; (~~TS~~-GP 4) J5M 1690-71 to Secy, JCS, 15 Oct 71; JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71). (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. F-11 - F-13. (~~S~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 1359 to CINCPAC, 6 Oct 71 (derived from JCS 2339/345-9), JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 2.

184,000 figure authorized by the Secretary of Defense for that date.[28]

(~~S~~) In the course of this 100,000 redeployment, the drawdown reached the point where US troops no longer engaged in active ground combat operations. During the summer of 1971, US ground forces assumed a mission of "dynamic defense," protecting US installations, processing equipment and supplies to be retrograded, and assisting the development of the RVNAF.[29] At this time, the RVNAF assumed responsibility for all major ground combat action. General Abrams evolved the dynamic defense concept in late June, and the shift by US forces from active combat to security operations occurred gradually in the succeeding months. It was only in November, however, that President Nixon announced that US forces in South Vietnam were in a defensive position. This turnover of combat responsibility to the South Vietnamese marked the end of the first phase of Vietnamization. Now US forces in South Vietnam would concentrate on the second phase, the development of air, naval, artillery, and logistical support capability necessary for "effective independent security." This second phase had, in fact, already been in progress concurrently with the first, but would take much longer to complete.[30]

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28. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. J-37.

29. See Chapter 5, pp. 219-223, for a discussion of the changed mission for US forces in Vietnam.

30. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. I-5; (~~S~~) p. IV-10. (U) Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, p. 1103. (U) Statement by SecDef Melvin R. Laird Before the Senate Armed Services Committee on FY 1972-1976 Defense Program and the 1972 Defense Budget, 15 Mar 71, p. 31.

Planning the Next Redeployment

(TS) Immediately after the announcement of 7 April, the President and his advisers, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense, began to consider the size and timing of US withdrawals beyond 1 December. On 21 April 1971, Secretary Laird issued guidance for the FY 1973-1977 Defense Program that included his long promised decision on US force and activity levels for Southeast Asia. He set forth the following US force levels in South Vietnam: 254,700 at the end of FY 1971, 100,000 at the end of FY 1972, and 43,400 at the end of FY 1973. The Secretary anticipated that these force levels would be revised over the next few months. Since the President had approved redeployments only through 1 December, the assumed level for the end of FY 1972, Mr. Laird advised, was subject to "substantial change."[31]

(TS) Meantime, the President on 15 April had directed a complete assessment of the situation in South Vietnam through calendar year 1972. Carried out within the NSC system, this assessment is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. It examined principally enemy and allied strategies and needed improvements for the RVNAF, though, of course, the subject of US redeployments entered into the consideration. The results of the two-month review were summarized by the Deputy Secretary of Defense in a draft decision paper for the President of 18 June 1971. It was the general agreement of the Senior Review Group, Deputy Secretary Packard said, that the probable enemy threat in the

31. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, et al., 21 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2458/780, 23 Apr 71, JMF 555 (21 Apr 71) sec 1.

coming period, coupled with continuing US redeployments, required additional measures to strengthen the South Vietnamese forces, and he outlined a series of incremental alternatives to accomplish this objective. The Deputy Secretary also presented two US withdrawal options for 1972: redeployment at a rate of 12,500 men per month, reaching a level of 100,000 by the end of FY 1972 and 50,000-to 70,000 by 30 September 1972; or a monthly rate of 17,700, attaining a 50,000 to 70,000 level by 30 June 1972. In the end, however, the President approved only measures to improve the RVNAF and made no decision at that time on the size of further US redeployments.[32]

(~~TS~~) Subsequently, on 6 August 1971, after returning from another visit to Saigon, Secretary Laird requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for planning purposes, to develop two possible forces of 60,000 US troops in South Vietnam. He wanted a "refined and updated" version of the balanced force called for in COMUSMACV's Contingency Plan 208 and another to be achieved by the end of FY 1972 that would maximize in-country helicopter lift.[33]

(~~C~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff furnished the two force structures to the Secretary of Defense on 20 August 1971. The modified CONPLAN 208 force would provide a reasonable amount of additional helicopter

32. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, Dep SecDef, DCI, and CJCS, 15 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/739, 16 Apr 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 1. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Dr. Kissinger et al., 18 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-19, 21 Jun 71, same file, sec 4. (S-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 118, 3 Jul 71, JMF 001 (CY 1971) NSDMs.

33. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 6 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2472/773, 9 Aug 71, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 1.

lift--enough to meet requirements--without sacrificing other capabilities. The second force would provide "maximum" lift, but at the expense of other capabilities, and would thereby restrict flexibility. Therefore the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred the modified CONPLAN 208 force, the more so since it would spread the redeployment over a longer time, i.e. until September, instead of 1 July 1972.[34]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense rejected the modified CONPLAN 208 force endorsed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, apparently because it did not meet the 1 July 1972 target date. United States objectives in Southeast Asia, he told the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 26 August 1971, required planning for a US force alternative that included the following: (1) a US strength in South Vietnam of 60,000 by the end of FY 1972 (30 June 1972); (2) priority missions in South Vietnam of helicopter support to permit the equivalent of 1.5 assault helicopter companies and 0.5 assault support helicopter companies for each ARVN/VNMC division, logistics retrograde and RVNAF backup support, intelligence collection, advisory effort, and security; (3) turnover of all functions practicable to the RVNAF, including security for US forces where located close to South Vietnamese facilities; (4) provision of tactical air and tactical airlift by out-of-country and offshore forces as far as possible with extraordinary procedures to insure adequate air defense and timely tactical air support in South Vietnam; (5) maximum base consolidation and turnover to the Government of Vietnam. In conclusion, the Secretary stressed the vital necessity for placing US forces "in a posture to carry

34. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-383-71 to SecDef, 20 Aug 71, Encl to JCS 2472/773-1, 18 Aug 71, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 1.

out any redeployment plan the President should choose to announce in November." Administrative difficulties, such as logistics retrograde or base turnover, he insisted, must not be allowed to limit the President's options.[35]

(TS) Meantime, General Abrams had prepared and submitted to CINCPAC on 28 August his OPLAN J208, a revision of Contingency Plan 208. This new plan presented alternative US force levels of 100,000 or 60,000[36] in South Vietnam on 1 September 1972. General Abrams observed, however, that the 100,000 level was a "notional" force only, since he expected to reach that level in the first half of June 1972. He considered the 60,000 structure more "definitive" and the plan included a concept of operations and employment for that force level. In OPLAN J208, COMUSMACV assumed a tactical air sortie rate of 8,000 per month through FY 1973 and provided for a balanced force to conduct the air war, to furnish combat support and combat service support to the RVNAF, to provide adviser and assistance, to provide limited US ground security units for dynamic defense of command and vital installations, to allow a sustaining base for the residual US force, and to accomplish orderly retrograde of essential supplies and equipment. General Abrams believed that US redeployment to a 60,000 level on 1 September 1972 could be met with an acceptable risk, but that

35. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 26 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2472/773-2, 27 Aug 71, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 1.
36. The plan itself addressed a force level of 62,000, but COMUSMACV in his forwarding letter consistently cited a 60,000 level.

any faster withdrawal would risk the continued success of Vietnamization.[37]

(TS) Admiral McCain forwarded COMUSMACV OPLAN J208 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 7 September 1971, but in the interval since COMUSMACV had prepared the plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had asked the field commanders for an alternative force concept to meet the requirements as outlined by the Secretary of Defense on 26 August 1971. Accordingly, COMUSMACV prepared and submitted to CINCPAC on 5 October 1971 OPLAN J208A, providing for a 60,000 force level in South Vietnam by the end of FY 1972 (30 June 1972). Essentially, OPLAN J208A was the same as OPLAN J208 but compressed to meet the earlier completion date of 30 June 1972 instead of 1 September 1972 and with provision for helicopter support as directed by the Secretary of Defense. Admiral McCain relayed this latest COMUSMACV plan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 8 October characterizing it as "reasonable." He warned, however, that any adverse change in the situation in Vietnam might render the plan unduly risky.[38]

(TS) On 22 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded OPLAN J208A to the Secretary of Defense, comparing it in detail with the alternative they had recommended on 20 August, namely the revised

37. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV OPLAN J208, 25 Aug 71, Encl with (TS) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 28 Aug 71, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71).

38. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3020 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 27 Aug 71. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 6054 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 31 Aug 71. (TS-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, "Future Force Planning (U)," 7 Sep 71; (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV OPLAN J208A, 4 Oct 71; (TS) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 5 Oct 71; (TS-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 8 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2472/773-3, 10 Oct 71; JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 1.

Contingency Plan 208. They labeled the former the "alternative force" and the latter the "revised MACV CONPLAN 208." Projected US force levels under these two structures were as follows:

Date	Alternative Force 30 June 1972	Revised MACV COMPLAN 208 1 September 1972
1 December 1971	184,000	184,000
1 May 1972	84,000	122,000
1 July 1972	60,300	-
1 September 1972	-	61,803

The Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that the "alternative" force would provide the required helicopter lift as desired by the Secretary and that the final major combat force compositions of both forces would be essentially the same. The primary difference was in the timing, with the "alternative" force being reached two months earlier and requiring a more accelerated redeployment of the remaining US major combat and combat support forces between December 1971 and April 1972. The Joint Chiefs of Staff foresaw two major impacts of the "alternative" force. One was the redeployment of US engineer units at a more rapid rate than previously planned, delaying completion of the lines of communication program and, ultimately, hindering the internal development and defense of the Republic of Vietnam. The other was the required closure of air bases at Cam Ranh Bay and Phan Rang during the fourth quarter of FY 1972, necessitating relocation of units in order to maintain the required monthly tactical air sorties through 30 June 1972.

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary that the "alternative" structure would provide a balanced force by 30 June 1972, but they cautioned that the accompanying accelerated removal of US combat support might adversely affect the RVNAF's ability

to absorb and adjust to increased operational responsibilities. They supported the position of the field commanders that, although the risks involved in execution appeared acceptable at that time, changes in the military situation might make its execution risky with respect to the security of US forces, orderly retrograde, and RVNAF development, and might reduce leverage for negotiating the release of US prisoners of war.[39]

The November Announcement

(U) While the Joint Chiefs of staff and the Secretary of Defense struggled during the summer of 1971 with the issues of the size and timing of further US withdrawals, the President and his national security adviser, Dr. Kissinger, had pursued secret negotiations to end the war.[40] In efforts not publicly revealed until the following year, the United States offered at the end of May 1971 to set a deadline for withdrawal of its troops from South Vietnam in exchange for a prisoner release and a cease-fire. Again in August 1971, the United States offered to withdraw all its troops within nine months of the date of an agreement, providing an agreement was signed by 1 November 1971. But when 1 November 1971 passed with no positive response from the North Vietnamese, the President moved ahead with preparations for the announcement of the next US troop redeployment, dispatching Secretary Laird, Admiral Moorer, and the Assistant of Defense (International Security Affairs), G. Warren Nutter, to Saigon for a firsthand assessment.[41]

39. ~~(TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-471-71 to SecDef, 22 Oct 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/773-4, 16 Oct 71, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71).
40. For discussion of the secret negotiations, see Chapter 11, pp. 602-604.
41. (~~C-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. J-36. Dept of State Bulletin, 22 Nov 71, p. 579.

(C) One issue confronting the President as he considered further US redeployments was the possibility of assigning only volunteers to duty in Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had opposed such a practice in May 1971, and they reaffirmed this opposition to the Secretary of Defense on 9 November 1971, stating that a volunteer approach to duty in Vietnam was contrary to the best interests of the US armed forces. It was doubtful that a volunteer force in Vietnam could be sustained with the required force mix. Morover, such a policy would establish an undesirable precedent. The hardships to be endured by troops assigned to South Vietnam, as US involvement dwindled there, they believed, would be no greater than, or very much different from, those in other remote areas such as the Republic of Korea. The JCS advice was heeded, and the United States made no effort to introduce an all volunteer force into South Vietnam.[42]

(U) After consulting with Secreary Laird upon his return from Saigon, President Nixon made his decision on further redeployments. At a press conference on 12 November 1971, he announced that 45,000 US troops would leave South Vietnam during the next two months--25,000 in December 1971 and 20,000 during January 1972. The offensive ground combat role for US forces in South Vietnam had ended, he said, and troops remaining were in a defensive position. He promised another redeployment announcement before the first of February 1972,

42. (~~S~~-GP 4) JCSM-497-71 to SecDef, 9 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/784-1, 8 Nov 71; (~~S~~-GP 4) J-1 Briefing Sheet for CJCS on JCS 2472/784-1, 8 Nov 71; JMF 911/105 (1 Nov 71). (~~S~~-GP 4) CM-928-71 to SecDef, 31 May 71, Att to N/H of JCS 2472/740, 1 Jun 71, JMF 911/105 (16 Apr 71).

stating that the size of this withdrawal would be determined by the level of enemy activity and, particularly, the rate and route of enemy infiltration during December and January; the progress of the RVNAF; and movement in obtaining the release of all prisoners of war in Southeast Asia and a cease-fire.[43]

(U) Three days later, on 15 Novemer 1971, the Secretary of Defense authorized the Joint Chiefs of Staff to proceed with redeployments as announced by the President, reaching 159,000 spaces or below by the end of December 1971 and 139,000 by 31 January 1972. For planning purposes the Joint Chiefs of Staff were to "look towards a US force goal in the Republic of Vietnam of 60,000 by 30 June 1972," while giving consideration to levels above and below that figure in order to maintain flexibility. At the President's request, Mr. Laird directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to take measures to insure against any comment or speculation on what US force levels would be after January 1972.[44]

(U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on 19 November of the Secretary's guidance. With regard to the 30 June 1972 force structure, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that COMUSMACV OPLAN J208A provided an adequate basis for a 60,000 level and J208 for a higher level, but since there was no plan for a structure smaller than 60,000 by the end of FY 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested CINCPAC to prepare an appropriate plan.[45]

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43. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, pp. 1101-1105.
44. Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 15 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2472/786, 16 Nov 71, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).
45. Msg, JCS 2990 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 19 Nov 71 (derived from JCS 2472/786-1), JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).

US Redeployments, December 1971-January 1972

(~~C~~) Subsequently, CINCPAC prepared and the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved on 26 November the troop list for the 45,000-man withdrawal announced by the President on 12 November. Designated Increment 10 (KEYSTONE MALLARD), the redeployment began on 1 December and met the schedule announced by the President with 25,000 forces departing during December 1971 and another 20,000 in January 1972. In all KEYSTONE MALLARD comprised 36,718 Army, 2,017 Navy, and 6,265 Air Force troops. Major Army units included two infantry brigade headquarters, six infantry battalions, five air cavalry troops, five artillery battalions, 13 separate aviation companies, and other combat support elements organic to the redeploying combat units. The Air Force withdrew one tactical airlift and one tactical air support squadron; the Navy removed various minor support elements.[46]

(~~C~~) With the completion of KEYSTONE MALLARD on 31 January 1972, the United States had announced and carried out 10 redeployment increments totaling 410,500 troops and including 102 maneuver battalions, 66 artillery battalions, and 33 attack and fighter squadrons. United States strength in South Vietnam at the end of January 1972 stood at 136,505.[47] including only 13 maneuver battalions.[48]

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46. (~~TS~~-GP 4) MJCS-355-71 to SecDef, 26 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2472/786-2, 2 Dec 71, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71). (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~C~~) pp. F-13 - F-15.

47. US strength in South Vietnam on 31 December 1971, midway through KEYSTONE MALLARD was 158,119, (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~C~~) p. J-39.

48. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~C~~) pp. F-15, F-1-1.

Reduction of Free World Military Assistance Forces

(TS) As the United States withdrew its troops from Vietnam and relinquished its ground combat role, the other Free World troop contributing countries began to consider reduction in their contingents in Vietnam. At peak strength in 1970, the forces of these countries totaled about 70,000 and amounted to more than three full US Army infantry divisions. During 1970, four Free World countries besides the United States had combat forces deployed in South Vietnam. The Republic of Korea was the largest contributor with a Marine brigade, two infantry divisions, and support units for a total of about 50,000 troops. Next came the Kingdom of Thailand with small naval and air force units and the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Force (RTAVF), also known as the Black Panther Division, and subsequently the Black Leopard Division, consisting of a headquarters, two infantry brigades of three battalions each, two light artillery battalions, one medium artillery battalion, a cavalry squadron, and engineer battalion, and appropriate support, for a total of approximately 11,000 men. Australia had about 7,600 combat troops in Vietnam, including a combat brigade and support, a squadron of Canberra bombers, a detachment of Caribou aircraft, a guided missile destroyer, and combat advisers, and New Zealand had two infantry companies and some other units, amounting to about 550 men. Australia and New Zealand bore the cost of furnishing and supporting their troops in Vietnam although the United States did supply some selected support on a

reimbursable basis. The ROK and Thai troops in Vietnam, on the other hand, had always been fully supported by the United States.[49]

(Ø) With the accelerating US troop withdrawals in 1970, both Australia and New Zealand announced reduction of their forces in Vietnam. The first redeployment of Free World military assistance forces from Vietnam occurred in November 1970 when New Zealand withdrew a combat unit, Company W, and Australia followed that same month with the removal of its 8th Battalion of about 900 men.[50]

(U) At the beginning of 1971 both the Republic of Korea and the Royal Thai Government were contemplating redeployment of some troops from South Vietnam. On 11 January 1971, President Chung Hui Park of Korea announced that his government planned a step-by-step withdrawal of the ROK military forces then in Vietnam. The next day the Prime Minister of Thailand announced plans to redeploy all Thai forces from Vietnam by February 1972, with the first 5,000 troops to leave in July 1971.[51]

(~~TS~~) These announcements, combined with the redeployments already begun by Australia and New Zealand, convinced US officials in Washington of the need for an assessment of the future role of Free World troop contributing countries in South Vietnam. As

49. (~~TS NOFORN~~ GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~S~~) p. G-1, (Ø) pp. IV-31 - IV-38. (~~TS NOFORN~~ GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1971, pp. 128-131. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 262309Z Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan-Feb 71.

50. (~~S NOFORN~~ GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (Ø) pp G-8 - G-15.

51. (~~S NOFORN~~ GP 1) COMCUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. J-2.

the Secretary of Defense told Admiral Moorer on 3 February 1971, the assessment would be an interagency effort within the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam. As the first step in this process, the Departments of State and Defense had dispatched a joint message to the US Embassies in the troop contributing countries requesting responses on this matter. The Secretary told Admiral Moorer that, although Defense participation in the assessment would be within the context of the Ad Hoc Group, he wanted separately the advice and comments of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He posed a number of questions to the Joint Chiefs of Staff including, among others, the following: Should the troop contributing countries be encouraged to maintain a presence in Vietnam? If so, to what extent? What should be the nature of the US commitment to the maintenance of the troop contributing country forces if their members were radically reduced?[52]

(~~TS~~) Asked for his views, CINCPAC told the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 26 February 1971 that the military forces of the troop contributing countries should "phase down roughly parallel to US reductions." He favored encouragement of the troop contributing countries to retain a presence in South Vietnam to foster regional cooperation, to assist the development of the RVNAF, and to promote the economic stability of South Vietnam. He believed that the phaseout of Australian, New Zealand, and Thai military forces would have little impact on plans for Vietnamization, but that the departure of the much larger ROK forces was a different matter. Reduction of the Korean forces, he said, should be subject to the same planning factors as US

52. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 3 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2472/706, 3 Feb 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

redeployments--i.e., based on the ability of the RVNAF to assume the areas of responsibility without serious degradation to overall security. Admiral McCain believed it reasonable to assume a withdrawal of one ROK division or the separate ROK Marine brigade first, followed by other elements, on a time schedule that would permit economical phasing of transportation plus adjustments to special support arrangements such as ROKFV combat rations. Admiral McCain also thought that the United States should provide only equipment, operations and maintenance, and incidental personnel costs related to keeping the ROKFV in South Vietnam as opposed to the current extensive US support to the ROK in South Vietnam plus additional expenses in Korea associated with the maintenance of the ROK forces in Vietnam.[53]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 12 March 1971 gave the Secretary of Defense their views on future troop contributing country forces and roles. They believed that, as the United States withdrew its combat forces from Vietnam, the troop contributing countries should be encouraged to continue their support to the Republic of Vietnam with a shift of emphasis from combat forces and support to civic action, nation-building, and advisory roles. The level of US support for the troop contributing country forces would, they believed, determine the force level retained in South Vietnam, and they noted three courses of action the troop contributing countries might adopt at differing levels of US support. If there was no net cost to the United States, there would probably be no troop contributing country participation in any form with the exception of

53. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 262309Z Feb 71, JCS IN 43286, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71.

Australia and New Zealand; if the United States furnished military assistance and replenishment costs only, then Thailand and the Republic of Korea would likely retain token support forces; but if the United States supplied military assistance, replenishment, and operations and maintenance costs, Thai and ROK noncombat support units would probably be provided as requested.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff urged that the redeployment of ROK troops from South Vietnam follow those of the United States, with the ROK Marine brigade, because of its peculiar logistics arrangements, coming immediately after the departure of the US Marines. Then, with RVN concurrence, the first ROK division-equivalent should return home during the last half of FY 1972 (January to June 1972) and the remaining ROK combat forces should redeploy in the first half of FY 1973 (July-December 1972). Agreeing with CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought that the Republic of Korea should be encouraged to shift participation in South Vietnam to increased military civic action and nation-building support. They added, however, that US support for such continued participation should be negotiated separately without involving the United States in "complex, open-ended support arrangements."[54]

(TS) After considering the JCS comments together with responses from the US Embassies concerned, the Secreary of Defense outlined on 26 March 1971 the Department of Defense position on troop contributing country forces in South Vietnam. He believed that the United States should support withdrawal of the combat forces of these countries at "a measured pace" generally parallel with the US reduction, and at the same

54. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-118-71 to SecDef, 12 Mar 71, Encl to JCS 2472/706-1, 10 Mar 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

time encourage the troop contributing countries to keep, "at least temporarily," a token military force in Vietnam to foster regional cooperation. As a "second stage," he said, the Unted States should suggest that these countries replace their combat contingents with advisory, training, and medical assistance units. With specific reference to the Korean forces, the Secretary favored the JCS position for withdrawal of the ROK Marine brigade in mid-1971, one infantry division in the January-June 1972 period, and the other division thereafter with withdrawal completed by the end of 1972, but he said a decision should await completion of studies then underway in Seoul. As to the Thai forces, Mr. Laird favored an approach to persuade a symbolic Thai presence in South Vietnam, possibly in the civic action and nation-building area.[55]

(U) Subsequently, an "interagency agreement" was reached within the US Government that the nature and extent of the ROKFV presence in South Vietnam would be a matter for negotiation between the Governments of South Vietnam and the Republic of Korea, with the United States in the role of a "closely interested third party." Then, at the invitation of the United States the foreign ministers of Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand met with the South Vietnamese foreign minister and the US Secretary of State in Washington on 23 April 1971 to review troop contributions in Vietnam. The assembled ministers recognized the "notable progress" accomplished in bringing an end to the North Vietnamese aggression in South Vietnam, which permitted reexamination of the future combat role of the troop contributing countries.

55. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, et al., 26 Mar 71, Att to JCS 2472/706-2, 29 Mar 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

They noted both the steady assumption of the South Vietnamese forces of their own self-defense and the continuing US redeployments and agreed that it was possible for them to withdraw "some" of their combat forces. They further agreed that, as their combat forces left Vietnam, they should "strive" to provide military support forces for training, construction, medical, and other similar purposes for "a further period." No announcements of actual force reductions occurred at the meeting, but the ministers did note the already announced plans of Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand to reduce their forces, and the Korean foreign minister stated that his government planned to withdraw one division from South Vietnam though he gave no specific date.[56]

ROK Withdrawals

(TS) The NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam now took up the question of reduction of troop contributing country forces, dealing exclusively with the matter of ROK withdrawals. In a paper prepared in May 1971 for Senior Review Group consideration, the Ad Hoc Group noted that the ROK forces in Vietnam had given a rather "dilatory" performance in the past several years in comparison to their good record in the earlier stages of the war. During 1970, the ROKFV troops had represented 17 percent of the friendly main force strength in MR 1 but had experienced only two percent of the casualties. Similarly, in MR 2, where the ROK troops made up 30 percent of the regular combat forces, they were credited with only 14 percent of battalion days of combat and had taken only 18 percent of the

56. (U) Final Communique, Vietnam Troop Contributing Conference, 23 Apr 71, Dept of State Bulletin, 17 May 71, pp. 635-638. (TS) NSC Ad Hoc Group Study, "Republic of Korea Forces in Vietnam (ROKFV)," p. 14, n.d., Att to (TS-GP 3) JCS 2472/706-3, 27 May 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

casualties. All observers, the Ad Hoc Group said, agreed that the ROKFV was not being used to the greatest advantage. The Group then presented four alternatives for ROK forces in South Vietnam for FY 1972: to maintain the current structure intact, to withdraw the Marine brigade alone or with one of the Army divisions, or to withdraw all three major units. Although the Ad Hoc Group indicated no preference among these alternatives, it did urge that, in negotiations with the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Vietnam, the United States oppose any increase in the cost of US support for the ROKFV beyond that estimated for FY 1972. This position did, in effect, amount to a choice since the first three alternatives would all require increases in support costs for FY 1972. In addition, the Ad Hoc Group believed that the United States should get "considerably enhanced military combat returns for our financial contribution" from whatever Korean forces remained in South Vietnam for any period.[57]

(~~TS~~) The Senior Review Group considered the Ad Hoc Group paper on 24 May 1971 as part of the overall assessment of the situation in South Vietnam.[58] In preparation for this meeting, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) and the Director of the Joint Staff recommended support for alternative four, redeployment of all ROK forces parallel to the US withdrawals, with ROK troops remaining in their current areas until withdrawn to Korea. They also recommended no increase

57. (~~TS~~) NSC Ad Hoc Group Study, "Republic of Korea Forces in Vietnam (ROKFV), n.d., Att to (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCS 2472/706-3, 27 May 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).
58. For discussion of the Vietnam assessment, see Chapter 2, pp. 68-85.

in the US support of the ROKFV beyond that currently estimated for FY 1972.[59]

(TS) General William C. Westmoreland, the Army Chief of Staff and former COMUSMACV, attended the 24 May Senior Review Group meeting as Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since Admiral Moorer was in Europe. He was emphatic about the need to retain some ROK forces in South Vietnam through CY 1972. He did not think the RVNAF could contain a large-scale enemy attack in either MR 1 or MR 2 in view of US redeployments and he favored using the ROKFV to strengthen the defense in the two northern military regions. He suggested the possibility of creating a ROK mobile task force of 8,000 to 12,000 men to meet emergency situations in the two military regions. The Senior Review Group reached no consensus on this matter, but did agree that the Vietnam Ad Hoc Group should prepare a paper for the President setting forth the alternatives with probable effects and estimated costs for each.[60]

(TS) Subsequently, the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam developed a further paper on ROK forces in Vietnam, which was circulated to the SRG members on 18 June 1971. The Ad Hoc Group again noted that the ROKFV was not being used to best advantage. Further, the Group observed that the Korean forces in South Vietnam had been involved in a "continual and well-organized pattern of irregular practices." Investigations had

59. (TS-GP 3) Joint TP for DepSecDef and CJCS for 24 May 71 SRG Mtg, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/706-3, 27 May 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

60. (TS-GP 1) Memo, CSA to CJCS, 16 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/765, 21 Jul 71, JMF 911 (2 Jun 71). (S NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM, 24 May 71. (TS) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState et al., "Vietnam Assessment," 26 May 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 71.

revealed substantial amounts of US funds and property diverted from intended purposes by the ROKFV. The Ad Hoc Group again presented four ROK redeployment alternatives open to the United States. Three of the four were the same as the alternatives of the Group's earlier paper: (1) withdrawal of the entire ROKFV from Vietnam on a schedule roughly parallel to the US withdrawals; (2) retention of the ROKFV in Vietnam through CY 1972, gradually returning it to Korea in CY 1973; (3) return to Korea of a force equal to a division "(the Marine brigade plus support troops)" beginning in October 1971 and keeping two division equivalents in Vietnam through CY 1972. The final alternative of the 18 June paper, reflecting General Westmoreland's earlier proposal, called for the establishment of a ROK mobile task force of 8,000 to 12,000 men to remain in South Vietnam through CY 1972 with the balance of the ROKFV redeploying to Korea following the South Vietnamese presidential election in October 1971. The group had included this last alternative despite the opposition of General Abrams, who had cited the high level of US support required as well as the higher ROK combat exposure and casualty rates involved. No matter which alternative was selected, the Ad Hoc Group again recommended no increase in already planned US support for the ROKFV and insistence on enhanced military return for the US financial contribution.[61]

(~~TS~~) The choice among the ROK force alternatives could not be decided solely on the basis of the forces needed in South Vietnam and the costs involved. In

61. (~~TS~~) NSC Study, "Republic of Korea Forces in Viet-Nam (ROKFV)," n.d., Att to Memo, NSC Staff Secy to USecState et al., 18 Jun 71, Att to (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCS 2472/706-4, 22 Jun 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

the final decision, the President had to consider current US negotiations with the Republic of Korea. The United States had decided in 1970 to withdraw 20,000 US forces from Korea by 30 June 1971. Although President Nixon had directed in October 1970 that there would be no further withdrawals from Korea, both the Departments of State and Defense agreed in general that US ground forces in the Republic of Korea could be further reduced by the end of FY 1973 (30 June 1973). Officials of the two departments believed it desirable for the United States to notify the Republic of Korea one year in advance if it planned further redeployments from Korea. But in this situation, if the United States should press the Republic of Korea to keep the ROKFV in Vietnam, then the Koreans would be in a position to insist that the United States not reduce its force levels in Korea. Nevertheless, the Ad Hoc Group in the 18 June paper suggested that the United States inform the Republic of Korea, "at about the same time we negotiate the issues concerning the ROKFV," of plans for further reductions in US ground forces in Korea during FY 1973.[62]

(~~TS~~) On 23 June 1971, the President selected what amounted to the third alternative proposed by the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam in the 18 June paper. He tentatively decided that the United States would support the continued presence of the two ROK divisions in Vietnam through CY 1972 (allowing redeployment of ROK forces equal to a division in FY 1971) and would reconsider this position after the 1971-1972 Vietnam dry season. In return for this support, however the United States would insist upon improved combat performance by the ROKFV; moreover, the cost of US support

62. Ibid.

would be limited to the amount already estimated for FY 1972. In order to prevent any linkage between the question of ROK troops in Vietnam and the retention of US troops in Korea, the United States would take the position that, in continuing to support the ROKFV in South Vietnam, it was merely acquiescing in a request by the Republic of Vietnam.[63]

(TS) General Westmoreland was somewhat reluctant to accept the President's decision on Korean force withdrawals. He told Admiral Moorer on 16 July that he wanted to make his position and rationale "a matter of record." He feared that the RVNAF could not contain a large-scale enemy attack in either MR 1 or 2 and that it would be prudent to leave all the ROK forces in Vietnam through CY 1972. He believed that the past performance of the ROK forces had led to an underestimation of their capabilities and he again advocated the creation of a ROK mobile task force of 8,000 to 12,000 men available for movement throughout Vietnam. He recognized General Abrams' opposition to such a force, but argued that the advantages would outweigh the disadvantages. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, took no action on General Westmoreland's proposal, which received no further consideration.[64]

(TS) The United States informed the Republic of Korea through diplomatic channels of its decision to support two ROK divisions in Vietnam until 1973, and the Republic of Korea pressed ahead with plans to reduce ther ROKFV accordingly. Shortly thereafter the

63. (TS-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 113, 23 Jun 71, JMF 001 (CY 1971) NSDMs.

64. (TS-GP 1) Memo, CSA to CJCS, 16 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/765, 21 Jul 71, JMF 911 (2 Jun 71).

Republic of Korea announced its intention to withdraw 10,000 troops from Vietnam by June 1972 in the first phase of a redeployment that would eventually reduce the Korean force in Vietnam to about 5,000 troops. The Republic of Korea planned to deactivate one division plus a Marine brigade in the latter part of 1972 so that its armed forces could remain within the 600,000-man strength ceiling as had been agreed with the United States. The Republics of Korea and Vietnam concluded a working arrangement to carry out the redeployment, and the United States had no direct involvement in that arrangement except to encourage both countries in their task and assist wherever possible. Subsequently, the ROK field commander in Vietnam advised COMUSMACV that the 10,000 ROK troops scheduled for redeployment would comprise the 2d Marine Brigade and elements of the ROK 100th Logistical Command.[65]

(C) The actual withdrawal of the first 10,000 ROK forces did not begin until late 1971. Planning for the redeployment called for seven increments and the first two, consisting of 2,449 Korean troops and associated equipment, departed South Vietnam during December 1971. The remaining five increments left during the next four months. The ROK 5th Marine Battalion and the ROK 2d Marine Brigade Headquarters redeployed on 24 February, and the remainder of the 2d Marine Brigade and the 100th Logistical Command left on 1 April completing the 10,000-man ROK withdrawal.[66]

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65. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Encl B, JCS 2472/775, 27 Aug 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71). (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, Top Secret Supplement, p. TSS-12. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1971, p. 143.

66. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. G-9. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. N-1 - N-2.

(~~C~~) The announced intention of the Republic of Korea in July 1971 to begin withdrawal of its forces from Vietnam raised the difficult matter of disposition of ROKFV equipment. Much of the equipment used by the Korean troops in South Vietnam, approximately $70 million in value, was on loan to the Republic of Korea with the title held by the United States. The United States was not committed to transfer any of this equipment to the Republic of Korea except as might be used to replace MAP items lost or destroyed through combat or other normal wear. But "from the standpoint of intergovernmental relations and cost effectiveness," the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders generally favored transfer of the equipment. The matter was further complicated by the fact that the US Congress, in passing the Department of Defense appropriation bills for FY 1971, had stipulated a worldwide limit on the disposal of excess defense articles of $100 million, valued at one-third of original cost.[67]

(~~C~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 August 1971 raised the question of ROKFV equipment with the Secretary of Defense. They favored transfer of all US-titled equipment held by the ROKFV to the Republic of Korea except for the following items: those determined by the Services to be unsuitable for transfer; those that could not be used effectively or maintained by the ROK forces; those that were classified material, including classified munitions; those that were politically sensitive, such a toxic or incapacitating agents and associated munitions; and those required for RVNAF

67. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCS 2472/775, 26 Aug 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71). (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1971, (S) p. 359.

improvement. Cost incident to redeploying the equipment, such as packing and crating, they said, should be applied to the ROK five-year modernization program. The turnover of equipment to the redeploying ROKFV troops should be made in the most favorable possible terms for the Republic of Korea, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, since the cost of reequipping them in Korea would have to be paid out of the military assistance program and would thus reduce the money available for modernization of ROK forces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff requested authority for the timely transfer of US-titled equipment held by the ROKFV to the Republic of Korea, except for exempted items, at one-third of the acquisition cost.[68]

(C) The Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) on 2 September informed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Secretary of the Navy on 30 August 1971 had determined that US Marine Corps equipment on loan, with the exception of that required by the US Marine Corps and not compatible with the ROK MAP, could be transferred to the Republic of Korea as in long supply and excess. Pricing of US Army nonexcess defense articles at one-third cost, the Assistant Secretary said, would require a determination by the Secretary of the Army that such a reduced price reflected the actual condition and market value of the equipment in question. Therefore the Assistant Secretary asked that the Joint Chiefs of Staff reconsider their one-third pricing formula in light of the special ruling that would be required of the Secretary of the Army.[69]

68. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-397-71 to SecDef, 27 Aug 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/775, 26 Aug 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71).
69. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 2 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/775-1, 3 Sep 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71).

(S) Thereafter, on 14 September, the Department of the Army ruled that US-titled equipment on loan to the ROKFV that was not excess might be offered to the Republic of Korea at 56 percent of the standard cost. Four days later, on 18 September, the Secretary of Defense informed CINCPAC of approval for the transfer of US Marine Corps equipment on loan to the ROK Marine Brigade as excess.[70]

(TS) In response to the Assistant Secretary of Defense's request, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed their position on the pricing formula for the US Army equipment. They informed the Secretary of Defense on 30 October 1971 that the acquisition cost of US-titled major US Army items in the hands of the ROKFV was estimated at $13.4 million, of which $4.7 million was excess to the US Army and $8.7 million was not. They reaffirmed their previous recommendation on transfer to the Republic of Korea, but with the exception that US Army items not in excess be priced at 56 percent of acquisition value instead of one third. They expected this transfer of US Army equipment to have a minimal impact on the US Army portion of the ROK five-year modernization program and noted that, by the time the ROKFV had redeployed to Korea, the value of the US-titled equipment not excess and desired by the Republic of Korea might be considerably reduced.[71]

(S) The Secretary of Defense subsequently authorized transfer of US-titled equipment held by the ROKFV to the Republic of Korea as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thereafter, on 2 November 1971,

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70. (S-GP 4) Memo, Army OpsDep to DJS, 14 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/775-2, 16 Sep 71; (TS-GP 4) DJSM-1810-71 to ASD(ISA), 29 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/775-3, 1 Oct 71; JMF 911 (14 Aug 71).

71. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-483-71 to SecDef, 30 Oct 71, Encl to JCS 2472/775-5, 29 Oct 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71).

Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard wrote the ROK Minister of Defense confirming the US decision for the transfer of US-titled equipment to the Korean forces.[72]

Redeployment of Thai Forces

(S) The redeployment of Thai forces from South Vietnam began in 1971. The previous fall, Admiral McCain had proposed the return of Thai forces beginning in January 1971 in order to upgrade the Royal Thai Army. His proposal was not adopted, but the possible withdrawal of Thai troops was soon under discussion among Thailand, the United States, and South Vietnam and in November 1970 the three countries agreed to set up a joint committee to supervise the Thai withdrawal. Then on 12 January 1971, Thai Prime Minister Kittikochorn announced plans for the redeployment of the Thai contingent in Vietnam with 4,000 troops to depart in August 1971 and all forces by the following February.[73]

(U) Each year Thai forces in Vietnam had rotated home in two increments, the first in January and the second in August. As each increment redeployed, it was replaced in South Vietnam by a new one. In accord with the Prime Minister's January 1971 announcement, the increment that redeployed in August 1971 was not replaced. This withdrawing increment in August consisted of the brigade and a portion of support elements of the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Force (RTAVF), and the remaining elements of the RTAVF in Vietnam were designated a task force. This force began a standdown on 9 December 1971 and redeployed to Thailand during

72. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSKOREA, Annual Historical Report, 1971, (C) p. 95. (C-GP 4) Ltr, DepSecDef to ROK Min of Nat'l Defense, 2 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2472/775-6, 4 Nov 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71).

73. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1970, Vol II, pp. 129-130. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. G-17.

the period 3 January through 4 February 1972. Earlier, on 9 May 1971, the Royal Thai Navy Patrol Gunboat Medium (PGM-12), whose mission was to prevent coastal infiltration, had returned to Thailand, and the 45-man Thai air force unit, Victory Flight, withdrew from South Vietnam during November and December 1971. When the RTAVF completed its redeployment in February 1972, a Thai residual force of about 200 men remained as a temporary headquarters elements in Saigon to complete administrative and logistic actions for the Thai forces with a final phaseout scheduled for April 1972.[74]

(~~S~~) The disposition of US equipment in the hands of the departing Thai forces was governed by an agreement signed in 1967. This document, the Unger-Dawee agreement, committed the United States to transfer the equipment furnished to the Thai forces in Vietnam to the Royal Thai Government upon redeployment of those forces to Thailand. Other provisions required the United States to construct and equip an overseas replacement training center in Thailand that would revert to Thai ownership when training of Thai personnel for the RTAVF in Vietnam had been completed, and to furnish Thailand a HAWK missile battery, including training and equipment. With the redeployment of the Thai forces from South Vietnam in 1971, the United States transferred US-titled equipment used by the Thai forces in Vietnam to the Royal Thai Government. At the same time, training at the overseas replacement center ceased, and approximately $.5 million in equipment and consumable supplies were also transferred to the Royal Thai Government. In August 1971, Thailand agreed to accept 18 UH-1 and two CH-47 helicopters as a

74. ~~(S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) pp. G-17 - G-18.

substitute for the pledged HAWK missile battery, and by the end of the summer of 1971, only two continuing US commitments remained under the 1967 agreement: US support for the Thai residual forces in South Vietnam and personnel liability claims.[75]

(S) At the request of the Department of State and Defense, COMUSMACV prepared during the summer of 1971 an analysis of RTAVF performance in South Vietnam. The two departments wanted the study for use in developing future policy toward Thailand as well as in determining military assistane requirements. On 23 August, General Arams submitted the analysis to CINCPAC, who relayed it to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 5 October with his concurrence. According to COMUSMACV, the RTAVF in South Vietnam had been "adequately trained and exceptionally well equipped," but had had little combat experience and had been reluctant to coordinate or conduct combained operations with the ARVN. Commanders of manuever units lacked confidence in their highly capable artillery arm and had chosen instead to employ gunships for close-in support of troops. The RTAVF in South Vietnam, General Abrams concluded, had relied excessively on helicopters for movement of troops and had been hesitant to undertake aggressive operations on foot.[76]

Australian and New Zealand Redeployments

(U) New Zealand continued in the early months of 1971 the redeployment of its forces from South Vietnam

75. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1971, (S) pp. 440-441.
76. (S-GP 1) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 23 Aug 71; (S-GP 1) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 5 Oct 71; Atts to JCS 2353/194, 13 Oct 71, JMF 910/535 (23 Aug 71).

begun the previous November.[77] In February 1971, the New Zealand Special Air Service, 4 Troop, returned home and the 161 Battery of the Royal New Zealand Artillery redeployed during April and May 1971, leaving a total of 264 New Zealand troops in South Vietnam.[78]

(~~C~~) Both New Zealand and Australia announced on 18 August 1971 plans to withdraw all of their remaining combat troops from South Vietnam. Australian Prime Minister William McMahan stated that the bulk of the Australian forces would be home by Christmas, and he pledged economic assistance for South Vietnam over the forthcoming three years in place of active military assistance in the war. Australian forces began a three-phase redeployment the following day, 19 August. On 7 November the Australians turned over the military installation at Nui Dat to the RVNAF and 400 Australian troops departed for home. On 8 December 1971 the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, the last Australian combat battalion, left and by 8 January 1972 all but 1,618 Australian troops had withdrawn from Vietnam. Subsequently, on 7 March 1972, the 1st Australian Task Force stood down, ending the combat role of Australia in the Republic of Vietnam and by the end of March 1972, the Australian Army Force strength in Vietnam had declined to 150. These remaining troops constituted a small headquarters in Saigon and the Australina Training Team, Vietnam, stationed in Phuoc Tuy Province and

77. See above, p. 163.
78. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) pp. G-15, J-12.

scheduled to remain in South Vietnam for an indefinite period.[79]

(U) The final withdrawal of New Zealand combat forces occurred in December 1971 with the redeployment of V Company and the 1st New Zealand Service Medical Team. New Zealand continued to assist the Republic of Vietnam with the New Zealand Army Training Team, Vietnam, a 25-man team stationed at the Chi Lang National Training Center in Chau Doc Province to train Regional Force officers. New Zealand also provided a four-man contingent to serve with the Australian Army training team in Phuoc Tuy Province, whose mission was to train Regional and Popular Forces in jungle warfare techiques.[80]

(S) The actual strength of the free world military assistance forces in South Vietnam declined from 67,400 on 1 January 1971 to 54,497 on 31 December 1971. These redeployments continued in the first half of 1972. The actual strength of the free world military assistance forces had fallen to 38,531 men by October 1972, 38,230 of whom were troops of the Republic of Korea.[81]

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79. ~~(S-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. F-15, (U) pp. G-12 - G-13, J-13, J-29, J-36, J-38. (~~TS-NOFORN-~~EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. N-1. Stanley R. Larsen and James L. Collins, Allied Participation in Vietnam, 1975, pp. 103-104.

80. ~~(S-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. G-15.

81. ~~(TS-NOFORN)~~ CINCPAC Command History, 1972, (S) p. 131.

TABLE 1

Actual Strength of Military Forces in Vietnam
1971

	US	FWMAF	RVNAF
January 31	334,850	67,433	1,054,125
February 28	323,797	67,791	1,049,163
March 31	302,097	67,513	1,057,676
April 30	272,073	66,563	1,058,237
May 31	252,210	66,586	1,060,597
June 30	239,528	66,842	1,060,129
July 31	225,106	64,762	1,057,924
August 31	216,528	61,256	1,052,353
September 30	212,596	60,538	1,047,890
October 31	198,683	58,813	1,043,232
November 30	178,266	58,526	1,040,640
December 31	158,119	54,497	1,046,254

Source: COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, Annex J.

TABLE 2

US REDEPLOYMENTS IN 1971

INCREMENT	PERIOD	AUTHORIZED CEILING	SPACES REDUCED	COMBAT FORCES MVR BN	COMBAT FORCES ARTY BN	ATK/FTR* SQDNS
VI (KEYSTONE ROBIN CHARLIE)	1 Jan-30 Apr 71	284,000	60,000	15	8	0
VII (KEYSTONE ORIOLE ALPHA)	1 May-30 Jun 71	254,700	29,300	6	2	2
VIII (KEYSTONE ORIOLE BRAVO)	1 Jul-31 Aug 71	226,000	28,700	6	5	5
IX (KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE)	1 Sep-30 Nov 71	184,000	42,000	8	10	2
X (KEYSTONE MALLARD)	1 Dec 71-31 Jan 72	139,000	45,000**	6	5	2

* Includes both USAF and USMC squadrons

** 25,000 spaces in December 1971 and 20,000 spaces in January 1972

Source: COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. F-1-1.

CHAPTER 4

DETERMINING US AIR SUPPORT LEVELS FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA IN 1971

(U) The use of air power assumed mounting importance in Vietnam during 1971. As the bulk of US ground forces departed in the course of the year, remaining US commanders turned more than ever to air resources to find and destroy the enemy and his supplies, to support friendly ground operations, and to protect the residual US forces. But, simultaneously, US budget strictures limited the air activity levels available in Southeast Asia. These monetary restrictions, beginning in 1969, had continued throughout 1970 and would become even more severe in 1971.

(U) Throughout the first half of 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had opposed Secretary Laird's efforts to restrict US air activity levels in Southeast Asia. Ultimately, the President resolved the issue in August 1970 when he directed the Department of Defense to fund a monthly Southeast Asia activity level of 14,000 tactical air (both Air Force and Navy), 1,000 B-52, and 1,000 gunship sorties in FY 1971. By the end of 1970, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff feared that decisions were being made to reduce US sortie rates in Southeast Asia in FY 1972 on the basis of fiscal rather than operational needs and they launched a series of appeals to the Secretary of Defense on this matter. Often they combined these positions on air support with ones dealing with US force levels.[1] In late December 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Secretary to

1. See Chapter 3 for discussion of the force levels question.

continue air activity levels in Southeast Asia for the remainder of FY 1971 as currently programmed and to approve for FY 1972 a minimum of 10,000 (7,300 USAF and 2,700 USN) tactical air, 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship monthly sorties. In reply, the Secretary of Defense had deferred a final decision, but assured the Joint Chiefs of Staff that funds to fly the sortie levels they had recommended were included in the FY 1972 budget submitted to the President. On 31 December 1970, Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard approved an additional $249.1 million in FY 1972 funds for Southeast Asia that included support for monthly sortie rates of 10,200 tactical air, 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship.[2] Although the Deputy Secretary's decision seemed to fulfill the JCS recommendations for air activity levels, this action proved only temporary, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff would be occupied throughout 1971 with obtaining necessary funds for adequate air support in Southeast Asia.

Air Support for FY 1972

(TS) On 21 January 1971, Admiral Moorer told Secretary Laird that air sorties for FY 1972 as provided in the Deputy Secretary's recent budget decision were the "minimum" necessary for interdiction operations in Laos and Cambodia and for the security of US forces in Vietnam. The Chairman did not expect the enemy to decrease infiltration into South Vietnam and, consequently, he anticipated increased requirements for

2. For discussion of air activity levels in 1970 see (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 341-345.

tactical air support for the remaining US forces. As he explained to the Secretary:

> As US redeployments continue, the selective application of air power assumes greater importance as a primary means to bring concentrated firepower to bear rapidly wherever and whenever required to counter enemy efforts. Retention of this flexible capability is essential to the successful prosecution of our war effort and the success of Vietnamization.

In order to permit the Services to proceed with planning, Admiral Moorer requested an early decision and announcement to support the air activity levels set forth in the Deputy Secretary's 31 December decision. Secretary Laird replied to Admiral Moorer on 9 February 1971 that he did not want to make "a firm decision" on the FY 1972 levels until results of the current dry season air campaign could be assessed. In the interim, however, he authorized the Services to plan on the basis of the tenatively approved Presidential budget (presumably the sortie rates sanctioned by the Deputy Secretary's 31 December 1970 decision).[3]

(~~TS~~) After receiving the comments of the field commanders, the Joint Chiefs of Staff addressed the Secretary on US force and activity levels in Southeast Asia.[4] With regard to the latter, they told the Secretary that the field commanders supported the JCS December recommendations for a rate of 10,000 tactical air, 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship sorties per month

3. (~~TS~~-GP 3) CM-489-71 to SecDef, 21 Jan 71, Att to JCS 2339/333-3, 22 Jan 71, JMF 907/323 (7 Nov 70). (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 9 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2339/338, 15 Feb 71, JMF 907/323 (9 Feb 71).
4. For the JCS recommendations on US force levels, see Chapter 3.

throughout FY 1972. To meet these requirements, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, it would be necessary to retain five additional tactical air squadrons in Southeast Asia at the end of FY 1972 as well as to retain in the active force one tactical fighter wing then scheduled to be transferred to Reserve status. In addition, one attack aircraft carrier and one aircraft carrier wing tentatively planned for deactivation would have to be retained in the Western Pacific or replaced from forces committed to NATO.[5]

(TS) Secretary Laird was still not prepared to make a final decision on air activity levels. But, in the meantime, on 10 February, Deputy Secretary Packard had issued tentative fiscal guidance for the FY 1973 planning, programming, and budgeting cycle, and Secretary Laird instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 February to use that document for planning. This guidance provided for monthly sorties in Southeast Asia for FY 1972 equal to those in the earlier 31 December decision--10,200 tactical air, 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship sorties. But these rates were averages and by the end of FY 1972, monthly tactical air sorties would actually drop to 6,800 (though with no change in the B-52 and gunship rates). The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed this tentative guidance and advised the Secretary that the end FY 1972 air activity levels for Southeast Asia as set forth therein were well below those recommended by the field commanders, and they reiterated support for their earlier recommendations on this matter. Since ongoing operations could change the situation in Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of

5. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-59-71 to SecDef, 16 Feb 71, Encl to JCS 2472/695-1, 27 Jan 71, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70).

Staff did promise to review the air activity questionn again before 30 April.[6]

(TS) At this time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were also considering a "banking" concept for air sorties in Southeast Asia, holding rates as far as possible below authorized ceilings when the military situation permitted in order to allow increased rates in times of particular need. The Secretary of Defense had raised this possibility in February, but on 5 March, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended against adoption of such a system. The field commanders already kept sorties at the lowest level possible, they said, and to adopt the Secretary's suggestion would only require additional effort to administer without any real advantages in practice.[7]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff addressed air activity levels for Southeast Asia again on 26 March in recommendations to the Secretary of Defense on force withdrawals. On that occasion, they provided the Secretary evaluation of four possible US redeployment alternatives. All four, they told him, were "critically contingent" upon US air levels of 10,000 and 8,000 tactical sorties per month throughout FY 1972 and FY 1973, respectively, and 1,000 B-52 sorties per month for both fiscal years. Since current programming and fiscal guidance did

6. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 23 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2472/695-2, 26 Feb 71, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70). (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS et al., 10 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2458/770, 12 Feb 71; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-95-71 to SecDef, 3 Mar 71, Encl A to JCS 2458/769-1, 26 Feb 71; JMF 550 (10 Feb 71).

7. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-97-71 to SecDef, 5 Mar 71 (derived from JCS 2339/338-1), JMF 907/323 (9 Feb 71).

not allow for rates at these levels, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the required additional funding be provided.[8]

(TS) During early April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to press the Secretary for adequate air support for operations in Southeast Asia. In connection with redeployment planning, they informed him on 1 April that COMUSMACV supported the recommendations for air support as previously presented. Moreover, while General Abrams was agreeable to a process of averaging sorties throughout the fiscal year, he believed that sufficient air assets must remain in Southeast Asia to support the authorized sortie level plus a reasonable surge capability as of the last day of each fiscal year, and he did not favor any plans for banking of sorties. On 3 April, Admiral Moorer again presented the JCS position on air activity levels for FY 1972 and FY 1973 to Secretary Laird, stressing the importance of a prompt decision, especially for the Navy, since a lengthy program of carrier and air wing inactivations was involved. Three days later, in an evaluation of RVNAF improvement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary that they, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV all urged support of the air activity levels recommended on 26 March in order to assure the progress of Vietnamization and the secure withdrawal of US forces.[9]

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8. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-145-71 to SecDef, 26 Mar 71, Encl to JCS 2472/725-1, 25 Mar 71, JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71).

9. (TS-GP 1) CM-766-71 to SecDef, 1 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 SEA, Apr-Jun 71. (TS-GP 1) CM-780-71 to SecDef, 3 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-1, 8 Apr 71, JMF 378 (1 Apr 71). (TS-GP 1) JCSM-165-71 to SecDef, 6 Apr 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/736, 6 Apr 71, JMF 911/535 (30 Mar 71).

(TS) Finally, on 21 April, the Secretary of Defense issued planning and programming guidance for the FY 1973-1977 Defense Program that included a separate section on Southeast Asia. With respect to air support, Mr. Laird established the following levels for Southeast Asia:

Tactical air Sorties/Month	End Fy 1971	End FY 1972	Average FY 1972	End FY 1973	Average FY 1973
Navy	3,600	1,800	2,700	1,800	1,800
Air Force	10,000	5,000	7,500	0	3,500
Total TACAIR	13,600	6,800	10,200	1,800	5,300
B-52 Sorties per month	1,000	1,000	1,000	300	650
Gunship Sorties per month	1,000	700	700	0	350

Mr. Laird anticipated that these Southeast Asia assumptions would be revised in the coming months, adding that sortie levels for FYs 1972 and 1973 were under review with a firm decision expected within a few weeks.[10]

(TS) In the meantime, Secretary Laird had also requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Services to consider additional ways of reducing air support requirements in Southeast Asia. On 7 April, the day the President announced the withdrawal of 100,000 more US troops from South Vietnam by 1 December 1971, Mr. Laird noted that planning for air activity levels had

10. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, et al., 21 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2458/780, 23 Apr 71, JMF 555 (21 Apr 71) sec 1.

reached a critical juncture. The Department of Defense he said, must pursue US foreign policy goals in Southeast Asia while at the same time lessening US involvement. Noting the "pressures and temptations to hold onto the reins " there, especially in the area of air support, he asked the Service Secretaries to take the problem of air support under review. Specifically, the Secretary wanted the Services to review the Chairman's 3 April presentation Mr. Laird followed up with a further request to the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13 April to consider a new alternative force posture involving complete withdrawal of Air Force assets from South Vietnam by the end of FY 1972, basing sufficient air assets in Thailand to provide tactical sortie levels of 10,000 per month at the end of FY 1971, and 5,000 at the end of FY 1972, for an average of 7,500 per month.[11]

(TS) The Secretarty of the Air Force replied on 23 April that his service was prepared to provide the level of air support specified in the tentative fiscal guidance for FY 1972 issued by the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 12 February. But additional funds and manpower would be needed, he said, if a decision was made to support the higher sortie rates recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Air Force Secretary saw some advantages in the alternative of early withdrawal of Air Force assets from South Vietnam in terms of security of US forces, but he pointed out that significantly increased manpower authorizations would be

11. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, 7 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-1, 8 Apr 71; (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecAF and CJCS, 13 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-2, 14 Apr 71; JMF 378 (1 Apr 71).

needed in Thailand as well as additional funds. Moreover air capabilities in Vietnam would be degraded.[12]

(TS) The Secretary of the Navy, on 21 April 1971, had voiced his strong impression that both past and present air sortie requirements had been overestimated. He acknowledged the difficulty in "second guessing" the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff but, based on conversations with combat pilots, he believed sorties could be reduced during the rainy season. Accordingly the Navy Secretary recommended an available monthly Navy tactical air sortie rate of 2,700 with actual executed sorties held below that figure, as opposed to the JCS support for a Navy tactical sortie level of 2,700 without qualification, within the recommended total of 10,000 per month for FY 1972. The Secretary of the Army, a few days later, deferred to Mr. Laird's judgment since he had not been fully exposed to the rationale of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders on Southeast Asian air requirements. In his own review, however, the Army Secretary had found little evidence to support the recommended increase in the programmed sorties levels.[13]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not agree that air support could be reduced in Southeast Asia. They told the Secretary of Defense on 26 April that the sortie levels of his 13 April proposal would not meet foreseen requirements. They repeated their recommendations of 26 March 1971 that 10,000 and 8,000 tactical

12. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, 23 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-5, 27 Apr 71, JMF 378 (1 Apr 71).

13. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecNav to SecDef, 21 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-4, 22 Apr 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecArmy to SecDef, 27 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-6, 28 Apr 71; JMF 378 (1 Apr 71).

air sorties per month throughout FY 1972 and FY 1973, respectively, and 1,000 B-52 sorties per month through the end of FY 1973 be used for planning and budgeting purposes and that additional funds be supplied to meet these levels. As for the suggestion to remove all US tactical air assets from South Vietnam by the end of FY 1972 with basing in Thailand instead, the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw both advantages and disadvantages. While supporting the concept in general, they recommended deferral of any decision pending resolution of redeployments after December 1971.[14]

(TS) The question of US air sortie levels became even more complicated on 28 April When Dr. Kissinger advised the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the other members of the Senior Review Group of requirements for various studies for use in the ongoing NSC assessment of the situation in South Vietnam.[15] Among others, Dr. Kissinger wanted an analysis of the manpower and logistics implications of "air interdiction at the 10,000 tactical air and 1,000 B-52 sortie rates established by the President for CY 1972." The complicating factor here was the question of the time period involved. The most recent authoritative ruling that the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Services had was the Secretary of Defense's planning and programming guidance of 21 April 1971,[16] which specified an average monthly tactical air sortie rate of 10,200 through fiscal 1972, tapering to an actual rate of only 6,800 by the end of FY 1972 (30 June 1972). The President's ruling, if definitive, would have

14. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-199-71 to SecDef, 26 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2147/527-3, 21 Apr 71, JMF 378 (1 Apr 71).
15. See Chapter 2, pp. 68-85.
16. See p. 191.

continued the 10,000 rate through 31 December 1972. The latter approach would, of course, meet the JCS recommendations, but was Dr. Kissinger's statement an announcement of Presidential approval or merely an assumption for study purposes? Dr. Kissinger did not elaborate, and Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., brought this matter to JCS attention on 6 May 1971, pointing out the discrepancy between the Secretary of Defense's 21 April guidance and Dr. Kissinger's request. If, as indicated in the latter, a level of 10,000 tactical sorties per month, of which 2,700 would be Navy, was to be maintained throughout 1972, then the Navy would have to maintain three attack carriers (CVA) off Southeast Asia. Accordingly, Admiral Zumwalt said, the Navy would require additional funds to retain the required number of carriers in the Pacific.[17]

(~~TS~~) Joint Staff action officers apparently interpreted Dr. Kissinger's 28 April memorandum as a Presidential decision to support the higher air support levels as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff; they incorporated the higher rate in briefing papers for the Chairman on 7 May and again on 17 May. This matter was resolved on 17 May when the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the sortie level question and associated Service problems with the Secretary of Defense and Mr. Laird apparently told them that the President had not made a decision on air activity levels. Although no record is available of this meeting, Admiral Moorer on 20 May provided the Secretary, "in accordance with our discussions on 17 May 1971," a summary of incremental costs and manpower increases to support the JCS

17. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState et al., 28 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-3, 4 May 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 1. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CNOM-135-71 to JCS, n.d., Att to JCS 2147/527-7, 6 May 71, JMF 378 (1 Apr 71).

recommended levels of 10,000 and 8,000 tactical air sorties through FY 1972 and FY 1973, respectively, and 1,000 B-52 monthly sorties for both fiscal years. These costs amounted to an additional $170 million in FY 1972 and $500 million in the succeeding year. Admiral Moorer then recommended approval of these levels (with additional funding and manpower as necessary) for FY 1972, thereby indicating that no final decision had been made on the sortie levels. He also sought approval of the FY 1973 capability for planning.[18]

(TS) Secretary Laird advised Admiral Moorer on 11 June 1971 that there was little or no chance of securing additional funds for the air activity rates advanced by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In fact, he was making every effort just to avoid reductions below the currently programmed levels. He was impressed, he acknowledged, by the "strong views" of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the necessity for their recommended sortie levels for the success of the Vietnamization effort over the next two years. But if the higher levels were approved, reductions in other programs would be necessary, and he did not think it fair to ask the Air Force to bear the major share of the added air operations costs. Could he have, he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the assurance of each of them that he would be willing to make appropriate reductions in his Service programs in order to share the cost of the additional sorties? He also inquired whether attention to

18. (TS-GP 1) Briefing Sheet for CJCS on JCS 2147/527-5, 7 May 71; (TS) J-5 BP 39-71, 17 May 71; JMF 378 (1 Apr 71). (TS-GP 1) CM-915-71 to SecDef, 20 May 71, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 70-Jun 71.

"adequacy and effectiveness, as opposed to any specified or predetermined operating rates," might reduce the number of sorties needed? Specifically, he suggested periodic surges as opposed to flying continuously high rates. The same day, 11 June, the Secretary also approved the retention of the carrier USS HANCOCK through the end of FY 1972 in order to continue the deployment of three carriers in the Western Pacific. Subsequently, the Navy absorbed the additional costs of about $34.1 million and 4,100 manpower spaces required by this retention.[19]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied to the Secretary on 28 June 1971. They still supported the position they had put forth on 26 March (10,000 tactical air and 1,000 B-52 sorties per month in FY 1972 and 8,000 tactical and 1,000 B-52 sorties in FY 1973) as essential for the success of Vietnamization and for the safety of remaining US forces. Moreover, the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to recommend additional funding to meet these levels since reprogramming within current fiscal limitations would require reductions in other programs. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, "with all the Service Chiefs concurring," told Mr. Laird of their willingness to provide for the additional costs by "equitable sharing." Should it still be impossible to achieve their recommended activity levels, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had considered alternative programs of air operations in Southeast Asia and supplied the Secretary six "resource-constrained" options. All of

19. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 11 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2339/345, 11 Jun 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to SecNav, 2 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-4, 3 Aug 71; JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 1.

them, they told the Secretary, incurred significant risks either in Southeast Asia through undesirably low sortie levels or in other areas because of drawdowns and shortfalls required by necessary reprogramming. Of the six, the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored "Option D," providing for a monthly average of 11,100 tactical air sorties in the first quarter of FY 1972, 10,000 per month in the second and third quarters, and 9,700 (with a surge capability to 10,000) in the fourth quarter. For FY 1973, Option D would supply a monthly average of tactical air sorties of 7,100 (5,000 Air Force and 2,100 Navy) per month for the first three quarters and 6,300 (4,200 Air Force and 2,100 Navy) in the final quarter. The B-52 sorties in this option would average 1,000 per month through FY 1972 and 800 per month through FY 1973; gunship sorties would average 700 per month in both fiscal years, with 300 per month in FY 1973 flown by VNAF gunships.

(~~TS~~) While Option D did not meet all the requirements of the field commanders, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed it approximated them and involved the least risk of all the alternatives examined. Accordingly, if additional funding could not be provided, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended approval of Option D for planning and programming. They did not address the Secretary's suggestion concerning more effective management of sorties in place of higher levels except to state that the field commanders should have the flexibility to vary sorties within the limits of the force capability so long as total expenditures over the year remained within authorized levels.[20]

20. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-306-71 to SecDef, 28 Jun 71, Encl A to JCS 2339/345-1, 24 Jun 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 1.

A Tentative Decision

(C) On 1 July 1971 the Secretary of Defense informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he was sending a memorandum to the President supporting the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on air levels for FY 1972 as outlined by them on 28 June. The level of air operations for Southeast Asia for FY 1972 and FY 1973 was to be reviewed by the Senior Review Group during July, Secretary Laird continued, and alternatives would be submitted to the President for decision. Pending that action, the Secretary directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to implement the program recommended in their Option D for FY 1972. Secretary Laird also concurred with a proposal by the Secretary of the Navy to maintain two attack aircraft carriers in the Western Pacific during the wet season and three during the dry season, an action he considered consistent with Option D. Finally, he directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to continue to plan on the basis of the fiscal guidance for Southeast Asia for FY 1973. He did not elaborate but, presumably, referred to the planning and programming guidance issued on 21 April.[21] He added that air operations for FY 1973 would be reviewed at the appropriate time in the future.[22]

(C) In his 1 July decision, Secretary Laird also agreed with the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the field commanders must have flexibility to vary sortie levels according to circumstances. It was important, he said, for COMUSMACV to save sorties in periods of reduced threat and inclement weather to allow surges in periods

21. See p. 191.
22. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 1 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-2, 2 Jul 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 1.

of greater need. Accordingly, he again requested comments on a "banking" procedure, whereby COMUSMACV would prepare an advanced schedule of monthly sortie rates for the fiscal year, varying them in accord with enemy activity patterns and seasonal weather conditions. Total sorties in the schedule, the Secretary said, should be less than the total permitted by the fiscal guidance to allow a reserve available when needed.[23]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff still opposed, as they had earlier in March,[24] any such banking of air sorties in Southeast Asia. They told the Secretary of Defense on 29 July 1971 that neither COMUSMACV nor CINCPAC favored his recent proposal in this regard. While there were seasonal patterns in the air effort, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, prediction of monthly requirements was "difficult and of questionable accuracy." Consequently, they urged that the field commanders be permitted to manage sorties within the total annual authorization as provided in their Option D of 28 June.[25]

(TS) Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General John D. Ryan, meantime had suggested the possibility of reducing B-52 operations in Southeast Asia. In the preceding 12 months (FY 1971), the field commanders had varied tactical air rates in Southeast Asia with a net savings of over 22,000 sorties, allowing the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assure the Secretary of Defense of the flexibility of the commanders in responding to military requirements. A similar savings, however, had

23. Ibid.
24. See above, p. 189.
25. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-353-71 to SecDef, 29 Jul 71, Encl to JCS 2339/345-3, 23 Jul 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 1.

not been possible for B-52 operations. The sorties flown during the first part of 1971 had averaged more than the authorized 1,000 per month, the surge being initially to support LAMSON 719 operations and then to exploit the lucrative targets that developed as a result of that operation and to limit the flow of supplies to enemy forces operating in Cambodia and the southern part of the Republic of Vietnam. Consequently, the US Strategic Air Command had agreed in February 1971 to increase the daily B-52 rate from 30 to 40 sorties and, at COMUSMACV's request, this higher expenditure continued through May. During that month, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed a return to the authorized 1,000 monthly rate on 1 June to coincide with the start of the southwest monsoon and an anticipated drop in enemy infiltration activities. General Ryan believed that B-52 sorties during the monsoon season were of limited value, especially considering the cumulative effectiveness of previous bombings on the same targets. Therefore on 21 July 1971, he suggested to his JCS colleagues the possibility of reducing B-52 operations in Southeast Asia during the current wet season.[26]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not accept the Air Force proposal for any reduction in B-52 sortie rates in Southeast Asia, but Admiral Moorer on 2 August did urge the field commanders to consider managing the

26. (~~S~~-GP 3) CSAFM 280-71 to JCS, 21 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/768, 21 Jul 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7656 to CINCPAC, 2 Aug 71; JMF 907/323 (21 Jul 71). (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-894-71 to SecDef, 14 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/749, 14 May 71, JMF 895/323 (24 Apr 71). (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~TS~~) p. TSS-1, (S) pp. VI-11 - VI-13.

B-52 program to conserve expenditures as the situation allowed. He told the commanders that, although the Joint Chiefs of Staff had succeeded in obtaining Secretary of Defense support for the current B-52 sortie levels through the remainder of FY 1972, the Services were under continuing pressure to make further reduction in operating expenditures with sortie reductions frequently cited as a possible source for savings. Recent studies within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Admiral Moorer continued, had suggested limiting both tactical and B-52 air strikes to known or validated targets to achieve budget reductions. Even though the Joint Staff had resisted such suggestions, Admiral Moorer requested CINCPAC to consider the "negotiating advantages" accruing from management of the FY 1972 B-52 program by varying monthly sorties, without relinquishing any assets, when the military situation permitted.[27]

A Final Decision

(~~TS~~) At long last, on 12 August 1971, Secretary Laird informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the decision on air support levels for Southeast Asia. He told Admiral Moorer that the following monthly sortie rates "will be budgeted" for each fiscal year:

	FY 1972	FY 1973
Tactical air	10,000	8,000
B-52	1,000	1,000
Gunship	750	750

He added that COMUSMACV was "authorized and encouraged" to keep the number of sorties (including B-52s)

27, (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7656 to CINCPAC (info CINCSAC and COMUSMACV), 2 Aug 71, JMF 907/323 (21 Jul 71).

"as low as the tactical situation permits," though it was not necessary to provide an advance schedule of proposed sortie expenditures. The Secretary did not explain how the decision on these rates was reached. He had told the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 1 July that the question of Southeast Asia air levels would be reviewed by the Senior Review Group with alternatives submitted for the President's decision. Available records, however, give no indication of such Senior Review Group consideration or Presidential action. Apparently, the President did approve the levels provided the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 12 August 1971, for subsequently Secretary Laird referred to the FY 1972 sortie rates approved by the President. In any event, the levels announced by Secretary Laird on 12 August were higher than those reluctantly recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their Option D on 28 June and tentatively approved by the Secretary on 1 July 1971. In fact, these 12 August activity levels were identical to those the Joint Chiefs of Staff had advocated throughout the first six months of 1971 though with the stipulation to hold below those rates to the extent the military situation allowed.[28]

(~~TS~~) When the Secretary of Defense announced the FY 1972 and FY 1973 air activity levels on 12 August, he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to recommend the mix of Air Force and Navy tactical air sorties for those two years and the basing plans for Air Force units on two possible assumptions: that the Air

28. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-5, 12 Aug 71; (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 28 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-10, 29 Sep 71; JMF 907/323 (11 Jul 71) sec 2.

Force would withdraw entirely from South Vietnam in FY 1972 or that it would retain two operating bases there by the end of that year. In reply the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted three options for the mix of tactical air sorties in FYs 1972 and 1973. They preferred Option 3, which provided:

	FY 1972 (by quarter)				FY 1973 (by quarter)			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
USAF	8,300	6,900	6,700	6,700	5,100	4,700	4,700	4,700
USN	2,100	3,100	3,300	3,300	2,900	3,300	3,300	3,300
	10,400	10,000	10,000	10,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000

The other two options would have assigned the Air Force larger, though varying proportions of the total.

~~(TS)~~ The Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense that US Air Force squadrons to support Option 3 could be based in Southeast Asia without an increased manpower ceiling in Thailand if two operating bases were retained in South Vietnam at the end of FY 1972. If no bases were retained, they continued, then US Air Force squadrons for Option 3 could be based in Thailand only with an increase of 1,250 US personnel in that country. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the unprogrammed costs for Option 3 could be absorbed without unmanageable impacts on risks in FY 1972, but that the impacts for FY 1973 would be serious, involving "significantly increased risks." They recommended approval of option 3 for execution in FY 1972 and for planning in FY 1973 with provision of additional funds to offset the unprogrammed costs. If such funds were not available, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that these costs be shared equally among

the Services and other DOD activities with exact costs developed "in Secretarial channels."[29]

(S) The Secretary of Defense approved Option 3 for planning purposes on 20 September 1971. He told the Service Secretaries to defer until FY 1973 the procurement of all air ordnance required for the additional sorties involved, stating that other costs for FY 1972 should be reprogrammed from within the current Navy and Air Force budgets. For FY 1973, additional costs would be added to current programs, but Secretary Laird warned that the added costs for FY 1973, like those for FY 1972, might ultimately have to be absorbed. He emphasized the need to reduce the costs of Southeast Asia operations, particularly those of the Navy. Authorization to maintain a sortie-level capability, he said, did not mean the authorized level had to be flown. Rather, "the tactical situation and the availability of valid targets should be the determining factors." He expressed gratification with the recent overall Southeast Asia air effort in this regard, especially the Air Force record, and urged that all benefit possible should be derived from the presence of three attack aircraft carriers in the Western Pacific.[30]

(C) At the end of September 1971, Secretary Laird directed that the transition from the FY 1972 to the

29. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-391-71 to SecDef, 25 Aug 71, Encl A to JCS 2339/345-7, 25 Aug 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 2.

30 (S-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, 20 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-8, 21 Sep 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 2.

FY 1973 sortie levels take place over a three-month period, as had been the practice in previous years, to facilitate planning and to reduce personnel and logistical turbulence. The attack carrier deployment schedules and Air Force deployment and inactivation plans, he said, should reflect this transition during the fourth quarter of FY 1972 (April-June). At the same time the Secretary of Defense directed the Service Secretaries to maintain the capability to fly the 10,000 monthly tactical air sorties "directed by the President for FY 1972." This could be done, he said, by relying on the surge capability of the forces in Southeast Asia or by making temporary use of other CINCPAC resources.[31]

(S) Now after many months of effort, air activity levels in Southeast Asia seemed, at last, to be fixed. But even these rates, so laboriously resolved, were not able to withstand the continuing pressures for further budget reductions in the Vienam war effort. Although the Services had programmed for 8,000 tactical air sorties per month for FY 1973 in accord with the decision of 12 August 1971, the Secretary of Defense on 23 December 1971 approved a new Program Budget Decision providing for an average of 6,000 tactical air sorties per month in FY 1973 while retaining a force structure to support a normal level of 7,100 per month and a surge capability of 9,700 per month. This decision was based on the assumption that there would be three attack carriers available for the first half of

31. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 28 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-10, 29 Sep 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 2.

1973 and two for the second half, and it reduced obligational authority for FY 1973 by $27.3 million. Average monthly sorties for FY 1973 under this new decision were:

Service	Service Estimate	Force Capability Average	Normal	Surge
Air Force	4,800	3,700	4,800	5,500
Navy	3,200	2,300	2,300	4,200
Total	8,000	6,000	7,100	9,700[32]

(U) During 1971, US commanders in Vietnam employed air assets within the activity levels established by the Secretary of Defense even though there was considerable uncertainty throughout much of the year as to what those levels would be in the coming months. The actual conduct of the operations as well as the matter of authorities for air operations are discussed in the following chapter.

32. (S) Program Budget Decision 316, 23 Dec 71, Att to J-5 Briefing Sheet for CJCS on a Memorandum by the CSAF to be Considered at the JCS Meeting on 26 January 1972, 25 Jan 72, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).

CHAPTER 5

THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR, 1971-EARLY 1972

(U) As the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other US officials in Washington struggled to resolve the size and timing of US redeployments and the levels of air support for remaining US forces, the combat continued in Southeast Asia. But in 1971, it was a different war for the United States. By mid-year US forces no longer participated in major ground combat actions; these became the responsibility of the RVNAF as was already the case with naval operations. The United States did maintain supply and support for these actions and continued air interdiction in South Vietnam, in Laos, and in Cambodia to impede infiltration of enemy personnel and supplies. The reduction of US forces in South Vietnam gave added importance to these air operations, and both the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were especially vigilant throughout 1971 and early 1972 in seeking expanded air authorities both to protect remaining US forces and to assist the RVNAF. During this same period, the enemy, while continuing a protracted war strategy, showed no inclination to end the fighting.

The Enemy

(U) The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong pursued objectives in South Vietnam during 1971 unchanged from previous years. The enemy sought to overthrow the existing government of South Vietnam, replace it with a communist regime, and ultimately unify all of Vietnam. This had been the enemy goal since the beginning of the conflict, though the strategy and tactics for achieving it had changed over the years.

(U) The enemy's main force warfare strategy, culminating with a series of unsuccessful offensives in 1968, had proved costly in terms of manpower and resources. Consequently, in 1969, the enemy had abandoned this strategy in favor of one of protracted conflict. In late 1969 and 1970, enemy leaders called for a "two track" policy of building socialism in the north while continuing the war in the south, and North Vietnamese and Viet Cong operations concentrated on rebuilding base areas, conservation of forces, surges of activity, and defeat of the RVN pacification program.[1]

(S) The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong continued to pursue a protracted war strategy in 1971. Directive 01/CT-71, issued by the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) in late 1970 or early 1971, provided general guidelines for the year. The military mission of the directive called for continual attacks to achieve piecemeal victories, to defeat allied efforts, and to counter the pacification program. The directive stressed equal use of main force and guerrilla tactics; main forces would be employed against US and RVN mobile troops with guerrilla warfare developed in both rural and urban areas. The VC/NVA forces would also rebuild secure base areas in remote areas for urban movement. As the United States continued to withdraw its forces, the Republic of Vietnam would be required to increase conscription and taxes. Such action would bring civilian discontent, providing exploitable weaknesses for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. Another possible source of exploitation listed by the directive was the vulnerability of the RVN outposts and local

1. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 331-333.

security network manned by the Regional and Popular Forces and by the People's Self Defense Forces.[2]

(S) Further guidance was forthcoming during the year. A second directive, COSVN 06/CT-71, issued in June 1971, set forth guidelines for activities during the RVN congressional and Presidential elections in August and October 1971, respectively. In November 1971, COSVN issued Directive 39 to cover the remainder of 1971 and early 1972. It, in effect, admitted the success of the RVN pacification program and emphasized the importance of regaining political control in the countryside.

(S) At the start of 1971, US intelligence sources estimated that there were 230,060 VC and NVA forces in South Vietnam, or approximately 8,000 fewer than a year earlier. These forces made up some 244 maneuver battalions, 27 less than the previous year, and were directed from Hanoi by the High Command of the North Vietnam Armed Forces. Command over the upper part of South Vietnam was exercised through four major tactical headquarters covering the following areas: The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) Front; Military Region Tri Thien Hue (MRTTH), extending southward from the DMZ almost to Da Nang; Military Region (MR) 5, the central coastal region; and the B-3 Front, the central inland area. North Vietnamese command over forces in the lower part of South Vietnam (roughly the area of RVN MRs 3 and 4) was through the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), the military arm of which was known as the South Vietnam Liberation Army (SVNLA) Headquarters.[3]

2. All information in this section, unless otherwise stated, is from ~~(S NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. III-1 - III-35.

3. ~~(S NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. III-9, IV-12. ~~(TS NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, (S) p. III-73.

(Ø) Enemy forces in South Vietnam were organized into divisions, regiments, battalions, and smaller designations, and assigned to the various military regions mentioned above. All NVA units in South Vietnam were main force units. In addition, there were VC main forces, consisting largely of personnel from North Vietnam. Local forces were organized as battalions or smaller groupings and were usually subordinate to the province or district level organization, and generally did not move outside of the province or district to which they were assigned. Increasing numbers of NVA personnel were appearing in local forces, though in lower ratios than in the main force units. Also included in the local forces were the guerrillas, the part-time soldiers whose main task was terrorism. They were subordinate to the district level organization and, usually, did not operate far from their home areas.

(Ø) In 1971, the enemy suffered an estimated 98,094 killed in action, including operations in Laos and Cambodia. Allied actions and programs seriously restricted enemy recruitment of personnel within South Vietnam during the year, and the enemy increasingly relied on infiltration of replacements from North Vietnam. United States military authorities in South Vietnam estimated that between 60,000 and 70,000 enemy personnel were infiltrated into Cambodia and South Vietnam during the year and an additional 10,000 into southern Laos, representing a marked increase over similar figures for the preceding year.

(Ø) In accord with the strategy of protracted war, enemy activity in South Vietnam during 1971 was generally at a low level. There were, of course,

sporadic surges of action in different parts of the country at varying times. In RVN MR 1, allied forces succeeded in keeping main force enemy units out of the lowland areas, but these units operated in strength along the DMZ and in the unpopulated western areas of the region. In addition, throughout the year, there was considerable military and terrorist activity in the southern sector of the region. The enemy forces in RVN MR 2 consolidated and resupplied troops and bases in the Central Highlands in anticipation of the 1972 spring offensive. As a result, the population centers of the region were relatively free of enemy presence. Nevertheless, at the end of the year the greatest enemy threat in South Vietnam remained in the two northern military regions of the country.

(S) In the COSVN area of South Vietnam, enemy forces were fairly active along the Cambodian border. There they resupplied and refitted, avoiding major contacts, employing economy of force tactics and carrying out terrorism and sapper attacks. Elsewhere in MR 3, including Saigon and its environs, enemy activity remained at a generally low level throughout the year. In the Delta, RVN troops had operated since August 1969 unassisted by US ground forces. In accordance with COSVN Directive 01/CT-71, enemy forces during 1971 concentrated on overrunning government bases in outlying areas. In the course of the year, the enemy took 96 such outposts, incurring few losses and achieving valuable psychological gains in terms of the local population's perception of enemy strength.

(S) In the last several months of 1971, US and RVNAF commanders became aware of enemy preparations for a large-scale offensive. Various indicators revealed

a logistical buildup designed to move supplies through the Laotian panhandle to forces in southern Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. One of these was a broadcast by General Cuu Long over the Liberation Radio in late October. He called for annihilation of the "Saigon puppet" main force troops. Aerial reconnaissance showed pre-positioned stockpiles of supplies and petroleum products, numerous new warehouses near infiltration routes, and significant increases in material stored at major transshipment points. Lines of communications in Laos and Cambodia were expanded in the south and west and major enemy transportation units also extended their areas of operation in the same areas. To protect the extended lines of communication in southern Laos, the enemy deployed 45 to 50 antiaircraft artillery battalions, as well as surface-to-air missile units to nearby areas.

The Allies

(~~C~~) The most significant aspect of friendly activities in 1971 was the continuing withdrawal of US forces and the RVNAF assumption of all offensive ground combat operations. At the beginning of 1971, the United States forces in the Republic of Vietnam numbered 335,794. During the year, nearly 180,000 US troops departed Vietnam, leaving 158,119 at the end of December 1971. This withdrawal reduced allied maneuver battalions in South Vietnam by 42, from 273 in January to 231 in December. After August 1971, the role of US troops was limited to support and training for the RVNAF and providing security for US bases.[4]

4. ~~(S NOFORN~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. IV-12, J-1, J-39.

(C) With the continuing US redeployments and the removal of US forces from offensive combat, US combat casualties dropped significantly in 1971. During the year, 1,380 US Armed Forces personnel were killed in Southeast Asia, 1,289 in South Vietnam and the remainder in Laos and North Vietnam. The 1971 total was nearly 3,000 less than the 4,225 combat deaths in the preceding year and over 8,000 less than the figure for 1969.[5]

(C) Non-combat deaths (from accidents, drug abuse, and other miscellaneous causes) showed no such dramatic decline. On 8 February 1971, the Secretary of Defense commended Admiral Moorer on the steady reduction of combat casualties, but questioned the lack of progress in achieving a drop in non-combat deaths. "It seems to me," he told the Chairman, "we might have expected the level of non-combat deaths to decline as our troop strength declines."[6]

(C) Admiral Moorer replied that the level of non-combat deaths was, indeed, "a matter of serious concern to all commanders within MACV." He assured the Secretary that the Services and General Abrams were working to reduce non-combat deaths. Admiral Moorer described recent measures taken to increase emphasis on training, preventive practices, and safety precautions. These actions, Admiral Moorer concluded, should begin to diminish non-combat deaths in Vietnam. True to his

5. ~~(S-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. X-69 - X-70.

6. (C) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Non-Hostile Deaths in Southeast Asia," 8 Feb 71, JMF 907/175 (8 Feb 71).

prediction, the number did decline from 1,841 in 1970 to 953 in 1971.[7]

(Ø) The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) assumed greatly expanded combat responsibilities in 1971, but did not attain their authorized force level of 1,100,000. On 1 January 1971, RVNAF strength stood at 1,074,410; at the close of the year, this figure had dropped slightly to 1,046,254. Nonetheless, COMUSMACV judged the RVNAF in 1971 "a strong, broadly based military establishment, an establishment which will be difficult for an aggressor to defeat on its home ground."[8]

(Ø) In addition to US and South Vietnamese troops, the allied forces included contingents from third country contributors. These forces, together with those of the United States, were known collectively as Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF). At the beginning of 1971, the third country contributor forces in Vietnam totaled 67,444 men, representing seven countries. The Republic of Korea (ROK) contribution was by far the largest. The ROK personnel had participated in combat operations in Vietnam since October 1965, and as 1971 began, 48,537 ROK troops were deployed along Highway No. 1 in central Vietnam. During the year, they took part in three large operations. They carried out DOKURI 71-1, a large search and clear operation between 22 February and 11 March. Subsequently the ROK forces launched an operation on 23

7. (U) CM-633-71 to SecDef, 25 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2339/340, 25 Feb 71, JMF 907/175 (8 Feb 71). (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. X-70.

8. ~~(S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. I-11, J-1, J-39.

April 1971 to counter enemy plans to disrupt the RVN congressional elections. This operation continued until 14 May and a similar one followed between 21 June and 11 July. As related in Chapter 3, the Republic of Korea began to withdraw forces from South Vietnam during 1971, and by the end of the year, 2,449 men with their equipment had returned to Korea.[9]

(C) Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand all had combat troops in South Vietnam at the beginning of 1971, but as already described, these three countries substantially reduced their contingents during the year.[10] The remaining three contributor countries were the Philippines, the Republic of China, and Spain. The Philippines had reduced its forces from slightly over 2,000 men to 74 medical and dental personnel during 1969 and 1970 and the Philippines contingent in Vietnam dropped further in 1971 to 60 personnel. The Republic of China contribution to South Vietnam was a group of 31 military advisers, and this contribution remained unchanged throughout 1971. Spain had maintained a military medical team in Vietnam since November 1965, but withdrew the last seven members of the team in December 1971, citing a shortage of medical personnel at home.[11]

(Ø) The guide for the conduct of operations by all allied forces in South Vietnam in 1971 was the Combined Campaign Plan, 1971 (AB 146). The Combined

9. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. G-5 - G-9. (~~S-NOFORN-GP~~ 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, (C) p. IV-33.
10. See Chapter 3, pp. 178-183.
11. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. G-20 - G-22.

Campaign Plans dated from 1967 and were published annually for each calendar year. Theoretically, they were combined documents prepared jointly by the RVNAF Joint General Staff and the MACV staff, though in actuality they had in the past been primarily US efforts. The 1971 document, however, issued on 31 October 1970, was for the first time principally a Vietnamese plan prepared with US cooperation. Following the format of previous versions, the 1971 Plan called for the RVNAF and the Free World Military Assistance Forces to assure the security of the Vietnamese people through the accomplishment of two objectives: defeat of the VC/NVA and participation in the RVN 1971 Pacification and Development Plan. Operations to achieve these objectives included sustained, coordinated, and combined mobile operations against VC/NVA forces; ground, sea, and air operations to interdict enemy land and water lines of communication; maintenance of air and naval superiority in the air space and waters of the Republic of Vietnam; and conduct of border and coastal surveillance, including cross-border and counterinfiltration actions. The 1971 plan also provided for operations to build on progress made by the RVNAF in the previous year with "minimum participation" by US and other third country forces.

(S) The 1971 Combined Campaign Plan recognized the diminishing US presence in South Vietnam, stating that the United States would retain minimal combat, combat support, and combat service support capability in South Vietnam to assist the RVNAF. The South Vietnamese forces, meantime, would develop and improve in order to become self-sufficient and capable of assuming the entire responsibility for the war. In a

specific division of responsibilities, the plan assigned the RVNAF: neutralization of enemy main and local forces; conduct of anti-infiltration operations; prevention of enemy main force incursions into secure areas; control and improvement of lines of communication; participation in pacification; defense of key government and military installations; and support of the Phung Hoang program to eliminate the Viet Cong infrastructure. In addition, for the first time, the RVNAF was charged with the conduct of cross-border operations in authorized contiguous areas.

(S) In accordance with the expanding RVNAF assumption of responsibility for the war, the Combined Campaign Plan, again for the first time, assigned the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) the task of maintaining air supremacy over the Republic of Vietnam and the contiguous areas when authorized. The United States would support the VNAF in both combat operations and in the attainment of self-sufficiency.

(S) United States responsibilities differed from previous years. No longer would US forces carry out mobile operations to locate and destroy VC/NVA forces, base areas, and resources. Rather, the 1971 Combined Campaign Plan provided that US and third country forces would: conduct operations in support of the RVNAF to reduce the flow of enemy men and materiel; assist in opening lines of communications and in securing designated areas; provide limited combat and combat service support to the RVNAF as required; and support the RVN pacification program.[12]

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12. (S) RVNAF JGS-FWMAF Combined Campaign Plan, 1971, AB 146, 31 Oct 70, JMF 911/350 (30 Oct 70). ~~(S-NOFORN-~~ GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. IV-5.

A Revised Mission for US Ground Forces

(~~TS~~) As US forces continued to redeploy from South Vietnam during the early months of 1971, the question arose of the mission for the remaining US troops once responsibility for ground combat operations were turned over to the RVNAF as anticipated on or about 1 July 1971. Asked about this matter by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Abrams responded on 8 March that US ground forces remaining in South Vietnam could not assume a purely noncombat role:

> As long as US forces are stationed in a hostile environment, they must not be placed under the restriction that they cannot engage in offensive combat operations. Instead of restrictions on participating in combat, the degree of participation should be considered as the function of the forces available . . . . To assume a guard-type security posture would be detrimental to the security of the command.[13]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense, too, was concerned with this question and asked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 21 April 1971 about the concept for employment of US forces after 1 July 1971. Admiral Moorer replied on 27 April, pointing out the difficulties that would result from a literal interpretation of any statement that remaining US forces would not engage in "any form of ground combat operations." To permit US forces to defend themselves and their installations adequately, he explained, they would have to patrol actively. Moreover, they would have to protect US

13. (~~S~~) Msg, COMUSMACV to CJCS, 081135Z Mar 71, cited in (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. TSS-9 - TSS-10.

artillery employed on fire support bases as well as US airfields, helicopter installations, and communication centers. Admiral Moorer also anticipated "severe" leadership and morale problems if US soldiers, having been told that the RVNAF had assumed responsibility for all ground combat operations, were required to conduct defensive patrolling beyond the perimeters of their installations. Consequently, Admiral Moorer recommended that both public pronouncements and official documents not speak of transferring "all ground combat responsibilities," but rather refer to "passing to the RVNAF primary responsibility for ground offensive combat operations."[14]

(TS) Secretary Laird agreed with the Chairman but, as he pointed out to Admiral Moorer on 10 May 1971, the RVNAF assumption of the "primary responsibility" for ground combat operations would mark "a significant change in the relative roles of US and Vietnamese forces." For example, the Secretary did not visualize that US forces would conduct or participate in the ground phase of "major preplanned combat actions" after 1 July 1971 although they would have "an active combat role" in defending the remaining US presence.[15]

(TS) Four days later, on 14 May 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a statement of the role for US ground forces in South Vietnam after 1 July 1971 that provided for: (1) "dynamic defense" of US installations; (2) security

14. (TS-GP 1) CM-855-71 to SecDef, 27 Apr 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 21 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/742, 22 Apr 71; JMF 907/374 (21 Apr 71).

15. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Redeployments from Southeast Asia," 10 May 71, JMF 907/374 (21 Apr 71).

and processing of equipment and supplies to be retrograded; (3) development of the RVNAF by supplying essential combat and combat service support. The term dynamic defense, they explained, did not imply static garrison-type defense posture, which would be militarily unsound. Rather the concept encompassed the conduct of operations by US forces out from vital installations and in concert with RVN Regional and Popular Force units, keeping the enemy off balance and disrupting his operations. In addition, US forces would continue to supply artillery, air, engineer, communications-electronics, intelligence, and naval support for RVNAF operations and for the defense of key US, FWMAF, and RVNAF bases. United States naval forces would be positioned offshore to provide naval gunfire, air, and coastal patrol support; US Air Force units would conduct tactical air operations in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos as required; and US advisers would assist in developing and training the RVNAF and in supporting the South Vietnamese pacification effort.[16]

(~~TS~~) The adoption of this changed concept of operations for the remaining US ground troops in South Vietnam raised a problem concerning the designation given the operations still conducted by US forces. Admiral Moorer brought this aspect of the matter to the attention of the field commanders on 5 June, requesting them to take a "close look" at the system of reporting the status of US units. He wanted to insure a clear reflection of the type of operations in which the units were actually engaged. Many persons who read and used

16. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-232-71 to SecDef, 14 May 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/742-1, 13 May 71, JMF 907/374 (21 May 71).

those reports, he cautioned, might draw invalid conclusions from the daily portrayal of US activity by employment categories. He instructed the commanders: "we will have to be especially precise in the way . . . we report activities of maneuver battalions." He noted that most of these units were still being reported as engaged in "combat operations" with only a few in "security" or "pacification" actions. He considered it misleading to continue to report as combat operations the activities of units carrying out dynamic defense. "From our point of view," Admiral Moorer said, "dropping the term combat operations would solve the problem." Moreover, Admiral Moorer pointed out that reports were still listing US casualties in "large-scale" operations bearing code names. Possibly, he suggested, the use of code names for operations should be discontinued, since over the years operations so designated had been associated with large offensive ground actions.[17]

(Ø) General Abrams subsequently issued guidance to his subordinate commanders in June 1971 defining the terms "combat" and "security" operations. The former included those that were "primarily offensive in nature" and normally involved units of battalion size or larger operating against formations beyond striking distance (35-50 km) of US installations, facilities or unit bases. Security operations were defensive actions against enemy incursions of any kind that, if permitted to proceed unchecked, would threaten US installations, facilities, or units. This latter category normally included reconnaissance, ambush operations, reaction to local enemy contact, and other operations involving

17. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1619 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 5 Jun 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Apr-Jun 71.

units of company size or smaller. Some US commanders in Vietnam objected to being considered in anything but a "combat" role. But as the Director, Joint Staff, remarked to the Chairman, there need be no stigma attached to the "security" role, since it permitted, and indeed required "aggressive offensive operations."[18]

Ground Operations

(~~S~~) In fulfillment of the Combined Campaign Plan, allied forces in 1971 proceeded in efforts to defeat the VC/VNA forces and, thus, to thwart their objective of taking over South Vietnam. To accomplish this goal, the allies pursued a three-pronged attack consisting of coordinated ground operations to locate and destroy enemy main and local forces, a combined interdiction program to prevent infiltration, and attempts to neutralize the Viet Cong infrastructure. The ground war during the year was characterized by a low level of enemy activity resulting, according to COMUSMACV, from significant losses inflicted upon the enemy, allied success in carrying the war to areas outside South Vietnam, and the enemy's need to concentrate on the security of his logistical system.[19]

(~~S~~) The ground operations in South Vietnam varied from military region to military region. The enemy threat was greatest in MR 1 and consequently more allied forces operated there in 1971 than in any

18. ~~(S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV COmmand History, 1971, p. IV-10. (S-GP 1) DJSM-1017-71 to CJCS, 1 Jun 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Apr-Jun 71.

19. All information in this section, unless otherwise stated, is from (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. IV-11 - IV-37.

other region. Regular RVNAF units conducted combat operations to find and destroy enemy main forces and base areas in the foothills and mountains in the western portion of the region, while Regional and Popular Forces provided security and community development support in the populous coastal area. In addition, considerable effort was devoted to prevention of enemy infiltration of main force units across or around the DMZ.

(TS) The first three months of 1971 were quiet in MR 1. During January, maneuver forces pursued search and clear operations against enemy main force units. In February and March, most allied troops in the region were occupied in either direct participation or support of LAMSON 719,[20] the RVNAF incursion into Laos. Launched on 30 January, this operation was the largest ground action of the year.

(TS) No US ground troops entered into Laos, but the United States did furnish extensive air support for LAMSON 719. Even after the operation ended, the United States continued to supply support for RVNAF cross-border operations into Laos. At Admiral Moorer's request, the Secretary of Defense extended such authority, initially, until 15 June 1971 and, eventually, through 30 September 1971. In the second extension, however, the Secretary stipulated that:

> subsequent to 15 July 1971, I desire that US support be limited to planning assistance and coordination, and the use of US TACAIR and B-52's. In emergency situation [sic] which exceed RVNAF ability to react within available resources, additional

20. See Chapter 1.

authority is granted to employ US helicopter gun ships and logistic helicopter [sic] for extraction purposes.[21]

(S) Meantime on 28 March 1971 Fire Support Base MARY ANN, manned by an element of the 196th Brigade, 23d US Infantry Division, had come under enemy attack. After firing 50 to 60 rounds of 82mm mortar fire into the base, enemy sappers penetrated the base perimeter. Following some initial confusion, the US forces drove the enemy from the base. But, during the 20-minute engagement, 33 US soldiers were killed and 76 wounded, two 155mm howitzers destroyed, and numerous small arms and miscellaneous gear damaged or destroyed. Enemy losses were placed at 12 killed. The Commanding General, 23d Infantry Division, told COMUSMACV that "we may have been the victims of some complacency." There had been no enemy activity in the immediate vicinity of the base for months, he explained.[22]

(S) This apparent complacency by US forces caused concern in Washington. At the request of the Secretary of Defense, General Abrams conducted an investigation, and Admiral Moorer submitted the results to the Secretary on 4 May. The US forces had, indeed, been complacent. There had been no recent local patrolling

21. (TS-GP 1) CM-892-71 to SecDef, 12 May 71; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8598 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 14 May 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 71. (TS-GP 1) CM-976-71 to SecDef, 14 Jun 71; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Support for RVNAF Cross-Border Operations (S)," 17 Jun 71; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5200 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 18 Jun 71; same file, Jun 71.

22. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 72-71, 29 Mar 71. (C-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and CJCS 290235Z Mar 71 (transmitting a 28 Mar 71 msg from CG, 23d Inf Div to COMUSMACV), CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (S) p. J-11.

to screen the immediate vicinity of the base; observation and listening posts did not exist outside the base; the perimeter guard was undermanned; and there were no interior or roving guards within the base except at the 155mm weapons. In addition, no reaction force had been designated, the alert signal was not sounded at the time of the initial attack, and anti-intrusion devices as well as measures to increase troop alertness were minimal.[23]

(C) Secretary Laird expressed alarm to Admiral Moorer that "any U.S. military organization in Southeast Asia could grow so careless and be so ill-prepared for action." He "assumed" that the military chain of command had insured against further negligence of this kind. The Admiral replied that General Abrams had directed his entire command to review, and improve as necessary, readiness measures. Eventually, after completion of a final investigation, five US Army officers, including one general, received reprimands.[24]

(S) With the end of LAMSON 719 in April, allied commanders in MR 1 launched LAMSON 720, a stepped up action against enemy supply and base areas and infiltration routes. Forces of the US 101st Airborne Division and the 1st ARVN Division took part in this operation in the Da Krong and A Shau valleys of Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces. LAMSON 720 continued into May 1971. In June, enemy pressure forced the

23. (C-GP 4) CM-873-71 to SecDef, 4 May 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 71.

24. (C) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Interim Report of Attack on FSB MARY ANN," 7 May 71; (C-GP 4) CM-883-71 to SecDef, 12 May 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 71. Washington Post, 24 Nov 71, 3.

RVNAF to evacuate Fire Support Base FULLER in Thua Thien Province.

(S) The summer brought continuing redeployment of US forces from MR 1 and the withdrawal of the remaining forces from offensive operations. In late June, US forces began "dynamic defense," with primary attention devoted to defense against enemy incursions. Operations included reconnaissance, ambush patrol, and reaction to local enemy contact.

(S) In September, the RVNAF carried out LAMSON 810, a two-week interdiction campaign in western Quang Tri Province. The following month, two brigades of the US 23d Infantry Division ceased their dynamic defense operations, which they had pursued since July, and began departing Vietnam, along with a US armored cavalry squadron. To compensate for this loss, the RVNAF activated a new combat unit, the 3d Infantry Division, in MR 1. The new division, although not completely activated until the following March, assumed responsibility for an area along the DMZ in northern Quang Tri Province in November. The remainder of the year was quiet in MR 1 and, at the end of the year, the last US Army division in-country, the 101st at Phu Bai, was in a standdown posture.

(S) In all operations in MR 1, the enemy enjoyed the advantage of a sanctuary of sorts in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). He moved men and weapons there at will, positioning them against allied forces in MR 1 just below. The allies could launch artillery attacks against enemy targets in the DMZ below the Provisional Military Demarcation Line (PMDL), could return enemy fire from anywhere in the DMZ, and could invade the zone to repulse any large enemy attack emanating from the zone. But they were not allowed to operate at will

in the DMZ, nor could they carry out pre-emptive attacks against enemy buildups or weapons in the DMZ above the PMDL. As a consequence, the enemy was able to launch artillery attacks from the upper half of the DMZ at the time and place of his choosing, with the allies powerless to respond until the attack actually occurred.

(TS) In turning down a JCS request in August 1970 for expanded DMZ authorities, the Secretary of Defense had asked that he be kept informed of activities in or near the DMZ that "significantly" increased the threat to allied forces. On 10 March 1971, Admiral Moorer informed the Secretary of Defense that there had recently been a number of attacks by fire on allied installations in MR 1. In addition, General Abrams had identified movement of two medium artillery weapons into the upper half of the DMZ. These pieces were not only in a position to attack US and RVN forces below the DMZ, but could also interdict the eastern half of Route 9, the primary line of communication supporting LAMSON 719. In accord with a recommendation of CINCPAC, Admiral Moorer requested authority for an air or artillery strike, as appropriate, to eliminate the artillery pieces, and the Secretary of Defense approved a week later, on 17 March, granting the authority through 31 March 1971.[25]

(TS) Subsequently, on 27 March 1971, Admiral Moorer informed the Secretary of Defense that recent enemy activities in the DMZ portended an attempt to move his artillery into "previously prepared, widely dispersed,

25, (TS-GP 1) CM-691-71 to SecDef, 10 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Operational Authorities (U)," 17 Mar 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

and easily camouflaged positions throughout the sanctuary of the DMZ" above the PMDL. To remove that threat the Admiral requested standing authority to attack NVN artillery targets anywhere in the DMZ.[26]

(TS) On the following day, 28 March, visual reconnaissance was conducted in anticipation of the one-time strike authorized by the Secretary on 17 March. The reconnaissance revealed that the site was empty and the strike was not carried out. Instead, CINCPAC asked for authority to strike three newly identified artillery sites in North Vietnam just above the DMZ as well as for continuing authority for armed reconnaissance to locate and destroy field artillery pieces in North Vietnam below 17°10' north. Admiral Moorer relayed the CINCPAC request to the Secretary of Defense, concurring that the sites in question threatened US forces. "The sanctuary areas in and north of the DMZ must be denied to the enemy," he told the Secretary, "if we are to minimize the risk to our troops operating in northern MR 1 adjacent to the DMZ and reduce US casualties."[27]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense approved neither authority. He told the Chairman that it was not his intention to "create sanctuaries in and north of the DMZ." But, in the absence of "more definitive intelligence" of enemy activity in the DMZ, and until there was more positive evidence of enemy artillery in North Vietnam shelling US forces in South Vietnam, the Secretary declined to grant the recommended authorities.

26. (TS-GP 1) CM-750-71 to SecDef, 27 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71.
27. (TS-GP 1) CM-756-71 to SecDef, 29 Mar 71, same file.

He reminded the Chairman that authority already existed to counter artillery fire from north of or from within the DMZ with heavy ground or naval gunfire and tactical air until the enemy weapons were destroyed.[28]

(TS) Two months later, on 27 June 1971, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense of recent enemy activity in and near the DMZ, including the loss of Fire Support Base FULLER, that significantly increased the threat to allied forces. He told the Secretary that enemy initiative in northern MR 1 presented a grave danger to the security of troops and installations in Quang Tri Province. Recent US troop withdrawals as well as the current RVNAF posture precluded effective defense, the Admiral believed, so long as the DMZ remained an enemy sanctuary. He requested authority to use tactical air, artillery, naval gunfire, area denial air munitions, and B-52 strikes, if SAM defenses allowed, throughout the entire DMZ.[29]

(TS) The Secretary turned down the request on 1 July 1971. Although he shared the Chairman's concern, he saw no indication that expanded authorities in the DMZ were critical to countering the enemy threat in western Quang Tri Province.[30]

(TS) Both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and COMUSMACV were reluctant to accept the Secretary's decision as

28. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnam Demilitarized Zone (U)," 31 Mar 71, same file. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Strikes Against Artillery Positions," 7 Apr 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

29. (TS-GP 1) CM-1012-71 to SecDef, 27 Jun 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 71.

30. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "DMZ Authorities," 1 Jul 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 2.

final. On 8 July 1971, the Chairman forwarded the Secretary a DIA appraisal of the situation in the DMZ, and General Abrams had discussed the matter with Dr. Kissinger a few days earlier when the latter was in South Vietnam. The General stressed the need for a five to ten day air campaign against enemy installations in the DMZ and North Vietnam to a depth of 25 miles north of the PMDL.[31]

(TS) A few days later, General Abrams submitted an updated assessment of the situation in MR 1 and the DMZ, together with a detailed plan for a special interdiction campaign there. Included was provision for a two to three-day air strike of all military and logistics targets in North Vietnam below 17°35' north. A MACV representative briefed both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard on the DMZ situation and the plan, and Lieutenant General Melvin Zais, USA, Director of Operations, Joint Staff, followed with "a very strong and convincing case" in support of the MACV recommendations.[32]

(TS) On 19 July, the Chairman told the Secretary of Defense that the current threat in MR 1 required a major US effort focused on the "total enemy system" within and north of the DMZ. Admiral Moorer believed that a concentrated program launched against this threat at that time would not only diminish the present danger but also the "threat potential" for the next year. Destruction of the enemy capabilities in lower

31. (TS-GP 1) CM-1033-71 to SecDef, 8 Jul 71; (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and CJCS, 041000Z Jul 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 71.

32. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info JCS), 111020Z Jul 71, JCS IN 24815; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1342 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 15 Jul; same file.

North Vietnam and the DMZ sanctuaries was essential to insure safe and orderly US withdrawals and achievement of RVNAF self-sufficiency. Admiral Moorer provided the Secretary the COMUSMACV plan, recommending that it be forwarded to "higher authority" for approval.[33]

(TS) The Secrtary of Defense did not approve the plan. On 24 July 1971, he told Admiral Moorer that he found insufficient changes in the military situation since their exchange on this matter in June to warrant revising his earlier decision. "Moreover," he told the Admiral, "there are non-military considerations which make the initiation of military actions such as those you propose exceedingly difficult at this time." Although not elaborating on those considerations, he did promise to monitor developments in MR 1 and the DMZ closely. Meanwhile, he assumed that the existing authorities would be used to the "maximum."[34]

(S) No further action was taken in 1971 to expand the operating authorities in the DMZ. In August, Dr. Kissinger asked the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam to develop a paper on diplomatic and military options available to counter North Vietnamese road building in the DMZ and western Quang Tri Province. The Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared a draft for the military portion of the study. After consulting CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Admiral Moorer suggested the following: B-52 strikes below the PMDL; tactical air and fixed and rotary wing gunship strikes in the DMZ; artillery attack from fire bases along the DMZ; and ground interdiction. Both the field commanders and the

33. (TS-GP 1) CM-1060-71 to SecDef, 19 Jul 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 71.

34. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Bombing Campaign, DMZ North (TS)," 24 Jul 71, same file.

Chairman believed that, in order to deal effectively with the threat posed by the road network, it would be necessary to carry the interdiction beyond the PMDL into North Vietnam, and Admiral Moorer requested appropriate authorities for that purpose. But no action was taken on his request, nor did any further developments result from the Ad Hoc Group's study.[35]

(S) Ground combat operations in Military Region 2 during 1971 were similar to those in MR 1. The allies faced a significant enemy main force threat throughout the year. Allied maneuver battalions operated against the enemy main force units, usually in the western area of the region while the territorial forces sought out the Viet Cong infrastructure. In addition, the Republic of Korea forces supported pacification efforts in the coastal area.

(S) The year began in MR 2 with a low level of combat activity. The enemy ended the Tet truce with attacks by fire on several cities in the region, and heavy combat followed until mid-April. Thereafter there was a brief lull until early May when the enemy began to increase pressure on allied fire support bases in western Kontum Province. The RVNAF reacted with 14 maneuver battalions. The month of June brought a period of reduced combat activity that lasted throughout the rest of the summer. In August, the US 173d Airborne Brigade, which had operated in the region, left Vietnam. During the remainder of the year, the RVN forces maintained pressure on the enemy, conducting continuous search and destroy operations.

35. (S-GP 3) Memo, Actg ASD(ISA) to CJCS, "Possible Military Actions Against Route 103 Extension in Quang Tri Province," 12 Aug 71; (S-GP 4) CM-1137-71 to Sec Def, 17 Aug 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Aug 71.

~~(S)~~ In November, intelligence began to indicate a building enemy threat in the western highlands of the region, and the RVNAF initiated Operation QUANG TRUNG II/4. It consisted of increased border surveillance through the establishment of artillery-supported operational bases for saturation patrolling and ambushing along infiltration routes. When QUANG TRUNG II/4 terminated on 22 December, the RVNAF reported 228 enemy killed, five prisoners taken, and 42 individual and 51 crew-served weapons captured.

~~(TS)~~ In November 1971, the RVNAF Commander of MR 2 planned an interdiction operation into Base Areas 701 and 702 in Cambodia to destroy enemy supplies, equipment, and personnel. Although the RVNAF would conduct the planning, coordination, and execution, the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John D. Ryan, advised the Secretary of Defense on 13 November that some US air support would be required. Specifically, General Ryan requested authority to use the assets of two US air cavalry troops for screening the west flank of the area and for armed reconnaissance as well as provision of helicopter medical evacuation, trooplift, resupply, and equipment removal left in emergency situations. The Secretary agreed two days later stating that the authority would expire upon completion of the operation, but no later than 20 December 1971.[36]

36. (~~TS~~) CM-1308-71 to SecDef, 13 Nov 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Request for Authorities, Base Areas 701/702 Operations (~~TS~~)," 15 Nov 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 71.

(TS) Subsequently, the RVNAF conducted a battalion-sized raid into Base Area 702 on 14 December 1971. United States B-52 and VNAF tactical air strikes, together with US air cavalry reconnaissance, preceded the attack. The action lasted for seven hours and damaged an extensive logistics storage area. On 17 December 1971, the Chairman notified the Secretary of Defense that the VNAF planned further raids into the two base areas, and Admiral Moorer asked for extension of the US support authorities for a 60-day period. The Secretary approved, but no further operations into Base Areas 701 or 702 occurred in 1971. Despite the success of the cross-border raid into Cambodia as well as of QUANG TRUNG II/4, allied commanders in MR 2 at the end of the year expected an enemy offensive in early 1972.[37]

(TS) There was little combat activity in Military Region 3 during the first nine months of 1971. This situation allowed most RVNAF forces in the region to engage in counter-infiltration operations along the Cambodian border and in Cambodia. The major RVNAF cross-border operation in Cambodia during 1971 was TOAN THANG 01/71 a combined ARVN-FANK effort to disrupt enemy attempts to restore logistics bases along the Mekong River and to remove enemy pressure on populated areas east of the Mekong River and below Route 7 (see MAP 5). The United States participated in the planning, and seven RVNAF multi-battalion task forces were committed to the operation. As recommended by COMUSMACV,

37. (TS-GP 1) CM-1386-71 to SecDef, 17 Dec 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 20 Dec 71; same file, Dec 71. (TS-GP 1) CM-1443-71 to SecDef, 13 Jan 72, same file, Jan 72. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. IV-31.

CINCPAC, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and approved by the Secretary of Defense, the United States provided airlift for TOAN THANG 01/71, both fixed and rotary wing for medical evacuation, logistic movement and troop lift when and where the VNAF resources and capabilities proved insufficient.[38]

(~~TS~~) TOAN THANG 01/71 began on 4 February 1971 when two RVNAF task forces moved into the Chup Plantation area of Cambodia. In the initial phase, RVN and Cambodian forces cooperated in searching out and destroying enemy troops and supplies. Numerous contacts were made with the enemy during the first ten days of the campaign. Thereafter contact was sporadic until 17 March when two RVNAF task forces again became engaged in the Chup area. Heavy fighting lasted for two days, and US tactical air, B-52s, and helicopter gunships supported the battle. Then, the level of action dropped off, except for occasional surges, and a general lull began in mid-April that lasted until late May.[39]

(~~TS~~) On 5 May, the Secretary of Defense questioned the value of TOAN THANG 01/71. From the available reports, he found it difficult to see how the pattern of recent activity had been productive. Moreover, he was concerned about possible "adverse impacts" of

38. (~~S-NOFORN~~ GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. E-5. (~~TS~~) CM-481-71 to SecDef, 4 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Cambodia, Jan 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9395 to CINCPAC (info COMUS MACV), 6 Jan 71.

39. All information on the operational details of TOAN THANG 01/71 is from (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. E-5 - E-11.

continuing the operations and asked Admiral Moorer for his views and recommendations.[40]

(TS) The Chairman replied on 19 May that TOAN THANG 01/71 continued to serve "the underlying purpose of Vietnamization." It had tied down the major elements of three enemy divisions, denying their employment in critical areas in Military Regions 3 and 4 in South Vietnam; it had thwarted enemy plans to restore base areas along the Cambodia-Vietnam border; and it had reduced enemy pressure on the Government of Cambodia during a critical period of FANK development. Although the current action was "more modest" than during the early weeks of the operation, Admiral Moorer expected the ARVN, supported by tactical air, would continue to disrupt enemy intentions in Cambodia. In addition, he believed that the RVNAF had demonstrated their ability to plan and execute a complex operation and would probably pursue TOAN THANG 01/71 until the wet season prevented further action. Premature withdrawal of US support, Admiral Moorer concluded, could undermine RVNAF confidence and the will to conduct such operations in the future. He recommended continued US support for TOAN THANG 01/71 through the current dry season.[41]

(TS) After reviewing Admiral Moorer's assessment, the Secretary on 11 June approved US air support for TOAN THANG 01/71 through 30 June 1971. Subsequently, on 25 June, the Acting Chairman, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, informed the Secretary of Defense that

40. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Operation TOAN THANG 01/71 NB," 5 May 71, CJCS File 091 Cambodia, May 71.

41. (TS-GP 1) CM-912-71 to SecDef, 19 May 71, same file.

enemy forces and activities in Cambodia still posed a threat in both the TOAN THANG 01/71 area and in the adjacent portion of South Vietnam. Admiral Zumwalt believed that the original objectives of TOAN THANG 01/71 remained valid and requested further extension of US support through 1 November 1971. Mr. Laird agreed on 30 June and extended authority for US support as requested.[42]

(S) While the RVNAF maneuver battalions operated along and across the Cambodian border, the territorial forces pursued pacification objectives throughout the rest of MR 3. United States troops, meantime continued redeployment from the region. By May, two brigades of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, the remaining brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment had all departed Vietnam, necessitating the assumption of an even larger security role by the RVN territorial forces in MR 3.

(S) The low level of military action in MR 3 continued until late September 1971. Then enemy activity increased markedly in the northwestern part of Tay Ninh Province. Main force units launched coordinated attacks against the RVNAF, apparently hoping to make an impact on the RVN presidential election scheduled for 30 October 1971. Timely RVNAF reinforcement and an integrated fire support plan forced withdrawal of the attacking enemy forces by 26 October, and military activity in MR 3 returned to a low level for the last two months of the year.

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42. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Operation TOAN THANG 01/71," 11 Jun 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-1010-71 to SecDef, 25 Jun 71; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "U.S. Support for Operation TOAN THANG 01/71," 30 Jun 71; CJCS File 091 Cambodia, Jun 71.

(S) The ARVN proceeded with operations in Military Region 4, as they had since August 1969, unassisted by US ground forces. The South Vietnamese forces attempted to saturate the area with search and clear operations in order to eliminate enemy forces and bases. The most important of these operations during 1971 were the 21st ARVN Division's U Minh campaign and the 9th ARVN Division's Seven Mountains effort in the western part of the region. In addition, the ARVN carried out cross-border limited operations into Cambodia throughout the year. As mentioned earlier, the enemy adopted a new tactic in MR 4 of overrunning ARVN outposts, and the number of such posts overrun increased alarmingly during the year.

(S) Following the pattern of earlier years, US and RVN forces observed brief cease-fires to mark Tet, Buddha's birthday, Christmas, and New Year's. In all four instances, the Republic of Vietnam restricted the truces to 24 hours rather than matching longer periods proclaimed by the enemy. Experience had taught that the enemy never respected the holiday standdowns, regardless of the length. Thus shorter periods brought fewer casualties for the allies. As in previous years, US and RVN forces suspended all offensive ground operations during the truces although remaining on alert and patrolling base areas. During the Tet truce, 261800 to 271800 (Saigon time) January 1971, there were 59 major and 58 minor incidents; 18 allied personnel were killed, including one US soldier, eight RVNAF troops, and nine Vietnamese civilians. For Buddha's birthday, the allies suspended action from 081200 to 091200 (Saigon time) May 1971, but enemy observance was little better than in the Tet cease-fire. Three US and ten RVNAF soldiers and ten civilians were killed in

some 78 (45 major and 33 minor) enemy-initiated incidents. The 24-hour Christmas and New Year's standdowns began at 241800 and 311800 (Saigon time), respectively. In both, incidents and casualties were lower than in the previous truces. Thirty major and 18 minor incidents were reported throughout South Vietnam during the Christmas cease-fire and 34 major and seven minor incidents during New Year's. No US casualties occurred during either period, though seven RVNAF soldiers were killed during the Christmas truce and 20 soldiers and one civilian during New Year's.[43]

Naval Operations

(~~S~~) Allied naval operations in and around South Vietnam in 1971 followed the pattern of immediately preceding years. The Vietnamese Navy (VNN), with decreasing US support, engaged in two principal operations: MARKET TIME, to interdict seaborne movement of men and supplies into the Republic of Vietnam; and the Southeast Asia Lake-Ocean-River Delta Strategy (SEA LORDS), to prevent waterborne infiltration from Cambodia over internal waters into MR 4 and southern MR 3.

(~~S~~) The MARKET TIME operation maintained three barriers: an air patrol to provide an early warning against infiltration of large steel-hulled NVN trawlers; an outer surface barrier that patrolled 12 to 40 miles off the RVN coast to stop large craft; and an inner surface barrier of small patrol craft to interdict junks and sampans. In September 1970, the VNN had

43. ~~(S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 22-71, 28 Jan 71; 108-71, 10 May 71; 298-71, 27 Dec 71; and 1-72, 3 Jan 72.

assumed full responsibility for the inner surface MARKET TIME barrier and the operation was renamed TRAN HUNG DAO XV. All vessels of the inner barrier were commanded and operated by the VNN in 1971 though the United States continued to provide advisers. The United States also retained responsibility for both the outer surface barrier and for the air patrol throughout the year.[44]

(~~S~~) During 1971, the United States began a program (ACTOVRAD) of building and turning over to the VNN a network of coastal radar stations. These installations, when fully operational, would provide a detection capability equivalent to the US Navy P-3 aircraft manning the MARKET TIME air patrol. The first ACTOVRAD station became operational on 1 July 1971 and was turned over to the VNN a week later. By December 1971, the VNN operated seven of the planned sixteen stations, and the remaining nine would be operational by 30 June 1972.[45]

(~~S~~) The Vietnamese Navy forces were active in patrolling the MARKET TIME inner barrier in 1971. They inspected an average of approximately 135,000 craft per month along the South Vietnamese coast from the 17th Parallel to the Gulf of Thailand. Nonetheless there was some increase in sea infiltration after the South Vietnamese took over control.[46]

(~~S~~) The Secretary of Defense, on 18 May 1971, noted this decline in MARKET TIME effectiveness. He considered the prevention of significant enemy infiltration by sea to be "crucial to the success of the overall

44. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~S~~) pp. I-7, V-32.
45. Ibid., (S) p. V-37.
46. Ibid., (S) V-32 - V-34.

interdiction effort" and asked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff about additional measures that might be taken to assist the Vietnamese in MARKET TIME operations.[47]

(C) Admiral Moorer replied on 14 June. He told the Secretary that, although the turnover of ships and craft to the VNN was "well planned and orderly," the results of the rapid VNN expansion were beginning to show in the form of preventive maintenance deficiencies and lack of adequate leadership among the young officers. The Commander, US Naval Forces, Vietnam (COMNAVFORV), was implementing appropriate measures, including a greater concentration of advisory emphasis on logistics and maintenance. In addition, COMNAVFORV had recommended to the Vietnamese Chief of Naval Operations several measures to improve MARKET TIME effectiveness. He had proposed a restructuring of the inner barrier and a concept of task units under the command of a senior naval officer to cover high threat areas in order to place boat commanders under more experienced supervision.

(C) Admiral Moorer expected the COMNAVFORV actions to bring some improvement, but he cautioned Secretary Laird that the progress of VNN surface MARKET TIME forces, however great, would not completely stop sea infiltration. The Vietnamization of MARKET TIME did not include a Vietnamese air barrier patrol. Therefore the VNN operations simply could not match MARKET TIME when combined US air and surface forces participated. Should the remedial actions initiated by COMNAVFORV fail to bring improvement, then the United States might be forced, the Admiral believed, to reevaluate

47. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 18 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/759, 21 Jun 71, JMF 911/329 (18 May 71).

the "scope" of its involvement in the operational aspects of the program. But for the present, Admiral Moorer favored postponement of any additional action pending further experience with the VNN operation of the MARKET TIME inner barrier.[48]

(~~TS~~) After reviewing the Chairman's comments, the Secretary of Defense directed "aggressive" pursuit of the COMNAVFORV MARKET TIME corrective measures. In addition, he thought it might be advantageous to retain the MARKET TIME air barrier beyond the end of FY 1972 when termination was currently planned. Further, he wanted attention given to measures allowing the RVNAF to assume the air patrol mission and capability. Accordingly, the MARKET TIME Operations Annex to the Combined Interdiction Campaign Plan for FY 1972,[49] submitted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense on 23 August 1971, provided for a MARKET TIME maritime air patrol by US aircraft throughout FY 1972. Although the VNAF would assume a share of the air patrol, it would not be able to support all the requirement. As a consequence, the US Navy P-3 aircraft, currently performing this function, would remain on station and would not be "Vietnamized."[50]

(~~S~~) The other major allied naval operation in 1971, SEA LORDS, was, with one exception, completely a VNN responsibility and had been redesignated TRAN HUNG DAO.

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48. (~~S~~-GP 4) CM-980-71 to SecDef, 14 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/759, 21 Jun 71, same file.

49. For coverage of the FY 1972 Combined Interdiction Campaign Plan, see Chapter 6, pp. 335-338.

50. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., 2 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-4, 9 Jul 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 3. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Annex C, MARKET TIME Operations, to Outline Combined Interdiction Campaign Plan for FY 1972, App to JCSM-384-71, 23 Aug 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/747-7, 18 Aug 71, same file, sec 4.

The exception was SOLID ANCHOR, a project to establish a base for both coastal junks and patrol craft fast (PCF) at old Nam Can City to assist expansion of RVN control in An Xuyen Province. On 1 April 1971, however, SOLID ANCHOR, the last US Navy operation in Vietnam, was turned over to the VNN and renamed TRAN HUNG DAO IV. Throughout 1971, the US Navy continued to supply limited air support to SEA LORDS, adding to the success of the operation.[51]

(S) All through the US combat involvement in South Vietnam, allied ground actions had been supported by naval gunfire. On 6 April 1971, however, the Secretary of Defense questioned the need for such support in light of the diminishing number of suitable targets in coast areas. In reply, Admiral Moorer objected to any withdrawal of remaining US naval gunfire support capability from South Vietnam. It was too early, he told the Secretary, to judge whether the RVNAF artillery would be able to assume the complete naval gunfire support mission. Moreover, he thought any such withdrawal unwise at that time in view of the accelerated redeployment of US combat forces.[52]

(S) Still not convinced of the need to retain naval gunfire capability off South Vietnam, Secretary Laird asked the Chairman on 11 May 1971 to study the possibility of terminating this support except for emergencies. Admiral Moorer continued to insist that this

51. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, V-11, V-15 - V-19.

52. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Naval Gunfire Support," 6 Apr 71; (S-GP 4) CM-851-71 to SecDef, 29 Apr 71; Atts to JCS 2472/746, 3 May 71, JMF 911/325 (6 Apr 71).

capability was necessary. It was his "considered opinion," as well as that of the field commanders, that naval gunfire support was a valuable contribution to the total fire support resources available for Southeast Asian operations. He recommended retention of this support until redeployment of US combat forces was completed. At that time, the need for naval fire support would be reassessed. This exchange ended discussion of the matter and no reduction in US naval gunfire support occurred in 1971.[53]

Air Operations

(U) In 1971, COMUSMACV used air operations to support ground action and to interdict enemy personnel and supplies in South Vietnam and in neighboring Cambodia and Laos. With the continuing US redeployment and the removal of US ground forces from combat during the year, air operations became increasingly important. Both the remaining US units and the RVNAF, as they took over the combat operations, depended more than ever on air power to furnish the support that the departing troops had previously supplied. As COMUSMACV aptly put it: "airpower in 1971 literally took up the slack in US offensive power."[54]

(U) Although the employment of air resources for combat support and for interdiction followed the pattern of previous years, the situation in 1971 was different. Not only did US ground forces leave South Vietnam, but US air forces and their equipment were drawn down as well. Fewer airplanes and personnel now

53. (~~C~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 11 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/746-1, 4 Jun 71; (~~C~~-GP 4) CM-941-71 to SecDef, 31 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/746-1, 4 Jun 71; JMF 911/325 (6 Apr 71).

54. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. VI-1.

had to provide the same type of strike missions, support, reconnaissance, interdiction, airlift, and search and rescue as in previous years. Only technological advances and improved weapons made this possible.[55]

(~~S~~) United States air activity levels for Southeast Asia remained fixed for the first six months of 1971 at 1,000 B-52 and 14,000 tactical sorties per month, and then tactical levels dropped to 10,000 per month during the last half of the year.[56] The number of US aircraft, however, declined significantly during the year. The 1st Marine Air Wing redeployed to Japan; US Navy aircraft carriers on YANKEE STATION off Vietnam were reduced from three to two; and the last US F-100 fighter bomber squadrons returned to the United States, leaving the F-4 and a few F-105G fighters in Thailand as the main fighter aircraft for tactical air operations in Southeast Asia, aside from US Navy carrier planes. At the end of the year, there were 833 US Air Force planes in Southeast Asia, of which 384 were based in South Vitnam. This total compared with 1,584 in Southeast Asia on 31 October 1971. The United States also turned over several air bases to the South Vietnamese during 1971, including Ban Me Thout, Phu Cat, Nha Trang, and Binh Thuy.

(~~S~~) Improvement and expansion of the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) proceeded during the year.[57] On 31 December 1971, the VNAF had 42 operational squadrons of all types, including 9 fighter, 15 helicopter,

55. All information in this section on air operations, unless otherwise stated, is from (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. VI-1 - VI-33.

56. For planning in 1971 for future air activity levels, see Chapter 4.

57. For improvement planning for the VNAF, see Chapter 6.

7 liaison, 4 transport, and 2 gunship. The VNAF flew gradually increasing numbers of sorties month after month. In all, the VNAF carried out 650,979 sorties in 1971, almost doubling the 383,240 total of the previous year.

(S) United States air forces supported the RVNAF throughout South Vietnam and in Cambodia and Laos in 1971 and assisted the FANK and the Royal Laotian forces. The most significant US air operation in South Vietnam was the support of LAMSON 719 during February and March. United States B-52s bombed the landing zones in Laos prior to RVNAF air assaults; tactical air strikes directed by forward air controllers followed; and before the helicopter assaults, US tactical aircraft laid down smoke screens interspersed with cluster bombs.

(S) In Cambodia, US air resources supported the almost year-long TOAN THANG 01/71 operations. In addition, the United States assisted the South Vietnamese with air support for Mekong River convoys, furnishing air protection for the military and commercial convoys proceeding up the Mekong from Tan Chau in the Republic of Vietnam to Phnom Penh. United States Air Force and Army assets were committed to the initial aerial defense when the convoys began on 12 January 1971, and the 7th Air Force directed continuous aerial coverage. Forward air controllers of the USAF provided day and night coverage, calling in AC-119 gunships as needed. This Mekong River defense proved so successful that in 1971 only one tug and one barge were lost to enemy action.

(S) United States B-52 and tactical air forces carried out interdiction operations in South Vietnam,

Cambodia, and Laos throughout 1971. The largest interdiction program was conducted in the southern part of Laos and was known as STEEL TIGER. There US Air Forces had attempted since 1965 to restrict and halt the movement of men and materiel from North Vietnam over the Ho Chi Minh Trail into Laos and, eventually, into South Vietnam. Following the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam in 1968, particular attention was assigned to the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the STEEL TIGER area. The United States instituted semi-annual campaigns to follow the cyclical dry-rainy seasons of the area. The first such operation, COMMANDO HUNT, covered the dry season during November 1968 to April 1969. Interdiction operations in Southern Laos during the summer of 1969 were designated COMMANDO HUNT II, and COMMANDO HUNT III followed during the 1969-1970 dry season.[58]

~~(S)~~ Enemy infiltration over the Ho Chi Minh Trail was estimated to be greater in the 1970-1971 dry season than in previous years, and COMMANDO HUNT V was launched in October 1970 to interdict that activity. Continuing into April 1971, COMMANDO HUNT V combined tactical air strikes, gunships, B-57 bombers, and B-52 attacks to disrupt the enemy flow of supplies. Seventy percent of the authorized Southeast Asian tactical air sorties as well as a large portion of the B-52 sorties during this period were allotted to COMMANDO HUNT V.

(S) Although COMMANDO HUNT V ended on 30 April 1971, air interdiction of enemy infiltration through

58. ~~(S-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, (S) pp. V-215, V-220.

southern Laos continued. A summer campaign, COMMANDO HUNT VI, began on 15 May 1971. The mission was the same as the earlier dry season campaign, but monsoon weather precluded a comparable level of activity.

(S) On 1 November 1971, US forces launched COMMANDO HUNT VII, the 1971-1972 dry season interdiction operation in southern Laos. In this campaign, however, the number of available sorties was reduced almost a third from the previous year, reflecting the continuing reduction of US forces.

(S) United States Air Forces also conducted interdiction in Cambodia, especially in the eastern portion to assist in the campaigns against the Ho Chi Minh Trail movement. Use of B-52s in the southern Laos-eastern Cambodia for interdiction missions was particularly heavy both at the beginning and the end of 1971.

(TS) There was some question among US officials in Washington as to the effectiveness of the US and allied interdiction in Southeast Asia. On 28 June 1971, Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard submitted to the Senior Review Group a DOD paper that presented both sides of the issue. Although there was consensus that the interdiction campaigns waged since 1965 had destroyed supplies and disrupted the flow of enemy materiel into South Vietnam, disagreement centered on the extent to which this disruption had influenced North Vietnamese strategy. While one side argued that the enemy had been neither "resource-constrained" nor severely limited by the bombing of the Laotian road net, the other side held that this interdiction had been a key factor in the enemy switch from a main force to a protracted war strategy. The Defense study did not resolve the argument, but officials in Washington

did agree on the need to continue the effort and to provide the South Vietnamese with an interdiction capability. With the continuing drawdown of US forces, it was essential that the VNAF take over the interdiction. Consequently, the United States initiated in October 1971 an accelerated program, CREDIBLE CHASE, to test and evaluate a concept to improve the RVN air interdiction capability.[59]

(S) In addition to the interdiction in southern Laos, the United States also conducted air operations in northern Laos in 1971. There, in operations that had begun in 1964, US tactical air and B-52 forces provided interdiction, armed reconnaissance, and ground support to Major General Vang Pao's forces against the communist troops. The United States also continued to use its air resources in Southeast Asia during 1971 for reconnaissance and the collection of intelligence and for search and rescue operations. The latter category was credited in 1971 with 250 "saves," of which 142 were "combat saves."

(TS) All US air operations in Southeast Asia at the beginning of 1971 were conducted under consolidated authorities issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with Secretary of Defense approval, on 5 November 1970. In Laos, these authorities provided for air strikes in the BARREL ROLL area of northern Laos and for tactical air, B-52, and armed reconnaissance operations in

59. (TS) DOD Paper, "Air Operations in Southeast Asia," n.d., Att to Memo, DepSecDef to Dr. Kissinger, CJCS, USecState, and DCI, "FY 72-73 Air Operations in Southeast Asia (U)," 28 Jun 71, Att to (TS-GP 3) JCS 2472/739-21, 29 Jun 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 5. For JCS consideration of the CREDIBLE CHASE Program, see Chapter 6, pp. 343-350.

southern Laos. The authorities allowed for only limited defensive US air operations over North Vietnam, while in Cambodia they permitted B-52 and tactical air interdiction, air reconnaissance with armed escort and flak suppression, and search and air rescue operations. In addition, search and rescue and recovery operations were authorized in support of the Vietnamese Air Force, the Cambodian Air Force, and the Royal Thai Air Force in emergencies and when such operations were beyond the capabilities of those Southeast Asian nations.[60]

(TS) In April 1971, the Southeast Asia air operating authorities were extended through 1 November 1971 with only two minor changes: IRON HAND aircraft overflight of North Vietnam was widened to allow positioning between US and allied planes in the Republic of Vietnam, in addition to planes in Laos, and surface-to-air missiles and antiaircraft artillery sites in North Vietnam; and the three interdiction areas in Cambodia, FREEDOM DEAL, FREEDOM DEAL ALPHA, and FREEDOM DEAL EXTENSION, were combined into one area referred to as FREEDOM DEAL.[61] In addition the following air authorities, which previously did not have expiration dates, were included in the consolidated Southeast Asian authorities that extended through 1 November 1971: current air operations in the Republic of Vietnam; search and rescue operations for US personnel throughout Southeast Asia; B-52 strikes in support of operations along Route 4 in Cambodia; use of US transport

60. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5220 to CINCPAC, 5 Nov 70.
61. See pp. 254-271, for Joint Chiefs of Staff efforts to expand air operating authorities in North Vietnam during 1971.

for airborne insertion and resupply of SALEM HOUSE reconnaissance and intelligence teams in Cambodia; US leaflet operations against the NVA/VC forces wherever US air strikes were authorized in Cambodia; B-52 strikes in Laos and the Republic of Vietnam when approved by CINCPAC and CINCSAC and coordinated with the US Embassy in Vientiane or Saigon; manned tactical reconnaissance in North Vietnam below 19° north and elsewhere in Southeast Asia except in the BARREL ROLL NORTH area where JCS approval was required; and high and low altitude drone and SR-71 missions over all of Southeast Asia and U-2R operations over all of Southeast Asia except North Vietnam. These authorities were subsequently extended to April 1972.[62]

(S) With the increasing withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam, the Deputy Secretary of Defense grew concerned about the ability of the Southeast Asian countries to assume completely their own air defense. As a consequence, the US Air Force undertook in early 1971 a study of the Southeast Asian air defense systems and the possible development of a single integrated air defense system for the area. The results of the study were submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 2 April 1971. The Air Force concluded: the current air defense systems could not be maintained without US logistical support for the foreseeable future; the current and presently programmed systems could be improved

62. (TS-GP 1) CM-830-71 to SecDef, 16 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Operations, Jul 70-Jun 71. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Air Operating Authorities," 29 Apr 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, same subj, 22 Oct 71, 12 Nov 71, 29 Dec 71, same file, sec 2. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, same subj, 29 Jan and 26 Feb 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 27 Nov 71, same subj, CJCS SecDef Memo File.

without a correspondingly enlarged US presence, but an increase in size and sophistication of programmed forces would require a corresponding increase in US logistic support; the current air defense systems of the Republic of Vietnam and Thailand could not defend the entire area against an all out NVN air attack and, consequently, some type of US presence or commitment was needed as a deterrent; an improved air defense system was required to support the planned RVN interdiction program and counter North Vietnam's air support of its ground force operations; and the effectiveness of programmed air defense systems for Southeast Asia could be enhanced by upgraded radar capabilities, increased interceptors, and provision of additional aircraft shelters and ground-to-air weapons to reduce vulnerability of air bases in high threat areas. Even with additional resources, autonomous air defense systems were destined to failure in the face of a common enemy, the study found. Survivability of the Republic of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand depended upon their cooperation, and the United States should encourage and sponsor a mutual security arrangement among those countries.[63]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the study and forwarded the Air Force conclusions to the Secretary of Defense on 28 June 1971. They emphasized the need for a regional air defense system, but were skeptical whether the countries could overcome their longstanding hostilities and suspicions of one another. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also cautioned against provision of complex equipment that was beyond the capabilities of the Southeast Asian countries. They

63. (S-GP 3) CSAFM 112-71 to JCS, 2 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2339/341, 6 Apr 71, JMF 907/323 (2 Apr 71).

recommended to the Secretary that the United States pursue negotiations for a mutually acceptable air defense system among the Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. They also recommended that, as long as US aircraft supported the RVN effort, US air defense aircraft be committed to Southeast Asia and that air defense operating teams be retained at key radar sites.[64]

(S) The Secretary of Defense agreed on 20 July 1971 that undue sophistication should be avoided in development of Southeast Asian air defense systems and that these systems must be kept in the perspective of overall requirements. He approved the JCS recommendations to the extent that existing bilateral working relationships should be improved to provide more effective coordination of the air defense effort. But he saw neither need for nor prospect of multilateral air defense agreements at that time. The US air defense capability should be retained, he stated, to provide protection for US forces. The regional protection resulting therefrom was merely incidental to the US capability.[65]

The Search for Air Operating Authorities Against North Vietnam in 1971

(U) United States pilots in 1971 faced a growing enemy air defense threat when conducting missions near the North Vietnamese borders. The North Vietnamese had undertaken an augmentation of these defenses in late 1969, and the buildup proceeded throughout 1970 and into 1971. The enemy moved surface-to-air missiles

64. (S-GP 4) JCSM-299-71 to SecDef, 28 Jun 71, Encl to JCS 2339/341-2, 15 Jun 71, JMF 907/323 (2 Apr 71).
65. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 20 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2339/341-3, 21 Jul 71, same file.

(SAMs), antiaircraft artillery (AAA), and MIG aircraft into the southern areas of North Vietnam targeted against US planes operating in nearby Laos and, in early 1971, began to direct these defenses against US planes over South Vietnam just below the DMZ.

(~~C~~) Almost simultaneously with the initiation of the enemy air defense augmentation, both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had begun a series of continuing requests for increased operating authorities to counter the threat. United States pilots were allowed to react in self-defense, and on two occasions, 1-4 May 1970 and 20-21 November 1970,[66] offensive strikes were approved against air defense targets in North Vietnam. But despite the repeated recommendations of the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense had not granted standing authority for preemptive attack of enemy air defense installations in North Vietnam. With the withdrawal of US forces from ground combat operations during 1971, US air power took on even greater importance as a means of halting enemy infiltration into South Vietnam. Consequently, the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were even more attentive to the threat to US air operations and efforts to obtain authorities to remove the weapons based in North Vietnam that endangered these US operations in South Vietnam and Laos.

(~~TS~~) As described in the preceding volume in this series[67], the Secretary of Defense on 1 January 1971

66. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 353-354, 360-361.
67. Ibid., pp. 362-364.

authorized a one-time attack of SAM sites in North Vietnam, but weather conditions prevented execution. As a result, when the authority expired on 18 January 1971, the NVN SAM threat remained undiminished. On 20 January 1971, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff apprised the Secretary of Defense of this situation and the continuing threat. Admiral Moorer proposed further armed reconnaisance in the lower portion of North Vietnam along certain key routes, followed by "one-time" strikes when SAM sites or equipment were located. The suggested name for such an operation was LOUISVILLE SLUGGER.[68]

(TS) On the following day, 21 January 1971, Admiral Moorer forwarded to Secretary Laird two plans for air strikes against North Vietnam. These plans, requested earlier by the President, provided for a 72-hour protective reaction operation against SAM facilities and supply lines below 19° north and a 72-hour air and naval attack of the supply system along the NVN coast. The Secretary acknowledged receipt of the plans two days later, stating that he had advised the President of their availability, but no action was taken to approve strikes against North Vietnam.[69]

(TS) Admiral Moorer repeated his recommendation for attack of the North Vietnamese SAM sites on 29 January 1971. The strikes, he told the Secretary, would be limited to not more than 16 F-4 strike and suppression

68. (TS-GP 1) CM-523-71 to SecDef, 20 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN.

69. (TS-GP 1) CM-513-71 to SecDef, 21 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 71. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "North Vietnam Contingency Plans," 23 Jan 71, JMF 912/340 (23 Jan 71).

aircraft for each SAM target discovered. This time the Secretary approved and the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC to conduct armed reconnaissance and one-time strikes along carefully delimited roads leading from North Vietnam into the Laotian panhandle. The authority extended through 10 February 1971 with the number of participating aircraft limited as specified by Admiral Moorer in his request to the Secretary.[70]

(TS) Once again poor weather conditions over North Vietnam prevented implementation before the expiration of the authority. Accordingly, on 11 February 1971, the Chairman recommended an extension until such time as the strike could be executed. On the previous day, 10 February 1971, Admiral Moorer had also provided the Secretary of Defense an assessment of the North Vietnamese SAM, AAA, and MIG threats to US interdiction and other air activities. These enemy defenses, Admiral Moorer said, had forced the United States to divert "significant numbers" of fighter aircraft from interdiction missions in order to protect the B-52 force operating in Laos near the NVN border. He also noted that the B-52s were frequently diverted from the most lucrative targets to lesser ones in order to avoid the enemy defenses.[71]

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70. (TS-GP 1) CM-532-71 to SecDef, 29 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. SecDef approval is indicated in handwritten notation on draft msg attached to CM-532-71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3254 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 4 Feb 71.

71. (TS-GP 1) CM-583-71 to SecDef, 11 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. (TS-GP 1) CM-582-71 to SecDef, 10 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71.

(~~TS~~) The Deputy Secretary of Defense extended the strike authority to 18 February and, when poor weather again prevented implementation, the authority was further extended through 28 February. United States forces conducted strikes against SAM targets in North Vietnam on 20, 21, and 28 February. The announced purpose for these LOUISVILLE SLUGGER attacks was a reaction to recent missile firings at US aircraft. A total of 67 strike sorties destroyed or damaged 4 SA-2 missiles, 15 SA-2 transporters, and 14 "vehicles."[72]

(~~TS~~) It soon became apparent that LOUISVILLE SLUGGER had not deterred the enemy, and SAM firings at US aircraft in Laos continued. In addition, for the first time since 1967, NVN SAMs were fired at allied planes over South Vietnam below the DMZ. Even before the completion of the LOUISVILLE SLUGGER operation, the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff had urged the Secretary of Defense to approve a "concentrated effort" against the NVN SAM defenses. Specifically he recommended a one-day strike of approximately 250 sorties, with a second strike the following day if reconnaissance indicated suitable targets, against SAM, AAA, and lucrative targets in North Vietnam below 18°15' north and within 30 kilometers of the Laos-NVN border.[73]

(~~TS~~) Before the Secretary replied to this request, Admiral Moorer pressed for a much more ambitious air

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72. Handwritten DepSecDef approval on draft msg attached to CM-583-71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-606-71 to SecDef, 18 Feb 71; (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Authority to Strike SAM Sites in NVN (~~TS~~)," 18 Feb 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-34. NY Times, 24 Feb 71, 1; 2 Mar 71, 1.

73. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-642-71 to SecDef, 25 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71.

strike program. On 4 March 1971, he explained to Secretary Laird that authority for one-time strikes was not adequate to meet the threat. Such restricted reaction gave the enemy a "distinct advantage," while limiting the US ability to meet the growing air defense threat. Before US forces could strike identified sites, the enemy, using the cover of darkness and adverse weather, was able to relocate his firing elements. It was essential, Admiral Moorer believed, to strike enemy SAM assets when and where they were found. To do so, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV required strike authority on a continuing basis rather than being restricted to a series of one-time strikes.[74]

(~~TS~~) Approval was given for a one-time protective reaction strike and the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed implementation on 5 March during the period through 10 March. The Secretary of Defense did not, however, approve continuing strikes against NVN air defenses. He told Admiral Moorer on 6 March 1971 that such action would be "inappropriate--or at least premature" at that time. He realized that protection was vital for the aircrews and planes flying over Laos and conducting unarmed reconnaissance over North Vietnam, but he was concerned about the consequences of granting continuing authority to strike SAM targets. Unless the United States struck repeatedly and on a sustained basis, it risked failure to achieve any substantial results. Yet repeated strikes would abrogate the November 1968 bombing halt understandings and the Secretary was not ready to take such an action. Mr. Laird had hoped that the authorities allowed in 1969 and 1970 would

74. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-628-71 to SecDef, 4 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN.

be adequate. Before granting additional ones, he requested an assessment of the military value of the strikes already carried out, an indication of the sufficiency of the existing authorities, a "stringent" assessment of the military value of proposed additional authorities, and a detailed review of the costs and risks, "military and otherwise," associated with repetitive attacks against North Vietnam.[75]

(TS) Poor weather again delayed execution of the one-time strike. After an extension of the authority, US Air Force and Navy planes carried out protective reaction strikes on 21 and 22 March 1971 in the lower NVN panhandle, as delimited by the Chairman in his original request of 25 February. This operation, nicknamed FRACTURE CROSS ALPHA, expended 234 strike and 30 reconnaissance sorties, destroying eight SA-2s, two SA-2 transporters, one FANSONG radar, six control vans, 64 buildings, and 45 trucks. One US F-4 was lost, but the crew was recovered.[76]

(TS) Meantime, on 19 March 1971, Admiral Moorer forwarded to the Secretary of Defense the requested assessment of the need for standing authority to attack air defense targets in North Vietnam. He regretted Mr. Laird's impression that the authorities granted

75. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5579 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 5 Mar 71. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Protective Reaction Strikes Against North Vietnam," 6 Mar 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

76. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6661 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV) 19 Mar 71. (TS-GP 3) Damage Assessment Fact Sheet, Att to CM-782-71 to SecDef, 5 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 71. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-34. NY Times, 22 Mar 71, 1; 23 Mar 71, 1; 24 Mar 71, 5.

in 1969 and 1970 were adequate. To the contrary, evidence accumulating as early as October 1970 had indicated that the enemy intended to contest US air operations in the vicinity of the Laos-NVN border. The Chairman agreed fully with the Secretary that, without repeated and sustained strikes, the United States risked failure to achieve "any substantial or durable" military benefits. "Had we earlier permitted the field commander the latitude to attack these targets as they were discovered," Admiral Moorer continued, "I am convinced the threat would have been contained well below the current level." After discussing the impact of the enemy air defenses, but without considering the costs or risks involved in added authorities, Admiral Moorer repeated his request for standing approval to strike SAM targets in North Vietnam. Specifically, he wanted authority to attack SAM and AAA sites as discovered in the NVN panhandle (Route Package 1) within 19 nautical miles of the Laos border and to retaliate within 72 hours (or a week if the weather was unfavorable) against any SAM or AAA site below 20° north that fired at US aircraft.[77]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense did not reply immediately and, in the interim, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also addressed the matter of countering the increasing MIG presence in the lower part of North Vietnam. The concern of the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the growing air defense threat in North Vietnam during 1971 was not limited solely to the SAM and AAA sites. As early as 14 January, the Acting Chairman, Admiral Zumwalt, had

77. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-723-71 to SecDef, 19 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71.

requested permission either to strike MIGs on the ground or engage them in the air in North Vietnam below 20° north. No action resulted, and on 14 April 1971, the Chairman again broached the MIG issue with the Secretary. He recounted a growing number of MIG deployments to the lower area of North Vietnam, stating that this increased MIG activity had become a "major consideration" in the conduct of US air operations in Southeast Asia. Current countermeasures, the Chairman said, were clearly inadequate to dissuade the enemy from establishing strip alert facilities within threatening range of US aircraft. He repeated the recommendation of 14 January and, additionally, wanted permission for the field commanders to attack any MIG within 20 nautical miles of the BARREL ROLL EAST area of Laos.[78]

(TS) Two days following the submission of the MIG request, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also submitted a codification of existing, as well as proposed, air operating authorities for Southeast Asia. In November of the previous year, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had codified all the SEA air authorities into the single integrated interdiction program, and the Secretary of Defense had approved these rules through 1 May 1971. With regard to North Vietnam, the codification had encompassed principally self-defense measures, including: (1) immediate protective reaction strikes, without subsequent retaliation, by fighter aircraft, including IRON HAND, against any SAM or AAA site in North Vietnam below 20° north that fired on or was activated against US aircraft conducting missions

78. (TS-GP 1) CM-505-71 to SecDef, 14 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 71. (TS-GP 1) CM-814-71 to SecDef, 14 Apr 71, same file, Apr 71.

over Laos or North Vietnam; (2) overflight of North Vietnam by IRON HAND aircraft to the extent necessary to position themselves between SAM and AAA sites in North Vietnam and B-52s operating in Laos to protect the B-52s from attack; (3) engagement by friendly aircraft and surface-to-air missiles of enemy aircraft over North Vietnam that indicated hostile intent against US or allied planes operating outside the border of North Vietnam; (4) overflight of North Vietnam by laser-illuminator aircraft, not to exceed three nautical miles, in order to guide ordnance onto selected targets in Laos close to the NVN border. Now these authorities were due for renewal. The Chairman asked for a continuation until 1 November 1971; he also requested additional authorities, or "modifications" as he called them, for operations in North Vietnam, which in effect consolidated the outstanding requests for standing authorities against both SAM and MIG targets.[79]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense was still unwilling to expand air operations over North Vietnam. On 26 April 1971, he informed the Chairman that he considered the existing rules adequate to handle the MIG threat. Two days later, on 28 April, he addressed the 19 March request concerning NVN SAMs. He considered that current "countermeasures, tactics, and operating authorities" provided sufficient protection for US aircraft and crews at that time. The next day, he extended the existing SEA air operating authorities until 1 November 1971, but in accord with his previous decisions, did not include the "modifications" for North Vietnam requested by the Chairman.[80]

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79. (TS-GP 1) CM-830-71 to SecDef, 16 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 70-Jun 71.

80. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "NVN MIG Activity," 26 Apr 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS,

(TS) The North Vietnamese air defense activities continued unabated, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were reluctant to accept the Secretary of Defense's decision as final. On 29 April 1971, Admiral Moorer informed Mr. Laird of recent MIG activity against US aircraft in Laos near the NVN border. He repeated his belief that "a substantial expansion" of existing operating rules was required to defend against MIG activity below 20° north. Specifically, Admiral Moorer requested approval to launch anti-radiation missiles against active enemy GCI sites below 20° north when MIGs were airborne in the area. Secretary Laird, however, turned down this request a week later.[81]

(TS) On 1 May 1971, CINCPAC reported a continuing MIG threat and location of new SAM and AAA sites and equipment. He wanted to conduct appropriate strikes but the Acting Director of the Joint Staff was, initially, reluctant to press the matter further. He told Admiral Moorer that reiteration of such recommendations to the Secretary of Defense was not advisable in light of the recent denials of similar requests. The continuing NVN air defense buildup, apparently, overcame the Director's reluctance, and on 12 May 1971, the Chairman began a renewed series of requests, which continued into July 1971, for permission to attack both SAM and MIG targets in North Vietnam. The Secretary of Defense did not approve any of these requests. He did, on

"Protective Reaction Against North Vietnam," 28 Apr 71; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Air Operating Authorities," 29 Apr 71; JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

81. (TS-GP 1) CM-854-71 to SecDef, 29 Apr 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-860-71 to SecDef, 29 Apr 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 71. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Air Operating Authorities," 7 May 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

15 May 1971, assure the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he was "vitally interested" in the protection of the lives of US aircrews. But, observing that only one US plane had been lost in the thousands of sorties flown over Laos and North Vietnam during April and May, he believed existing authority was working satisfactorily.[82]

(~~TS~~) With the arrival of the summer rainy season in 1971, allied air operations over both Laos and northern South Vietnam slackened, accompanied by a corresponding decline in enemy air defense activities in the lower part of North Vietnam. But the approach of the fall dry season brought an increase in both again. By mid-September 1971, the US commanders realized that North Vietnam intended to contest allied planes near its borders, perhaps to an even greater degree than during the previous dry season. To meet this threat, the Secretary of Defense approved and the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the execution of a strike against air defense, logistic, and other military targets in North

82. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 010540Z May 71, JCS IN 79929. (~~TS~~-GP 1) DJSM-833-71 to CJCS, 3 May 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-893-71 to SecDef, 12 May 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-907-71 to SecDef, 16 May 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-975-71 to SecDef, 14 Jun 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1047-71 to SecDef, 11 Jul 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-902-71 to SecDef, 19 May 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 71. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Authority to Strike SAM Installations in North Vietnam, 15 May 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, same subj, 19 May 71; (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "NVN SAM Firing," 17 Jun 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "NVN MIG Threat," 22 May 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef, "NVN SAM Firing," 17 Jul 71; JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 2.

Vietnam within 35 miles of the northern boundary of the DMZ. Priority of attack was directed against those systems posing most serious threat to friendly operations in Laos and South Vietnam. The attack was scheduled for 20 September 1971.[83]

(S) After a one day's postponement because of poor weather conditions, Operation PRIZE BULL was carried out on 21 September. Continuing bad weather necessitated an all-instrument attack, and US planes flew 200 combat sorties against only three targets in North Vietnam within 35 miles of the DMZ. The strike destroyed an oil storage area and several AAA radars; no US aircraft were lost. In Washington, a Department of Defense spokesman announced the strike, stating by way of explanation that the number of AA guns within the DMZ had increased about 40 percent since August 1971.[84]

(TS) The PRIZE BULL strike did not remove the NVN air defense threat, and the remainder of 1971 witnessed a resumption of the search by the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff for expanded authority to counter this challenge. On 20 October 1971, Admiral Moorer described for the Secretary of Defense the current MIG disposition in North Vietnam below 20° north that was endangering US B-52 operations in Laos and requested appropriate strike action. The Secretary of

83. (~~S NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-34. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3334 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 17 Sep 71. Available records do not reveal the documentation of the request for or approval of this strike by the Secretary of Defense.

84. (S-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4828 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 20 Sep 71. (~~S NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-34. (U) DJSM 1792-71 to CJCS, 28 Sep 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 71. NY Times, 22 Sep 71, 1, 9; 24 Sep 71, 1.

Defense, however, declined to approve the request. He readily admitted that the loss of a B-52 "would indeed be unfortunate," but asked for an assessment of limiting B-52 operations to areas less susceptible to MIG attack.[85]

(TS) On the day of this disapproval, 21 October 1971, Admiral Moorer provided the Secretary a codification of air operating authorities for Southeast Asia. This codification included not only the existing rules scheduled to expire on 31 October 1971, but also various new ones. With respect to North Vietnam, new proposals included the designation as hostile any airborne MIG below 19° north and standing permission to attack during actual engagement controlling GCI sites in North Vietnam below 20° north.[86]

(TS) On 22 October 1971, the Secretary of Defense notified Admiral Moorer that the matter of Southeast Asia air authorities required "detailed examination." Therefore he extended the current rules until 15 November, pending a review of the proposed new ones requested the previous day. The Secretary of Defense never did approve the expanded authorities requested by the Chairman. On 12 November 1971, the Secretary extended the existing authorities until 1 December 1971 and, thereafter, he extended them month by month until the time of the April 1972 offensive.[87]

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85. (TS) CM-1275-71 to SecDef, 20 Oct 71 (not available because it contained SI information, but its contents are summarized in (TS-GP 1) CM-1281-71 to SecDef, 29 Oct 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, B-52 Strikes, Jan-Dec 71). (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Requests for Strikes," 21 Oct 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 2.

86. (TS-GP 1) CM-1272-71 to SecDef, 21 Oct 71, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72.

87. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Operating Authorities," 22 Oct 71, 12 Nov 71, and

(TS) Meanwhile, on 29 October 1971, Admiral Moorer had responded to the Secretary's request for an assessment of the restriction of B-52 operations to areas less vulnerable to enemy MIG attack. He supported the position of COMUCMACV and CINCPAC that B-52 operations were vital to the success of the interdiction campaign and must be continued in Laos near the NVN panhandle in order to restrict enemy movement through the Laotian LOC network. "All appropriate measures within our ability and authority," the Chairman assured the Secretary, "will be taken to defend against A MIG attack." Nevertheless, Admiral Moorer did not believe that the "inherent potential" for a successful MIG attack on a B-52 could be ignored.[88]

(TS) In early November 1971, reconnaissance revealed additional MIG deployments to airfields in lower North Vietnam near the pass areas into Laos. On 13 November, the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Ryan, informed the Secretary of Defense of this situation, citing an increased number of aircraft deployed to Bai Thuong and staged to Vinh, Quan Lang, and Dong Hoi. United States protective reaction strikes in support of reconnaissance missions over these three latter fields had not deterred the enemy resolve. General Ryan explained that the transitory nature of MIG deployments to the three fields militated against a request to strike newly located MIGs. But he did recommend execution of an attack (FRACTURE DEEP)

29 Dec 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 2. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, same subj, 29 Jan 72 and 26 Feb 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 27 Nov 71, same subj, CJCS SecDef Memo File.

88. (TS-GP 1) CM-1281-71 to SecDef, 29 Oct 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, B-52 Strikes, Jan-Dec 71.

against Bai Thuong, a hub of MIG activity in the panhandle and a field that had remained occupied throughout the summer monsoon.[89]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense did not approve the plan, and on 24 November 1971, the Chairman again requested expanded authorization to meet the growing MIG threat. This particular request was spurred by a North Vietnamese attempt to shoot down a B-52 on 21 November. Currently, US fighter aircraft escorting the B-52s, the Chairman said, could engage in immediate protective reaction against attacking MIGs, including hot pursuit and strike of the air fields where the MIGs landed. Often, however, the US fighters could not carry out reaction against enemy air fields because they were configured primarily with air-to-air munitions. Accordingly, Admiral Moorer sought permission to expand the time allowed for protective reaction against hostile MIGs and the fields from which they operated. Instead of the currently authorized immediate reaction, the Chairman recommended a 24-hour period with extension to 72 hours in case of bad weather. But the Secretary took no immediate action on this request.[90]

(TS) In a further effort to counter the NVN air defenses, the Chairman submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 30 November 1971 several plans for attack of targets in North Vietnam: (1) FRACTURE DEEP, one-day, one-time attacks on four air fields, Bai Thuong, Quan Lang, Vinh, and Don Hoi, and associated air defenses below 20° north; (2) PROUD BUNCH, a one-day "maximum

89. (TS) CM-1309-71 to SecDef, 13 Nov 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 71.

90. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Air Strikes Against North Vietnam Air Defenses (S)," 15 Nov 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 2. (TS-GP 1) CM-1340-71 to SecDef, 24 Nov 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 71.

effort" against military and logistic targets below 17°45' north; (3) PROUD DEEP, consolidation of the previous two. Admiral Moorer also provided the Secretary a plan, HAI CANG TUDO II, for covert off-shore fire against port and logistic facilities at Quang Khe by PTF boats with South Vietnamese crews, using captured enemy 122-mm rockets. For maximum effectiveness, Admiral Moorer recommended approval of PROUD DEEP with simultaneous and concurrent execution of HAI CANG TUDO II.[91]

(TS) Before the Secretary of Defense replied, NVN SAM firings at US aircraft increased. On 10 December, a US F-105 escorting B-52s was shot down, followed a week later by the loss of an F-4 reconnaissance escort. Now the Secretary of Defense decided expanded reaction was justified and on 19 December the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed execution of PROUD DEEP and HAI CANG TUDO II. As seemed always to be the case when the United States decided to carry out reaction strikes in 1971, the weather forced a delay, and on 26 December, after expiration of the Christmas cease-fire, the Joint Chiefs of Staff extended the authority. They directed CINCPAC to conduct the operations, weather permitting, until the beginning of the New Year's cease-fire scheduled to begin 31 December 1971.[92]

(TS) Accordingly, US forces carried out operation PROUD DEEP ALPHA during the five-day period 26-30 December 1971. Secretary Laird announced in a press

91. (TS) CM-1345-71 to SecDef, 30 Nov 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 71.

92. NY Times, 20 Dec 71, 1. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6784 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 19 Dec 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3591 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 26 Dec 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5984 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 29 Dec 71.

conference on 27 December that the strikes were designed to protect the lives of US servicemen still in South Vietnam and warned that such strikes might be repeated. The PROUD DEEP ALPHA operation was the largest attack and deepest penetration of North Vietnam since the 1968 bombing halt; over 200 US Air Force and Navy planes from bases in Thailand and South Vietnam and from two carriers off North Vietnam flew 1,025 strike sorties against targets below 20° north. These targets consisted of SAM sites, air defense radar locations, airfields, antiaircraft sites, POL dumps, and supply depots. Three US planes were lost to SAM attacks, with one crewman recovered. Despite its size and extent, the operation did little to reduce the enemy air defense threat, which continued in 1972.[93]

Covert Operations Against North Vietnam

(~~TS~~) During 1971, the United States planned and supported to a limited extent covert operations against North Vietnam. As the result of a Washington Special Actions Group meeting on 2 December 1970, Dr. Kissinger requested the development of selected options in Cambodia, Laos, or North Vietnam with the objective of enabling the United States to wrest the initiative from the enemy instead of continually reacting to enemy moves. The Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared and submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 5 December a series of options, both overt and covert. They fell into three categories: short term spoiling-type operations designed to keep the enemy off balance and use minimum

93. (~~S~~-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-34. NY Times, 27 Dec 71, 1; 28 Dec 71, 1; 29 Dec 71, 1; 30 Dec 71, 1; 31 Dec 71, 1. Although the JCS authorized the execution of both PROUD DEEP and HAI CANG TUDO II no reports of the latter operation have been found.

resources; more ambitious undertakings requiring longer time and more resources; and deception and psychological feint operations to support the previous two categories.[94]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense forwarded the JCS proposals to Dr. Kissinger, but recommended against any implementation pending a further review. Subsequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reconsidered the options and Admiral Moorer submitted to the Secretary a revised list on 4 January 1971. The new options, he believed, had the highest probability of success, would give the enemy concern, and could be implemented within existing capabilities. The original JCS options had included North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, but the new ones provided only for the following actions against North Vietnam: small-scale air attacks; Patrol Torpedo Fast (PTF) boat[95] attacks on NVN coastal shipping; PTF coastal attacks by fire; capture and subversion of

94. (TS-GP 1) CM-412-70 to SecDef, 5 Dec 70, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

95. The PTF boats involved were assigned to the MACV Studies and Observation Group. The previous October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had wanted to return these craft to the US Navy for deactivation as a means of easing budget pressures. The Secretary of Defense had agreed, but Dr. Kissinger had delayed this deactivation, citing the President's interest in maintaining these boats for possible covert use against North Vietnam. The scheduled reduction of US forces to a level of 69,000 men during the spring of 1972 precluded retention of the PTF boat detachment in South Vietnam, and on 27 March 1972, the Secretary of Defense authorized the return of the boats to US Navy control. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-482-70 to SecDef, 14 Oct 70, Encl to JCS 2472/552-41, 22 Sep 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 10. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Nov 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-42, 13 Nov 70, same file, sec 11. (TS-GP 1) CM-1311-71 to SecDef, n.d. [ca. 13 Nov 71] and not sent, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 71. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Patrol Torpedo Fast Boats (PTF)," 27 Mar 72, same file, Feb 72.

North Vietnamese fishermen; and PTF destruction of a NVN trawler at sea. All of these actions, except for the air attacks, could be conducted by indigenous personnel.[96]

(TS) Throughout January, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense various refinements to the options and several additions, including proposals for both cross-beach and airborne raids against petroleum and logistics facilities. On 3 February 1971, however, the Secretary of Defense notified Admiral Moorer that he was not prepared to approve any of the options for implementation at that time. He felt that the small-scale air attacks of North Vietnam would have minimal effect and might be viewed by the public as "a unilateral US resumption of the air war over NVN with its attendant unfavorable impact upon the Paris Negotiations along with widespread domestic and international political repercussions." Nor did the Secretary feel the other actions justified the political and military risks involved, although he did direct continuation of planning for those and other possible covert actions.[97]

(TS) Thereafter, Admiral Moorer narrowed the contingency options against North Vietnam to two actions: interdiction of NVN coastal shipping by PTF boats,

96. (TS) CM-467-71 to SecDef, 4 Jan 71; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Contingency Options for Southeast Asia," 9 Dec 71; CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

97. (TS-GP 1) CM-537-71 to SecDef, 28 Jan 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-547-71 to SecDef, 30 Jan 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-548-71 to SecDef, 30 Jan 71; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Contingency Options for Southeast Asia," 3 Feb 71; CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

with the nickname NEWPORT CASINO; and coastal attacks by fire using PTFs, nicknamed SPRUCE GUM. The PTFs for both actions would be manned with Vietnamese crews and no US personnel would be aboard. Admiral Moorer submitted plans for these operations to the Secretary of Defense on 5 February 1971, recommending immediate execution. This time the Secretary approved and, on 7 February 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC and COMUSMACV to carry out the plans. They directed that no US personnel, even advisers, should participate.[98]

(~~TS~~) Subsequently, PTF craft, manned by South Vietnamese crews, conducted maritime harassing operations against NVN shipping on two occasions, the first off Quang Khe on the night of 10-11 February and the second off Vinh during the night of 19-20 February. The actions resulted in five enemy ships sunk and four heavily damaged with eight prisoners and numerous documents captured. The cost to friendly forces was one crew member killed and minor damage to one PTF boat. The nicknames for these operations were changed from the English designations NEWPORT CASINO and SPRUCE GUM to HAI CANG TUDO at the direction of the Secretary of Defense. Since the operations were conducted by the South Vietnamese, he wanted them to have Vietnamese names. The field commanders and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff all recommended to the Secretary of Defense execution of a third HAI CANG TUDO mission, an attack by fire against petroleum and transshipment

98. (~~TS~~) CM-567-71 to SecDef, 5 Feb 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3418 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 7 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

targets at Quang Khe, using captured NVN 122-mm rockets, but the Secretary did not approve the mission.[99]

(TS) The United States also conducted amphibious feints off the coast of North Vietnam in February and March 1971. On 4 February, Admiral Moorer provided the Secretary of Defense a plan to deploy an Amphibious Ready Group and a Marine Amphibious Unit off the southern coast of North Vietnam. Such action was designed to convey to the North Vietnamese the impression that a raid was being planned and to cause them to hold forces in-country in anticipation of an impending attack. CINCPAC had strongly recommended approval of the plan, and Admiral Moorer concurred in that recommendation.[100]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense approved the plan and, on 5 February 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized deployment of the amphibious forces to waters off North Vietnam. Subsequently, at Admiral Moorer's request, the Secretary of Defense agreed on 3 March 1971 to the movement of the amphibious group further up the NVN coast in order to maintain the enemy's concern over possible coastal attack. The operation was completed on 6 March.[101]

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99. (TS-GP 1) CM-598-71 to SecDef, 15 Feb 71; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4144 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 16 Feb 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-619-71 to SecDef, 20 Feb 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-654-71 to SecDef, 27 Feb 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71. (TS-GP 1) Unconventional Operations Summary No. 4, 1 Apr 71, Att to DJSM 641-71 to SecDef, 5 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Hai Cang Tudo Operations (U)," 9 Apr 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

100. (TS) CM-565-71 to SecDef, 4 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71.

101. SecDef approval of the original plan is contained in a handwritten notation on a draft msg

(TS) In February 1971, CINCPAC had developed a general concept for agent operations in North Vietnam. It provided for the recruitment of both short- and long-term agents with about three months required for the training of the former and 9 to 14 months for the latter. Admiral Moorer forwarded the concept to the Secretary of Defense on 17 February stating that:

> The momentum of current operations against North Vietnam must be maintained; the initiative is clearly ours in overt operations in Cambodia and Laos and in successful covert operations by Patrol Torpedo Fast (PTF) boats against the coast of NVN. These operations have caused confusion and frustration within the NVN government.

Admiral Moorer thought that ultimately all types of agents should be introduced into North Vietnam, and he recommended initiation of the CINCPAC program. No US personnel or "attributable resources" would be required and the Vietnamese would do all the recruiting and training.[102]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense approved the concept for agent operations in North Vietnam on 20 February provided that the Joint General Staff would undertake the program. He stipulated that there should be no US participation in the actual operations, although COMUSMACV might assist in planning and training. Thereafter, General Abrams approached the Chief of

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attached to (TS) CM-565-71 to SecDef, 4 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3318 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 5 Feb 71, same file. (TS-GP 1) CM-656-71 to SecDef, 2 Mar 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Amphibious Deception Plan (U)," 3 Mar 71; same file, Mar 71. (TS-GP 1) DJSM-451-71 to Dir DIA, 11 Mar 71, JMF 912/378 (CY 1971).

102. (TS-GP 1) CM-604-71 to SecDef, 17 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

the JGS, General Vien, who believed that the proposal should be discussed by President Thieu and Ambassador Bunker. Subsequently, the Secretary of Defense, at Admiral Moorer's request, asked the Secretary of State to have Ambassador Bunker approach President Thieu.[103]

(TS) Secretary Rogers, however, expressed "considerable skepticism" about the agent program. He told Secretary Laird on 21 May 1971 that similar operations in the past were of little or no intelligence value and of only minor use for harassment. In addition, Secretary Rogers feared that, even though no US personnel or resources attributable to the United States would be used in execution of the program, the United States would be blamed, particularly since it would be involved in the recruitment and training. He suggested an interdepartmental evaluation of the gains and risks of the proposed operations. Although Secretary Laird favored such a project, the evaluation was never conducted and the record reveals no further consideration of the agent program.[104]

(TS) Throughout 1971, the United States carried out covert psychological operations against North Vietnam. These consisted primarily of [redacted] the insertion of psychological operations materials into North Vietnam. On 6 December 1971, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

103. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Contingency Options for Southeast Asia," 20 Feb 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-699-71 to SecDef, 15 Mar 71; CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71. (TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 4 May 71, same file, Apr-Jun 71.

104. (TS) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 21 May 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Apr-Jun 71. (TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 16 Jun 71, CJCS SecDef Memo File.

Staff submitted to the 40 Committee, a special committee of the National Security Council, a three-phase program for expanded covert psychological operations in North Vietnam. The first phase would revitalize the ongoing actions, while the second and third would expand them. No US personnel would participate in the execution of the operations although they would be used for training and as advisers. Admiral Moorer requested the Committee to approve the first phase of the program for immediate implementation and to approve in principle the remaining two phases, but the record does not reveal further action on this matter.[105]

(~~TS~~) In February 1972, COMUSMACV undertook to prepare a cover and deception plan for NVN operations with the ostensible purpose of disrupting NVA forces and preventing their movement into South Vietnam. When learning of this planning, the President requested that it be broadened to include a full range of ground, sea, and air options. Subsequently, Assistant Secretary of Defense G. Warren Nutter told Admiral Moorer that South Vietnamese assets should be used to the maximum extent possible and that there should be no US ground troop involvement.[106]

(~~TS~~) On 23 February, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense "conceptual planning options" for cover and deception operations against enemy forces in North Vietnam. These included: a RVNAF ground attack across the DMZ; increased carrier operations; an amphibious operation

105. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1355-71 to the 40 Cmte, 6 Dec 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 71.

106. (~~TS~~) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, "Cover and Deception Operations for North Vietnam (~~S~~)," 15 Feb 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 72.

north of the DMZ; covert attacks in NVN waters; and various combinations of the above options.

(TS) The Chairman doubted that the outcome of any of the options warranted the risks and expenditures of resources involved. As US redeployments continued, the Republic of Vietnam had to assume increased responsibility for "the total conduct of the war effort." As a result, the RVNAF was stretched thin and troop deployments necessary to give credibility to the projected operations would leave critical areas undefended. In addition, Admiral Moorer questioned whether credible deception operations could be conducted in light of the accelerated US withdrawals, the reduced in-country support for the RVNAF, and the political constraints precluding expansion of the US combat role in South Vietnam. For these reasons, he recommended against implementation of the options. The Secretary of Defense relayed them to Dr. Kissinger, agreeing with Admiral Moorer that the expenditure of the necessary resources could not be justified at that time, and the available record reveals no further action on this matter.[107]

The Approaching Offensive: Military Operations, January - March 1972

(S) There had been indications of enemy plans for an attack during the latter half of 1971, and these signs increased significantly during January 1972. Growing enemy troop movements and improvements of his logistics network in western Quang Tri Province, in the DMZ, and in North Vietnam just above the DMZ

107. (TS-GP 1) CM-1571-72 to SecDef, 23 Feb 72; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Cover and Deception Options," 8 Mar 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 72.

all portended an approaching ground attack. In addition, during the first two months of 1972, the enemy became increasingly bold in his air defense activities, stepping up attacks against US interdiction operations in Laos, and carrying out troop and supply movements in support of the impending offensive. He continued to employ NVN-based MIGs for this purpose and introduced SA-2 missile batteries into heretofore lightly defended areas of Laos, the lower part of North Vietnam, and even into the DMZ. Moreover, US reconnaissance indicated construction work on the airfields in the NVN panhandle to enable MIGs to use them as well as a marked increase in conventional anti-aircraft artillery forces in the same area.[108]

(~~TS~~) To counter the enemy air defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 10 December 1971 had asked the Secretary of Defense for authority to use IRON HAND aircraft equipped with anti-radiation missiles in protective reaction against GCI and associated radars below 20° north that were activated whenever MIG aircraft were deployed or operating in that area. The Secretary of Defense did not reply until 8 January 1972 when he requested a further assessment of this matter before making a final decision. He asked about the capabilities of enemy radar in the lower part of North Vietnam, the US ability to attack specific radars, and measures that might be taken within the existing authorities to counter the increased threat to allied aircraft.[109]

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108. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) pp. 9, 11.

109. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1370-71 to SecDef, 10 Dec 71, CJCS 091 Southeast Asia, Jul-Dec 71. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Request for Authority to Strike Vietnamese EW/GCI Sites," 8 Jan 72, CJCS File 091 Laos, B-52 Strikes, Jan 72 - .

(TS) The Chairman submitted the requested assessment two days later. He related that, between 4 October 1971 and 8 January 1972, there were 43 penetrations of Laotian air space by MIG aircraft, 17 of which occurred in the first seven days of January. He continued:

> It is obvious that the character of our air operations in Laos has taken on a new dimension. Whereas we previously enjoyed freedom of the skies and were concerned primarily with the SAM/AAA threat, we now face a determined, clever and more qualified enemy in the air. Against this new threat, we are forced to operate in the fringe area of our radar and radio coverage and at the limits of aircraft endurance. On the other hand, the enemy is working at or near optimum capability under close radar control [in] a friendly environment, in proximity to his airfields, over familiar geography and [with] the added comfort of base sanctuary.

Admiral Moorer carefully detailed for the Secretary of Defense the actions undertaken by the field to increase and improve warning and alert procedures as protection against the enemy air defenses. He shared the opinion of the field commanders that there was little further that could be done in that regard. What was required was authority to attack MIGs, both airborne and on the ground, anywhere in North Vietnam below 20° north as well as their supporting airfields, facilities, GCI sites, and associated radars. Ten days later, on 20 January, Admiral Moorer provided the Secretary additional information in response to the 8 January request and reiterated the recommendation for authority to employ anti-radiation missiles against GCI air defense radars in North Vietnam.[110]

110. (TS) CM-1439-72 to SecDef, 10 Jan 72; (TS-GP 1) CM-1464-72 to SecDef, 20 Jan 72; CJCS File 091 Laos, B-52 Strikes, Jan 72 - .

(TS) Meantime, General Abrams was seeing increasing signs of a buildup for an enemy offensive. On 11 January, he forwarded a warning of such an attack to CINCPAC and Admiral Moorer. Recent intelligence, he said, revealed enemy preparations for intensified military and political actions during the spring of 1972. Nine days later, on 20 January 1972, he described for his superiors "in the clearest possible manner" the impending enemy offensive against South Vietnam. He believed that high level decisions and planning for such effort had already been made although he could not be sure of the precise plan of attack. He reported major movement of NVA units toward northern MR 1 and MR 2 in South Vietnam. General Abrams expected recently intensified enemy MIG activity to continue, as well as increased movement of SAMs and AAA to the area just north of the DMZ in order to "complicate our operations." The enemy had already moved these weapons into the Laotian panhandle.[111]

(TS) To counter this buildup and to be prepared when the enemy offensive broke, General Abrams requested the following authorities in North Vietnam, to be invoked as appropriate when the battle began: strike of enemy MIGs on the ground at Dong Hoi, Vinh, and Quan Lang; fighter strike, including IRON HAND, of active GCI radars below 20° north; fighter strike, including IRON HAND, of occupied SAM sites and associated equipment in North Vietnam located within 19 nautical miles (SAM range) of the PMDL or the Laotian border as far north as 19 nautical miles above Mu Gia

111. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 11 Jan 72, JCS IN 59093. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 20 Jan 72, JCS IN 76221.

Pass; fighter strike of enemy logistic support facilities below 18° north. General Abrams also recommended the use of sensors throughout the DMZ to provide necessary intelligence to assure the safety of US forces and employment of fixed and rotary wing aircraft for logistic support, troop lift, and medical evacuation to assist the RVNAF in limited cross-border operations in Laos and Cambodia when requirements exceeded the VNAF capabvilities. The seriousness of the developing situation and the need for prior preparation, General Abrams said, demanded urgent consideration. "The stakes in this battle will be great," he believed. "If it is skillfully fought by the RVN, supported by all available US air, the outcome will be a major defeat for the enemy, leaving him in a weakened condition and gaining a decisive time for the consolidation of the Vietnamization effort." Both Ambassador Bunker and CINCPAC supported General Abrams' assessment, and Admiral Moorer forwarded it the same day to the Secretary of Defense recommending that it be sent to the White House.[112]

(~~TS~~) Heretofore, in the continuing search for expanded air operating authorities against North Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had relied on the Chairman to pursue these operational matters with the Secretary of Defense. But on this occasion, they themselves addressed the Secretary as a body. On 21 January, they told him that recent evidence strongly pointed to a major enemy campaign in the near future. They shared the concern of the field commanders over the developing situation. The ensuing battle, the

112. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 20 Jan 72, JCS IN 76221. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg CINCPAC to CJCS, 210149Z Jan 72, JCS IN 77806. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1468-72 to SecDef, 20 Jan 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 72.

Joint Chiefs of Staff thought, might well depend on the effective use of US air power. The North Vietnamese had already expanded their operating areas to the point where MIG incursions into Laos were commonplace. This growing threat had required the United States to allocate large numbers of tactical air sorties to an anti-MIG role at the expense of US interdiction operations. The SAM and AAA threat had also expanded.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense that the previous requests for additional air authorities remained valid. They "urgently" rcommended approval of the authorities requested by General Abrams the previous day and repeated the recommendation that the field commander's assessment be forwarded to the White House. This latest request was more urgent, they believed, and required immediate attention because of the threat of substantial ground operations. In the impending battle, the field commander must have the necessary authority to insure effective use of air power. The authorities requested by General Abrams, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, would allow flexibility in application of air assets for "optimum impact on the ground situation" while continuing overall interdiction against the enemy's vital logistic pipeline.[113]

(TS) The Senior Review Group met in a "principals only" session on 24 January 1972 to consider the increasing enemy threat to South Vietnam together with General Abrams' request for authorities to cope with the anticipated enemy offensive. The available record does not reveal what transpired at the meeting, but a modified version of authorities desired by General

113. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-26-72 to SecDef, 21 Jan 72, JMF 907 (21 Jan 72).

Abrams was approved. For, on 26 January 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified both CINCPAC and COMUS-MACV that "pertinent" operating authorities had been examined. When the expected ground campaign developed, the following authorities would be effective, in addition to those currently available: intensified reconnaissance of the vicinity of the Dong Hoi, Vinh, and Quan Lang airfields with "associated protective reaction" strike if the involved reconnaissance aircraft were fired on; and consideration as hostile and engagement of MIGs from the above fields when "encountered" below 18° north. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also authorized employment, until 1 May 1972, of anti-radar missiles against primary GCI sites outside RP 6 when MIGs were airborne and indicating hostile intent, and planning for a one-time attack of all threatening radars below 20° north with execute authority to be provided on "a case-by-case" basis depending on the circumstance. Should these authorities prove inadequate, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the field commanders, consideration would be given to a one-time strike of threatening SAM facilities. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also directed the preparation of plans for attack on those NVN logistic support facilities that could be expected to support a major attack into South Vietnam. Again execute authority would be retained in Washington, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff expected rapid approval once the battle began. In accordance with General Abrams' request, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed aerial implanting of sensors in the DMZ above the PMDL and the provision of fixed and rotary wing aircraft for logistic, trooplift, and medical evacuation support for RVNAF operations along the Laotian and Cambodian borders. Since substantial

enemy attacks could begin without much additional warning, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested CINCPAC to alert all friendly forces of the possibility of an enemy attack and to increase the vigilance of US forces throughout South Vietnam.[114]

(TS) In their discussions at the 24 January meeting, the members of the Senior Review group had considered possible air strikes against North Vietnam, and on the following day, Admiral Moorer submitted to the Secretary of Defense a "concept plan" for such strikes. The plan provided for "short duration operations against military and war support targets" in the NVN panhandle (below 18° north) with strikes against troop concentrations and artillery sites. Such operations were designed to disrupt the enemy supply system as well as to destroy supply stockpiles in North Vietnam and the means for introducing those supplies into Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. The plan included options for a one, two, or three day operation with flexibility "to play the weather" by continuing the visual bombing attack for as long as necessary to accomplish the objective. Admiral Moorer preferred the three-day option and asked the Secretary to approve the plan and forward it to Dr. Kissinger for the President's approval.[115]

(TS) No action resulted on the Chairman's plan, but on 2 February, Secrtary Laird asked Admiral Moorer "on an urgent basis" for plans for operations against North

114. Handwritten note by COL Hansen, J-5, NSC Affairs Office, "SRG Meeting on Vietnam Assessment," 24 Jan 72, J-5 Files. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2002 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 26 Jan 72.

115. (TS-GP 1) CM-1485-72 to SecDef, 25 Jan 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 72.

Vietnam. Specifically, the Secretary wanted four plans to cover an attack of logistics and military personnel targets in North Vietnam below 19° north; a strike of GCI radars in North Vietnam below 20° north; a surge in US air activities, including stepped up tactical air sorties and increased B-52 capability; and a plan to meet an all-out enemy assault across the DMZ. Admiral Moorer responded on 7 February. Three plans dealing with logistics targets, threat radars, and an enemy assault across the DMZ were designated FREEDOM PLAN, FREEDOM DASH, and FREEDOM MANDATE, respectively. Plans for augmentation of US air assets provided for the movement of a fourth CVA (the USS KITTY HAWK) to WESTPAC, a B-52 capability of 1,500 sorties per month, and deployment of one F-4 squadron from Korea. Again, however, no action was taken on the Chairman's plans.[116]

(TS) Meantime, COMUSMACV and CINCPAC had requested a temporary augmentation of US tactical air assets for operations in Vietnam and Laos. They were concerned over the enemy's "continued aggressiveness in gaining additional control in new areas" in Cambodia and Laos and his "unprecedented" interference with US air interdiction operations. Vehicles and equipment continued to move through the passes into southern Laos and South Vietnam, surface-to-air missiles and associated equipment had been introduced into southern Laos, and the enemy was using MIGs to attack friendly aircraft in northern Laos. These activities, as well as the necessary defenses to counter them, had strained the US ability to meet sortie requirements during peak periods of "simultaneous and widespread" enemy

116. (TS-GP 1) CM-1521-72 to SecDef, 7 Feb 72, CJCS CM Chron File.

action. Accordingly, Admiral Moorer requested the Secretary of Defense's concurrence on 2 February 1972 in the implementation of a CINCPACAF plan, COMMANDO FLASH, to deploy up to three cells of six F-4 aircraft (for a total of 18 aircraft) from the Philippines to Udorn and Ubon Air Bases in Thailand and to Da Nang in South Vietnam.[117]

(TS) On 4 February, the Secretary authorized the execution of COMMANDO FLASH for a period of 30 days to begin on the date the first increment of aircraft arrived in Southeast Asia. The Joint Chiefs of Staff relayed this authorization to CINCPAC the following day, directing that, for security reasons, there be no public announcement or comment of any kind at that time about "this activity." Subsequently, on 28 February 1972, the Chairman requested and the Secretary of Defense thereafter approved a 30-day extension of the COMMANDO FLASH deployment to Southeast Asia.[118]

(TS) As an additional means of countering the enemy air defenses, CINCPAC had developed a plan to employ TALOS/TERRIER missiles against the NVN MIG threat. The plan provided for the positioning of two US Navy TALOS/TERRIER-equipped ships in the Gulf of Tonkin to create a SAM environment in which to lure and destroy hostile MIGs as they proceeded below 20° north. Admiral Moorer secured Secretary of Defense

117. (TS-GP 1) CM-1510-72 to SecDef, 2 Feb 72, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Jun 72.

118. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Temporary Augmentation of SEA TACAIR Forces," 4 Feb 72; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3274 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 5 Feb 72; CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jan 72. (TS-GP 1) CM-1581-72 to SecDef, 28 Feb 72; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Temporary Augmentation of SEA Forces," 3 Mar 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 72.

approval, and CINCPAC executed the plan during the period 29 January through 5 February 1972. Four TALOS missiles were fired and one was believed to have destroyed a ground control intercept site at Cam Ngoc-Le Nghia on 4 February. Following that action, US forces observed "a virtual standdown" of the NVN GCI sites for three days, possibly as a defensive measure.[119]

(TS) Thereafter, the United States stepped up air operations in the enemy B-3 Front (the central highlands area in MR 2) and in the northern part of MR 1 in an attempt to disrupt the enemy troops massing for the expected offensive. The 18 additional F-4 aircraft supplied by the COMMANDO FLASH deployment provided "a significant increase" in US Air Force sortie generation capability, and on 12-13 February, a sustained maximum air effort was conducted in the B-3 Front. All available air assets were turned to this effort on a round the clock basis. Allied aircraft flew a total of 1,072 sorties, including 868 US tactical air, 100 VNAF tactical air, 34 gunship, and 70 B-52. No allied losses occurred, but bomb damage assessment revealed numerous damaged or destroyed enemy structures, trucks, caves and tunnels, guns, and storage areas.[120]

(TS) The intensified allied air operations did, apparently, delay the enemy offensive, but the air

119. (TS-GP 1) CM-1439-72 to SecDef, 10 Jan 72, CJCS File 091 Laos, B-52 Strikes, Jan 72 thru -. (TS-GP 1) DJSM 67-72 to CJCS, 13 Jan 72; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "TALOS/TERRIER Employment," 18 Jan 72; (TS-GP 1) CM-1540-72 to SecDef, 14 Feb 72; CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Jun 72.

120. (TS) CM-1534-72 to SecDef, 14 Feb 72; (TS) CM-1551-72 to SecDef, 18 Feb 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 72.

defense threat continued unabated. On 1 March 1972, CINCPAC submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan for a 48-hour attack to eliminate NVN MIG airfields. The plan was not approved, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed Admiral McCain that it was being held as "an on-the-shelf contingency option."[121]

(TS) On 2 March 1972, Admiral Moorer advised the Secretary of Defense that the SAM threat in the pass areas of Laos and the area of South Vietnam below the DMZ continued to cause serious interference with air interdiction operations. There were now 28 SAM battalions currently stationed in North Vietnam below 20° north, and eight US aircraft had been lost to SAMs since the beginning of the current dry season. It was apparent, Admiral Moorer stated, that the enemy was determined to cover his intensive logistic effort to support an impending offensive with the most extensive possible defense. To deny the enemy the benefit of sanctuary, and to reduce the effectiveness of his air defenses, the Chairman supported recent proposals by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC for tactical air strikes against both logistic support facilities in the NVN panhandle and SAM sites located within 19 nautical miles of the PMDL or the Laos/NVN border to a point 19 nautical miles north of Mu Gia Pass.[122]

(TS) A week later, on 9 March 1972, Admiral Moorer again warned the Secretary of Defense of continuing enemy preparations for a major offensive. After giving a detailed assessment of the situation, he went

121. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 011458Z Mar 72, JCS IN 57991. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3133 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 3 Mar 72.

122. (TS-GP 1) CM-1593-72 to SecDef, 2 Mar 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 72.

on to request additional authorities to limit the enemy's options in the approaching battle and to reduce the prevailing danger to friendly air operations in the NVN border areas. These expanded authorities included: tactical air strike and naval gunfire attack of SAM sites, MIGs, GCI sites, AAA, long-range artillery, tanks, and logistic facilities in North Vietnam below 18° north; and employment of area denial munitions throughout the northern portion of the DMZ[123]

(TS) On 11 March, Admiral Moorer informed the Secretary of Defense that, although the enemy had not launched his offensive, such an attack appeared "imminent." Current intelligence and field assessment indicated the movement of VC/NVA units into Hue, the B-3 Front, and MR-3, and CINCPAC wanted to take additional preparatory actions. In order to reduce the reaction time should additional reinforcement of US air forces in Southeast Asia become necessary, CINCPAC had proposed the relocation of 18 US F-4D aircraft, with associated personnel and equipment, from Korea to the Philippines. There the crews would receive combat training and theater indoctrination and be available for rapid deployment to South Vietnam and Thailand. In order to avoid any political problems arising from the withdrawal of the planes, the F-4Ds would be replaced in Korea with F-4C aircraft from Okinawa. Admiral Moorer supported CINCPAC's proposal, telling the Secretary that the "threatening situation" made it prudent to take such preparatory measures.[124]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense approved the movement of the F-4Ds from Korea to the Philippines on 15 March,

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123. (TS-GP 1) CM-1625-72 to SecDef, 9 Mar 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71 - Jun 72.

124. (TS-GP 1) CM-1568-72 to SecDef, 11 Mar 72, same file.

adding that "further approval" would be needed for deployment of the aircraft to Southeast Asia. He did not, however, grant the Chairman's requests of 2 and 9 March for air strikes and naval gunfire against NVN air defense targets. On 22 March, he reaffirmed all existing authorities and stated that these authorities and "the firm RVNAF posture" had, from all reports, disrupted the enemy's offensive plans. He did authorize employment of area denial munitions in the upper half of the DMZ with the authority extending through 1 May 1971. Should there be "significant adverse changes" in the overall military situation, the Secretary promised to reconsider requests for expanded authorities in North Vietnam.[125]

(S) The expected enemy offensive still had not developed by the latter part of March. Allied forces in South Vietnam remained on alert and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders had, with Secretary of Defense approval, augmented US air resources in Southeast Asia. They also wanted to carry out preemptive air strikes against the continuing enemy preparations just above the DMZ in North Vietnam, but Secretary Laird, ever mindful of the political implications, resisted such action in the absence of an actual enemy attack.

Unauthorized Bombing

(U) Despite the careful control exercised by the Secretary of Defense through the Joint Chiefs of Staff

125. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "TACAIR Augmentation, Southeast Asia," 15 Mar 72, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Request for Operating Authorities to Counter the North Vietnamese Threat," 22 Mar 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72.

over US air operations against North Vietnam, a number of unauthorized US strikes did occur during the winter 1971-1972. Between 8 November 1971 and 8 March 1972, US aircraft of the 7th Air Force conducted 28 such strikes against military targets in the lower part of North Vietnam and reported them as protective reaction even though they were pre-planned rather in reaction to enemy firing.[126]

(U) On 8 March 1972, a noncommissioned US airman in Thailand wrote to General John D. Ryan, Chief of Staff of the US Air Force, telling of this violation of the rules of engagement in Southeast Asia. General Ryan immediately dispatched the Air Force Inspector General to investigate the charge, and the resulting report confirmed the allegation. Some missions had been flown in violation of the rules of engagement and there were irregularities in the subsequent operational reports.[127]

(U) General Ryan then summoned General John D. Lavelle, USAF, the Commander of the US 7th Air Force, to Washington to explain the situation. General Lavelle admitted that he had authorized a small number of such attacks and had erroneously reported them as protective reaction. Following consultations with the Secretary of the Air Force, Admiral Moorer, and the Secretary of Defense, General Ryan allowed General Lavelle to retire for "personal and medical reasons" at the reduced rank of lieutenatnt general. The Director of the Joint Staff, Lieutenant General John W. Vogt, USAF was selected on 6 April to replace General Lavelle

126. "Unauthorized Bombing of Military Targets in North Vietnam," Report by Investigating Subcom. of H. Com. on Armed Services, 15 Dec 72, 92d Cong, 2d sess, pp. 1-12 (hereinafter cited as "Unauthorized Bombing," H. Com. on Armed Services, 15 Dec 72).
127. Ibid., p. 1

as the 7th Air Force Commander, and a Department of Defense spokesman announced the command change the following day, though no explanation for the change accompanied the official statement.[128]

(U) Rumors about this incident soon began to circulate, and US Congressman Otis G. Pike of New York, himself a former Marine pilot, requested a Congressional inquiry. Subsequently, on 12 June 1972, the Investigating Subcommittee of the House Committee on Armed Services held a hearing on the unauthorized bombing of military targets in North Vietnam. The Subcommittee heard Generals Ryan and Lavelle, and the latter confirmed his authorization of the strikes, though he placed the number "in the neighborhood" of 20. He admitted "a very liberal interpretation" of the rules of engagement, but justified the strikes against airfields, missile sites and equipment, radars, and heavy guns in North Vietnam just above the DMZ in order to check the expanding enemy air defense threat and to protect US air crews. The General acknowledged that some incorrect reports had been submitted on these missions, but believed that his "superiors," including General Abrams, were aware of "what he was doing"[129]

(U) The Congressional hearing did not end the controversy over the Lavelle relief. General William Westmoreland, the Chief of Staff of the US Army, retired on 1 July 1972, and the President named General Abrams to succeed him. But General Abrams' Senate

128. "Unauthorized Bombing," H. Com. on Armed Services, 15 Dec 72.

129. Ibid., pp. 2-8, 18-24. NY Times, 11 Jun 72, 1; 12 Jun 72, 4; 13 Jun 72, 1.

confirmation became ensnared in the Lavelle matter. General Abrams left Vietnam for Washington on 29 June, but because of Congressional dissatisfaction with General Lavelle's removal, the Senate Armed Services Committee delayed confirmation hearings on General Abrams pending further investigation of the Lavelle affair. In September, the Committee conducted an inquiry into the Lavelle relief together with hearings on General Abrams' nomination. The Senate Committee voted unanimously to confirm General Abrams on 6 October 1972 and the full Senate followed suit a few days later by a vote of 84 to 2. The Committee also confirmed the Air Force's decision on General Lavelle and, in fact, voted to strip him of another star, lowering him to the rank of major general. But this action amounted to a token punishment since he would retain the retired salary of a full general.[130]

(U) Later, in December 1972, the House Committee on Armed Services issued the report of its Investigating Subcommittee on the unauthorized bombing in North Vietnam. The House members, in effect, took issue with their Senate colleagues, finding General Lavelle's action "not only proper, but essential" to meet the increased enemy radar coverage endangering US aircrews. The Subcommittee stopped short, however, of declaring the General's authorization for the strikes legal, and no further action resulted on the matter.[131]

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130. Hearings, Nomination of John D. Lavelle, General Creighton W. Abrams, and Admiral John S. McCain, S. Com. on Armed Services, 92d Cong, 2d sess. NY Times, 29 Jun 72, 12; 30 Aug 72, 7; 14 Sep 72, 1; 16 Sep 72, 1; 19 Sep 72, 1; 7 Oct 72, 1; 13 Oct 72, 9.

131. "Unauthorized Bombing," H. Com on Armed Services, 15 Dec 72, pp. 7-12.

(U) To prevent such unauthorized bombing from occurring in the future the Secretary of Defense implemented a number of actions within the Department of Defense during the fall of 1972 to strengthen civilian control. He created a new group of inspector generals in the unified commands to conduct regular checks of procedures to insure scrupulous compliance with instructions from Washington. Henceforth reporting by Service inspector generals would be to their civilian Service secretaries in addition to their respective military chiefs, and the second Deputy Secretary of Defense, a position recently authorized by the Congress, would concentrate on maintaining operational control of forces in the field. Finally, the Secretary directed the newly established Defense Investigative Service to work directly under him rather than the individual Services and all echelons of the Department of Defense were to give closer scrutiny to the "accuracy and completeness" of operations reports.[132]

132. Ltr, SecDef to Senator John Stennis, 18 Oct 72, OSD Files.

CHAPTER 6

EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE RVNAF, 1971

(U) United States policy in Vietnam since 1969 had called for a negotiated settlement of the war, but in the absence of success in that approach, the United States had also pursued a program of strengthening and improving the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. The objective was to enable the South Vietnamese forces to assume that combat burden as the United States gradually disengaged from the war. President Johnson had initiated the improvement program in 1968 and President Nixon had greatly expanded and accelerated it in 1969 and 1970. At the beginning of 1971, the revised Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program (CRIMP), as approved by the Secretary of Defense on 5 June 1970, provided for a 1.1 million force structure for the RVNAF to be attained by the end of FY 1973 (see Table 3, p. 298). On 31 December 1970, the RVNAF had reached an actual strength of 1,054,125[1] and recruitment was under way to meet the authorized CRIMP ceiling of 1,078,345 for the end of FY 1971.[2]

(U) The improvement of the RVNAF appeared to be progressing satisfactorily at the beginning of 1971,

1. This is the figure given in COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VIII-5. Individual component figures given on pp. VIII-7, 15, 18, and 22 of the same source total 1,047,410. Page J-1 gives a figure of 1,074,410; this is, perhaps, a typographical error for 1,047,410.
2. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, Chapters 6 and 10, pp. 177-209, 373-411.

TABLE 3

The Revised Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program (CRIMP) Approved by the Secretary of Defense on 5 June 1970*

Forces	FY 1971	Proposed End FY 1972	FY 1973
Regular Forces			
ARVN	434,019	441,829	447,456
VNN	39,611	39,611	39,611
VNAF	38,780	44,712	46,998
VNMC	13,462	13,462	13,462
RF	294,446	294,446	294,446
PF	258,027	258.027	258,027
Total RVNAF	1,078,345	1,092,087	1,100,000
Total Paramilitary	179,410	163,285	149,160
Total RVNAF plus Paramilitary	1,257,755	1,255,372	1,249,160

*The Secretary of Defense approved the revised CRIMP for FY 1971-1972 and the FY 1973 portion for planning purposes.

but it was, nevertheless, a matter that would receive considerable JCS attention in the coming months. As the US redeployments continued, reaching the point in mid-year where US forces no longer participated in major offensive combat operations, the RVNAF had to assume the missions vacated by the US troops whether ready or not. In addition, the Secretary of Defense on several occasions during the year called upon the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military commanders to plan additional specialized capabilities for the RVNAF. No additional funds, however, were supplied, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had to juggle existing US military resources to accomplish these programs without further derogation of US force posture and readiness. They also had to tread the narrow line between further strengthening of the RVNAF and stretching too thin its already limited leadership resources.

The RVNAF Force Structure Review

(C) In December 1970, COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff reviewed the FY 1972-1973 RVNAF structure, and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird was presented with proposed changes to the approved structure by the Vietnamese Ministry of Defense during a visit to South Vietnam in January 1971. The principal proposals were for acceleration of 7,913 manpower spaces from FY 1973 into FY 1972, thereby attaining the projected 1.1 million-man ceiling by the end of FY 1972 instead of FY 1973 as currently planned, and for various changes within that ceiling (but without any change in the total figure) to correct existing short-falls. On 6 February 1971, COMUSMACV submitted the same recommendations to CINCPAC, stating that these changes would

enable the South Vietnamese to assume a much greater responsibility for the war as US forces continued to redeploy. Subsequently, on 17 February 1971, CINCPAC forwarded these recommendations with his concurrence to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[3]

(C) On 5 February 1971, COMUSMACV had forwarded to CINCPAC a progress report on leadership, morale, and training in the RVNAF, elaborating in extensive detail developments in those three areas during 1970. It was the commander's view that leadership in the RVNAF was improving at a satisfactory rate "quantitatively and qualitatively." The Chief of the Joint General Staff and the Joint General Staff as a unit, he said, were performing in an "eminently" satisfactory manner, and appointment of new commanders in MRs 2 and 4 had given all four MRs excellent leadership. Division and regimental commanders, with a few exceptions, were satisfactory, and the quality of leadership at battalion and lower levels in both the regular and regional forces was expected to improve as projected force levels were obtained. Nevertheless, despite the promising indications, leadership remained a problem for the RVNAF. Adviser reports rated the leaders of many units as weak or mediocre. Corrective measures, COMUSMACV explained, had to consider many complex factors, such as social, cultural, religious, ethnic, and political influences, some of which had existed for centuries. In addition, many of the bravest and most experienced leaders had been killed, and the

3. (C) Memo, RVN Ministry of Defense to SecDef, "Requirements for the Plan of Developing and Modernizing the RVNAF," 11 Jan 71; (S-GP 4) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 6 Feb 71, and (S-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 17 Feb 71, both Atts to JCS 2472/714, 23 Feb 71; JMF 911/535 (30 Jan 71).

limited supply of qualified leaders had been further dissipated in the expansion of the RVNAF and the diversion of many leaders to governmental and other nonmilitary positions.

(C) General Abrams described ongoing programs to build RVNAF morale in the areas of food, housing, clothing, pay, terms of service, medical care, and leave, stating that they had achieved some beneficial effect. But it was difficult, he explained, to assess progress in this area. Cross-border operations, increased mobility and time away from base camps, assumption of greater combat responsibility, and decreased US combat assistance all tended to degrade morale, while success on the battlefield tended to improve it. He believed that the most positive measurement of improvement in morale was increased effectiveness of the RVNAF units in combat and he found that "RVNAF units on the whole have become more aggressive and effective in 1970."

(C) In the 5 February report, COMUSMACV rated ARVN training programs as "very satisfactory." In a later report, he indicated that the training efforts of the VNAF, VNN, and VNMC were making progress though some continuing problems remained.[4]

(C) CINCPAC relayed the COMUSMACV report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 25 February with some additional comments. He pointed out the continuing problem in improving RVNAF leadership, which he attributed to the rapid expansion of the forces. He was encouraged,

4. (C-GP 4) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 5 Feb 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/721, 4 Mar 71; (C-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 4 Mar 71, JCS IN 61150; JMF 911/535 (5 Feb 71).

however, that the leveling off of desertion rates during 1969 and 1970, except during the Cambodian incursion, indicated that this problem was stabilizing and "more amenable to solution."[5]

(TS) Meantime, a sharp rise in infiltration of enemy personnel into South Vietnam occurred in January and early February 1971, and on 10 February the Secretary of Defense requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assess the capability of the Government of Vietnam to interdict North Vietnamese infiltration of men and supplies into the south both then and after completion of the improvement and modernization program. He wanted to make sure, he explained, that there was no misunderstanding of the direction in which the Department of Defense was moving in long-standing efforts to strengthen the RVNAF. While the United States could not give the RVNAF all the capabilities of the US forces then in South Vietnam, he did not think that "semantic differences" should be allowed to obscure the fact that an interdiction capability could be developed by the South Vietnamese. "Acceptably effective interdiction" could take place at or near destination points, he believed. Methods of interdiction might include disruptions by ground and naval forces, location of enemy caches through judicious use of financial incentives, political pressures, and air interdiction.[6]

(U) While the Joint Chiefs of Staff were reviewing the proposals for the revised FY 1972-1973 RVNAF structure in February and March 1971 and preparing

5. (C-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, 25 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2472/721, 4 Mar 71, JMF 911/535 (5 Feb 71).
6. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 10 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2472/715, 23 Feb 71, JMF 911/309 (19 Feb 71).

their assessment of South Vietnamese interdiction capability for the Secretary of Defense, the RVNAF launched cross-border operations into both southern Laos and Cambodia.[7] These actions gave some indication of the improvement of the RVNAF. The ARVN units had some successes and some notable failures, but at a news conference on 4 March, President Nixon told reporters that "the South Vietnamese on the ground by themselves are taking on the very best units that the North Vietnamese can put in the field." The President told of General Abrams' conclusion, that the ARVN by themselves could "hack it" and could give "a better account of themselves even than the North Vietnamese units." This meant, the President explained, that the Vietnamization program was a success and could continue on schedule, perhaps ahead of schedule assuming more progress in operations in southern Laos.[8]

(S) On 26 March 1971, the President met with Dr. Kissinger, Secretary of Defense Laird, Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard, and Admiral Moorer and discussed RVNAF progress and the possibility of accelerating US troop redeployments from South Vietnam. At that meeting, Secretary Laird left with the President a memorandum[9] on RVNAF improvement and modernization, summarizing statistically the progress of the CRIMP as of the beginning of 1971. After studying this memoramdum, President Nixon directed Dr. Kissinger, Secretary Laird, and Admiral Moorer on

7. See Chapter 1 for an account of the LAMSON 719 operation in southern Laos and Chapter 5 for an account of the operations in Cambodia.

8. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Richard Nixon, 1971 (1972), p. 387.

9. The memorandum has not been located in either JCS or OSD files. The OSD Deputy Historian stated ahat it most likely was an informational memorandum that the Secretary took to the White House meeting, rather than a formal memorandum addressed to the President.

1 April 1971 to join in conducting a detailed analysis of future plans for expanding and modernizing the South Vietnamese forces. Specifically he wished an analysis for the period 1 May 1971 to 30 June 1973 of illustrative levels of major items of equipment for the RVNAF ground forces and for air and navy units with emphasis on helicopter troop and cargo lift, helicopter gunship, and tactical air capabilities. Also to be considered was the possibility of expanding RVNAF ground forces beyond the programmed 1.1-million level.[10]

(S) The Secretary of Defense wanted to make use of all the work currently underway on RVNAF improvement and modernization in the preparation of the analysis for the President. Accordingly, on 8 April 1971, he requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to complete by 23 April 1971 their recommendations on the FY 1972 RVNAF force changes proposed by the Government of Vietnam, the evaluation of the RVNAF interdiction capability, and the annual review of RVNAF leadership and morale. The Secretary intended to base his analysis for the President on "the RVNAF capability to conduct protracted war, to counter the main force threat, to interdict the flow of men and materiel from the north, and to provide local security in the countryside," and he requested any additional recommendations the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought appropriate.[11]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff already had these tasks well in hand. Two days previously, they had provided the Secretary an optimistic assessment by

10. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 1 Apr 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/735, 8 Apr 71, JMF 911/535 (8 Apr 71).

11. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 8 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/735, 8 Apr 71, JMF 911/535 (8 Apr 71).

CINCPAC and COMUSMACV of RVNAF improvement. The next day, 7 April, they had given the Secretary both the COMUSMACV report and the CINCPAC comments on leadership, morale, and training in the RVNAF during 1970. They made no comment on this information except to state that "excellent progress" was accomplished during 1970 in improvement of the quality and quantity of RVNAF training. Although several "minor difficulties" remained, they believed that the problems had been recognized and were being addressed.[12]

(TS) On 19 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense their review of the JGS and COMUSMACV proposals for the FY 1972-1973 RVNAF force structure. (See Table 4, p. 308.) They recommended approval of the acceleration of the 7,913-space increase from FY 1972 to FY 1973 as well as the RVNAF force structure changes within the 1.1 million force ceiling for FY 1972. They also requested planning approval for the related changes within the established ceiling for FY 1973. The acceleration, they told the Secretary, assumed that the RVNAF would undertake an increasingly greater responsibility for the war in the coming months. They pointed out that, while this proposal would speed up the RVNAF manpower ceiling by one year, it would not accelerate activation of major RVNAF units into the same time frame except for one air defense artillery weapons battalion and three station hospitals. Consequently, the RVNAF would be able to maintain its training facilities and pipeline at near capacity.

12. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-165-71 to SecDef, 6 Apr 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/736, 6 Ar 71, JMF 911/535 (30 Mar 71). (S-GP 4) JCSM-174-71 to SecDef, 7 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2472/721-1, 30 Mar 71, JMF 911/535 (5 Feb 71).

(TS) With regard to specific improvements brought about by the recommended proposals, the acceleration would supply the ARVN 5,627 spaces in FY 1972 to augment existing approved units and 2,286 spaces for the VNAF in the same period, to accomplish recruiting and training for units scheduled for activation in FY 1973. No acceleration would occur in the VNN or VNMC, since those services were currently scheduled to reach their final ceilings in the 1.1 million structure by the end of FY 1972. The most significant changes in the ARVN resulting from the proposed revisions within the overall ceiling would include an additional armored cavalry squadron to be positioned in MR 2, 10 M-196 self-propelled mortar platoons, and 10 military police companies. In addition, increases totaling over 6,000 spaces in the combat service support structure would enhance the ARVN capability in the areas of air operations, logistics, maintenance, and medical treatment. The territorial forces would be expanded through the addition of 17 Regional Force battalion headquarters and 219 Popular Force platoons. Changes in the VNN would permit: activation of the Coastal Surveillance Radar System (ACTOVRAD); turnover of 29 US river patrol boats to the VNN; improved coordination of riverine operations; augmentation of the Viper patrol craft building and operation program; and improved logistics, base maintenance, and support. Proposed revisions in the VNAF would allow enhanced self-sufficiency primarily in base operating support, logistic depot repair, and UH-1 helicopter maintenance. In addition, the VNMC division would be reorganized to improve command and control and to upgrade maintenance capability.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated the cost of these force structure proposals at an additional $88.585 million. The cost breakdown for the US Services was as follows:

	PERSONNEL	EQUIPMENT	O&E	TOTAL
Army	$12.2	$55.3	$19.4	$86.9
Navy	0.0	0.0	.435	.435
Air Force	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Marine Corps	0.0	1.210	.04	1.250
TOTAL	$12.2	$56.510	$19.875	$88.585

The Joint Chiefs of Staff requested the Secretary of Defense for provision of additional FY 1972 funds and procurement authority to replace US equipment that was delivered to the RVNAF in accord with the above programs. They also recommended authority for the Military Departments to deliver major items of equipment in FY 1972, at an unprogrammed cost of $56 million, as required by the proposals.[13]

(TS) The same day, 19 April 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also sent the Secretary of Defense the requested appraisal of RVNAF interdiction capability. They explained that the CRIMP was not designed to provide the South Vietnamese forces with an out-of-country air interdiction capacity. The rationale for the CRIMP program was that the progress and momentum of pacification made it reasonable to assume that the Viet Cong threat would decline as the GVN capability

13. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-180-71 to SecDef, 19 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2472/714-1, 12 Apr 71, JMF 911/535 (30 Jan 71).

TABLE 4

The JCS RVNAF Force Structure Proposals as submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 19 April 1971 in JCS 180-71.

ACCELERATION PRESENT FY 1972 MANPOWER AUTHORIZATION TO FY 1972

RVNAF Service	FY 1972 Present	FY 1972 Accelerated	Difference
ARVN	441,829	447,456	+ 5,627
VNN	39,611	39,611	0
VNMC	13,462	13,462	0
VNAF	44,712	46.998	+ 2,286
RF	294,446	294,446	0
PF	258,027	258.027	0
TOTALS	1,092,087	1,100,000	+ 7,913

improved and that the RVNAF would be able to cope with the combined VC/NVA threat in-country by mid-1973 with MAAG assistance. Also included in this rationale was provision for continuation of certain elements of US out-of-country and offshore tactical support beyond mid-1973. Moreover, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not believe that interdiction at the place of destination, as suggested by the Secretary, was the best method of dealing with the problem. From a tactical standpoint, they said, it was more "cost effective" to aim principal interdiction efforts at choke points in the enemy's infiltration system.

(~~TS~~) The RVNAF did have some interdiction capability, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense. The VNAF could conduct limited air operations outside the RVN borders against low-threat areas, and this capacity would be further improved upon completion of the CRIMP in 1973. Aircraft currently in the VNAF inventory and programmed in the CRIMP would be highly vulnerable in actions against strongly defended enemy sanctuaries, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought the VNAF could be further strengthened by substituting aircraft with greater capabilities for some of those planned in the CRIMP. Efforts in that direction were under study. In addition, the acceleration of VNAF manpower spaces, as proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the RVNAF force structure review,[14] would improve helicopter maintenance, ultimately augmenting the VNAF interdiction potential.

14. See above, pp. 305-307.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff also anticipated that the continued improvement of the 37 Ranger Border Defense Battalions should increase RVNAF effectiveness in controlling enemy infiltration along either side of the RVN borders. Further, the approved CRIMP would supply the VNN with a means of preventing significant enemy infiltration by sea. Finally, they pointed out that the RVNAF already possessed a special cross-border capability targeted exclusively against activities in Laos and Cambodia. Although these operations were directed primarily to intelligence collection, they did, in fact, represent a limited interdiction asset.

(TS) For all these reasons, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not convinced that further efforts to give the RVNAF additional interdiction capability were warranted at that time. Though they did not recommend against further efforts in this regard, they did request that major changes in the CRIMP await further review of the RVNAF force structure and assessments of projected US redeployments as well as the results of the current (1970-1971) dry season campaign.[15]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 April 1971 provided the Secretary of Defense further comments on the RVNAF improvement and modernization program based on an additional review by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC of the South Vietnamese performance in the recent cross-border operations and the predicted impact of the US redeployment directed by the President on 7 April 1971.[16] The Joint Chiefs of Staff anticipated "no significant adverse effects" on the RVNAF improvement and modernization program at that time from either the cross-border operations or the accelerated US redeployments.

15. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-182-71 to SecDef, 19 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2472/715-1, 7 Apr 71, JMF 911/309 (19 Feb 71).
16. See Chapter 3, p. 147.

But continuation of the current US withdrawal rate beyond 30 November 1971, they believed, could "impact adversely on the program." The RVNAF force structure, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told Mr. Laird, was designed to provide a "balanced mix of forces with increased firepower, tactical mobility, and logistical support capabilities," and it was important to avoid disruptive changes and to retain a degree of stability. Therefore they opposed any drastic force structure changes or additions of unprogrammed new and sophisticated equipment that could impede the success currently enjoyed in RVNAF training, logistical, and maintenance programs. Moreover, they did not consider that either the South Vietnamese manpower or economic base could support an increase in the RVNAF force level above 1.1 million men under present conditions. In conclusion, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended early approval of the proposals for the FY 1972-1973 RVNAF force structure that they had submitted on 19 April 1971 together with provision of additional FY 1972 funds and procurement authority.[17]

(~~TS~~) After reviewing the various JCS submissions, the Secretary of Defense on 3 June 1971 made his decision on the RVNAF structure that the United States would support in the forthcoming fiscal year. He approved both the force structure modifications for FY 1972 within the 1.1 million-man ceiling and the acceleration to achieve that ceiling by the end of FY 1972 as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 19 April 1971. Force structure modifications for FY 1973 were approved for planning. The Secretary of Defense did not, however, provide any additional funds for RVNAF

17. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-192-71 to SecDef, 23 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2472/735-1, 21 Apr 71, JMF 911/535 (8 Apr 71).

improvement and modernization. The additional $88.585 million for FY 1972, as estimated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would have to be accommodated within the resources available to the military departments. Secretary Laird did authorize COMUSMACV to continue to make field refinements to the RVNAF tables of organization and equipment so long as personnel and equipment changes did not exceed approved ceilings.[18]

A Presidential Decision on RVNAF Improvement

(~~TS~~) While the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense were resolving the questions of the RVNAF structure during the spring of 1971, the National Security Council was conducting an extensive Vietnam assessment that included an examination of the RVNAF.[19] Among a number of preliminary studies used in the review was an appraisal by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) of the RVNAF improvement and modernization program submitted to the Senior Review Group on 19 May 1971. This appraisal was, in fact, the Secretary of Defense response to the President's 1 April request[20] for a detailed analysis of future plans for the RVNAF, and the day before submission to the Senior Review Group, the Secretary of Defense had sent the same appraisal to the President together with proposals for adjustment of the FY 1972 and 1973 RVNAF force structure as proposed

18. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 3 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/714-4, 4 Jun 71, JMF 911/535 (30 Jan 71).
19 The NSC assessment is treated in Chapter 2, pp. 71-85.
20. See above, pp. 303-304.

by COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff and concurred in by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[21]

(TS) The Assistant Secretary concluded that the improvement and modernization program had given the RVNAF a potential ability to cope with the VC/NVA threat as then projected. Whether the South Vietnamese could realize that potential depended on their "national will, leadership, and morale." Moreover, some minor adjustments would be needed in the equipment provided under current plans. RVNAF interdiction systems and techniques did exist but needed continued improvement and added impetus. Moreover, the "manpower and economic impact resulting from the size of the RVNAF" made the ultimate reduction of the force structure essential.

(TS) One problem raised by the Assistant Secretary was the possibility of an unfavorable ratio of South Vietnamese to enemy main force units in Military Regions 1 and 2 during FY 1972 if US redeployments continued. In the "aggregate," he pointed out, South Vietnamese forces outnumbered the enemy significantly, but assuming a US force of 50,000 and the maximum estimate of VC/NVA strength and operations, there could be deficit of 44 RVNAF battalions in Military Region 1 and a surplus of only 8 in Military Region 2. Clearly some decision would be required to give additional defensive capability in the two northern Military Regions.[22]

(TS) After a lengthy review, as described in Chapter 2, the Senior Review Group concluded that the

21. (TS-GP 3) Memo, ASD(ISA) to Dr. Kissinger, USec State, DCI, and CJCS, 19 May 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/739-5, 27 May 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 1.

22. Ibid.

threat confronting the RVNAF in South Vietnam was serious and that additional measures were urgently required to strengthen the South Vietnamese forces. Consequently, the Group presented the President three alternatives for RVNAF improvement: (1) qualitative improvement in the RVNAF and temporary commitment of RVNAF general reserve forces from Military Region 3 to Military Regions 1 and 2; (2) improvements as in the first alternative, but with permanent allotment of increased forces in Military Regions 1 and 2 within the current 1.1 million-man RVNAF ceiling by either moving forces from the other regions or inactivating units in other areas to allow increased authorization in the northern regions; (3) expansion of the RVNAF to a 1.2 million-man ceiling and the creation of an additional two-division force.[23]

(~~TS~~) After reviewing the Vietnam assessment, the President made two decisions to strengthen the RVNAF and improve the situation in the northern regions of South Vietnam. On 23 June 1971, he decided that the United States would support the continued presence of two ROK divisions in South Vietnam throughout 1972 thereby allowing the RVNAF more flexibility in force dispositions.[24] Then on 3 July 1971, he approved US support for the RVNAF in accordance with the second alternative proposed by the Senior Review Group. He directed the Department of Defense and the US Mission in Saigon: to institute training and promotion programs to improve RVNAF leadership and morale as well as programs for combat pay for units in isolated areas; to

23. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Dr. Kissinger, USecState, DCI, and CJCS, 18 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-19, 21 Jun 71, same file, sec 4.
24. For resolution of Republic of Korea force levels in South Vietnam, see Chapter 3, pp. 168-174.

increase manning levels in RVNAF combat and other key units to 90 percent; and to strengthen the RVNAF by adding a division in Military Region 1 and a division headquarters with appropriate support in Military Region 2 (being careful not to lower security in the other MRs). Should the Government of Vietnam request US support for additions to the 1.1 million RVNAF ceiling in FY 1972, and should the US Mission judge that the alternative of adding RVNAF forces by removing or demobilizing units in Military Regions 3 and 4 involved excessive risks, the United States would be willing, the President said, to consider an increase in the ceiling. But US support would be contingent upon demonstration that the increase would not jeopardize the attainment of the manning level of 90 percent in combat and other key units. This decision of the President on 3 July, in effect, confirmed the Secretary of Defense's earlier action on the FY 1972 RVNAF structure. No strength increases beyond the 1.1 million-man ceiling were approved nor were any additional FY 1972 funds provided for the improvement and modernization program.[25]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised General Abrams of the President's decision on 8 July 1971, but an actual implementing directive was delayed pending the return of the Secretary of Defense from a trip to the Far East. In view of the many programs then under way for improving the RVNAF, the Director of the Joint Staff believed that only minimum guidance need be given the field commanders, but the Secretary of Defense did not agree. After his return to Washington, Secretary Laird advised the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

25. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 113, 23 Jun 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 118, 3 Jul 71; JMF 001 (CY 1971) NSDMs.

on 20 July 1971 that, while he agreed that the President's decisions were "consistent with the numerous programs already underway," he believed more would have to be done to achieve the full potential of the RVNAF. The success or failure of the Vietnamization program, he said, and as he had repeatedly stressed, would ultimately rest on the "will, desire, and initiative" of the South Vietnamese themselves.[26]

(TS) Secretary Laird was concerned, however, at the apparent inability of the RVNAF to achieve program objectives. He had earlier, on 23 June 1971, raised with the Joint Chiefs of Staff the continuing leadership problem in the RVNAF and asked about additional measures in this area. He remained convinced that there was "still a long way to go" in improving the performance and effectiveness of the RVNAF leadership. He found it hard to reconcile the generally favorable reports given him on RVNAF training in light of the operational failures such as air-ground and fire control inadequacies during the LAMSON 719 and Snuol operations, deficiencies of the VNN MARKET TIME forces, and the inability or unwillingness of the VNAF to fly at night. He also commented on the inefficient personnel management that allowed RVN country-wide average combat unit strength to "drift" at under 80 percent while the overall RVNAF strength stood at nearly authorized levels. It was essential to the success of Vietnamization, the Secretary said, for the full potential of the RVNAF force structure to be attained. He requested that COMUSMACV review

26, (TS) Msg, JCS 4739 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 8 Jul 71. (TS) DJSM-1298-71 to ASD(ISA), 15 Jul 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 20 Jul 71; Atts to JCS 2472/769, 21 Jul 71, JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71).

current programs and report his findings and recommendations for measures to implement the President's recent decisions.[27]

(S) At JCS direction, COMUSMACV conducted the necessary review, and on the basis of the commander's findings, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded two reports to the Secretary of Defense on 17 August 1971, one dealing with RVNAF leadership and a second on programs to implement the Presidential decisions on RVNAF improvement. In the former, the Joint Chiefs of Staff outlined the status of efforts to enhance RVNAF leadership, including: identification and elimination of weak leaders; the current battlefield promotion system designed to recognize and accelerate advancement of promising leaders; and an improved leadership evaluation system. It was the JCS judgment that, despite the continuing expansion of the South Vietnamese forces and their increased responsibility for combat operations, RVNAF leadership was improving both quantitatively and qualitatively. Nevertheless, continued improvement was required, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the ongoing programs, with emphasis on rapid promotion of proven leaders, removal of ineffective commanders, and improved morale and training, were appropriate and adequate.

(S) With regard to implementation of the President's decisions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary that the Joint General Staff had actions underway to improve the distribution of manpower (allotting a higher proportion of men to combat units) as well as

27. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 20 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/769, 21 Jul 71; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 23 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/769-1, 13 Aug 71; JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71).

efforts to improve RVNAF morale and to lower desertions. These efforts included a pay increase for military personnel financed through economic assistance from the US Agency for International Development. In addition, COMUSMACV and the US Embassy in Saigon were attempting to induce stronger GVN enforcement of the South Vietnamese desertion law in an effort to stem what accounted for the "largest single manpower loss to the RVNAF." To strengthen the RVNAF in the northern Military Regions, the Joint General Staff was working on a plan to deploy an additional "division-sized force" to Military Region 1. In addition, a series of other measures were under consideration to strengthen forces there and in Military Region 2, including provision of additional artillery units in both regions, a medium tank battalion for Military Region 1, additional armored cavalry squadrons in Military Region 2, and strengthened VNAF and VNN forces in both regions.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff also reviewed for the Secretary of Defense current RVNAF training efforts. For the ARVN, the JGS Central Training Command in April 1971 had taken action to standardize training, with specified yearly training quotas and objectives. In addition, the ARVN refresher training program attempted to train all ground forces (ARVN, Regional, and Popular Force) units, battalion size and below, once every three years. Although refresher training goals had not been met, added emphasis and resources were being devoted to this effort. The recent RVNAF cross-border operations into Laos and Cambodia had identified deficiencies in operational capabilities, largely attributable to the inability of regimental, division, and corps operations centers to "orchestrate" large combat actions effectively. Staff command post exercises and war games were being conducted to solve

this problem. Unit training was being conducted in the VNAF to improve combat effectiveness and correct the inability or unwillingness to fly at night. Fighter and helicopter pilots were receiving additional night flying training and the VNAF training center was being expanded. The Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned, however, that there was a more basic problem, namely, that the RVNAF simply had not had, and was only beginning to develop, the necessary integrated air-ground capability to identify targets properly and then to conduct tactical air strikes at night. For the VNN, the GVN was carrying out programs to increase unit training, enhance combat effectiveness, and overcome deficiencies in the logistic system and MARKET TIME operations.

(~~S~~) All these programs, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, would be reviewed and changed continuously as the RVNAF demonstrated the ability to absorb new responsibilities. In all instances, the programs would be carefully examined with the objective of achieving the results desired by the President.[28]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense informed Admiral Moorer on 4 September 1971 that he had relayed the JCS reports on RVNAF improvement to the President. Mr. Laird believed that, in general, the plans and actions underway by COMUSMACV had achieved commendable progress. But he expressed concern over the lack of clearly assigned priorities and target dates. On the basis of his review, the Secretary listed the following areas that required further action: strengthening of forces in Military Regions 1 and 2, particularly the

28. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-379-71 to SecDef, 17 Aug 71, Encl to JCS 2472/769-2, 13 Aug 71, JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71).

provision of an additional division in Military Region 1; reform of RVNAF personnel practices to assure a 90 percent manning level; and renewed attack on leadership and morale problems. Since the imminent redeployment of more US troops would impose further limitations on COMUSMACV's capabilities, Secretary Laird urged that actions be carefully chosen to achieve the greatest impact. He wanted a report on all these matters by 15 October.[29]

(TS) Planning and actions now proceeded to strengthen the RVNAF in Military Regions 1 and 2 as directed by the President and the Secretary of Defense. In September 1971, COMUSMACV concurred in a JGS proposal to activate a new ARVN infantry division in Military Region 1 using a nucleus of units already operational in the area. Subsequently, the Joint General Staff activated the 3d Infantry Division on 21 October 1971. The new division would be fully deployed by April 1972; until that time, elements of the RVN Marine Corps division would be moved to Military Region 1 to provide additional combat strength while the 3d Infantry Division received unit training. In addition, the Joint General Staff ordered the movement of three ARVN artillery battalions and a newly activated M-48A3 tank battalion into Military Region 1 and an armored cavalry squadron into Military Region 2. By reducing the size

29. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 4 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/769-3, 7 Sep 71, JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71). The deadline of 15 October was subsequently extended to 15 November by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) when he informed the Chairman on 28 September of a Presidential directive for a follow-up report on RVNAF improvement by 1 December 1971. (TS-GP 1) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 28 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/769-4, 29 Sep 71, same file.

of the Popular Force platoon, the Joint General Staff was able to activate 302 additional platoons in Military Regions 1 and 2. Eight Regional Force battalion headquarters were added there as well. Actions to strengthen the VNAF and VNN in the two northern regions included: the August 1971 transfer of a VNAF AC-46 gunship squadron from Military Region 3 to Military Region 2; turnover of Coastal Surveillance Radar System (ACTOVRAD) sites in Da Nang and Mui Dinh to the VNN with three remaining sites in Military Region 1 scheduled to be transferred to the Vietnamese by February 1972; turnover of the Naval Intermediate Support Base at Thuan An and the Naval Operating Base at Chu Lai, both in Military Region 1, to the VNN; planned relocation of a detachment of F-5A aircraft from Military Region 3 to Military Region 1 in January 1972; and activation of one U4-1H squadron at Nha Trang in November 1971 and another at Da Nang in February 1972 in advance of activation dates of March and June 1972, respectively, previously planned.[30]

(TS) On 9 November 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a further report on improvement in the South Vietnamese forces that responded both to the Secretary's 4 September request as well as the President's desire for further followup on this subject. They told the Secretary of the measures taken to strengthen the RVNAF in Military Regions 1 and 2, as described above, and added that COMUSMACV had approved a JGS concept of standardized Ranger battalions/groups and the addition of a Ranger component to the RVNAF general reserve. This latter action would provide an additional force capable of

30. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-493-71 to SecDef, 9 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/769-5, 2 Nov 71, JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71).

deployment as needed. Also, recommendations had been made to the RVNAF in the areas of personnel procurement, distribution and management, and control of desertions in the continuing effort to attain a 90 percent manning level in RVNAF combat units. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff admitted that desertions still represented the largest single manpower loss to the RVNAF. Despite a law prescribing punishment for deserters, they said, there was little manifestation of "a unified concern or effort" by the Government of Vietnam to enforce this law, although the Joint General Staff had repeatedly stressed the need for stronger efforts. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the actions already taken, together with JGS proposals then under consideration dealing with conscription, terms of service, military pay, and promotions, indicated "an encouraging assessment of GVN/RVNAF determination to enhance Service morale, as well as insure higher manning levels in the Military Forces." They believed, however, that attempts to enlist the cooperation of GVN civilian officials in the prompt and thorough execution of draft laws must be pursued through Department of State channels while US military advisers continued "to emphasize proper manpower distribution within RVNAF units." In conclusion, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured the Secretary of Defense that the goals outlined by the President on 3 July were being pursued as vigorously as US military capabilities allowed.

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff appended to their submission to the Secretary a COMUSMACV assessment of the RVNAF leaders. It was General Abrams' view that the Joint General Staff and the commanders of the four military regions were performing in an eminently

satisfactory manner. Of the thirteen RVNAF division commanders (including the commander of the new 3d Infantry Division), General Abrams considered only one ineffective and one marginal. General Abrams had assured CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the assignment of the best qualified RVNAF officers to responsible positions had and would continue to have his personal attention. He had engaged in a constant dialogue with Vietnamese officials in an attempt to impress upon them the urgency and necessity for the relief of ineffective officers and, in most instances, his recommendatons had been accepted.[31]

(S) During the fall of 1971, the Secretary of Defense inquired about the future of the US advisory effort for the RVNAF. "Obviously," he told the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "as redeployments continue, the US advisory structure must also be reduced." Should the United States try to achieve esentially the same structure and role as before the 1965 buildup, he asked, and should the rate or reduction in the advisory force be tied to redctions in other US forces? The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied on 26 November that the advisory effort was being "continually analyzed and refined" as redeployments progressed and they expected the ultimate organization to evolve on the basis of requirements and the degree of self-sufficiency attained by the South Vietnamese forces.[32]

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31. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-493-71 to SecDef, 9 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/769-5, 2 Nov 71, JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71). The COMUSMACV assessment of RVNAF leaders is contained in (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 090944Z Oct 71, JCS IN 98143, same file.

32. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/781, 27 Sep 71; (S-GP 3) JCSM-514-71 to SecDef, 26 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/781-1, 15 Nov 71; JMF 911/145 (24 Sep 71).

(S) Despite all the US effort during 1971 to improve the South Vietnamese forces, the actions to enhance RVNAF morale and increase the manning levels of combat units did not prove successful. Overall ARVN strength declined during the last six months of the year and the ARVN was 46,000 personnel short of the planned figure at the end of 1971. In addition, conscription for the year fell 47 percent short of the 66,900-man goal. Consequently, combat infantry battalions had only 65 percent of authorized strength on 30 November 1971 while all other organic division units had between 96 and 121 percent. South Vietnamese conscripts did increase appreciably during December 1971 and ARVN strength rose by 5,856 to 407,963, but this increase would not be reflected in infantry battalions until February 1972 when the conscript training cycle was completed. Nor was there any major decrease in the high number of RVNAF desertions in 1971. A slight downward trend did occur in the last half of the year, but the overall total for 1971 showed an 18,528 increase over the previous year. The ARVN strength by month during 1971 was as follows:

January	416,609	July	412,549
February	411,958	August	405,745
March	414,069	September	404,704
April	412,035	October	401,526
May	412,705	November	402,107
June	411,693	December	407,963[33]

(S) During the last six months of 1971 (the first half of FY 1972), COMUSMACV approved adjustments in the

33. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. VIII-7 - VIII-9, VIII-33.

RVNAF force structure through tradeoffs within the approved 1.1 million space ceiling. In making those decisions, he was acting within the discretionary authority granted him by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[34] By the end of 1971, COMUSMACV had sanctioned 9,413 new spaces for the ARVN: 7,983 for the activation of the new 3d Infantry Division; 894 for the new 20th Tank Squadron (M-48A3); 402 for reorganization and standardization of ranger battalions; and 134 for other miscellaneous units. Against the new spaces, COMUSMACV had approved the reduction of 4,665 elsewhere in the ARVN, including disestablishment of the following units: an electronic combat detachment, a ranger border defense battalion, 13 highland scout companies, 17 highland intelligence platoons, 10 military intelligence detachments for allied units, and 2 military police battalion headquarters. Other spaces were obtained through reduction of interpreter-translator, communications, and ARVN pipeline personnel and by reorganization of the Inspector General system and the Medical Branch. Since a remaining net increase of 4,748 new spaces still had to be accommodated within the 1.1 million RVNAF ceiling, COMUSMACV also

34. On 15 August 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had authorized COMUSMACV to make field refinements to manpower space ceilings of individual RVNAF components up to 5 percent so long as the total RVNAF strength was not exceeded and new units were not created without prior JCS approval. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7495 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 15 Aug 70. On 29 March 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized COMUSMACV to create additional RVNAF units within the approved force structure without prior JCS approval provided individual component strength ceilings did not exceed 5 percent of the field adjustments authorized by COMUSMACV, the total RVNAF strength ceiling was not exceeded, Service approval was obtained for additional equipment, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were informed of the changes. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7422 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 29 Mar 71.

approved reductions in the Regional and Popular Forces, totaling 6,970 spaces in FY 1972, not only meeting the requirement for the 4,748 spaces for the ARVN but also providing 84 new spaces for the Regional Forces and 2,138 for the VNAF.

(S) For the VNAF, COMUSMACV approved 249 spaces for the conversion of an AC-47 gunship squadron to AC-119K; 1,770 spaces for use in acquisition of Phu Cat Air Base, and 368 spaces for miscellaneous purposes for a total of 2,387. Those spaces were accounted for by the 2,138 tradeoff from the Regional and Popular Forces as well as a tradeoff of 249 spaces within the VNAF pipeline strength.

(S) COMUSMACV also approved 431 new spaces for the VNN, comprising: 308 for two Coast Guard high-endurance cutters (WHEC); 99 for one repair, berthing, messing barge (YRBM); and 24 for three landing craft mechanized (LCM-8). Against those new spaces, COMUSMACV approved a tradeoff of 92 spaces from two coastal minesweepers, 197 spaces from one river transportation escort group, 80 spaces from miscellaneous craft, and 62 spaces from 16 Viper patrol craft.[35]

(C) By the end of 1971, the RVNAF had reached an actual strength of 1,046,254 against the authorized ceiling of 1.1 million. This total comprised 407,963 ARVN, 42,267 VNN, 49,475 VNAF, 14,312 VNMC, 282,680 Regional Forces, and 248,557 Popular Forces.[36]

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35. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-75-72 to SecDef, 23 Feb 72, Encl to JCS 2472/796-1, 18 Feb 72, JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 72).

36. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. VIII-7, VIII-15, VIII-18, VIII-21, and VIII-22.

Improving the RVNAF Interdiction Capability

(S) Even though the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed in the spring of 1971 that improvement of the South Vietnamese armed forces was progressing as rapidly as possible, the Secrtary of Defense and his Deputy, Mr. David Packard, sought some new ways to improve the RVNAF interdiction capability. While it was true, as Mr. Packard told the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Director of the Defense Special Projects Group on 10 May 1971, that the "highly sophisticated US aerial bombardment capability" could not be duplicated in the VNAF, it was equally apparent that the US air effort could not continue indefinitely. More would have to be done, he believed, to improve the indigenous capabilities of the RVNAF with "reasonably unsophisticated systems and within reasonable manpower and dollar limitations." With that end in mind, he directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Director of the Defense Special Projects Group to assess five projects as possible means of increasing the RVNAF interdiction capacity: (1) addition of the CBU-55 (a cluster bomblet munition) weapons system to the VNAF inventory; (2) provision of a mini-gunship fleet to the RVNAF to replace the US AC-119/AC-130/B-57G aircraft in interdiction operations; (3) replacement of the IGLOO WHITE sensor system with a strategic readout system to permit the RVNAF to measure infiltration into South Vietnam and northern Cambodia; (4) provision of improved equipment for support of raiding parties targeted against the Laotian infiltration system (both personnel and materiel); (5) appraisal of the RVNAF need for additional border surveillance equipment, including sensors, readout equipment, and

radars, to increase the capability to monitor infiltration across the South Vietnam border.[37]

(TS) A week later, on 17 May 1971, Secretary Laird informed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that greater emphasis would have to be placed on imaginative tactics, techniques, and technology to enhance further the RVNAF interdiction capability. In addition to the studies already assigned to the Military Departments and the Defense Special Projects Group, the Secretary wanted the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assess three proposals: RVNAF targeting of the personnel infiltration by either ground or air operations employing currently planned force levels (using harrassment, terror, and other unconventional warfare tactics); conduct of operations in exploitation of intelligence of the personnel and materiel infiltration systems; and integration of all RVNAF border surveillance and cross-border reconnaissance capabilities into a single command.[38]

(TS) After reviewing these concepts and proposals, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 15 June 1971 advised the Secretary of Defense that it would be feasible and desirable to increase emphasis on targeting the personnel infiltration system. While total interdiction was not possible, harassing operations would impede infiltration and cause the enemy to commit greatly disproportionate forces to this effort. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the RVNAF capability could be improved by "establishing all aspects of interdiction as high-priority missions"; by employing

37. (S-GP 3) Memo, DepSecDef to Secys of MilDepts, Dir DSPG, 10 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/747, 11 May 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 1.

38. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 17 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/751, 18 May 71, JMF 911/535 (17 May 71).

the RVNAF Strategic Technical Directorate in the primary task of unconventional warfare and special operations in North Vietnam and enemy-controlled areas of Laos and Cambodia; by developing a strong centralized planning and coordination element under the Joint General Staff; and by expanding the use of psychological warfare, small unit ambushes, mines, and booby traps along personnel infiltration routes. Although complete reconnaissance coverage of the Ho Chi Minh trail complex was not possible, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, targeting of personnel routes could be improved through integration of sensor reports and reconnaissance sightings. In order to improve cross-border operations, however, they advised the Secretary that significant changes would be needed in current rules of engagement to relax restrictions on boundaries, size of forces, and US adviser participation and to remove constraints on use of riot control agents and defoliants by the RVNAF. Finally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not consider formation of a force dedicated exclusively to infiltration interdiction to be an efficient application of planned RVNAF resources, nor did they believe that the creation of a single RVNAF command for cross-border and border surveillance forces with an integral exploitation capability was desirable.[39]

(~~C~~) A matter of further concern to the Secretary of Defense was the indication of a possible decline in effectiveness in combating sea infiltration into South Vietnam as the Vietnamese Navy took over the MARKET TIME operations. He raised this matter with Admiral Moorer on 18 May 1971 and received assurances that

39. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-274-71 to SecDef, 15 Jun 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/751-1, 9 Jun 71, JMF 911/535 (17 May 71).

COMNAVFORV was doing everything possible within available resources to remedy this situation. The Chairman cautioned the Secretary, however, not to expect the same level of effectiveness from the South Vietnamese operation as had been attained by the combined US air and surface forces.[40]

(S) Meantime, during June 1971, the studies that the Deputy Secretary of Defense had requested on improvement of the RVNAF interdiction capability were completed. The Director of the Defense Special Projects Group submitted to Mr. Packard on 9 June a review of the feasibility of developing a simplified strategic readout system to allow the RVNAF to measure infiltration into South Vietnam and northern Cambodia. The next day, 10 June, the Secretary of the Air Force submitted a study on the CBU-55 munition; a mini-gunship concept, given the name CREDIBLE CHASE, employing short takeoff and landing (STOL) aircraft to increase RVNAF interdiction and tactical mobility capabilities; and a feasiblity study of providing improved equipment to the RVNAF to permit expanded use of small airborne raiding parties. And the Secretary of the Army furnished an assessment of the need for more border surveillance equipment on 28 June 1971.[41]

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40. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 18 May 71; (S-GP 4) CM-980-71 to SecDef, 14 Jun 71; Atts to JCS 2472/759, 21 Jun 71, JMF 911/329 (18 May 71). See Chapter 5, pp. 240-243, for coverage of MARKET TIME operations in 1971.

41. (S-GP 3) Memo, Dir DSPG to DepSecDef, 9 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-1, 11 Jun 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) Memo, Actg SecAF to SecDef, 10 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-2, 14 Jun 71, same file, sec 2. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecArmy to DepSecDef, 28 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-3, 30 Jun 71, same file, sec 3.

(TS) After reviewing these studies and the JCS submission of 15 June on improvement of RVNAF interdiction, the Secretary of Defense on 2 July 1971 expressed satisfaction that "realistic RVNAF interdiction capabilities consistent with the eventual withdrawal of US forces from SEA" were being identified. He wanted further refinement of these plans and testing of selected equipment and concepts identified in the recent studies. He requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to review the Military Departments and Defense Special Projects Group papers and then prepare a combined interdiction plan for FY 1972 to reflect increasing RVNAF participation and responsibility for the entire effort. Specifically, the plan was to include: strengthening of the Vietnamese border surveillance capability; providing the RVNAF with some "primitive" strategic readout system; coordination of selected allied air and ground raids against the enemy's personnel and materiel systems "in the lower threat areas of Laos"; integration of a refined COMMANDO HUNT effort concentrated in the "higher threat areas of Laos"; integration of the system for uncovering enemy material caches through a rewards and incentives program; and improvement of the MARKET TIME performance by continuing the US air surveillance and improving RVNAF reaction capability.

(TS) In preparing the plan, the Secretary of Defense directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assume that US redeployments and air activity levels would continue "as at present or accelerate" and that essential elements of current operating authorities for the use of US personnel outside of South Vietnam and employment of US air in North Vietnam would remain unchanged. Mr. Laird also wanted aggressive

pursuit of corrective measures for MARKET TIME operations; further study of "dedicated" versus "decentralized" reaction forces for interdiction; further development of a JCS concept for a "strong centralized planning and coordination element" under the Joint General Staff to manage the interdiction campaign; and continued effort to develop a better intelligence base to assist the South Vietnamese in interdiction operations.

(~~TS~~) Since the time for planning before the onset of the next dry season was short, Secretary Laird suggested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff might form a special ad hoc task force at CINCPAC headquarters to expedite the task. He also directed the Department of the Air Force, with the assistance of the Army and the Defense Special Projects Group, to design a combat test to take place during the next dry season of selected equipment and concepts that might allow the RVNAF to conduct their own counterinfiltration operations in the future. He was willing, he said, to assist in obtaining Congressional approval for procurement of utility STOL aircraft for evaluation.

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense impressed on the Joint Chiefs of Staff the importance he attached to this effort:

> I need not remind you that the fate of our national Vietnamization policy rests in part on the evolution of a credible RVNAF interdiction capability at the earliest possible time. If the suggestions proposed and studied by the Services do not represent realistic and useful operational solutions, then I believe it to be incumbent on the JCS to evolve acceptable alternatives. It should be made clear to the Joint

> General Staff that the interdiction campaign will eventually become their total responsibility. Our process of withdrawal and disengagement is irreversible--including our own expensive and sophisticated air interdiction campaign over Laos.[42]

(TS) To implement the Secretary of Defense's directive, the Director of the Joint Staff on 12 July 1971 established an ad hoc group under the chairmanship of the Operations Directorate (J-3) of the Joint Staff with a membership from the other appropriate Joint Staff directorates as well as from the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Defense Special Projects Group. Subsequently, on 26 July 1971, CINCPAC convened a task force in Saigon to study specific programs and consolidate them into a single interdiction campaign plan for FY 1972. This group included representatives from CINCPAC's staff, his Service components, MACV, the 7th Air Force, and a small contingent from Washington consisting of officers from the Joint Staff, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Defense Special Projects Group.[43]

(TS) At a meeting of the CINCPAC group on 29 July 1971, General Abrams expressed concern over the Secretary of Defense's decisions for development of an RVNAF interdiction capability. He urged a careful review of the "total" problem facing the RVNAF and a weighing of the interdiction capability in light of the resources available to the RVNAF before the United States committed itself to such an effort.

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42. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, and Dir DSPG, 2 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/727-4, 9 Jul 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 3.

43. (TS-GP 1) DJSM-1260-71 to DIA et al., 12 Jul 71, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/747-4, 14 Jul 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 3. (TS-GP 1) DJSM 1417-71 to CJCS, 3 Aug 71, same file, sec 4.

Since South Vietnamese resources were extremely limited, addition of anything further to the CRIMP would require the subtraction of something else. But, despite these reservations, General Abrams agreed that the United States should test everything that offered any chance of success. He believed that 1972 and 1973 would be "extremely critical years" and that the United States must continue substantial tactical air and B-52 support of the RVNAF during that period. Without this US air umbrella, the enemy would be "quick to take advantage," General Abrams said, and the United States could lose all that it had invested in Southeast Asia to date.[44]

(~~TS~~) The CINCPAC task force proceeded with its work and identified a number of ways to improve allied interdiction capability both in FY 1972 and in future years. Enemy infiltration was not just a problem for the Government of Vietnam but one for Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand as well. The task force developed OPLAN ISLAND TREE for combined interdiction operations in Southeast Asia for FY 1972. The plan called for a coordinated air, naval, and ground interdiction effort against the entire enemy infiltration system by the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand, with US support. This effort was tailored toward RVNAF assumption of a major portion of the responsibility for interdiction operations in the short term and assumption of the primary role with minimal US involvement in succeeding campaigns. Operations called for in the ISLAND TREE plan were to

44. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo for Record, BG John W. Pauly, USAF, DepDir for Ops (J-3) 29 Jul 71, Att to DJSM-1417-71 to CJCS, 3 Aug 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 4.

be coordinated through the Combined Interdiction Coordinating Committee (CICC), recently established by COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff. ISLAND TREE would also serve as the basis for an interdiction annex to the US/RVN Combined Campaign Plan then being drafted. CINCPAC forwarded OPLAN ISLAND TREE to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 5 August 1971 together with a separate "Compendium of Additional ISLAND TREE Issues."[45]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff used the ISLAND TREE OPLAN as the basis for the US/RVNAF Combined Interdiction Plan, which they submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 23 August 1971. This document, they told the Secretary, was based on the "fundamental strategy" of establishing GVN self-sufficiency with US assistance for interdiction action. It recognized the need for a coordinated effort by Lao, Cambodian and Thai forces to disrupt the enemy infiltration network beyond the borders of South Vietnam. All operations contributing to interdiction, including land, sea, riverine, psychological and special, would be coordinated into a single attempt to impede the flow of enemy personnel and supplies into South Vietnam. This plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured the Secretary, included all feasible possibilities for improving interdiction in Southeast Asia.

(TS) Under the Combined Interdiction Plan, ground actions would include reconnaissance, deception,

45. (TS-GP 1) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 5 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-6, 10 Aug 71; (TS-GP 3) J-3 Briefing Sheet for CJCS, "JCS 2472/747-7--RVN Armed Forces Interdiction Alternatives (U)," 19 Aug 71; JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 4. (TS-GP 1) CINCPAC OPLAN ISLAND TREE, 5 Aug 71, JMF 346 (5 Aug 71) sec 1A.

diversion, and exploitation operations within available resources. Regular RVNAF units would launch larger-scale, less-frequent attacks against lucrative targets in Laos and Cambodia to disrupt the enemy infiltration system. Allied air forces would interdict enemy lines of communication in the COMMANDO HUNT area, including BARREL ROLL, STEEL TIGER, and FREEDOM DEAL operations in Laos and Cambodia. This effort would be principally a US one with some Lao, Thai, and Cambodian support, but it would not be possible to integrate this friendly assistance fully into the COMMANDO HUNT program. In addition, VNAF sorties within the limits of resources would be directed against interdiction targets in Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam with COMUSMACV serving as the coordinating agency for the total air effort against the enemy infiltration system. The MARKET TIME patrol would continue along the South Vietnamese and Cambodian coasts with emphasis on improved effectiveness, and riverine operations would be conducted against enemy infiltration along inland waterways and coastal estuaries. In addition, the Combined Interdiction Plan provided for: employment of reconnaissance teams along known or suspected infiltration routes; psychological operations to demoralize the enemy while enhancing the morale of friendly forces; conduct of special operations directed by the RVNAF Strategic Technical Directorate with complete responsibility for special interdiction operations assumed by the South Vietnamese in June 1973; and an extensive rewards and incentives system to stimulate the flow of information on all aspects of the enemy infiltration system. Finally, the plan would improve equipment for border ranger battalions and supply improved sensor surveillance of border regions by ARVN divisional forces.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out to the Secretary of Defense that, because of the limited time remaining before the onset of the 1971-1972 dry season, only "a minor increase" in RVNAF participation in the FY 1972 interdiction operations was possible and that the US air campaign, COMMANDO HUNT VII, would constitute the largest single element of the Combined Interdiction plan for FY 1972. Moreover, continuing US redeployments and the limited capability of the RVNAF to assume the US air role would reduce the total interdiction effort in FY 1972 and subsequent years. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did believe, however, that centralized planning and coordination of the overall effort at the JGS level would enhance the "viability and effectiveness" of the future operations, and to that end, COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff had established the Combined Interdiction Coordination Committee. As US redeployments proceeded, the South Vietnamese would assume complete responsibility for the Committee with only US advisory assistance.[46]

(S) Subsequently, on 30 August 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC that they did not plan a formal review of his ISLAND TREE OPLAN. They had used it as the basis for the Combined Interdiction Plan for FY 1972, which they had aproved and forwarded to the Secretary of Defense. They told the field commander that he should use this latter document as a "guideline" for completing interdiction planning for FY 1972 and in developing an appropriate annex for the 1972 Combined Campaign Plan. The Joint Chiefs of

46. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-384-71 to SecDef, 23 Aug 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/747-7, 18 Aug 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 4.

Staff authorized and encouraged CINCPAC to implement any innovations in this area that were possible within his resources and authority.[47]

(TS) On 23 August 1971, the same day that the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense the Combined Interdiction plan, they also gave him their comments on the five Service and Defense Special Projects Group studies on improvements to RVNAF interdiction capabilities. Generally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found the Revised Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program commensurate with the South Vietnamese capability to assume increasing responsibility for the total war effort, and they again warned against placing "unmanageable burdens" on the RVNAF in the form of new weapons or programs. Few additinal improvements for the RVNAF were possible within the current program, they said, and experience had shown that South Vietnamese human, technological, and economic resources were already stretched "extremely thin." With regard to the specific studies, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that use of the CBU-55 munition was feasible and should be added to the VNAF inventory. The possibility of improved equipment for relay of sensor signals, as already planned for inclusion in the CRIMP, was a promising development to enhance border surveillance. They favored combat evaluation of both the mini-gunship concept (CREDIBLE CHASE) and improved equipment for airborne raiding parties. Finally, they found the strategic readout system "unrealistic in terms of required resources and cost," but urged a "limited evaluation" of it along with CREDIBLE CHASE. The studies presented other ideas, the Joint Chiefs of

47. (S-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4586 to CINCPAC, 30 Aug 71.

Staff concluded, that warranted testing, but regardless of the merits, those concepts would have to be incorporated into interdiction plans on the basis of feasibility and practicability, considering "available money, skills, allocation of resources, and desired results."[48]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense reviewed both the Combined Interdiction Plan and the JCS comments on the Service studies of possible RVNAF interdiction alternatives and informed Admiral Moorer on 8 October 1971 of his encouragement with the increased in RVNAF interdiction capability during the past year. He did not want improvements in RVNAF interdiction capacity tied up in lengthy test cycles. It was imperative, he said, to accelerate the time when the RVNAF could "go it alone." If additional equipment were required to reduce South Vietnamese reliance on US forces, it should be supplied at once. He established the objective of achieving an "optimal RVNAF interdiction capability by the fall of 1972" that could be "self-sustaining with no more than limited US advisory assistance." To accomplish that goal, he directed that the RVNAF assume responsibility for interdiction planning and operations for the 1972-1973 Laotian dry season and that materiel assistance be accelerated to give "all additional feasible capabilities" to the RVNAF during the 1971-1972 season.

(~~TS~~) With respect to the approaching 1971-1972 campaign, the Secretary stated that current operating authorities would continue with reevaluation by 1 November 1971 and with changes considered on a case-by-case basis. For ground interdiction, he set, as

48. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-369-71 to SecDef, 23 Aug 71, Encl to JCS 2472/747-5, 4 Aug 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 3.

a "reasonable starting point," an objective of ten company-size cross-border interdiction operations per month and battalion raids as required. To increase South Vietnamese involvement in air interdiction in FY 1972, he wanted: an objective established for VNAF contribution to COMMANDO HUNT VII in the low-threat area of southern Laos and northeast Cambodia; immediate improvement in VNAF basing for interdiction purposes; and a program for prompt provision of the CBU-55 to the VNAF. Mr. Laird found the plans for MARKET TIME operations for 1972 sound. Further he requested that responsibility for special operations be completely transferred to the RVNAF by 1 July 1972 with "US advisory effort reduced in accordance with overall US redeployment planning." He did not find the Combined Interdiction Campaign Committee a completely adequate mechanism for involoving South Vietnamese, Thais, Cambodians, and Laotians in the overall interdiction effort and directed that better methods for integration and coordination of operations of common concern be developed and instituted during the 1971-1972 dry season.

(~~TS~~) Looking toward the future, the Secretary directed that the RVNAF interdiction capability receive "priority attention" in the current review of the RVNAF modernization program. Specifically, he directed that the following changes be considered: additional radar-equipped C-119s, C-47s, and other suitable aircraft to give the VNAF a "limited maritime air patrol capability"; incorporation of the mini-gunship (CREDIBLE CHASE), subject to successful testing of the program, in the FY 1972/1973 CRIMP "either as part of the interdiction operations or as a substitute for those air assets diverted to that mission"; expanded sensor and radar capability for all ground forces; a

senor delivery and readout capability for the VNAF; and provision of AC-119K aircraft, modification of A-37s, and recommendations for any other significant changes to strengthen the RVNAF interdiction capability. He wanted preliminary views on these changes by 15 November and final recommendations by 15 February 1972 so that reprogramming could be initiated. In final guidance, the Secretary stated:

> Every effort must be made to involve the RVNAF to the extreme limits of their capability in all facets of planning, coordination, execution and evaluation of the campaign. Therefore, whenever possible RVNAF resources should be employed and the Vietnamese should plan and control operations.[49]

(C) On 12 November 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported to the Secretary of Defense that the field commanders had been informed of his objectives and guidelines to achieve an optimum RVNAF interdiction capacity. Both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC had the South Vietnamese interdiction efforts under continuing review and had already begun action for improvements. The commanders were concerned, however, that these programs might not be practical without US support

49. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 8 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-8, 12 Oct 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 5. To manage implementation of the actions directed by the Secretary, Admiral Moorer requested the Director of the Joint Staff on 14 October 1971 to establish "a high level Joint Staff Steering Group with appropriate Service representatives." Subsequently, the Director decided to use the already existing Joint Vietnamization Coordinating Group, which included both Joint Staff and Service members, to meet this requirement. (S-GP 4) CM-1265-71 to DJS, 14 Oct 71; (S-GP 4) DJSM-1914-71 to CJCS, 16 Oct 71; same file.

and might require "prohibitive trade-offs" in other areas. General Abrams had noted, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary, that the Government of Vietnam must necessarily place primary emphasis on internal security in populated, food-producing, and industrial areas that were vital to its survival. The type and scale of South Vietnamese interdiction operations would depend on the forces available for the various competing requirements and the situation in each military region.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff then outlined for Secretary Laird the actions underway to carry out his directions for enhanced interdiction during the 1971-1972 dry season. They provided specific details on planned land, sea, and air operations as well as efforts and programs to expand the South Vietnamese interdiction capabilities. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also presented the Secretary their initial views on his suggested changes to the CRIMP to improve further RVNAF capability for the 1972-1973 interdiction campaign. They believed that the development of a VNAF maritime air patrol capability would only degrade other important missions and that action on CREDIBLE CHASE and on a sensor delivery and readout capacity should await the results of scheduled tests. Nor did they favor further sensors or radars for the RVNAF; they found the current sensor program adequate and stated that addition of any more radars would exceed the South Vietnamese support capability. Provision of AC-119K aircraft to the VNAF was planned for late FY 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, and further modification of the A-37 for interdiction operations was being considered. They told the Secretary that, while any one of these proposals might

be implemented without degrading other essential RVNAF functions, adoption of the entire set would require reductions of other vital efforts. The only means the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw for offsetting such reductions would be through the use of additional contractor assistance, but such support would add to "the already significant costs" of the Secretary's proposals.[50]

(U) When the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded this report on interdiction improvement to the Secretary of Defense, Admiral Moorer was away from Washington on a trip to the Western Pacific. Upon his return, he endorsed the JCS report and assured the Secretary of Defense that the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff accorded the highest priority to the Vietnamization of interdiction operations.[51]

(U) The JCS report of 12 November contained only their preliminary views on additional changes to the RVNAF improvement and modernization program and they promised the Secretary of Defense their final recommendations by 15 February 1972 in accordance with his earlier instructions. Consequently, the Secretary of Defense took no further action on RVNAF improvement during the remaining weeks of 1971 except for CREDIBLE CHASE.

CREDIBLE CHASE

(TS) The idea of a mini-gunship capability to augment RVNAF interdiction efforts arose in May 1971 when the Deputy Secretary of Defense asked the Secretary of the Air Force, as described above, to investigate such a possibility. As a consequence, the Air Force developed the CREDIBLE CHASE concept providing

50. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-500-71 to SecDef, 12 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/747-9, 8 Nov 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 5.

51. (TS-GP 4) CM-1318-71 to SecDef, 18 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-10, 18 Nov 71, same file.

for a large number of "simple, off-the-shelf, light" short takeoff and landing (STOL) aircraft to be armed and operated in an austere environment. The concept would reorient interdiction efforts from southern Laos to the contiguous border areas of South Vietnam and Cambodia where the STOL aircraft could provide continuous coverage of enemy supply corridors. The Air Force proposed to evaluate a squadron of 30 STOL aircraft in a combat situation in southern Laos during the next dry season, beginning in February 1972.[52]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the CREDIBLE CHASE concept and told the Secretary of Defense on 23 August that the STOL aircraft could have useful application for the RVNAF in several different roles and missions. They did not, however, make any recommendation on CREDIBLE CHASE, preferring to await the results of the planned combat tests. They did point out to the Secretary that the concept would impact heavily on the RVNAF improvement and modernization program, costing a total of approximately $1.7 billion for the first three years.[53]

(S) At the direction of the Secretary of Defense a multi-service task force was established in South Vietnam on 27 October 1971 to conduct the test of the CREDIBLE CHASE concept under combat conditions. A 60-day evaluation would begin about 15 April 1972 and would include armed STOL aircraft, orbiting relay

52. (S-GP 3) Memo, DepSecDef to SecAF et al., 10 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/747, 11 May 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) Memo, Actg SecAF to SecDef, 10 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-2, 14 Jun 71, same file, sec 2.

53. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-369-71 to SecDef, 23 Aug 71, Encl to JCS 2472/747-5, 4 Aug 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 3.

aircraft, ground forces, and sensor equipment. A force of 30 STOL aircraft would be divided between two competitive designs--the AU-23A PACEMAKER and the AU-24A STALLION. Following suitable training of both US Air Force and VNAF pilots, a squadron-sized task force would be deployed into a base area along the tri-border area of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to conduct counterinfiltration operations with staging from Pleiku; COMUSMACV would exercise operational control of the test through his Deputy for Air Operations and integrate it into the 1972 interdiction program.[54]

Pacemaker

(~~C~~) In their 12 November progress report on measures to improve RVNAF interdiction capabilities, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again noted that STOL aircraft might warrant consideration for a variety of missions in South Vietnam. They foresaw the possibility, depending on the results of the combat evaluation, of four to five STOL squadrons for the RVNAF by the end of FY 1973. But to meet that date, they added, action must be taken immediately to begin procurement and funding.[55]

(~~TS~~) On 29 November 1971, the Secretary of Defense decided that enough was known about the STOL aircraft and their capabilities to proceed immediately with procurement for the RVNAF. Although the Secretary agreed that final assessment of the use of CREDIBLE CHASE aircraft in the interdiction role must await the results of the impending field test, he did believe these planes could be used in Vietnam for coastal patrol, psychological operations, utility cargo and

54. ~~(S-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-15. As constituted at the end of 1971, the task force consisted of 108 VNAF and 278 US personnel.

55. ~~(TS-~~GP 4) JCSM-500-71 to SecDef, 12 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/747-9, 8 Nov 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 5.

troop movement, armed reconnaissance, and support of ground force operations. The low cost and the relative ease of maintenance were additional favorable features. Therefore the Secretary established a planning goal of five operational STOL squadrons (32 UE each, with a total of 200 to allow for command support and initial attrition) for the FY 1973 interdiction campaign. He requested JCS confirmation that a military requirement existed and could be met by the STOL as proposed in the CREDIBLE CHASE concept. Since provision of STOL aircraft to the South Vietnamese would contribute to the overall Vietnamization program, Mr. Laird wanted the US Military Departments to share the burden of absorbing the additional costs involved. He also directed coordination with the Joint General Staff to secure the manpower to support the STOL force.[56]

(TS) Admiral Moorer replied to Secretary Laird on 3 December 1971, stating that it was difficult to arrive at a "finite" decision on the military requirements for the STOL in South Vietnam before the conclusion of the CREDIBLE CHASE evaluation. Since the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Ryan, was currently away from Washington, the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed to delay their comments on the STOL until they could discuss the matter with their absent colleague. The Secretary agreed to this delay, but emphasized to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that "RVNAF interdiction capabilities must be maximized as soon as possible."[57]

(S) A few days later, on 11 December 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff supplied the Secretary their comments

56. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 29 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-11, 30 Nov 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6.

57. (TS-GP 1) CM-1359-71 to SecDef, 3 Dec 71, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/747-11, 7 Dec 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 6 Dec 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-13, 7 Dec 71; same file. (Emphasis is the Secretary's).

on the use of STOL aircraft for interdiction purposes in Vietnam. They still refused to endorse such a requirement in the absence of completed combat tests. The STOL was not capable of operations in the threat environment in which the US forces currently operated, they said, although it could satisfy other military requirements in South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed the field commanders to begin preliminary planning with the Joint General Staff to support introduction of STOL aircraft should such a decision be made, but they pointed out that a five-squadron force would require about 2,100 additional VNAF spaces. Such an addition, as well as the training and logistics required, they believed, must be carefully weighed against other RVNAF needs. Nor did the Joint Chiefs of Staff favor Service cost sharing for a STOL program. The Services had already been required to take substantial reprogramming actions to meet unexpected costs of the Southeast Asian operations, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended other means of funding for any procurement of STOL aircraft.[58]

(S) President Nixon announced on 13 January 1972 the withdrawal of another 70,000 US troops during the next three months, reducing US strength in South Vietnam to 69,000 by 1 May 1972, and this decision put increased demands on the US forces remaining in Vietnam. Four days later, on 17 January, the Chief of Naval Operations complained to Admiral Moorer that the currently approved plans for accelerated improvement of the RVNAF interdiction capability were taxing South

58. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-547-71 to SecDef, 10 Dec 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/747-12, 1 Dec 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6. Although the JCSM is dated 10 December 1971, it was not finally approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff until 11 December. See (S) Dec On, "JCS 2472/747-12, 'CREDIBLE CHASE Program (U),'" 11 Dec 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6.

Vietnamese resources and causing an "adverse impact" on the overall improvement effort. He relayed and endorsed CINCPACFLT's warning against premature assignment of RVNAF personnel and equipment to the CREDIBLE CHASE program prior to final evaluation. Otherwise serious dilution of VNAF ability to support VNN coastal surveillance, interdiction, and riverine operations might result.[59]

(S) Admiral Moorer acknowledged the CNO concern on 26 January, assuring Admiral Zumwalt that his views would be taken into account. In fact, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had a few days previously informed the Secretary of Defense of the impacts of meeting the President's recently announced redeployment schedule, pointing out, among other things, that the CREDIBLE CHASE program could no longer be supported from Pleiku.[60]

(S) Subsequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense on 5 February 1972 that, in order to meet the new US force level in South Vietnam, it would no longer be possible to conduct the CREDIBLE CHASE evaluation in Southeast Asia. The only feasible alternative, which they recommended, was to do the test at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. Mr. Laird accepted this change, reasserting once again the importance he attached to improving the RVNAF interdiction capacity:

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59. (TS-GP 4) Memo, CNO to CJCS, 17 Jan 72, Att to JCS 2472/747-14, 19 Jan 72, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6.

60. (TS-GP 4) CM-1478-72 to CNO, 26 Jan 72, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/747-14, 3 Feb 72, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-24-72 to SecDef, 19 Jan 72, Encl to JCS 2472/786-6, 19 Jan 72, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).

> I continue to rely on the Joint Chiefs of Staff to determine the most suitable and timely methods to optimize RVNAF interdiction capabilities. Those RVNAF capabilities must be consistent, in turn with the objective of allowing the people of the Republic of Vietnam to determine their future without outside interference.[61]

(TS) Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff canceled the evaluation of CREDIBLE CHASE in Vietnam, and plans proceeded for the testing of STOL aircraft in the United States with participation of both VNAF air and ground crews. In the meantime, the North Vietnamese launched their major offensive into South Vietnam on 30 March, and the President asked the Secretary of Defense to recommend additional equipment that might be furnished the South Vietnamese to increase their combat capabilities. Included among the Defense proposals, submitted by Deputy Secretary Kenneth Rush to the President on 19 May 1972, was provision to the VNAF of the 30 STOL aircraft that would become excess in June upon completion of the CREDIBLE CHASE evaluation, and the President approved this recommendation the same day.[62]

(TS) In the end, however, the STOL aircraft were not given to the RVNAF. Following the President's

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61. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-43-72 to SecDef, 5 Feb 72, Encl to JCS 2472/747-15, 5 Feb 72; (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 16 Feb 72, Att to JCS 2472/747-17, 17 Feb 72; JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6.

62. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 6026 to CINCPAC, 172109Z Feb 72. (TS-GP 4) Memo, CSAF to CJCS, "CREDIBLE CHASE Evaluation," 3 Mar 72, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Pres, 19 May 72, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/818, 22 May 72, JMF 911/495 (19 May 72). (TS-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 168, 19 May 72, JMF 001 (CY 1972) NSDMs.

decision, COMUSMACV questioned the survivability of the STOLs in a high threat environment and estimated that 4,100 additional VNAF personnel would be needed to operate and support these aircraft. Consequently, he recommended against introduction into the VNAF force structure, and the Secretary of Defense on 7 June 1972 halted all actions relating to provision of the STOL to the Republic of Vietnam pending the outcome of the final tests. The US Air Force conducted operational tests and evaluations of both the AU-23A and the AU-24A STOL aircraft in June and July 1972 and found performance of the planes only marginally effective for the missions tested. Therefore the Air Force did not recommend the STOL for an interdiction mission in South Vietnam. Thereafter the VNAF pilots who had participated in the test returned to South Vietnam and the United States gave 14 of the STOLs used in the evaluation to Thailand and 13 to Cambodia, but none to the Republic of Vietnam.[63]

63. (TS) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS et al., 7 Jun 72, Att to JCS 2472/821, 8 Jun 72; (TS) J5SM-1129-72 to Secy, JCS, 27 Dec 72; JMF 911/460 (7 Jun 72). (S) TAC COM, TAC Project 71A-211T, TAWC Project 1142, Final Rpt, "CREDIBLE CHASE/AU-23A (U)," Aug 72, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 4B.

CHAPTER 7

THE NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE

The Attack Begins

(~~C~~) After several months of increasingly visible preparations, the North Vietnamese launched their offensive into the south on 30 March 1972 in the form of three coordinated attacks.[1] In MR 1, two NVA divisions supported by armor and artillery pushed across the DMZ into Quang Tri Province, and a third enemy division moved eastward from Laos toward Hue in Thua Thien Province. The enemy hoped to eliminate the defending fire support bases (FSB) and occupy the provincial capital Quang Tri City. Two hundred and fifty kilometers to the south of the DMZ in the Central Highlands of MR 2, the North Vietnamese attacked in Kontum Province the following day, 31 March, and on 4 April, a major enemy drive began in Binh Long Province in MR 3 in a threat against Saigon 100 kilometers to the south. In all, six fully equipped divisions entered South Vietnam in these three major thrusts.[2]

(~~C~~) In MR 1, the North Vietnamese pressed the attack employing tanks and artillery to overrun South Vietnamese positions, and heavy cloud cover restricted tactical air support available to the defending South Vietnamese troops. By 2 April, six fire support bases just below the DMZ had fallen and two more were lost

1. For indications of enemy preparations for the offensive, see Chapter 5, pp. 279-292.

2. All information on the operational aspects of the North Vietnamese offensive and South Vietnamese counteractions is from (~~TS-NOFORN~~-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, Chapters 2 and 3 and Annexes B, J, K, and L, unless otherwise stated.

that day, leaving only three major bases in the northern part of Quang Tri Province in South Vietnamese hands. The North Vietnamese pushed on, threatening Quang Tri City as the South Veitnamese troops continued to fall back. On 4 April, after forcing the abandonment of one of the last remaining South Vietnamese defense points on the north bank of the Cua Viet River, the North Vietnamese paused briefly in their attack to regroup and make further preparations.

(C) The intensity of the enemy attack in MR 2 in the initial days of the offensive did not match the fighting to the north. South Vietnamese forces along Rocket Ridge in eastern Kontum Province as well as two regiments northeast of Dak To were in heavy contact with enemy forces, but the full impact of the offensive would not be felt in MR 2 until the middle of April.

(C) After a preliminary feint in northern Tay Ninh Province, the main enemy drive in MR 3 began on 4 April when elements of two VC divisions with armor support moved from Cambodia into Binh Long Province. The main attack was against the district capital of Loc Ninh on Route 13. Despite a fierce South Vietnamese defense, Loc Ninh fell on 7 April and the enemy pushed on down Route 13 toward Saigon to lay siege to the provincial capital of An Loc--a siege that would last for over two months.

United States Reaction

(U) United States officials, both in South Vietnam and Washington, watched the massive enemy onslaught and the faltering South Vietnamese resistance with growing concern and began immediate action to assist the South Vietnamese. President Nixon and his advisers never

contemplated using US ground combat forces to stem the invasion. Neither political nor military realities permitted consideration of that course and US assistance took the form of materiel assistance, naval gunfire and tactical air support, and air strikes against North Vietnam. Spasmodic and ad hoc at first, these measures soon evolved from mere reaction into organized and coordinated programs culminating in the LINEBACKER air attacks and the POCKET MONEY mining of North Vietnamese waters.

~~(TS)~~ On 1 April, Admiral Moorer provided the Secretary of Defense three options for air attack of North Vietnam to destroy the enemy's air defenses and disrupt his supply system. These plans would have permitted strikes in North Vietnam up to 18°, 19°, or 20° north, respectively. (In fact, one of these plans, allowing for attack up to 19° north, had been previously provided to the Secretary in February.) No formal action resulted on these options, but the United States did launch air strikes into North Vietnam immediately thereafter. On 2 April, Admiral Moorer authorized tactical air, artillery, and naval gunfire attack on military and logistics targets in North Vietnam to a limit 25 miles above the DMZ as well as B-52 strikes throughout the DMZ until the current emergency was terminated or not later than 1 May 1972. The following day, the target area in North Vietnam was extended to 17°35' north and the area was further enlarged on 4 April to 18° north with provision for protective reaction above that limit as required. These oerations were nicknamed FREEDOM TRAIN. Though closely restricted for the moment, the air attacks

against North Vietnam would be progressively expanded, becoming a full scale bombing campaign in early May.[3]

(TS) The Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG) reviewed the Vietnam situation on 3 April. In the course of the discussion, Dr. Kissinger asked how long the offenisve would last, and Admiral Moorer replied "a good 20 to 30 days" or perhaps even longer. In further discussions the following day, Admiral Moorer pointed out to the WSAG that the enemy had changed his strategy from protracted to conventional warfare. The fact that North Vietnam had committed "everything--all the mainforce units"--led Admiral Moorer to believe the enemy would try to stay in MR 1.[4]

(TS) President Nixon left no doubt about his concern with the developments in Vietnam. In a meeting with Admiral Moorer, Deputy Secretary of Defense Rush, and Dr. Kissinger on 3 April, he said that General Abrams should "exercise maximum aggressiveness in the use of air power." The President wanted the fullest possible impact achieved by air attacks, requesting COMUSMACV to give this matter "around-the-clock attention." He asked Admiral Moorer to investigate the feasibility of augmenting both B-52 and tactical air assets and voiced his expectation for "imaginative, aggressive

3. (TS-GP 1) CM-1693-72 to SecDef, 1 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 5821 to CINCPAC, 021702Z Apr 72; JCS 6494 to CINCPAC, 031716Z Apr 72; JCS 7921 to CINCPAC, 042325Z Apr 72; JCS 9013 to CINCPAC, 052250Z Apr 72. (Late on 2 April 1972, Admiral Moorer authorized a 48-hour strike of targets in North Vietnam below 19° north, but the authorization was canceled before any operations were undertaken. See (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 3030 to CINCPAC, 030518Z Apr 72 and JCS 7921 to CINCPAC, 042325Z Apr 72.) SecDef approval of these air attacks may be assumed although it cannot be documented.

4. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 3 and 4 Apr 72, NSC Files.

and continuous attention" to the current crisis "throughout the unified command system." The President also instituted special arrangements to follow the situation. During the offensive all reports from COMUSMACV were to be transmitted to the White House immediately "for my personal review" and an officer from the Joint Chiefs of Staff would be designated to brief him or his Assistant for National Security Affairs.[5]

(TS) In guidance for the field commanders on 4 April, Admiral Moorer emphasized the importance attached in Washington to stopping the offensive:

> We do not expect to lose this one and, consequently, must bring as much air and naval force to bear as possible in order to give the enemy a severe jolt. . . . We have received increased authorities and must make full use of them at every opportunity. Our objectives are: to ensure that the North Vietnamese do not endanger remaining U.S. forces, to provide maximum assistance to the South Vietnamese in their efforts to destroy the invader and to prevent the North Vietnamese from interferring with Vietnamization plans . . . .[6]

(U) The United States also publicly declared its intention to use air power to assist the South Vietnamese. In a press conference on 7 April, Secretary of Defense Melvin R Laird warned the leaders in Hanoi that the US bombing of their territory would continue until

5. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6826 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 040006Z Apr 72. (S) Memo, President to SecDef, 3 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72.

6. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7951 to CINCPAC et al., 042355Z Apr 72.

until North Vietnam withdrew its invading forces from the south and showed interest in "serious" peace talks. The White House Press Secretary followed up the next day stating that the United States would do "what is necessary" in terms of air power, fire support, and logistical assistance to help the South Vietnamese stop the enemy offensive.[7]

(TS) Poor weather in Vietnam prevented full use of authorized air resources against the North Vietnamese invasion and President Nixon grew dissatisfied with the level of US air operations. In a meeting on the morning of 8 April, he was "extremely out of patience," Admiral Moorer reported to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV afterwards. The President reminded his hearers that the military commanders had received authorities and resources beyond those requested and, "so far, nothing other than routine operations have occurred." The President wanted to give both North Vietnam and the Soviet Union "a clear message" of US intent to use whatever force was necessary. "I cannot impress on you too strongly," Admiral Moorer told the field commanders,

> how intensely the President is in this operation, how determined he is that the enemy does not succeed in their objectives, and how forthcoming he is when presented with requests for authorities and additional resources . . . .[8]

(TS) At the 8 April meeting, President Nixon approved expansion of tactical air and naval gunfire attacks against North Vietnam from 18° to 19° north and a B-52 strike on North Vietnam below 19° north and

7. NY Times, 8 Apr 72, 1; 9 Apr 72, 28.
8. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3492 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 082308Z Apr 72.

granted authority to engage all enemy fighter aircraft either in the air or on the ground below 20° north. This last authority had been requested by CINCPAC on 4 April and had the support of Admiral Moorer and Secretary Laird. Admiral Moorer issued the necessary directives the same day to implement the President's decisions. The B-52 strike was to employ "at least" six aircraft with execution before sunset 10 April 1972, Saigon time, against a logistics target. Accordingly, the strike was carried out on 9 April, beginning a series of B-52 attacks against North Vietnam.[9]

US Augmentations

(U) The air resources of the United States in South Vietnam at the beginning of 1972 were extremely thin as the result of the continuing US redeployments, and reinforcements were required to meet the expanding operations. The President and the Secretary of Defense were quick to approve these actions and the month of April witnessed a significant buildup of US air assets in South Vietnam and Thailand, and Guam. In South Vietnam, introduction of the augmentation forces complicated the continuing redeployment of US forces, necessitating the withdrawal of additional security and support personnel in order to meet approved redeployment ceilings, which remained unchanged despite the enemy offensive.[10]

9. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3492 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 081208Z Apr 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 3489 and 3500, 082259Z and 082321Z Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (~~TS-NOFORN~~) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, (S) pp. 152-153. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3502 to CINCPAC, 082322Z Apr 72.

10. For a discussion of US redeployments during the enemy offensive, see Chapter 8.

(~~TS~~) The incresing signs of an enemy attack in early 1972 had alerted the US military commanders to the need for added air resources and several initial augmentations were accomplished before the offensive broke. In February, the United States returned 18 F-4 aircraft to Thailand and South Vietnam (COMMANDO FLASH) and shifted another 18 F-4D aircraft from Korea to the Philippines for possible movement to Southeast Asia.[11] Once the invasion began, immediate actions were ordered to retain these assets. On 30 March, at the request of the field commanders, Admiral Moorer recommended a 30-day extension of the COMMANDO FLASH deployment, and the Secretary of Defense aproved on 4 April. Meantime, on 1 April, Admiral Moorer had requested and the Secretary approved moving the 18 F-4D aircraft in the Philipines to Southeast Asia. The movement (COMMANDO FLY) was ordered the same day.[12]

(~~TS~~) Other actions to bolster US air assets in Southeast Asia followed in rapid succession. Admiral Moorer, with the Secretary's concurrence, directed CINCPAC on 1 April to hold the USS CONSTELLATION in WESTPAC to maintain a four carrier posture.[13] At CINCPAC's request, Admiral Moorer approved on 4 April an increase of nine B-52 (ARC LIGHT) sorties per day, ordering the deployment of "approximately" 20 B-52s

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11. See Chapter 5, pp. 287-288, 291-292.

12. (~~TS~~) CM-1684-72 to SecDef, 30 Mar 72; (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "COMMANDO FLASH," 4 Apr 72; (~~TS~~) CM-1697-72 to SecDef, 1 Apr 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 7641 to CINCPAC, 041854Z Apr 72; JCS 5401 to CINCPAC, 011850Z Apr 72.

13. (~~TS~~) CM-1698-72 to SecDef, 1 Apr 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5371 to CINCPAC, 011744Z Apr 72.

to Guam and "approximately" eight supporting KC-135s to Okinawa.[14] That same day, the Secretary of Defense requested an increase of naval gunfire ships in support of activity in Vietnam, and Admiral Moorer ordered CINCPAC to carry out this task as soon as possible.[15]

(S) Further actions occurred the next day, 5 April. With Secretary of Defense and WSAG aproval, the Chairman directed the following deployments: (1) two US Marine Corps tactical air squadrons from the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing to South Vietnam; (2) one CONUS-based F-105 squadron (12 aircraft) to Thailand; (3) two CONUS-based F-104 tactical fighter squadrons to Thailand. All deployments were for a period of not more than 90 days and included required logistics and personnel support, and authority was granted to exceed temporarily the US manpower ceilings in Thailand.[16]

(TS) On 6 April, the President decided to provide additional tactical air support for Southeast Asia operations, and the Chairman issued the necessary implementing order. He directed the deployment of an additional carrier, the USS MIDWAY, from the west coast of the United States to Southeast Asia as soon as possible, to raise the Seventh Fleet strength to five

14. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7393 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 041443Z Apr 72.

15. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7438 to CINCPAC, 041530Z Apr 72.

16. (S-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 9004 to CINCPAC, 052241Z Apr 72; JCS 9069 to CSAF and CINCPAC, 052353Z Apr 72; JCS 9073 to CSAF and CINCPAC, 052357Z Apr 72. (TS) WSAG Mtg, Minutes, 5 Apr 72, NSC Files.

attack carriers, and the transfer of four CONUS-based EB-66 aircraft to Thailand.[17]

(TS) With the President's decision on 8 April for expanded tactical air operations and a B-52 strike against North Vietnam,[18] still more augmentations were needed. Accordingly, Admrial Mooere ordered movement of another carrier, the USS SARATOGA, from the Atlantic to WESTPAC as soon as possible. In addition, he authorized CINCPAC and CINCSAC to surge to the "maximum supportable" B-52 sortie level above the authorized 1,800 per month rate "until stabilization of the current emergency." To achieve these rates, the Chairman authorized the immediate deployment of all available B-52D and 28 B-52G aircraft to Guam together with required supporting KC-135 aircraft.[19] Further actions to strengthen tactical air and naval gunfire operations included direction on 9 April to deploy one US Marine Corps F-4J fighter squadron from Hawaii to South Vietnam and orders on 10 April to sail a cruiser (USS NEWPORT NEWS) from the Atlantic and two destroyers (USS C.P. CECIL and USS M.C. FOX) from the Mediterranean, all to WESTPAC.[20]

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17. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 6 Apr 72; (~~TS~~-GP 1) DJSM-656-72 to CJCS, 6 Apr 72; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1210 to CINCPAC, 062208Z Apr 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1718-72 to SecDef, 6 Apr 72; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2002 to CSAF and CINCPAC, 071351Z Apr 72; CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72.

18. See above, pp. 356-357.

19. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 2864 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 080443Z Apr 72; JCS 3476 to CINCLANT and CINCPAC, 082235Z Apr 72; JCS 3485 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 082253Z Apr 72.

20. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 4008 to CINCPAC, 100056Z Apr 72; JCS 4390 to CINCLANT, 101330Z Apr 72. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 4922 to USCINCEUR, 102334Z Apr 72.

The Offensive Continues

(S) The US air attacks on North Vietnam in the early days of April did little to slow enemy momentum. In MR 1, the lull in Quang Tri Proince, which had begun on 4 April, ended abruptly five days later when the enemy attacked Fire Support Base PEDRO with indirect fire and ground assaults. Heavy fighting raged for two days and, although the North Vietnamese suffered heavy losses, they took several more South Vietnamese fire support bases. General Abrams visited MR 1 on 11 April, and the South Vietnamese Commander, Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam, assured him that the situation was in hand. Thereafter, in mid-April, the RVNAF did launch a counter-offensive in Quang Tri to retake lost bases and clear the area, but little progress resulted in ten days of action.

(TS) On 11 April, Admiral Moorer gave the Secretary of Defense an assessment of enemy capabilities and his thoughts on the length of the offensive. In MR 1, the enemy had not only committed some of his best units, but had assured them the initial advantage of a large cache of prepositioned supplies. In the months October 1971 through March 1972, the enemy had moved some 4,200 to 4,700 tons of ammunition and equipment into Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces and this buildup, Admiral Moorer believed, would allow the enemy to continue fighting at the present level for as long as two months. Despite these advantages, the enemy had not captured Dong Ha or Quang Tri City, and Admiral Moorer attributed this failure to the "determined ARVN resistance." He believed that the South Vietnamese forces in MR 1, supported by "massive naval and air strikes," would give a good account of themselves. Moreover,

as the weather improved, enemy positions and supply lines would "become increasingly vulnerable to air, naval, and ground interdiction."

(TS) In MR 2, Admiral Moorer thought that the enemy forces would probably break contact soon after the start of the rainy season unless they had taken a key target such as Pleiku or Kontum City. But the Chairman believed that the South Vietnamese forces in that area, with reinforcement and strong air support, should be able to contain the enemy without loss of a major population center. As for the situation in MR 3, Admiral Moorer said that the enemy's supply posture there would constrain his offensive operations. He expected the enemy to contine action in the northwestern provinces of MR 3 to tie down ARVN troops, but added that VC forces in that Region had "historically" been incapable of contesting ARVN units of equal size. In any event, the Chairman predicted that the southwest monsoon would force the enemy to withdraw to base areas in Cambodia by mid-summer.[21]

(S) Admrial Moorer's prediction of the ARVN's ability to halt the enemy in MR 1 proved optimistic. On 27 April 1972, the enemy opened the second phase of his drive in the northernmost military region, attacking Dong Ha and Quang Tri City just to the south. Dong Ha received both 130mm artillery and 122mm rocket bombardment as well as an infantry attack from the southwest, and the provincial capital came under attack by enemy armor and infantry from the northwest, west, and southwest. Dong Ha fell the following day, further increasing the threat to Quang Tri City where the South Vietnamese now regrouped their defenses.

21. (TS GP 1) CM-1735-72 to SecDef, 11 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72.

(C) The enemy pressed on supported by tanks and heavy artillery, and the South Vietnamese position deteriorated rapidly. On 30 April, the North Vietnamese interdicted Route 1, the major line of communication between Quang Tri City and Hue to the south, hampering resupply activities and during the night the besieged city received 4,500 rounds of artillery, rocket, and mortar fire. Enemy pressure mounted during the morning of 1 May and all US advisers were evacuated except for 18 who elected to stay with their Vietnamese units. Later that day, the Quang Tri defense collapsed and friendly forces withdrew southward.

(TS) In Washington, at a WSAG meeting on 1 May, Dr. Kissinger asked how the enemy could still move south despite the heavy US air strikes. Admiral Moorer replied the "we're attacking them 24 hours a day," but that air strikes alone would not halt the enemy advance. "The ARVN ground force," he said, "must stand and fight."[22]

(C) Still the South Vietnamese continued to fall back and the enemy showed no letup in his drive. On 2 May, Fire Support Base NANCY, the last friendly position in Quang Tri Province, came under attack and fell to the enemy. Meantime, after a period of moderate action during early April, heavy fighting had broken out by mid-month in Thua Thien, the province just below Quang Tri, and continued during the struggle for Quang Tri City and the days immediately thereafter. Now, not only was all of the northernmost province of South Vietnam in enemy hands, but the old imperial city of Hue, the capital of Thua Thien Province, was threatened.

22. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 1 May 72, NSC Files.

(C) To the south in MR 2, the full force of the enemy offensive was not felt until mid-April. Then on 14 April, the North Vietnamese overran Fire Support Base CHARLIE in Kontum Province and pressed the defending forces back to Dak To and Tan Canh. The enemy also successfully blocked Kontum Pass, cutting Route 14 between the cities of Kontum and Pleiku. A major enemy armor attack during the night of 23-24 April forced the evacuation of Dak To and Tan Canh, and the RVNAF regrouped and prepared for the defense of Kontum. Thereafter, during the remaining days of April and into early May, scattered enemy ground contacts and attacks-by-fire occurred, but the anticipated thrust against Kontum did not come.

(C) In mid-April, enemy pressure also increased in neighboring Binh Dinh Province, and two district capitals, Hoai An and Hoai Nhon, fell to the enemy in rapid succession. On 26 April, the enemy closed Bong Son Pass, thereby blocking Route 1 and isolating the northeastern corner of the province.

(C) In MR 3, following the fall of Loc Ninh on 7 April, the South Vietnamese forces braced for an assault on An Loc. It began on 13 April when the 9th VC Division launched artillery and ground attacks that became daily occurrences, but in this battle the enemy did not succeed. The RVNAF air assaulted three airborne battalions southeast of An Loc on 15 April and they fought their way into the city linking up with the defenders three days later. The enemy maintained his daily attacks, but could not dislodge the tenacious defenders. On 26 April, the ARVN 3d Airborne Brigade air-landed near Chon Than to the south of An Loc and began to move northward. The South Vietnamese airborne troops came within eight kilometers of the beleaguered town, but could not break the enemy siege.

The United States Expands Air Efforts Against North Vietnam

(~~TS~~) In response to the deteriorating combat situation, the United States continued to step up air and naval gunfire operations against North Vietnam during the remainder of April. At CINCPAC's request, Admiral Moorer obtained Secretary of Defense approval on 10 April for an expansion of the authority to attack enemy fighter aircraft below 20° north to include "any military aircraft" in the designated area. Now US pilots could attack helicopters and military transports in order to disrupt enemy resupply activities. In the following days, 11-12 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered CINCPAC to plan and then execute a B-52 strike against Ba Thuong Airfield below 20° north. Accordingly, on 13 April, 18 B-52s hit the target, interdicting the runway in 12 places.[23]

(~~TS~~) On 14 April, the United States widened the area for naval gunfire attack in North Vietnam from 19° to 20° north. To complement the expanded gunfire, the Secretary of Defense directed the movement of at least two ships above 20° north on 15 April. Although no actual bombardment was to occur, he wanted to signal North Vietnam that the United States was considering even larger gunfire attacks. The increased area for naval gunfire stimulated a requirement for more spotting assets, and Admrial Moorer

23. (~~TS~~ GP 1) CM-1724-72 to SecDef, 10 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (~~TS~~ GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 090127Z Apr 72, JCS IN 39303. (~~TS~~ GP 1) Msgs, JCS 4689 to CINCPAC, 101915Z Apr 72; JCS 4940 to CINCPAC, 110006Z Apr 72; JCS 6111 to CINCPAC, 120008Z Apr 72; JCS 6322 to CINCPAC, 120530Z Apr 72. (~~TS NOFORN~~) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 153.

subsequently approved a CINCPAC request to use US Marine Corps helicopters of the Amphibious Ready Group for this purpose.[24]

(TS) Simultaneously, even larger air attacks against North Vietnam were under consideration. As early as 5 April, CINCPAC had urged "a one-time maximum effort air strike" against carefully selected targets in Haiphong to demonstrate US resolve to counter the enemy offensive. The following day, 6 April, the Secretary of Defense asked Admiral Moorer about an existing contingency plan, FREEMONT GAMBLER, for a limited 24-hour air strike against targets in the Haiphong area. He was particularly concerned with damage to foreign shipping in the harbor and wondered whether the potential military value would justify the risks involved. Admiral Moorer hastened to assure him that the risk would be no greater than during the bombing in 1967 and 1968, adding that all precautions would be taken to prevent inadvertent damage to foregin vessels. The Secretary was apparently satisfied, and on 10 April 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC, in coordination with CINCSAC, to plan an intensified one-day strike with combined tactical air and B-52 resources of key logistics targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong area.[25]

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24. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Naval Activity in the Gulf of Tonkin," 14 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9317 to CINCPAC, 141739Z Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9724 to CINCPAC, 142256Z Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1420 to CINCPAC, 151619Z Apr 72.

25. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 050521Z Apr 72, JCS IN 31176. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Contingency Plans for Operations Against North Vietnam," 6 Apr 72; CM-1722-72 to SecDef, 7 Apr 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4413 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 101406Z Apr 72.

(~~TS~~) CINCPAC prepared the plan and the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed the field commanders to proceed with necessary preparations for execution on 16 April. Subsequently, however, COMUSMACV recommended a postponement until later in the month in order to give priority to the "critical" combat situation in South Vietnam. But, despite the plea from General Abrams, the strike was not delayed. "Very high level considerations," Admiarl Moorer told CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, dictated "a heavy air strike" against Hanoi and Haiphong during the period 15-I6 April; and he directed execution of the original plan using 18 B-52's and the "maximum number" of tactical aircraft available above those needed for immediate requirements of the land battle.[26]

(~~TS~~) The attack, nicknamed FREEDOM PORCH BRAVO, was carried out on 16 April. Navy A-6s struck SAM sites in the Haiphong area, B-52s bombed nearby petroleum storage facilities, and two more waves of tactical aircraft hit other targets in both Hanoi and Haiphong. Photo bomb damage assessment revealed heavy destruction. The United States lost one F-105 and one A-7 while five enemy MIGs, three in the air and two on the ground, were destroyed. During the attack, CINCPAC at JCS direction moved a cruiser to 20°40' north and bombarded shore gun emplacements on the Do Son Peninsula.[27]

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26. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 140642Z Apr 72, JCS IN 49209. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 8374 to CINCPAC, 132334Z Apr 72; JCS 9098 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 141422Z Apr 72; JCS 9723 to CINCPAC, 142256Z Apr 72.

27. (~~TS~~-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 153. (~~TS~~) Msg, JCS 1580 to CINCPAC, 152327Z Apr 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 161138Z Apr 72, JCS IN 53513.

(U) Almost immediately, the Soviet Union charged that four of its ships in Haiphong harbor had been damaged in the US air attack and demanded that the United States immediately adopt strict measures to prevent similar provocations in the future. The United States refused any blame for the "alleged" damage, but did pledge every effort to avoid damage to international shipping.[28]

(U) In Washington, on 17 April, Secretry of State William P. Rogers told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the United States would take "whatever action is necessary" to repel the invasion of South Vietnam. The bombing was justified, he said, to protect the 85,000 US troops still in Vietnam, to guarantee the continuing troop withdrawal program, and to give the South Vietnamese a chance to defend themselves. Appearing before the same committee the following day, Secretary Laird declared that the raids on Hanoi and Haiphong had been both effective and precise. All of North Vietnam, he told the Senators, would be subject to bombing as long as the offensive in the south lasted. He also indicated that the Administration was considering plans to seal off Haiphong harbor in order to stop military shipments.[29]

(~~TS~~) Two further US B-52 strikes against North Vietnamese targets followed in April. On 22 April and again on 24 April, combined B-52 and tactical air attacks, named FREIGHTER CAPTAIN and FREIGHTER CAPTAIN II, respectively, hit rail and road bridges,

28. Edward W. Knappman (ed.), South Vietnam, vol 7, U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia, 1972-1973, (Facts on File, Inc., New York, 1973) p. 57.
29. Ibid., pp. 58-59.

airfields, and transshipment points, locomotive shops, and petroleum targets in the Thanh Hoa area between 19° and 20° north. In anticipation of these strikes, additional operating authorities were granted. With Secretary of Defense approval, Admiral Moorer advised CINCPAC on 19 April that, during any US air missions in North Vietnam above 19° north, the following would be permitted: (1) use of aircraft and SAMs to attack any airborne enemy fighter aircraft anywhere in North Vietnam exclusive of the Chinese buffer zone; (2) employment of anti-radar missiles against GCI sites throughout North Vietnam.[30]

(~~TS~~) On 25 April, the United States pushed the limit for tactical air strikes in North Vietnam still further northward from 19° to 20° north to correspond with the authorized naval gunfire target area. The field commanders and Admiral Moorer had sought this change since 17 April, the latter explaining to the Secretary of Defense that the mountainous terrain of North Vietnam between 19° and 20° north made a natural bottleneck for roads and railroads and an especially lucrative bombing target. The Secretary approved on 25 April and appropriate instructions were dispatched to CINCPAC allowing tactical air strikes below 20° north. In a separate message dispatched at the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized

30. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 5651 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 192327Z Apr 72; JCS 5676 to CINCPAC, 200002Z Apr 72; JCS 8890 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 221545Z Apr 72; JCS 8905 to CINCPAC, 221624Z Apr 72; JCS 8969 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 221833Z Apr 72. (~~TS-NOFORN~~) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 154. (~~TS~~) CM-1752-72 to SecDef, 17 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (The CINCPAC History gave the strike on 24 April the name FREQUENT WINNER.)

employment of tactical air "in support of and in conjunction with NGFS in those areas where naval gunfire is authorized."[31]

(TS) That same day, 25 April, the Acting Chairman, Admiral Zumwalt, requested a further expansion of naval gunfire operations. The segment of coastline between 20° and 20°25' north was one of the most heavily defended areas in North Vietnam with 12 coastal defense gun sites, and the Acting Chairman wanted to attack those sites. Moreover, since tactical air strikes were now authorized in areas approved for naval gunfire, the requested expansion would automatically enlarge the area of operations for tactical air interdiction.[32]

(TS) Before approving this request, however, Mr. Laird asked several questions. What were the specific targets in this area and what would be the potential value of destroying those targets as opposed to ones further south? In addition, he wanted an estimate of the amount of tactical air support that would be diverted from other operations to support any in this enlarged area. On 26 April, Admiral Moorer listed for Mr. Laird 25 storage areas, 2 inland waterway transshipment points, 41 highway bridges, 6 rail bridges, 7 ferry sites, and 6 rail sidings, all within naval gunfire range of the North Vietnam coast between 20° and 20°25', as well as a segment of railroad and 6 secondary highways in the same area. He believed that the currently authorized tactical air and naval gunfire operations were causing significant buildup

31. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 171855Z Apr 72, JCS IN 55315. (TS-GP 1) CM-1764-72 to SecDef, 20 Apr 72; CM-1760-72 to SecDef, 24 Apr 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 2309 and 2313 to CINCPAC, 251459Z and 251504Z Apr 72

32. (TS-GP 1) CM-1763-72 to SecDef, 25 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72.

of logistic and support equipment in the area just above 20° north, thus warranting the requested authority. The proposed attacks, he continued, would be intermittent and would not require substantial diversion of tactical air resources. Apparently satisfied, the Secretary approved and Admiral Moorer passed the authority to the field. This directive referenced the previous approval for tactical air support in areas authorized for naval gunfire and sanctioned the conduct of naval gunfire to 20°25' north. Authority to use both naval gunfire and tactical air to 20°25' north was subsequently confirmed in an extension of air authorities at the end of the month.[33]

(U) On 26 April, President Nixon told the American people that US military actions would continue against North Vietnam until the invasion ended. In a televised address, he condemned the current offensive as unprovoked and a violation of both the 1954 Indochina Accords and the 1968 understanding with President Johnson. Recalling previous pledges to meet any enemy efforts to expand the war, he announced the continuation of air and naval attacks on North Vietnamese military targets. This decision, he said, was designed to protect remaining US troops in Vietnam, to permit the US withdrawal to proceed, and to prevent imposition of a communist regime on the South Vietnamese against their will.[34]

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33. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "FREEDOM TRAIN Operating Authorities," 25 Apr 72; CM-1787-72 to SecDef, 26 Apr 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3765 to CINCPAC, 262224Z Apr 72. Msg, JCS 6393 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 290041Z Apr 72.

34. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1972 (1974), pp. 550-554.

(TS) With critical battles developing in both MR 1 and MR 3 at the end of April, the United States directed its primary air effort away from North Vietnam for the moment to support ground operations in South Vietnam. A planned B-52 attack against Hanoi and Haiphong was not carried out, and on 29 April, Admiral Moorer directed CINCPAC "to lay on" the maximum number of air sorties available in a surge effort against targets directly supporting the land battle. He wanted a level to exceed 1,000 sorties per day with allocation of resources as specified by COMUSMACV.[35]

(TS) Another operating authority in North Vietnam was granted in April--the use of riot control agents. Admiral Moorer made an appropriate request to the Secretary on this matter on 14 April seeking use of agent CS for aircrew recovery in North Vietnam and Cambodia. The Secretary approved and Admiral Moorer passed on this approval to the field commanders on 15 April. Subsequently, on 27 April, Mr. Larid gave detailed guidance for the use of riot control agents throughout Southeast. Asia. He authorized their use in search and rescue operations and to aid in the recovery of friendly evadees and escapees in North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia as well as for crash site inspections and prisoner recovery in all these same areas except North Vietnam. He also approved riot control agents for ground operaations in South Vietnam and for RVNAF employment in ground intelligence and reconnaissance operations in Cambodia and Laos, in emergency situations only,

35. (TS-Gp 1) Msgs, JCS 8952 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 221753Z Apr 72; JCS 6412 to CINCPAC, 290047Z Apr 72.

at the discretion of COMUSMACV. He reserved for himself, however, on an individual case basis, decisions for use in prisoner recovery in North Vietnam and for ground operations in Cambodia and Laos.[36]

(TS) The various operating authorities granted during April to meet the enemy offensive extended only through the end of the month, and all standing Southeast Asia authorities expired on 1 May 1972 as well. On 13 April, Admiral Moorer had asked the Secretary of Defense to extend all authorities, both standing and temporary, through October 1972 and had also proposed certain additional authorities for expanded air action against North Vietnam. Most of those in the latter category were subsequently approved on a case-by-case basis during the remainder of April as already described above. On 28 April Secretary Laird extended all the standing Southeast Asia authorities for a period through 1 November 1972; the temporary ones related to the current offensive, he continued only until 1 June. He also approved the following additional authorities through May: (1) use of antiradiation missiles against primary ground control intercept (GCI) sites in North Vietnam outside of Route Package 6 (the Hanoi-Haiphong area) whenever MIGs were airborne and indicating "hostile intent"; (2) employment of US fixed and rotary wing aircraft to provide logistic, trooplift, and medical evacuation support for RVNAF operations in areas along the South Vietnam border

36. (TS-GP 1) CM-1750-72 to SecDef, 14 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1477 to CINCPAC, 151842Z Apr 72. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Use of Riot Control Agents in SEAsia," 26 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72.

with Laos and Cambodia; (3) use of B-52 aircraft, in the Demilitarized Zone above the Provisional Military Demarcation Line as well as implanting of sensors throughout the Zone.[37]

(~~TS~~) One further authority in North Vietnam was granted before the end of April. Existing drone intelligence operations over North Vietnam had not produced the necessary coverage for the field commanders, and on 16 April, COMUSMACV had requested authority for manned tactical reconnaissance above 19° north to cover objectives in strike areas. Both CINCPAC and Admiral Moorer supported this request, but Secretary Laird requested further justification. Admiral Moorer prvided it, and the Secretary raised the northern limit for manned tactical reconnaissance in North Vietnam to 20°25' north on 29 April 1972. At this time, the Secretary requested still further information on these reconnaissance flights and Admiral Moorer furnished it a week later.[38]

(~~TS~~) The growing US air actions against North Vietnam in the latter part of April necessitated further augmentation of US Air Forces in Southeast Asia.

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37. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1742-72 to SecDef, 13 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "SEAsia Operating Authorities," 28 Apr 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6393 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 290041Z Apr 72.

38. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 160915Z Apr 72, JCS IN 53749; CINCPAC to JCS, 161716Z Apr 72, JCS IN 53754. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1783-72 to SecDef, 25 Apr 72; CM-1818-72 to SecDef, 6 May 72; CJCS CM Chron File. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "Manned Tactical Reconnaissance," 24 Apr 72 and 29 Apr 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). (There are two SecDef memos, "Manned Tactical Reconnaissance," both dated 29 Apr 72 and both in JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). In one, SecDef raised the limit for the reconnaissance and in the other he requested further information.)

Following the attack on Hanoi and Haiphong on 16 April, the President decided additional tactical air support was in order. Accordingly, on 25 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directred the immediate deployment of two USAF F-4 squadrons (36 aircraft and 836 squadron and ground support personnel) from CONUS to Thailand for a period of 90 days. This deployment increased Southeast Asia resources by 1,080 sorties per month. The continuing air operations, together with resulting battle damage to US aircraft, strained CINCPAC's C-130 airlift capability and he requested additional aircraft. In response, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the Commander, US Readiness Command (USCINCRED), on 28 April to loan CINCPAC 10 C-130E aircraft to ease his problems. The following day, 29 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff with WSAG approval extended all the augmentations, air and naval, through 1 June 1972.[39]

Public Reaction in the United States

(U) Public dissent in the United States, which had been relatively quiet during the preceding winter and early spring, was rekindled by the renewed US air attacks against North Vietnam in April. In the Congress, leading Democrats immediately charged President Nixon with "a dangerous and reckless reescalation" of the war. The offensive, they claimed, was proof of the failure of Vietnamization and they called for an immediate renewal of negotiations to end the war. On

39. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1755-72 to SecDef, 18 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 2657 to CSAF, CINCPAC, and USCINCRED, 252058Z Apr 72; JCS 5110 to USCINCRED and CINCPAC, 280019Z Apr 72; JCS 7058 to CINCPAC, CINCLANT, USCINCRED, and CINCSAC, 291655Z Apr 72. (~~TS~~) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 24 Apr 72, NSC Files.

17 April, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted a cutoff of funds for all US combat operations in Vietnam subject only to agreement for the release of US prisoners of war. The House Democratic Caucus followed suit three days later with a resolution calling for a definite date for the end of US military involvement in Indochina. Republicans in the Congress, generally, rallied to the suport of the President. Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona defended the bombing and called for strike of "every conceivable supply target." in North Vietnam. The Arizona Senator also introduced a resolution condemning the North Vietnamese as aggressors and endorsing the current US policies in Vietnam, but the Senate did not accept it.[40]

(U) The air strikes on North Vietnam also stirred public demonstrations. In mid-April, protests broke out on college and university campuses across the country and continued throughout the remainder of the month. Some were peaceful; others turned violent, requiring police dispersal and the use of tear gas. In New York, anti-war demonstrators marched in the rain on 22 April to protest the renewed bombing. Estimates of the number of participants ranged form 30,000 to 100,000, but no violence marred the day. A Gallup poll on the question of the bombing, released on 25 April, revealed somewhat ambivalent findings. Forty-seven percent supported the bombing, forty-four opposed, and nine percent remained undecided. But the poll also showed seventy-one percent in favor of a cutoff of funds for US operations in Vietnam after 31 December 1972.[41]

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40. Kappman, South Vietnam, pp. 59-60. NY Times, 20 Apr 72, 1.

41. NY Times, 18 Apr 72, 20; 19 Apr 72, 1; 22 Apr 72, 1; 23 Apr 72, 1; 26 Apr 72, 1, and 9; 29 Apr 72, 14.

The United States Considers Further Action

(U) At the beginning of May 1972, the war in Vietnam was going badly for both the United States and the South Vietnamese. The enemy now occupied the entire northernmost province of South Vietnam and was threatening Hue as well as provincial capitals in both MR 2 and MR 3. The deteriorating combat situation threatened the Vietnamization, pacification, and US troop withdrawal programs and the negotiations remained at a complete impasse. Clearly, the United States needed some bold stroke to turn the situation around, not only to blunt the North Vietnamese offensive, but to renew the confidence of the South Vietnamese as well.

(TS) President Nixon and his advisers had a number of possibilities under consideration in the early days of May. The use of US ground forces was not one of these, but a further expansion of US air attacks against North Vietnam was. Others included the landing of ARVN and VNMC forces in the North Vietnam panhandle and an amphibious feint off MR 1. Yet another possibility was action to stem the flow of war materiel that arrived in North Vietnam by sea. To accomplish this purpose, plans were readied for a blockade of the entire North Vietnamese coast and for various actions to block the water approaches to Haiphong, including mining operations.[42]

(TS) All of these options were reviewed in almost daily meetings of the Washington Special Actions Group. The choice was soon narrowed to expanded air

42. (TS) DJSM-898-72 to CJCS, 3 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 8659 to CINCPAC, 261257Z Apr 72; JCS 3298 to CINCPAC, 050024Z May 72. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 25 Apr 72, NSC Files.

operations and mining of North Vietnamese waters. On 2 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC and CINCSAC to plan an air strike (FRAME GLORY) against key logistic targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas on 6 and 7 May, using between 18 and 30 B-52s each day combined with tactical air strikes. Subsequently, however, this attack was cancelled on 4 May.[43]

(~~TS~~) Meantime, photo reconnaissance had located a large concentration of armor approximately 15 nautical miles northwest of Hanoi, and on 5 May, Admiral Moorer secured Secretary of Defense approval for a tactical air strike (FRESH BATH) of this target. In view of the critical situation in MR 1 and the large role enemy armor had played in the offensive, Admiral Moorer was particularly anxious to eliminate this tank collection. The Secretary approved and Admiral Moorer implemented the decision, ordering execution of the strike on 8 May. But the following day, 6 May, Admiral Moorer modified this instruction, directing a one-time extension of the FREEDOM TRAIN tactical air strikes above 20°25' north. Before these strikes could be carried out, however, the President decided upon an air interdiction program throughout North Vietnam and all air attacks were consolidated in this expanded operation.[44]

(~~TS~~) At this same time, consideration of mining of North Vietnam had moved forward. The field commanders had recommended such an option from the very beginning of the offensive. As early as 5 April,

43. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 9692 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 022232Z May 72; JCS 2860 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 041738Z May 72.

44. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 4681 to CINCPAC, 060014Z May 72; JCS 5524 to CINCPAC, 061823Z May 72.

CINCPAC advocated aerial mining as "the most direct, effective, and economical means available to neutralize enemy reliance upon seaborne imports." A plan for such action was already "on the shelf," he had told Admiral Moorer, and could be executed within 72 hours of approval. Again on 23 April, CINCPAC had recommended aerial mining of Haiphong harbor, the entry point for 80 percent of all North Vietnamese supplies.[45]

(~~TS~~) Admiral Moorer presented a mining proposal to the WSAG on 4 May and serious consideration ensued. Details of execution, timing, and announcement were discussed, and on 6 May the President tentatively approved the mining. Admiral Moorer immediately alerted CINCPAC, telling him to designate forces and assemble the materials for an aerial mining campaign as provided in his previously recommended plan. The mine laying would begin at 0900 on 9 May, Vietnam time, with Haiphong harbor to be seeded to become active in 72 hours and with sterilization within 180 days. Seeding would then proceed at Hon Gai and Cam Pha and other coastal areas including Dong Hoi, Quang Khe, Vinh, and Thanh Hoa. The Chairman authorized air and naval gunfire in the Haiphong area to suppress or divert threats to the mining aircraft.[46]

(~~TS~~) The President and his advisers considered the mining option one last time at a National Security

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45. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 050522Z Apr 73, JCS IN 31161; CINCPAC to CJCS, 230750Z Apr 72, JCS IN 67763.

46. (~~C~~-EX) USN Mine Warfare Project Office, The Mining of North Vietnam, 8 May 1972 to 14 January 1973, 30 Jan 75, pp. 2-3, 2-21. (Hereinafter cited as The Mining of NVN.) (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5451 to CINCPAC, 061608Z May 72. (~~TS~~) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 4 May 72, NSC Files.

Council meeting on 8 May. Admiral Moorer again presented the case and the President decided to proceed with the operation. Accordingly, Admiral Moorer issued the necessary orders to the field. He directed CINCPAC to lay the first mine in the Haiphong channel at 0900, Saigon time, as previously planned. Elaborate precautions would be taken to prevent any ship from unknowingly entering the mined areas, and US ships on the "notification line" would use all appropriate means to warn approaching vessels of the US action.[47]

(~~TS~~) On 8 May 1972, the President also decided to launch an air campaign against supply and transportation targets throughout North Vietnam in a further effort to restrict the enemy's ability to wage war in the south. Thus, several hours after despatch of the initial directive for the mining, Admiral Moorer ordered the air interdiction program, authorizing offensive air operations throughout North Vietnam except for a buffer zone along the Chinese border. The mining and air campaigns were named POCKET MONEY and LINEBACKER, respectively, and in anticipation of these actions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff increased the readiness of US forces worldwide to DEFCON 4. (CINCPAC was already at DEFCON 3 and CINCSAC at DEFCON 4.)[48]

(U) President Nixon announced these expanded actions on the evening of 8 May as US aircraft were actually

47. (~~C~~-EX) The Mining of NVN, p. 2-22. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 6992 and JCS 7453 to CINCPAC, 081839Z and 090325Z May 72.

48. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7421 to CINCPAC, 090247Z May 72; (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7309 to AIG 939, 090043Z May 72; (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7315 to all Unified/Specified Commanders, 090053Z May 72. (US forces worldwide returned to previous DEFCONs on 1 Jul 72; see (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to Pres., 1 Jul 72, CJCS SecDef Memo File.)

laying the mines in North Vietnamese waters where it was already the next morning. The United States really had no choice, he explained to the American people in a televised address. To stop the fighting and the killing, North Vietnam must be denied the weapons and supplies needed to continue the aggression. Therefore, he said:

> I have ordered the following measures which are being implemented as I am speaking to you.
>
> All entrances to North Vietnamese ports will be mined to prevent access to these ports and North Vietnamese naval operations from these ports. United States forces have been directed to take appropriate measures within the internal and claimed territorial waters of North Vietnam to interdict delivery of any supplies. Rails and all other communications will be cut off to the maximum extent possible. Air and naval strikes against military targets in North Vietnam will continue.
>
> These actions are not directed against any other nation. Countries with ships presently in North Vietnamese ports have already been notified that their ships will have three daylight periods to leave in safety. After that time, the mines will become active and any ships attempting to leave or enter these ports will do so at their own risk.

These actions would cease, the President said, when all US prisoners were returned and there was an internationally supervised cease-fire throughout Indochina.[49]

49. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, p. 585.

(TS) To exploit the possible psychological impact of his announcement, President Nixon also decided on a leaflet campaign directed toward North Vietnamese armed forces in both North and South Vietnam. In consideration of a leaflet effort several weeks earlier, CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had favored the idea while the US Embassy in Saigon was opposed, and no action resulted. Now, on 8 May, the President approved a saturation campaign. He wanted to bring to the attention of the North Vietnamese forces his decision on the mining and the "strangling effect" it would have on their resupply. He also hoped to alert the North Vietnamese troops to the continuing US offer for a cease-fire. Accordingly, the Department of State issued appropriate instructions to the Embassy in Saigon on 8 May. The Joint Chiefs of Staff passed the necessary order to CINCPAC based on the same guidance, and operations began on 10 May with 200,000 leaflets dropped at An Loc.[50]

POCKET MONEY

(TS) During a two minute period on the morning of 9 May, North Vietnam time, US aircraft plannted 36 MK-52 mines in the Haiphong ship channel. CINCPAC moved two carriers, two guided missile cruisers, and ten "destroyer types" to protect the mining aircraft, and 150 sorties, in addition to the actual mining

50. (TS-GP 1) CM-1774-72 to SecDef, 24 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (S-GP 3) Paper prepared for CJCS WSAG Mtg Bk, "Special Leaflet Campaign Against NVA Forces in RVN and NVN (S)," 10 May 72, WSAG Briefing Bk for 11 May 72 Mtg; (S) TP Prepared by J-3 for CJCS WSAG Briefing Bk, 12 May 72; J-5 Files. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7459 to CINCPAC, 090328Z May 72.

sorties, were flown to provide fighter cover, diversionary strikes, and ECM protection and to attack SAM sites. The North Vietnamese responded with MIG and SAM attacks and antiaircraft fire, but no US planes were lost; US pilots, however, downed one MIG. Subsequently, on 11 May 1972, US aircraft laid mines in the ports of Thanh Hoa, Dong Hoi, Vinh, Hon Gai, Quang Khe, and Cam Pha, effectively cutting off all seaborne supply to North Vietnam. In all, about 1,100 mines were dropped.[51]

(C) The mines in the Haiphong channel did not become active for 72 hours after emplacement in order to allow ships in the harbor a chance to depart. Nine vessels did so and another 27 from the Soviet Union, China, Hong Kong, Poland, Somalia, and Cuba remained in port and were prevented from leaving thereafter. Approximately 25 ships bound for North Vietnam at the time of the initial mining made no attempt to reach port.[52]

(TS) There were reports of US ordnance hitting third country shipping in North Vietnamese waters and the Soviet Union officially protested that two of its ships, the tanker PEVEK and the merchant ship GRISHA AKOPYAN, had been damaged on 9 May. The Secretary of Defense was especially sensitive on this matter and asked Admiral Moorer to take "extraordinary measures" to reduce the probability of hitting foreign vessels in North Vietnamese waters. The Chairman doubted that the United States had hit the PEVEK although he did acknowledge to the Secretary a possibility that US ordnance might have struck the GRISHA AKOPYAN. He thought it

51. (C-EX) The Mining of NVN, pp. 3-3 - 3-19. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, pp. 188-189. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 12 May 72, NSC Files.

52. (C-EX) The Mining of NVN, p. 3-19. Kappman, South Vietnam, p. 82.

likely, however, that the damage had been caused by North Vietnamese antiaircraft fire. In any event, he passed on an appropriate caution to the field on 10 May. Since President Nixon was planning a trip to the Soviet Union on 20 May, Admiral Moorer again cautioned CINCPAC about possible POCKET MONEY damage to third country shipping. "I would like to emphasize once again," he told the commander on 11 May, "the necessity to ensure that no third country ships are damaged in operations conducted in the immediate future." He did not want efforts to counter North Vietnamese mine clearing activities in the Haiphong channel if there was a chance of hitting any merchant ships. Still the Chairman did not intend to relax the closing of the North Vietnamese ports. "Under no, repeat no, circumstances," he continued, "must we permit further use of [the Haiphong] channel for delivery of supplies to North Vietnam." In the event of any indcation that the channel was open, Admiral Moorer instructed CINCPAC to notify the Joint Chiefs of Staff and prepare for reseeding operations. CINCPAC was to prepare an appropriate reseeding plan and maintain one carrier "on the line" with mining capability.[53]

(TS) Shortly after the initiation of POCKET MONEY, Admiral Moorer obtained Secretary of Defense approval of two CINCPAC requests for added authorities for the mining activities. On 13 May, the Chairman

53. (S-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Foreign Shipping in North Vietnamese Waters," 10 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 May 72, JMF 546 (CY 1972). (S) CM-1834-72 to SecDef, 11 May 72; CM-1870-72 to SecDef, 20 May 72; CJCS CM Chron File. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 9511 to CINCPAC, 101703Z May 72; JCS 2233 to CINCPAC, 120009Z May 72; JCS 2237 to CINCPAC, 120010Z May 72. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 9 May 72, NSC Files.

authorized CINCPAC to attack North Vietnamese ships or aircraft either engaged in or configured for mine clearance. In view of the Secretary's sensitivity about damage to third country shipping, Admiral Moorer told CINCPAC that this authority did not permit action against vessels of any nation other than North Vietnam. Later, on 17 May 1972, Admiral Moorer directed CINCPAC to proceed with his plan to mine segment 2100 in the approaches to Haiphong harbor as an additional backup to the already mined segments.[54]

(TS) The mining was a total success and no shipping entered or departed Haiphong after 11 May. There was, of course, always the possibility that a political settlement would require the removal of the mines. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had prepared for such an eventuality, directing CINCPAC on 9 May 1972 to develop an outline plan for sweeping the mines and to be ready to assemble appropriate assets for clearing operations.[55]

LINEBACKER

(TS) In the announcement of the mining of North Vietnamese ports on 8 May, President Nixon also stated that the United States would continue air and naval strikes to cut rail and all other communications to interdict the delivery of supplies. In accordance with

54. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 100312Z May 72, JCS IN 11271. (TS-GP 1) CM-1832-72 to SecDef, 11 May 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "SEAsia Operating Authorities," 13 May 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4545 to CINCPAC, 132151Z May 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 140537Z May 72, JCS IN 20205. (TS-GP 1) CM-1847-72 to SecDef, 17 May 72 (has DepSecDef initialed "O.K."), CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8742 to CINCPAC, 172240Z May 72.

55. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 189. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8588 to CINCPAC, 092315Z May 72.

this decision, Admiral Moorer directed CINCPAC the same evening to begin an air campaign against the enemy transportation and supply distribution system with initial strikes on 10 May, Vietnam time. The Chairman's authorization provided for offensive air operations in all of North Vietnam except in a buffer zone, varying from 25 to 30 nautical miles, along the Chinese border.[56]

(~~TS~~) Thirty-two US strike and eighty-eight supporting aircraft conducted the first attack of the new campaign at 100300Z May, hitting railroad and highway bridges and railroad yards. Photo reconnaissance revealed heavy damage and two US F-4s were lost. This first strike was conducted under the name ROLLING THUNDER ALPHA, but immediately thereafter the designation for the new air campaign was changed to LINEBACKER.[57]

(~~TS~~) Even before execution of the first strike, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directd CINCPAC to continue tactical air and naval gunfire interdiction efforts, augmented by B-52 sorties as necessary. The objective was to destroy and disrupt enemy petroleum and transportation resources and lines of communication in North Vietnam, and priority targets included POL storage and pumping stations; railways, roads, and associated bridges and tunnels; means of transportation (trucks, rolling stock, and watercraft); repair facilities for maintaining them; war supplies and support materials; ports; and transshipment points. A long list of specific targets was supplied and the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized addition of fixed transportation and interdiction targets at CINCPAC's discretion, except

56. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7421 to CINCPAC, 090247Z May 72.

57. (~~TS~~-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, p. B-8.

for those within a 10-nautical mile radius of Hanoi and Haiphong or in the Chinese buffer zone. Armed reconnaissance was also authorized against choke points and other time-sensitive transportation and interdiction targets that developed outside the restricted areas. Initial efforts were to concentrate on targets in the area between the Chinese buffer zone and Hanoi, in areas around Hanoi and Haiphong, and on lines of communication leading from the Hanoi-Haiphong area south. To enhance the interdiction even further Admiral Moorer secured Secretary of Defense approval to use aerial denial munitions, including MK-36 destructors. These munitions were already authorized for POCKET MONEY operations, and now they could be employed against appropriate land targets throughout North Vietnam below the Chinese buffer zone as well as in inland and coastal waters. As Admiral Moorer explained to the Secretary of Defense, LINEBACKER would complement the POCKET MONEY operations. In the near term, he expected it to disrupt the North Vietnamese supply and distribution system while over the longer term it should limit the enemy's ability to maintain an adequate logistic network, ultimately reducing his war-making capacity and lowering the level of combat.[58]

(S) After the initial strike, LINEBACKER missions were planned and carried out daily as weather permitted. Usually the strike missions consisted of 8 to 12 bombers accompanied by appropriate fighter and support aircraft. The North Vietnamese responded to

58. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 8619 to CINCPAC, 092356Z May 72; JCS 8627 to CINCPAC, 100111Z May 72. (TS-GP 1) CM-1778-72 to SecDef, 9 May 72; CM-1848-72 to SecDef, 15 May 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72.

the US air attacks with all the resources at their command, launching MIGs and firing SAMs. During May, North Vietnam fired 429 SAMs, downing 6 US aircraft.[59]

~~(TS)~~ Although the original LINEBACKER target list was extensive, many targets remained exempt from attack. Included were numerous targets within 10-mile radius control circles surrounding Hanoi and Haiphong and in the buffer zone along the Chinese border as well as dams, dikes, and locks. Almost from the beginning of the campaign COMUSMACV and CINCPAC pressed for permission to hit various of these restricted sites. Responding to requests from the field commanders, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 16 May authorized attack of several railroad bridges and tunnels in the Chinese buffer zone, directing maximum caution to avoid overflight of Chinese territory, and additional targets in the buffer zone were approved on 23 May. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also removed a large number of fixed targets within the Hanoi and Haiphong radiuses from the restricted category on 16 May. In a related action, they prohibited all air strikes within a 10-nautical mile radius of Hanoi during the period 21 May through 1 June and within a 5-nautical mile radius for the succeeding period 2 through 5 June in order to avoid any political repercussions during the President's visit to Europe and the Soviet Union. Meantime, on 12 May, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations had suggested to Admiral Moorer that the interdiction effort could be "significantly" enhanced by attacking all North Vietnamese irrigation, flood control, and waterway system targets to flood LOCs, thereby contributing to the interdiction campaign. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not act on

59. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) pp. B-8 - B-9.

this proposal, however, and dams, dikes, and locks remained in the restricted category.[60]

Reaction to POCKET MONEY and LINEBACKER

(U) President Nixon's decision for the mining and bombing of North Vietnamese territory and waters brought a loud public outcry. Reaction was immediate both in the United States and around the world. The Soviet Union on 11 May described the US actions as "fraught with serious consequences for international peace and security." The Soviets did not, however, cancel President Nixon's impending trip to Moscow planned for later in May. The official news agency of the People's Republic of China called the US action a "dangerous move" and "flagrant provocation against the people of Vietnam and the world over." The communist countries of Eastern Europe echoed the sentiments of the Soviet Union and China, and both France and Japan deplored the latest actions by the United States.[61]

(U) At home, in the United States, an intense wave of protests followed the President's announcement on 8 May. Mass marches, silent vigils, and traffic blocking sit-ins erupted on campuses and in major cities on 9 May and continued without interruption for the next several days. While most began as peaceful demonstrations, some turned into violent confrontations with police. Serious incidents occurred in Minneapolis,

60. (~~TS~~ Msgs, JCS 6177 to CINCPAC, 152340Z May 72; JCS 7006 to CINCPAC, 161617Z May 72; JCS 7011 to CINCPAC, 161625Z May 72; JCS 6029 to CINCPAC, 232017Z May 72. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, Vice CNO to CJCS, "NVN Interdiction Planning (U)," 12 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72.

61. Kappman, South Vietnam, pp. 84-86.

Minnesota; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Boulder, Colorado; Madison, Wisconsin; Gainesville, Florida; and Berkeley and San Jose, California. Protests of varying sizes, accompanied by violence and arrests, also took place in New York, Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco.[62]

(U) In Washington, protesters rallied at the Capitol on 11 May, causing the building to be closed to the public. A few days later, during the early morning of 19 May, an explosion damaged the Pentagon, though no one was injured. Mass demonstrations followed for several days and police clashed with demonstrators at the Capitol and the Pentagon. In all, more than 400 persons were arrested.[63]

(U) As might have been expected, reaction was also immediate in the Congress. For the most part, the Republicans praised the President's leadership and determination while Democrats repeated the terms "reckless," "dangerous," and "desperate" in commenting on the 8 May announcement. Senators Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern, and Edmund Muskie, all aspiring to the Democratic presidential nomination, were quick to criticize the President's decision. The Senate Democratic Caucus condemned the "escalation of the war in Vietnam" on 9 May by a vote of 29 to 14. The caucus also endorsed the cutoff of funds for Vietnam operations approved the month before by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.[64] The following day, 10 May,

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62. Kappman, South Vietnam, pp. 89-91. NY Times, 10 May 72, 22; 11 May 72, 1 and 7; 12 May 72, 21.
63. Kappman, South Vietnam, pp. 98-99. NY Times, 20 May 72, 1; 25 May 72, 20.
64. See above p. 376.

the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted a measure setting 1 October as the final date for the withdrawal of all US ground and air forces from Indochina subject only to prior release of US prisoners. A few days later, however, the Senate accepted an Administration proposal to add a clause to the proposed "end of the war" legislation providing that the withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam should be conditional upon "an internationally supervised cease-fire."[65]

(U) This victory over the anti-war forces in the Senate did not end the skirmishing between the Congress and the Nixon Administration over the bombing of North Vietnam. On 23 May the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved a military aid program that included an end-the-war amendment sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield. But later, on 3 July, the House Foreign Affairs Committee defeated a bill calling for US withdrawal from Indochina by 1 October 1972 and substituted a resolution backing the withdrawal terms offered by President Nixon. Subsequently, the full House also rejected another end-the-war amendment offered to a military procurement bill.[66]

Renewed Authorities and Further Augmentations

~~(TS)~~ By the end of May, POCKET MONEY had effectively closed Haiphong harbor and LINEBACKER had simultaneously interdicted the rail lines leading from China to Hanoi and railroads to the south had been cut as well. Now the enemy had to take to the highways to receive and move his supplies, making roads, bridges, petroleum

65. NY Times, 9 May 72, 1; 10 May 72, 19; and 17 May 72, 16.
66. Kappman, South Vietnam, pp. 103, 108, 111. NY Times, 14 June 72, 1; 28 June 72, 1.

pipelines, and fuel storage areas prime targets. Accordingly, on 26 May 1972, Admiral Moorer advised CINCPAC that it was "increasingly important to interdict these highway nets, as well as [to] strike the rolling stock, transshipment points and storage areas associated therewith." He wanted a coordinated program developed to insure that all suitable road net targets were struck and that the highway system north of Hanoi and Haiphong was "covered thoroughly with armed reconnaissance against fleeting targets."[67]

(~~TS~~) All the temporary air and naval operating authorities granted to meet the enemy offensive would expire on 1 June, and on 26 May Admiral Moorer requested the Secretary of Defense to extend these authorities for the duration of the "on-going" campaign against North Vietnam. The Chairman also sought certain revisions required by the expansion of operations during May. He wanted sanction of various support operations for LINEBACKER, including weather reconnaissance, flak and SAM suppression, flare, escort, reconnaissance before and after strikes, ECM and ELINT support, search and rescue, air refueling, and airborne early warning. He also requested approval to implant sensors in North Vietnam below the Chinese buffer zone in order to detect enemy activity and develop targets.[68]

(~~TS~~) Before granting the Chairman's request for a blanket extension the Secretary wanted a codification of all other temporary authorities, including those for LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY which had no specific

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67. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) p. B-9. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8685 to CINCPAC, 260019Z May 72.

68. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1879-72 to SecDef, 26 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72.

~~TOP SECRET~~

expiration dates, in order to facilitate his review. In the interim, however, he did extend all the temporary authorities until 1 July 1972. He added a proviso that there be no attack of helicopters and transports in North Vietnam because of possible consequences of mistakenly firing on third country or ICC aircraft. The Joint Chiefs of Staff passed on this extension to the field commanders on the same day, 1 June.[69]

(U) The LINEBACKER operations required additional air resources and the United States carried out more augmentations in May 1972. In all of these actions, a procedure was followed whereby the Chairman requested approval, the Secretary approved, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff then issued the necessary directive to the commanders involved.

(TS) Even before the initiation of LINEBACKR, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 3 May ordered the deployment of the 49th Tactical Fighter Wing, consisting of four F-4 Squadrons (72 aircraft and approximately 4,300 personnel) together with 16 KC-135 aircraft and approximately 583 additional personnel, from Europe to Thailand. This transfer necessitated the reopening of Takhli Air Base in Thailand on an austere basis with a capability to support tactical operations for a period of 90 days.[70]

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69. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Operating Authorities," 1 Jun 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6450 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 011705Z Jun 72.

70. (TS-GP 1) CM-1811-72 to SecDef, 3 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Additional USAF F-4 Deployments," 3 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1956 to USCINCEUR, USCINCRED, CINCPAC, CINCSAC, and CSAF, 032346Z May 72.

(S) Once LINEBACKER began, additional requirements arose. Accordingly, on 11 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered USCINCRED to deploy two C-130E squadrons (32 aircraft) to the Pacific Command to alleviate an airlift deficiency there.[71] Then on 15 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to deploy two US Marine Corps A-4 squadrons with necessary logistics and support personnel from Japan to Bien Hoa in South Vietnam.[72] Next on 20 May, they ordered the deployment of 7 B-52G aircraft from CONUS to Guam with additional KC-135 aircraft as required,[73] and three days later they directed deployment of another increment of 66 B-52G aircraft, including eight currently enroute, from CONUS to Guam. Thirty-two were to be moved immediately with the remaining ones to follow as soon as parking stubs could be made ready at Anderson Air Force Base in Guam.[74]

(TS) The movement of these 66 B-52s to Guam completed the US force augmentations to meet the enemy offensive. As indicated in the table below, these step-by-step increases more than doubled the US capacity to strike the enemy:

71. (S-GP 4) CM-1824-72 to SecDef, 10 May 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2142 to USCINCRED, CINCPAC and CSAF, 112216Z May 72.

72. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 6206 to CINCPAC, 160022Z May 72.

73. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3423 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 210004Z May 72.

74. (S-GP 1) CM-1872-72 to SecDef, 22 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5677 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 231422Z May 72.

	1 Jan 72	24 May 72	% Increase
TACAIR			
Land-based	212	480	126
Sea-based	121	334	176
B-52s	42	148*	252
KC-135s	64	129	102
Other Aircraft	110	149	35
Naval Gunfire Ships	16	54	238[75]

*This figure of 148 included only 8 of the 66 B-52G aircraft ordered deployed on 23 May; the remaining 58 had yet to arrive in Southeast Asia and their subsequent arrival raised the total B-52 strength to 206.

(TS) In the meantime, the question of replacement of carriers in the Western Pacific had arisen. In early April, the United States had increased the carriers on line in the Western Pacific from three to six to provide additional air support in Vietnam. By late May, when it was apparent that tactical air would be needed at current levels for some time to come, CINCPAC pointed out that two of the carriers were "critically" overdue for rotation and wanted to relieve them with one carrier from the US west coast and another from the Atlantic. Admiral Moorer requested Secretary of Defense approval on 27 May, noting, however, that movement of the carrier from the Atlantic would prevent the United States from maintaining its commitment of six carriers available for NATO within 48 hours. Nevertheless, the Secretary approved, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the necessary instructions. The USS ORISKANY moved from the west coast to

75. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/813-6, 24 May 72, JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 2.

relieve the USS CONSTELLATION and the USS AMERICA from the east coast replaced the USS CORAL SEA, maintaining six carriers on line to support the Vietnam operations.[76] On 27 May, with Secretary of Defense approval, the JCS continued all the temporary Southeast Asia air and naval augmentations until 30 June 1972.[77]

(S) The augmentations carried out during April and May to meet the enemy offensive were, of course, expensive both in terms of funding and manpower, and the Secretary of Defense was anxious to weigh the operational advantages against the costs. As early as 26 April, Mr. Laird had requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assess any further force augmentations from the standpoint of budgetary, logistical, manpower, and operational impacts. While not questioning the "operational and political benefits," he said, "the reality of resource limitations and costs . . . remains."[78]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense discussed this matter on 1 May, but Mr. Laird was not entirely satisfied. He came away from the meeting, he told Admiral Moorer on 3 May, with the impression that "we still had considerable homework to do in delineating and assessing the full impact of the recent force augmentations." He again asked for an assessment of this matter. He also wanted a plan for retaining the augmented air and naval forces as well

76. (TS-GP 1) CM-1883-72 to SecDef, 27 May 72 (Sec Def approval indicated on draft msg attached to CM), CJCS File 323.3 CINCPAC. (S-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 1873 to CINCPAC, 271630Z May 72; JCS 1878 to CINCLANT, 271634Z May 72. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History 1972, p. 195.

77. (TS-GP 1) CM-1874-72 to SecDef, 24 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1837 to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, CINCLANT, and USCINCRED, 271556Z May 72.

78. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef, to CJCS, 26 Apr 72, Att to JCS 2472/813, 26 Apr 72, JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 1.

as measures, and associated impacts, to assure sortie and gunfire levels that could be supported without constraints.[79]

(TS) On 10 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary a US Force Augmentation Plan for Southeast Asia. The current air and naval augmentation forces together with the associated air sortie and gunfire levels could be maintained, they said, with only minor problems for a six-month period from April through September (actually 179 days--the "full TDY period."). Maintenance of these forces and levels would, however, cause a significant impact on vital programs and capabilities outside Southeast Asia and should the tempo of operations increase or be prolonged beyond the six-month period the seriousness of this operational degradation would grow progressively worse. Moreover, drawdown of various munitions and equipment was restricting the US ability to respond to situations in the NATO area and elsewhere.[80]

(C) Five days later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented Mr. Laird an overall assessment of the US augmentation to date. They estimated the cumulative costs for the period through 30 September at $3.12 billion, a figure that would require extensive reprogramming in Service FY 1972 budgets if supplemental funding or other relief was not supplied. They spelled out in detail the logistic impacts involving primarily high attrition of aircraft and certain items of equipment as well as extremely high expenditures of both air

79. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 3 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/813-3, 4 May 72, JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 1.

80. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-221-72 to SecDef, 10 May 72, Encl to JCS 2472/813-5, 9 May 72, JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 2.

and surface munitions. They again said that manpower for the augmentations would not be a problem in the period through September though the buildup of these forces in Southeast Asia was causing "a severe degradation" in the US military capability to respond to crises in other areas and this impact would grow more severe as the duration of the augmenation increased. In conclusion, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Secretary to forward their views to the President.[81]

(~~TS~~) With the additional deployments following the initiation of POCKET MONEY and LINEBACKER, the Secretary of Defense requested an updated assessment of the augmentations on 24 May. Specifically to be included was the JCS judgment on recent deployment of B-52Gs and the "incremental military value" in relation to cost. Admiral Moorer asked to be relieved of this requirement. Recent changes, he believed, were not of such a magnitude as to require a major change in the earlier JCS positions. The Secretary thought otherwise and the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided him a new assessment on 31 May. They now placed the cost of the augmentations through 30 September 1972 at $3.75 billion. They reaffirmed the conclusions of their previous report and concluded that "prolonged deployment of the augmentation forces and replacement of projected material losses have aggravated and compounded the problems previously identified." With regard to the operational impact of the additional movements to Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of

81. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-225-72 to SecDef, 15 May 72, Encl to JCS 2472/813-4, 9 May 72, JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 1.

Staff listed further degradation in responsiveness to NATO, in readiness of antisubmarine warfare forces, and in the PACOM Single Integrated Operational Plan. Responding to the question about operational benefits of the the extra B-52 forces, they cited the increased number of daily sorties. The incremental military value of the planes, they said, could only be determined in light of a specific situation and the manner in which COMUSMACV targeted the planes.[82]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense expressed surprise at the JCS evaluation of the value of the additional B-52s. "If I understand your position correctly," he told Admiral Moorer on 7 June, "you and the Joint Chiefs feel we should leave all 206 B-52's in SEA in hope that some proper situation will prevail at some time in the future and that MACV will target these B-52's in some effective manner." In reply, the Joint Chiefs of Staff observed that their 31 May submission had assessed the importance of the B-52 augmentation. But, since this assessment had not satisfied the Secretary, they now set out in greater detail the benefits of the added B-52Gs. These planes allowed increased sorties and an improved night/all weather capability and were of major assistance in achieving a balance between LINEBACKER efforts, close air support, and interdiction in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. There was a military requirement, they said, for all 206 B-52s currently operating in Southeast Asia and

82. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/813-6, 24 May 72; (TS-GP 1) CM-1882-72 to SecDef, 26 May 72, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/813-6, 26 May 72; (TS-GP 4) JCSM-256-72 to SecDef, 31 May 72, Encl to JCS 2472/813-7, 30 May 72; JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 2.

they recommended retention of them until the situation improved.[83]

(TS) All the air and naval augmentation forces, with some minor adjustments, were, in fact, retained in Southeast Asia throughout the remainder of 1972. Extensions were made month-by-month, and each necessitated a separate request to and approval by the Secretary of Defense.[84]

The Enemy Offensive Plays Out, Operations May-June 1972

(U) The North Vietnamese capture of the last RVNAF base in Quang Tri Province on 2 May marked the high point of the enemy offensive. Fierce fighting would continue for several more months, but the enemy would win no more dramatic battles or make any further advances into South Vietnam. Now, slowly, the RVNAF began to regroup and push out to recapture lost territory.

(TS) On 4 May, Admiral Moorer compared for the Secretary of Defense the effectiveness of the RVNAF and North Vietnamese Army units. While the kill ratio in the fighting from 30 March through 30 April had favored the RVNAF by 6.7 to 1, "analysis of the quantitative factors and enemy activity" indicated that the enemy could

83. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Augmented B-52 Force in SEA," 7 Jun 72; (TS) JCSM-279-72 to SecDef, 19 Jun 72, Encl to JCS 2472/822, 12 Jun 72; JMF 907/327 (7 Jun 72).

84. (TS-EX) CM-1967-72 to SecDef, 23 Jun 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 5109 to CINCPAC, CINCLANT, USCINCRED, 261614Z Jun 72. (TS-EX) CM-2042-72, 21 Jul 72; CM-2137-72, 28 Aug 72; CM-2205-72, 27 Sep 72; CM-2267-72, 25 Oct 72; CM-2293-72, 11 Nov 72; CM-2389-72, 21 Dec 72; all to SecDef, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "Temporary Augmentation Authorities," 25 Jul 72, 31 Aug 72, 29 Sep 72, 18 Nov 72, and 23 Dec 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72.

replace personnel losses on a one-for-one basis. Although enemy equipment losses would affect his combat support capability over the longer term, Admiral Moorer doubted that these losses were "yet considered sufficient to render this combat support ineffective." In the fighting to date, the Admiral continued, the RVNAF had vitually exhausted their reserves while the enemy still had a relatively uncommitted division north of the Demilitarized Zone. He believed, however, that the great majority of the RVNAF remained an effective fighting force and that with continued US support the South Vietnamese should be able to contain the offensive in the long term. "The central point to be understood . . . ," he told the Secretary, "is that all our efforts of the past several years are at stake, and the effectiveness of RVNAF and GVN leadership at this time is the crucial ingredient."[85]

(~~S~~) Following the loss of Quang Tri Province, President Thieu decided to bring fresh military leadership into MR 1. General Abrams had urged such a course in order to bolster the ARVN's will to fight. On 4 May, President Thieu replaced Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam, the commander of the region, with Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong, the commander of MR 4, and also relieved Brigadier General Vu Van Giai, the Commander of the Third Division. The latter had been responsible for the defense of Quang Tri City and President Thieu did not believe he had performed with sufficient determination. President Thieu also considered naming an Assistant for Operations to the Chief of the JGS in MR 1 to insure that orders from Saigon were carried out and that reinforcements were used properly. This proposal raised delicate questions

85. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1813-72 to SecDef, 4 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72.

of command relations, and before President Thieu had reached a final decision, the Saigon press reported the prospective appointment. Consequently, it was never made.[86]

(S) Lieutenant General Truong took immediate actions to regroup the South Vietnamese forces in MR 1. He set up straggler control points at Hue and Da Nang to reorganize units and troops falling back from the Quang Tri battles and, with Major General Frederick J. Kroesen, Jr., the Senior US Commander in MR 1, he established a joint forward command post at Hue. Simultaneously, Brigadier General Nguyen Duy Hinh, the new commander of the Third Division, began to rebuild his forces near Phu Bai southeast of Hue.

(TS) Under new leadership and with battered units reformed, the South Vietnamese forces began to reassert themselves in MR 1. On 5 May, the 1st ARVN Division launched operations southwest of Hue to relieve enemy pressure on two fire support bases. Assisted by US tactical air and B-52 support, the South Vietnamese forces made steady progress. They not only removed the threat to the two bases, but in a second thrust on 14-15 May they retook Fire Support Base BASTOGNE which had fallen to the enemy on 28 April. These actions eased the pressure on Hue and also captured eight tons of enemy ammunition. To assist the South Vietnamese forces in meeting the serious tank threat in MR 1, General Abrams proposed to supply them a limited number of tube-launched, optically-tracked, wire-guided (TOW) antitank launchers and missiles. The weapons would

86. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) p. 44. (S) Memos, DCI to SecDef, 3 May, 4 May, and 8 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 3 May 72, NSC Files.

go to selected teams of the 1st ARVN and Marine Division units that had already demonstrated a will to stand and fight against enemy armor. Admiral Moorer sought the necessary approval from the Secretary of Defense on 6 May and authorization was duly granted.[87]

(C) Meantime, the RVNAF Marine Division had resumed operations in its area of responsibility along the coast between Hue and the Quang Tri border. On 8 May US and South Vietnamese forces launched an intensive campaign of tactical air, B-52, naval, and artillery fire against enemy concentrations in southeastern Quang Tri Province. The following day the 2d Brigade of the Vietnamese Airborne Division moved from MR 3 to MR 1 and came under the operational control of the Marine Division. Now reinforced, the RVN Marines launched their first offensive action on 13 May. Two battalions, air assaulted by US helicopters, landed behind enemy lines in Quang Tri while a third battalion crossed the Tach Ma River into the enemy-held province. These forces linked up, killing more than 300 North Vietnamese troops before returning to friendly positions the next day.

(S) On 21 May, a strong North Vietnamese force with armor support attacked the Marine Division. Several days of heavy fighting followed, but the South Vietnamese held their positions. The Marine Division counterattacked on 24-25 May with another airmobile and amphibious assault into Quang Tri, killing 505 North Vietnamese troops, destroying large caches of enemy

87. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CJCS and CINCPAC, 051010Z May 72, JCS IN 91741. (TS-GP 1) CM-1816-72 to SecDef, 6 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6267 to CINCPAC, 080108Z May 72.

ammunition and food, and freeing 5,000 civilians from enemy control. Contact with the enemy continued for the remainder of the month, but the Marine defenses held.

(C) Heavy fighting in MR 1 proceeded throughout the month of June but without significant result. The South Vietnamese Marines carried out additional assaults into Quang Tri on 8 June and again ten days later, on 18 June, killing significant numbers of enemy troops and destroying supplies and equipment. The enemy, in turn, attacked into the coastal area above Hue on 20 June with tanks and infantry, engaging both the Marine and Airborne Divisions. The fighting lasted through 26 June, but the enemy made no gains. Meantime, the 1st ARVN Division continued limited operations west and southwest of Hue to increase the depth of the defenses around the city. Activity was light until 10 June when heavy contact began and continued for over a week. With US air support, the ARVN troops stood fast. Another enemy attack against the 1st ARVN Division began on 26 June, but again the South Vietnamese troops were not dislodged.

(C) In MR 2 North Vietnamese troops encircled the provincial capital of Kontum City at the beginning of May and were increasing the pressure on the outlying defenses of the city. Many civilians had already been airlifted as the South Vietnamese defenders braced for the push on the city itself. Again President Thieu did not feel that the responsible field commander was resisting the enemy attack with sufficient determination, and on 10 May he removed Lieutenant General Ngo Dzu from command of MR 2, replacing him with Major General Nguyen Van Toan, the deputy for operations to the commander of MR 1.

(C) The battle for Kontum began on 14 May. Preceded by heavy attacks by fire, the enemy launched an armor-supported drive on the city. Assisted by tactical air strikes and supporting fire, the defending South Vietnamese repulsed the enemy, but he attacked again on 25 and 26 May. Sappers penetrated Kontum's defenses and by the following day, the enemy occupied strong points in the north, northeast, and southeast portions of the city. Fighting raged for three days and then the enemy attack subsided. Gradually, ARVN troops cleared the enemy from the city and opened the Kontum airfield on 8 June. The level of activity was light throughout the remainder of June as the South Vietnamese proceeded with clearing operations northwest and north of the city.

(C) There was other serious fighting in MR 2 during May in the area around Kontum Pass and the Route 14 area. On 4 May, ARVN forces attacked the Pass, which the enemy had closed in April, from north and south. They did open the Pass but did not succeed in clearing Route 14. Efforts to open the highway continued throughout the rest of May and most of June. Finally, by 26 June, enemy resistance began to falter, and on 30 June, a convoy of 36 vehicles traveled from Pleiku to Kontum City for the first time since mid-April.

(C) In MR 3, the siege of the provincial capital of An Loc continued during all of May. The enemy shelled the city daily, but failed in repeated efforts to breach An Loc's defenses. South Vietnamese forces attempting to move up Route 13 from the south to relieve the city were similarly unsuccessful and the siege continued into June. By the end of the first week of June, however, the enemy grip on An Loc began to slip. On 8 June, patrols from the city and the ARVN

6th Airborne Battalion moving up from the south linked up 1.5 miles below An Loc. Additional elements joined up the next day and began to consolidate and occupy the high ground dominating the southern approach to the city. The following day, 10 June, the first substantial airlift since the siege began was conducted into the city. Some 119 reinforcements arrived and over 100 wounded troops were evacuated. By 11 June the siege was definitely broken and more than 1,000 refugees moved out of An Loc along Route 13 to resettlement centers. The remainder of June brought sporadic enemy attacks by fire and small ground contacts around An Loc as the South Vietnamese proceeded to expand and clear their perimeter.

US Actions in June

(~~TS~~) By June, the military situation was finally beginning to improve for the South Vietnamese, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not want to let up the pressure on the enemy. On 6 June, they told the Secretary of Defense that it was essential to exploit the damage already inflicted on North Vietnam by increasing the "intensity and scope" of the current air campaign. Noting the military force now assembled in WESTPAC, as well as the prospect of three months of favorable weather, the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw a situation that presented "undoubtedly a final and unique opportunity to bring sufficient pressure to bear on the North Vietnamese to engage in meaningful negotiations." They proposed a "continuing and aggressive" air campaign against the entire "war-making capacity" of North Vietnam, including transportation and logistics targets, the electrical power net, and communications and command and control facilities.

(TS) Specifically, they requested authority to strike 44 additional targets not then on approved lists. These comprised sites in the restricted areas around Hanoi and Haiphong, including the Hanoi/Gia Lam airfield, the Hanoi and Haiphong railroad yards, the Hanoi thermal power plant, and four industrial sites, one of which was the only steel plant in North Vietnam. They also wanted authority for armed reconnaissane along railroads and highways within the Chinese buffer zone to within seven nautical miles of the Chinese border. This intensified effort against targets in North Vietnam would be complemented by expanded air operations in South Vietnam and adjacent areas, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed additional mining to seal off coastal areas in the event the People's Republic of China attempted to resupply North Vietnam "via close-in coastal waters." These efforts, they concluded,

> will deal a severe blow to the enemy's war-making capability and his resolve to continue. In our judgment, we are at a crucial juncture which requires a firm decision to take the entire target array under attack as the best course of action to assure attainment of our objectives in Southeast Asia.[88]

(TS) On 12 June the Secretary athorized strike of 28 of the recommended targets in the period through 1 July 1972, but he withheld approval for the remaining ones including the Hanoi/Gia Lam airfield. He also disapproved any expanded armed reconnaissance near the

88. (TS-EX) JCSM-265-72 to SecDef, 6 June 72, filed in CJCS CM Chron File in place of CM-1901-72.

Chinese border, though he was willing to consider requests for specific strikes within the buffer zone, as he had done in the past. The Secretary found it increasingly difficult to monitor the scope and pattern of the US interdiction campaign, and earlier, on 2 June, he had asked Admiral Moorer for a listing of all authorized targets in North Vietnam. Now, on 12 June, he requested a survey of all targets in North Vietnam to identify those of primary military value, those indirectly supporting the enemy offensive, and those of psychological value. Within those categories, he wanted the targets arranged in priority of importance. This information, he told Admiral Moorer, would aid him in evaluating future target requests and permit a more thorough assessment of the air campaign.[89]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff passed authorization to attack the additional targets to the field on 15 June and, on 21 June, Admiral Moorer gave the Secretary of Defense the requested survey of all targets in North Vietnam. Thereafter, on 26 June, Admiral Moorer requested approval to strike two radio receivers in the Hanoi area, targets that the Secretary had disapproved on 12 June. But the Secretary was still unwilling to approve these targets, telling the Chairman on 30 June that the currently approved target list was adequate. In addition, the Secretary wanted to approve any new targets "selected primarily for high psychological impact like electronic power installations,

89 (~~TS~~-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "LINEBACKER Target Validation," 12 Jun 72; (~~S~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Targeting in North Vietnam," 2 Jun 72; JMF 907/323 (CY 1972).

communications/command and control sites, and industrial facilities."[90]

(~~S~~) In the meantime, Admiral Moorer had responded to speciic questions from the Secretary of Defense on the concept for and operation of the air interdiction campaign against North Vietnam. There were two major objectives, he told Mr. Laird on 15 June: (1) to reduce the enemy's ability to wage main force war in South Vietnam and limit future enemy options to guerrilla and economy of force tactics; (2) to destroy the will of the North Vietnamese government and populace to continue the war and induce a willingness to participate in productive negotiations. To achieve these overall purposes, Admiral Moorer listed a number of specific military objectives, including disruption or destruction of transportation systems, repair facilities, stocks of materiel and supplies (specifically POL), key power plants, airfields, and communications. He could not develop a definite schedule for attainment of these objectives because of various intangibles such as the US ability to detect and counter enemy reactions. He added that the bombing should not be limited solely to transportation and logistics targets and stated:

> The US now has a perishable opportunity to attain its objectives in Southeast Asia. A military force has been assembled in WESTPAC which is adequate to the task. . . . At this critical period for US policy in Indochina, the United States must not

90. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, JCS 3293 to CINCPAC, 152100Z Jun 72. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-1932-72 to SecDef, 21 Jun 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-1964-72 to SecDef, 26 Jun 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 72. (~~TS~~-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 30 Jun 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972).

> unnecessarily restrict the application of its main strength, lest the enemy be given the chance to survive the next few months and later to accommodate his logistic system to a reduced air campaign.[91]

(TS) During June 1972, several questions arose concerning the mining of North Vietnamese waters. Since only limited areas of the coast of North Vietnam were mined, CINCPAC feared that infiltration of supplies was occuring by small craft in inlets not accessible to large vessels. To detect any such infiltration, Admiral Moorer requested authority on 10 June for manned tactical reconnaissance along the entire North Vietnamese coast to within five miles of the Chinese border, but the Secretary of Defense disapproved this request on 30 June 1972.[92]

(TS) Another question concerned the reseeding of the mines in the Haiphong channel. On 18 June, CINCPAC reported to Washington the presence of approximately 50 small North Vietnamese craft in the channel and the assumption that these craft were carrying out minesweeping. The following day, while assessment of the North Vietnamese activity continued, Admiral Moorer passed this information to the Secretary of Defense and requested authority to reseed minefield segments 2111A and 2111B in the Haiphong Channel. But Mr. Laird did not approve; he advised the Chairman on

91. (TS) CM-1951-72 to SecDef, 15 Jun 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 72.

92. (TS-EX) CM-1920-72 to SecDef, 10 Jun 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "LINEBACKER Tactical Reconnaissance," 30 June 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972).

on 26 June that he would reconsider his decision "when dictated by enemy mine countermeasures activity or the approaching automatic sterilization of the two mine fields."[93]

(TS) During June, Admiral Moorer also complained to the Secretary of Defense of Chinese efforts to frustrate the US campaign to cut off seaborne supply to North Vietnam. Since mid-April, he told Mr. Laird on 10 June, the People's Republic of China had rotated merchant vessels to the offshore islands along the southern North Vietnam panhandle as a tactic to keep anchorages at Hon Nieu and Hon La Islands continuously occupied. As a result, the United States had to expend significant air and surface resources to maintain constant surveillance in order to be ready to strike North Vietnamese lighters when they cleared the Chinese ships. Moreover, on 9 June, a Chinese ship at Hon Nieu had fired on a US surveillance aircraft. Accordingly Admiral Moorer recommended a formal US protest to the People's Republic of China as well as authority to destroy any ship in North Vietnamese waters that fired on US ships or planes. He also wanted permission to mine the waters around Hon Nieu, Hon La, and Hon Me with notice to the Chinese to leave those waters within 48 hours. By 29 June, the Secretary had not replied, and Admiral Moorer repeated his request. Again, the Secretary did not approve the mine seeding.[94]

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93. (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 182218Z and 182220Z Jun 72, JCS IN 89557 and 89569. (TS-EX) CM-1954-72 to SecDef, 19 Jun 72; (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "POCKET MONEY," 26 Jun 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 72.

94. (TS-EX) CM-1927-72 to SecDef, 10 Jun 72; CM-1979-72 to SecDef, 29 Jun 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 72.

(TS) All the temporary operating authorities granted to counter the enemy offensive would expire on 30 June. At the end of May the Chairman had sought extension of these authorities for the duration of the air and naval campaign against North Vietnam but the Secretary had renewed them only for the month of June pending a codification of all other temporary authorities including those for LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY.[95] Admiral Moorer submitted the requested codification on 9 June, although the Secretary still did not grant any blanket extension of the authorities. Consequently, on 23 June 1972, Admiral Moorer requested the Secretary of Defense to continue all the temporary authorities, including those for LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY, for another month through 31 July 1972. Mr. Laird did so on 26 June 1972. Thereafter these authorities, with the exception of LINEBACKER as will be discussed below, were extended on a month-by-month basis until the end of hostilities in January 1973.[96]

95. See above pp. 392-393.

96. (TS-EX) CM-1966-72 to SecDef, 23 Jun 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. For SecDef approval, see handwritten notation on draft msg attached to CM-1966-72. For subsequent extensions, see (TS-EX) CM-2057-72, 27 Jul 72 (SecDef approval on attached draft msg); CM-2133-72, 28 Aug 72 (SecDef approval on attached draft msg); CM-2270-72, 24 Oct 72; CM-2315-72, 22 Nov 72; CM-2414-72, 30 Dec 72 (SecDef approval on attached draft msg); all in CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72, except CM-2270-72, 24 Oct 72 which is in CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul-Dec 72. (TS-EX) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "Operating Authorities," 29 Sep 72; "Southeast Asia Operating Authorities," 30 Oct 72; JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Temporary SEAsia Operating Authorities," 29 Nov 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72.

(~~TS~~) Throughout May and June 1972, all dams and dikes in North Vietnam remained exempt from US air attack. The closest the United States came to such an attack was a strike against the Lan Chi hydroelectric power plant. Consideration of such a strike in a WSAG meeting in early June produced some hesitancy because of the possibility of damage to the adjacent dam and spillways. Both Dr. Kissinger and Secretary Laird were absent from Washington at that time and, thereafter, Admiral Moorer assured Mr. Laird that there was little chance of conventional bombs weakening the dam or spillways or of any extensive flooding resulting from inadvertent damage to the dam. Therefore he urged the Secretary of Defense to discuss the strike with Dr. Kissinger and approve attack of the Lang Chi power plant. Approval was secured and the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the attack on 8 June. They cautioned CINCPAC to restrict the effort to the transformers and the substation and to take special precautions to reduce damage to the dam and spillways.[97]

(U) Even with the prohibition against strike of dams and dikes as well as the precautions observed in bombing targets near such sites, reports did circulate of damage to dams caused by the US air attacks. President Nixon was questioned on this matter on 29 June, and he termed the reports "inaccurate." The United States tried, he said, "to hit only military targets and we have been hitting military targets. We have had orders out not to hit dikes because the result

97. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-1905-72 to SecDef, 6 Jun 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 72. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, JCS 4446 to CINCPAC, 081243Z Jun 72.

in terms of civilian casualties would be extraordinary." These orders, he said, remained in effect. A few days later, a Department of State spokesman hedged somewhat on the President's statement. He put the US air strikes in North Vietnam in the context of the US air effort, explaining that there might be inadvertent damage to dams and dikes when located near military targets.[98]

(TS) In another question of unauthorized bombing, the People's Republic of China made allegations in early June of US intrusion into Chinese air space, of a bombing of Chinese territory, and of fragment damage to a Chinese merchant vessel. From the beginnng of the air actions against North Vietnam in response to the spring offensive, the United States had taken careful precautions to avoid violation of Chinese territory or air space. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had prohibited any overflight of the People's Republic of China and had reinstated a buffer zone in North Vietnam along the Chinese border as had been the case in the ROLLING THUNDER bombing. No air attacks were allowed in this buffer zone without special permission in order to guard against inadvertent penetration into China's air space. At the Secretary of Defense's direction, Admiral Moorer investigated the Chinese charges and reported on 15 June no evidence to support the alleged violations. He assured the Secretary that every effort would continue to avoid any violation in the future.[99]

(TS) The United States carried on the LINEBACKER campaign without letup throughout June, inflicting considerable damage upon North Vietnam. A Defense

98. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, p. 708. Knappman, South Vietnam, p. 147.
99. (TS-EX) CM-1943-72 to SecDef, 15 Jun 72, CJCS CM Chron File.

Intelligence Agency assessment in early July evaluated the air effort as follows:

> The current campaign against North Vietnam has inflicted a progressively greater burden on the regime and the population. Hanoi's manpower and material resources have been heavily taxed, and the population's morale has been strained by the disruptions inflicted on the internal supply and distribution system and other targets. These strains have been compounded by the extra efforts required to counter restrictions on the flow of supplies into North Vietnam and southward to the battlefield area.
>
> Air and naval operations are adding substantially to the heavy price paid by the North Vietnamese in the battle area in the South.

(TS) In more specific terms, the United States had carried out 14,621 air strikes and 836 naval gunfire attacks against North Vietnam in the period between 9 May and 15 June 1972. The US air strikes had effectively closed both the northeast and northwest rail lines from China, forcing movement of supplies by means of truck and watercraft. In the North Vietnam panhandle the air campaign had disrupted and delayed highway traffic, the primary transportation mode in that area, but the enemy had resorted to alternate roads, bypasses, and ferries. Strikes against watercraft and transshipment points along inland waterways had destroyed about 1,100 barges, waterborne logistics craft, and assorted rivercraft and forced the enemy to limit his activity to hours of darkness. The net

effect of the effort in the panhandle was a substantial reduction in the enemy capability to move supplies into and through southern North Vietnam.

(TS) The air campaign had also done significant damage to the North Vietnamese POL and electric power systems. Petroleum stocks had been reduced from 103,000 metric tons to some 40,000 metric tons, a seven-week supply, and the major power plants of Lang Chi and Uong Bi, accounting for over 40 percent of the total national capacity, would require extended periods of repair. Moreover from 9 May onwards, most of North Vietnam's industrial plants had either ceased to operate altogether or were operating at reduced levels. Major facilities for barge construction and ship repair, coal processing, and production of construction materials, as well as sugar, paper, and textile mills had been struck. The cumulative impact of the strikes on industrial plants was reinforced by the degradation of the electric power supply, shortages of raw material imports, and departures of foreign technical experts.

(TS) Despite this extensive damage, North Vietnam was still able to carry on operations in South Vietnam. The Defense Intelligence Agency reported continued movement of supplies into South Vietnam even though the air and naval attacks were creating logistics problems. Shortages of ammunition had not yet manifested themselves in overall reductions of enemy exenditure, but the Agency claimed certain combat units had experienced serious ammunition supply problems and stated that enemy concern about the ability to meet future distribution requirements had become evident. North Vietnam was making efforts to cope with the

situation by strengthening and expanding its rear service apparatus in the North Vietnamese panhandle and MR 1. The North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam were in good logistics posture at the beginning of the offensive, and the DIA analysts believed substantial stocks remained despite drawdowns caused by operational requirements and losses from the US air campaign.

(TS) The Defense Intelligence Agency also reported the continued success of POCKET MONEY throughout June in denying North Vietnam supplies by sea. Since the mining on 9 May, no ships had attempted to enter or leave major ports, and the only known shipments by sea to North Vitnam were small amounts lightered ashore from Chinese ships at the anchorage off Hon Nieu and Hon La in the panhandle. In addition, mining operations, naval gunfire, and air strikes had seriously curtailed use of small river ports and transshipment points, and coastal traffic, the primary means of distributing supplies to the southern panhandle, had been halted. Consequently North Vietnam had been forced to shift to overland routes for the import of essential supplies from the People's Republic of China.[100]

(TS) Hampered by both supply problems and growing resistance from the RVNAF, the enemy offensive in South Vietnam had come to a halt by the end of June. In MR 1, the RVNAF was on the offensive, and the South Vietnamese forces had repulsed the attack on Kontum in MR 2 and broken the siege of An Loc in MR 3. On

100. (TS-EX) DIA Document, "Assessment of Campaign Against North Vietnam," n.d., Att to CM-2014-72 to SecDef, 11 Jul 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 72.

20 June, Admiral Moorer asked the field commanders for an assessment of future operations. What could the enemy do in South Vietnam in the next 30 days, he wondered, and what could the RVNAF do to meet the enemy action?[101]

(TS) General Abrams prepared the response, presenting a picture of growing RVNAF strength, and CINCPAC endorsed this position. Although the enemy was continuing preparations for an attack against Hue, the RVNAF position in MR 1 had steadily improved since early May. The South Vietnamese had made good progress in rebuilding depleted forces, in improving command and control and fire support coordination, and in conducting aggressive ground actions, and these activities had steadily eroded enemy units and logistics. Moreover, the South Vietnamese had initiated a coordinated operation in early June in preparation for a major counteroffensive to retake Quang Tri City, and the actual offensive was scheduled to begin on 28 June. Even if the enemy attacked Hue before this South Vietnamese operation began, COMUSMACV predicted that the RVNAF would prevail.

(TS) In MR 2, General Abrams reported that the enemy had logistics and personnel problems and that the RVNAF could gradually reassert influence over lost territory. The enemy failure to take An Loc and the resulting manpower and equipment losses, COMUSMACV believed, had significantly degraded the enemy capability to launch and sustain a main force offensive in MR 3. In addition, the RVNAF reinforcements previously

101. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 8243 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 202221Z Jun 72.

engaged in the An Loc battle were now available for use in other areas and the Airborne Brigade was being moved to assist in the counter-offensive in Quang Tri. COMUSMACV believed that the enemy still planned major activity in MR 4 but did not have the ability to mount such a campaign. General Abrams stated that the failure of the North Vietnamese invasion had discouraged "the already ineffective VCI in RVN" and that no more than sapper activity and terrorism were to be expected from the Viet Cong during the next 30 days. In this same period, he said, the "RVNAF, with our continued full support, can hold its own and make progress in regaining lost territory."[102]

(TS) Meantime, in Washington, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had prepared their own assessment. "The steady improvement in the friendly situation in recent weeks has been marked," they told CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on 22 June, and:

> The main enemy offensives appear to have been blunted. The GVN has retained its stability, and the people have not rallied to support the enemy. The enemy continues to suffer heavy losses in both manpower and material, and the impact of air and naval campaigns in NVN should further aggravate his resupply problems. The delays imposed on the enemy have provided time for the RVNAF to strengthen their defenses and prepare for counteroffensive action.

102. (TS-EX) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 211145Z Jun 72, JCS IN 94951. (TS-EX) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 220430Z Jun 72, JCS IN 96570.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of staff cautioned the field commanders, however, that maintenance of the present level of US forces "in-theater," as well as the associated budgetary support, for any extended period would be "extremely difficult." Thus they said, "prospects of a long stalemate along presently held lines would give rise to the difficulties previously experienced here and can only hasten the reduction in US support levels." The current situation, they continued, presented what, in all probability, was "a final oportunity" to regain the momentum lost after 30 March 1972. The "overall goal" for the next three months, they told the field commanders, must be to reestablish South Vietnamese control over the key areas lost in the recent offensive in order to present "the strongest possible negotiating position" in Paris and "to demonstrate to the world community the military strength of the GVN." The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the highest priority for the RVNAF should be to retake Quang Tri City and the coastal lowlands south of the Cua Viet River with the ultimate objective of seizing all the territory in Quang Tri Province along the coast to the Demilitarized Zone. Other objectives were to restore South Vietnamese control in MR 3 and MR 4 to the west and northwest of Saigon, to remove the threat to Kontum City, and to restore control in Binh Dinh Province in MR 2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted the field commanders to underscore the urgency of regaining the territorial initiative with the GVN and the RVNAF Joint General Staff.[103]

103. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1255 to CINCPAC (info COMUS-MACV), 221223Z Jun 72 (derived from JCS 2472/826), JMF 911/300 (10 Jun 72).

The RVNAF Counteroffensive, July-October 1972

(S) The South Vietnamese forces in MR 1 attacked northward on 28 June to retake the lost Quang Tri Province. The Marine and Airborne Divisions, supported by Ranger units and elements of the 1st and 2d ARVN Divisions, pushed into the enemy occupied province from Thua Thien in a series of ground and helicopter assaults. The RVNAF moved steadily ahead and by 7 July had reached Quang Tri City. There the South Vietnamese offensive halted, blocked by determined enemy resistance. After several weeks of heavy fighting, the South Vietnamese breached the northeast wall of the citadel of the provincial capital on 25 July, but were not able to dislodge the enemy.

(TS) At a WSAG meeting on 4 August, Dr. Kissinger asked why the South Vietnamese were still trying to capture the Citadel. He wondered whether they were squandering manpower in this effort. Admiral Moorer replied that the South Vietnamese did not want to leave the Citadel behind in their advance and that only a small force was being devoted to the actual assault. A representative of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), Major General David E. Ott, USA, pointed out the psychological importance to the RVNAF of retaking the Quang Tri fortress. Dr. Kissinger was not completely convinced. Still referring to the struggle for the Citadel, he said: "We are not interested so much in achieving great victories. We just have to avoid a major setback."[104]

(S) Still the battle for the Quang Tri Citadel continued. On 7 September, the South Vietnamese forces

104. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 4 Aug 72, NCS Files.

regrouped and began a new coordinated assault on 9 September. That day, the Airborne Division secured three enemy strong points just to the south of the fortress, and on 12 September, the RVN Marines broke through the northeast corner. Fierce fighting raged for two more days, and by the afternoon of 14 September, the entire Citadel was in friendly hands and the South Vietnamese officially declared Quang Tri City recaptured the following day.

(C) Throughout the remainder of September, action was light in MR 1 as the South Vietnamese units rested, refitted, and eliminated small pockets of enemy resistance in Quang Tri City. Then, on 30 September 1972, the Airborne and Marine Divisions attacked to the west and southwest of the city to seize fire support bases lost the previous April. Again the South Vietnamese met determined enemy resistance and heavy fighting continued. By the middle of October, monsoon rains began to restrict tactical air support for the ground forces and progress slowed. Finally, on 31 October, the Airborne Division reoccupied Fire Support Base BARBARA, one of the main objectives of this action, although another, nearby Fire Support Base ANNE, remained under enemy control.

(C) Meantime, the South Vietnamese had also resumed the offensive in MR 2. There, on 19 July, they began a three-phased operation, BAC BINH VUONG 22/8, to retake territory lost to the enemy in northern Binh Dinh Province. Following B-52, tactical air, and naval gunfire bombardment, elements of the 40th Regiment air assaulted into enemy held areas while the rest of the regiment and the 19th Cavalry attacked through Bong Son Pass. The operation went according to plan and the

South Vietnamese had accomplished their objective by 24 July. They had returned Hoai Nhon and Hoai An to their control and Route 1 was now open. The RVNAF conducted clearing actions in the recaptured areas during the last days of July and carried out additional, though smaller, operations to regain lost territory in August. These operations proved successful and thereafter military activity in MR 2 was at a low level.

(~~C~~) With the failure of the enemy siege of An Loc, the major battles were over in MR 3. The enemy continued frequent attacks-by-fire and occasional ground probes as the South Vietnamese expanded their control to the east of the city, but the last six months of 1972 was a stable period in MR 3.

LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY Continue

(U) The United States gave the RVNAF counteroffensive full backing. Adhering to the decision not to recommit ground forces to combat in South Vietnam, the US assistance took the form of increased air support. The United States furnished helicopter, fixed wing gunship, B-52, and tactical close air support and both US Army and US Marine Corps helicopters airlifted the attacking RVNAF units into combat. Consequently, US air activity levels continued to increase in South Vietnam during the summer months, with B-52 sorties reaching a peak of 3,407 for August. The largest concentration of these sorties was flown in MR 1 to assist the RVNAF assault on Quang Tri.[105]

105. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. 70.

(~~S~~) The United States also proceeded with efforts to block the movement of war supplies to and through North Vietnam. The POCKET MONEY mining was maintained and the LINEBACKER campaign grew more intense each successive month in the period June through August. These air attacks struck petroleum, transporation, and logistics targets throughout North Vietnam except in restricted control areas around Hanoi and Haiphong and in the buffer zone along the Chinese border. Strikes in those areas required specific approval by the Secretary of Defense, and the summer of 1972 brought continuing attempts by the field commanders, supported by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to gain permission to hit various exempted targets.[106]

(~~TS~~) In the latter part of July, Admiral Moorer asked the Secretary to approve a total of 20 additional targets in the Haiphong control area as well as to grant standing authority to strike petroleum storage and transportation facilities in a limited portion of that same area. Mr. Laird approved some of the specific targets, withheld others, and did not give the standing authority desired by the Chairman.[107]

(~~TS~~) During August, Admiral Moorer continued to press for attack of restricted targets. On 9 August, he sought permission for a B-52 strike of a railroad yard and repair area in Hanoi; on 16 August for attack of the Gia Lam airfield in Hanoi; on 30 August for 16

106. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) pp. B-8 - B-10.

107. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-2030-72 to SecDef, 18 Jul 72; CM-2038-72 to SecDef, 20 Jul 72; CM-2053-72 to SecDef, 26 Jul 72; Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "LINEBACKER Target Validations," 20 and 25 Jul 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 72.

targets in the Hanoi control area and another 13 in Haiphong; and on 5 September rail and road facilities in Hanoi. But the Secretary of Defense did not approve any of these. Later, on 27 September, Admiral Moorer asked and this time did receive authority to strike a Hanoi radio receiver target that the enemy used for commnications and intelligence purposes.[108]

(TS) The field commanders had found the restrictions on air operations in the area of North Vietnam near the Chinese border a particular hindrance to the effectiveness of the interdiction campaign and had repeatedly sought expanded authorities in this Chinese buffer zone from the beginning of LINEBACKER. These efforts continued in the period July through early October 1972. On 10 July, Admiral Moorer explained to Secretary Laird that the current restrictions on air strikes within the buffer zone limited US ability to interdict the complete North Vietnamese transportation system and requested approval for selected strikes in the zone along lines of communication up to the Chinese border. He also wanted sanction for manned tactical reconnaissance and low altitude drone flights inside the buffer zone to within 10 miles of the Chinese border.[109]

(TS) The Chairman's request came at a most inopportune time--just when the People's Republic of China accused the United States of further violations of

108. (TS-EX) CM-2086-72 to SecDef, 9 Aug 72; CM-2118-72 to SecDef, 16 Aug 72; CM-2135-72 to SecDef, 30 Aug 72; CJCS File 091, Aug 72. (TS-EX) CM-2160-72 to SecDef, 5 Sep 72; CM-2200-72 to SecDef, 27 Sep 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Linebacker Target Authorization," 30 Sep 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 72.

109. (TS-EX) CM-2008-72 to SecDef, 10 Jul 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 72. (TS-EX) CM-2009-72 to SecDef, 10 Jul 72, CJCS CM Chron File.

its territory. The Chinese charged that US planes struck two Chinese fishing boats on 20 June and bombed their territory on 5 July. These allegations caused the President and Dr. Kissinger considerable concern and Admiral Moorer's Assistant, Vice Admiral Weinel, cabled the Chairman, who had just left for Europe, of the reaction in Washington. "HAK [Henry A. Kissinger] is about to have a baby. . . . Things are serious and the word from the 'top' is that once more heads will roll." Secretary Laird called the Director of the Joint Staff "to read the riot act concerning border violations" and directed despatch of a strong message to the field. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC on 11 July:

> The Chinese buffer zone is established to preclude an inadvertent overflight of the People's Republic of China. The recent increase in buffer zone and PRC intrusions or allegations thereof has aroused grave concern at highest level. Result is an imperative requirement for whatever measures are needed to:
>
> a. provide absolute assurance that PRC border violations will not occur, and
>
> b. establish a source of data on all US aircraft tracks in vicinity of buffer zone so that we can with full confidence respond to allegations of violations.

They directed CINCPAC and CINCSAC to take specific actions to preclude Chinese border incursions and to report all ordnance expenditures and fuel tank releases

that might have impacted in the buffer zone or the People's Republic of China.[110]

(TS) At CINCPAC'S direction, CINCPACFLT and the Commander, 7th Air Force, investigated all LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY activities in the appropriate time periods and found no positive evidence to substantiate the Chinese charges. In commenting on this matter, CINCPAC told Admiral Moorer:

> I believe you should be aware of likely consequences emanating from our application of more stringent contols to effect the required degree of assurance that border violations are precluded . . . . The best interdiction points on the NE rail line lie within the buffer zone.

Effective interdiction, he said, was a difficult matter, and he recommended authority at an early date for strikes, under positive control, within the Chinese buffer zone.[111]

(TS) Needless to say, against this background, the Secretary of Defense did not approve Admiral Moorer's request for either strikes or manned reconnaissance in the buffer zone. The Chairman, however, did not let the matter rest. On 19 July he pointed out to the Secretary the extent to which the North Vietnamese were using the buffer zone as a sanctuary for receipt and transfer of supplies destined for battles in the south and five days later, on 24 July, requested

110. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1264 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 112047Z Jul 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1386 to CINCUSNAVEUR, 112257Z Jul 72.

111. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 2537 to CINCUSNAVEUR, 122304Z Jul 72. (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 140356Z and 180315Z Jul 72, JCS IN 47180 and 53605.

authority to strike three railroad bridges in the buffer zone.[112]

(TS) On this occasion, the Secretary was willing to allow attack of the targets in the buffer zone. Accordingly, on 1 August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to plan an operation against the three bridges and they subsequently authorized the attack on 17 August as a one time exception to the restrictions in the buffer zone. The authority lasted only through the end of August. Poor weather conditions prevented successful strikes during August and the authority was extended throughout September and, subsequently, into October 1972.[113]

(TS) Meantime, in extending the temporary Southeast Asia operating authorities at the end of July, the Secretary had relaxed the restriction against action in the buffer zone to allow aircraft hitting nearby targets to penetrate the zone to within 20 nautical miles of the Chinese border. He granted this modification to permit US pilots greater tactical flexibility and more options to avoid enemy air defenses. Two weeks later, the Secretary extended this authority to include support aircraft.[114]

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112. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Chinese Buffer Zone Reconnaissance," 14 Jul 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). (TS-EX) CM-2033-72 to SecDef, 19 Jul 72; CM-2052-72 to SecDef, 24 Jul 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 72.

113. (TS-EX) Msgs, JCS 9482 to CINCPAC, 012110Z Aug 72; JCS 6691 to CINCPAC, 172240Z Aug 72. (TS-EX) CM-2158-72 to SecDef, 27 Aug 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Aug 72. (TS-EX) CM-2198-72 to SecDef, 21 Sep 72, same file, Sep 72. (Draft msgs attached to both CMs have notations of SecDef approval.)

114. (TS-EX) CM-2057-72 to SecDef, 27 Jul 72 (for SecDef approval, see handwritten notation on draft msg attached to CM-2057-72); CM-2085-72 to SecDef, 7 Aug 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "SEAsia Operating Authorities," 15 Aug 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72.

(TS) In early September, Admiral Moorer requested authority to interdict a key rail and road bridge in the buffer zone located approximately eight miles from the Chinese border but the Secretary did not approve. Then on 21 September and again on 10 October, the Chairman repeated his earlier request to conduct manned tactical reconnaissance in the buffer zone, but Mr. Laird did not grant the requests.[115]

(U) Public opposition to the bombing of North Vietnam continued in the United States during the summer. The focus of the criticism shifted from the streets to the Democratic and Republican National Conventions and the selection of presidential nominees. The Democrats, meeting in Miami Beach, chose Senator George S. McGovern, an avowed opponent of the war, on 12 July and he pledged, if elected, to withdraw all forces from Vietnam within 90 days of his inauguration. Not surprisingly, the Democratic platform included a plank calling for "immediate and complete" withdrawal of US forces from Indochina and termination of all military assistance to the Thieu government. A little over a month later, the Republicans gathered at Miami Beach. While thousands of antiwar protesters demonstrated outside the convention hall, the Republicans renominated Richard Nixon by a vote of 1,347 to 1 and endorsed his peace efforts. Various speakers denounced Senator McGovern's Vietnam position, charging that he was sabotaging the President's negotiation efforts.[116]

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115. (TS-EX) CM-2157-72 to SecDef, 2 Sep 72; CM-2168-72 to SecDef, 21 Sep 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "LINE BACKER Reconnaissance," 26 Sep 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 72. (TS-EX) CM-2228-72 to SecDef, 10 Oct 72, same file, Oct 72.

116. NY Times, 13 Jul 72, 1; 14 Jul 72, 11; 21 Aug 72, 1; 23 Aug 72, 1; 24 Aug 72, 47.

(U) Attempts also continued in the United States during the summer of 1972 to legislate an end to the war. On 24 July, the Senate adopted an amendment to a foreign military aid bill requiring the withdrawal of all US troops from Vietnam within four months in exchange for the release of prisoners of war. The Senate quickly reversed itself, however, rejecting the entire bill, which it had just amended. Efforts to attach a similar amendment to the House version of the bill also failed on 10 August. Meantime, on 3 August, the Senate had approved an end-the-war amendment calling for US withdrawal from Vietnam within four months. In this instance, the provision was added to a military procurement bill, but it did not survive the conference action to reconcile the Senate and House bills. Congressional opponents of the war still did not rest. Further attempts were made in both the House and the Senate during September to attach end-the-war amendments to other bills, but these efforts did not succeed. Senator William Proxmire, Democrat of Wisconsin, made a final challenge in early October, offering an amendment to the Defense appropriations bill to prohibit use of any funds for bombing in Indochina. The amendment was defeated, however, by a vote of 55 to 26.[117]

(U) Despite the public and Congressional opposition, the United States maintained the air campaign against North Vietnam. As already mentioned, US force augmentations to support the campaign were extended from month to month throughout 1972. Because these forces were retained in Southeast Asia longer than originally anticipated, certain adjustments became necessary during the summer. On 15 July, the Secretary of

117. NY Times, 25 July 72, 1; 3 Aug 72, 1; 11 Aug 72, 1; 15 Sep 72, 7; 27 Sep 72, 1; and 3 Oct 72, 1.

Defense approved the redeployment of 13 KC-135 aircraft from Thailand to the United States by 10 October 1972. Since these tankers supported US F-4 aircraft stationed at Takhli, the Secretary also endorsed a JCS concept to substitute F-111s, which did not require aerial refueling, for the F-4s. To carry out this action the Secretary approved on 20 September 1972 Admiral Moorer's request to deploy 48 F-111s to Takhli and 72 A-7s to Korat and to redeploy 72 F-4s and an appropriate number of KC-135s from Thailand back to the United States.[118]

(S) In further augmentation adjustments, the Secretary of Defense approved on 14 August Admiral Moorer's request for the immediate return of six F-105 aircraft and nine aircrews to the United States. Movement of these planes to Southast Asia in early April had left only six in the United States and consequently the US Air Force training program was beginning to encounter serious problems. Subsequently, with the easing of airlift requirements in Southeast Asia, Mr. Laird granted on 26 August a request by Admiral Moorer for the return of two C-130E squadrons from WESTPAC to CONUS.[119]

(TS) Throughout the summer of 1972, the POCKET MONEY mining campaign prevented almost all resupply of North Vietnam by sea. During June the field commanders

118. (S) CM-1995-72 to SecDef, 7 Jul 72; CM-2166-72 to SecDef, 8 Sep 72; CJCS CM Chron File. (TS) CM-2088-72 to SecDef, 12 Aug 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72. (S) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, 15 Jul and 20 Sep 72, CJCS SecDef Memo file.

119. (TS) CM-2082-72 to SecDef, 5 Aug 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "F-105G Augmentation," 14 Aug 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72. (S) CM-2109-72 to SecDef, 15 Aug 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 29 Aug 72, CJCS SecDef Memo File.

and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had grown concerned about resupply activities by Chinese merchant vessels off-loading to North Vietnamese lighters in anchorages around Hon La and Hon Nieu Islands off the North Vietnamese panhandle. They wanted to mine waters around these islands in June, but the Secretary of Defense did not approve.[120] On 4 July Admiral Moorer informed Mr. Laird that a Chinese freighter had fired on a US plane near Hon Nieu. He recommended a strong protest to the People's Republic of China as well as authority to mine the waters around the two islands, but, again, the Secretary did not concur.[121]

(~~TS~~) Meantime, on 30 June, CINCPAC requested authority to seed new minefield segments with MK-36/40 destructors. The Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the use of these munitions in and around the entrances to ports, river mouths, islands, and other areas in the internal and claimed territorial waters of North Vietnam on 30 July, provided no third country shipping was present. They specifically prohibited the implanting of mines or destructors in the vicinity of the Chinese anchorages at Hon La and Hon Nieu, even if the Chinese ships temporarily vacated those areas. At this time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also restricted POCKET MONEY somewhat, directing that each seeding and reseeding operation be approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[122]

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120. See above, p. 411.

121. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-1989-72 to SecDef, 4 Jul 72, CJCS CM Chron File.

122. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 010245Z Jul 72, JCS IN 25042. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, JCS 7623 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 301946Z Jul 72.

(TS) On 1 August, Admiral Moorer notified the Secretary of Defense that two minefield segments (2111A and 2111B) in Haiphong harbor would be 50 percent sterile by 20 August and asked for authority to reseed them. Although a similar request had been denied earlier, the Secretary approved this time and the actual reseeding took place on 11 August.[123]

(TS) On 20 August, CINCPACFLT reported a "Woosung" class minesweeper in Haiphong harbor. The field commander had no explanation for how this vessel arrived behind the minefield, but there was speculation that a route through shallow coastal waters had been found to circumvent the deeper mined channel. Consequently Admiral Moorer suggested to CINCPAC consideration of further mining to close possible routes. Thereafter, three tender-type craft capable of minesweeping were identified in Haiphong harbor. The nationality of these three tenders as well as the minesweeper could not be determined, but none of them were attempting to sweep the minefields. Therefore, CINCPAC proposed on 28 August to continue surveillance of these ships to identify their nationality. Meantime, should any of the four attempt mine countermeasures operations he wanted immediate authority to reseed the Haiphong channel.[124]

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123. (TS-EX) CM-2040-72 to SecDef, 1 Aug 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Aug 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 5666 to CINCPAC, 071653Z Aug 72. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 191.

124. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1909 to CINCPAC, 221648Z Aug 72; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT (info CJCS), 232222Z Aug 72, JCS IN 32994. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 290318Z Aug 72, JCS IN 42154.

(TS) Admiral Moorer told the Secretary of Defense on 7 September of the presence of the minesweeper and the tenders in Haiphong harbor. Since the identity of the four ships still had not been determined, the Chairman did not want to raise the sensitive question of action to meet mine countermeasures by a third country unless the situation arose. Nevertheless, he did want to insure the effectiveness of the Haiphong channel minefield against this newly discovered minesweeping threat. Therefore he proposed the following actions: (1) should the minesweeper prove to be North Vietnamese, every effort would be made to attack and destroy it within existing authorities; (2) if the craft flew a third country flag, or if it could not be identified, destructors would be reseeded within existing authorities and immediate permission would be requested to reseed the channel with mines. At the same time, Admiral Moorer requested CINCPAC to report any enemy attempts or suspected attempts at minesweeping in the Haiphong channel. The vessels, however, made no effort to sweep the Haiphong waters and there was no occasion to take action against them.[125]

(U) During the summer and fall of 1972, there were further allegations of US attack on civilian targets in North Vietnam. In July, North Vietnam charged the United States with bombing dikes on 20 different occasions and forwarded reputed evidence of the attacks to the UN Secretary General. The United States disclaimed any intentional bombing of dams or dikes though a Department of State spokesman did concede that there might have been accidental or

125. (TS-EX) CM-2162-72 to SecDef, 7 Sep 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 5196 to CINCPAC, 071722Z Sep 72.

inadvertent damage as the result of strikes on nearby military targets. On 27 July, President Nixon strongly defended the US bombing in North Vietnam. It was not US policy, he said, to bomb the dikes. If it had been, he continued, "we could take them out, the significant part of them out, in a week." He went on to contrast the US efforts to avoid civilian targets in the north with the deliberate North Vietnamese shelling of cities in South Vietnam resulting in 45,000 civilian casualties since the beginning of the offensive in April.[126]

(~~TS~~) Another bombing incident that caused international repercussions was an attack on the Gia Lam railroad repair shops in Hanoi on 11 October when the French diplomatic mission was hit and heavily damaged. The Joint Chiefs of Staff immediately prohibited any further air strikes within a 10 nautical mile radius of Hanoi until further notice and ordered an investigation of the incident. In a detailed report to the Secretary of Defense some days later, Admiral Moorer accounted for all 19 aircraft that had participated in the operation. None, he said, had reported malfunctions that might have caused the damage. He noted that the strike aircraft were subjected to intense AAA fire and that at least eight SAMs were observed. In such a hostile environment it was not uncommon for aircrews to have difficulty keeping track of their exact positions. Since bomb fragments found at the French mission site were reported to be of US manufacture, Admiral Moorer could only conclude that US forces were responsible due to accidential release of weapons, inadvertent jettison, or late release of momentarily hung ordnance.[127]

126. Knappman, South Vietnam, p. 150. Nixon, Public Papers, 1972, pp. 744-746, 752.

127. NY Times, 12 Oct 72, 1. (~~TS~~-EX) Msgs, JCS 1472 and 1946 to CINCPAC, 111453Z and 112225Z Oct 72. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-2258-72 to SecDef, 19 Oct 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72.

(~~S~~) In October a serious problem in operational security for B-52 flights developed and all sorties in Route Packages 2 and 3, the upper portion of the North Vietnam panhandle, were cancelled on 9 October. Intelligence had confirmed that the enemy had accurate knowledge of the B-52 targets as well as planned times over targets. The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to undertake "an immediate and determined effort" to tighten the operational security of the B-52 strikes. They saw no reason to disclose B-52 targets and timing outside of US secure channels. "The fact that such information has reached enemy hands prior to the strikes," they said, "should be a matter of grave concern to all of us."[128]

(~~TS~~) When Secretary Laird learned of the possible enemy knowledge of the B-52 strikes, he asked for an investigation of "our entire chain of planning and execution of our B-52 strikes." Admiral Moorer replied on 17 October that the problem was a complicated one with a number of agencies and activities involved in the planning and execution. Each element in the process had been identified, he said, and a thorough investigation was underway. Preliminary results had disclosed no apparent source of operational leaks.[129]

(~~TS~~) By early October there were growing indications that secret US-North Vietnamese negotiations[130] might

128. (~~TS~~) DJSM-1923-72 to CJCS, 10 Oct 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72. (~~TS~~) Msg, JCS 1369 to CINCPAC, 111227Z Oct 72.

129. (~~TS~~-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Enemy Knowledge of B-52 Strikes in NVN," 10 Oct 72; CM-2255-72 to SecDef, 17 Oct 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72.

130. See Chapter 11 for a description of these developments.

soon produce a peace settlement in Vietnam, and in an effort to enhance the chances for success, the United States cut back air attacks against North Vietnam. On 14 October, the Secretary of Defense directed the gradual reduction of attack sorties in North Vietnam to about 150 per day by 19 October. The bulk of the remaining sorties, he instructed, should be used in the area just above the Demilitarized Zone in order to give maximum support to the fighting in South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff immediately issued the necessary orders to CINCPAC, and the following day, the reduction of the US air campaign against North Vietnam was accelerated. At that time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to achieve the 150 daily rate by 17 October in lieu of 19 October as previously instructed.[131]

(~~TS~~) Then on 22 October, the United States restricted air operations against North Vietnam even further. At the instruction of higher authority, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to cease all air operations, leaflet and psychological warfare operations, and naval gunfire in North Vietnam above 20° north effective 0700 Vietnam time, 23 October. Even

131 (~~TS~~-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Attack Sorties in North Vietnam," 14 Oct 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72. (TS-EX) Msgs, JCS 1401 and 1823 to CINCPAC, 150044Z and 152155Z Oct 72.

According to Richard Nixon's account, he ordered an intermediate reduction to 200 attack sorties on 13 October and then subsequently further restricted the bombing of North Vietnam to 150 attack sorties. See The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (1978), pp. 693-694. No record has been found, however, of an order for or implementation of the intermediate reduction to 200 sorties.

though the prospective peace settlement aborted on 26 October, the United States did not resume air operations in North Vietnam at the pre-October levels, and on the following day, 27 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff restricted the use of MK-36 destructors in the POCKET MONEY mining. They directed CINCPAC to cease using MK-36 MODs 1 and 1A altogether and to set other MK-36 destructors for either 30 or 45 day self-destruct times.[132]

(~~TS~~) On 27 October, the Acting Chairman, General John D. Ryan, USAF, asked the Secretary of Defense to clarify the restriction on US air operations in North Vietnam imposed five days earlier. Specifically, General Ryan wanted authority for immediate pursuit of hostile forces throughout North Vietnam to within 20 nautical miles of the Chinese border, for conduct of defensive reaction and use of antiradiation missiles (air and surface launched) as necessary above 20° north, and for laser illuminator/optical delivery aircraft overflight of North Vietnam up to a distance of three nautical miles. Further, unless directed otherwise, General Ryan interpreted the 22 October restrictions to allow psychological operations below 20° north, but to prohibit both POCKET MONEY seedings or reseedings above 20° north and action to counter North Vietnamese mine countermeasures activity. The Secretary approved these requests and clarifications with some modification. No air-to-surface or surface-to-surface ordance was to impact above 20° north and

132. (~~TS~~) Msg, JCS 7521 to CINCPAC, 221956Z Oct 72. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, JCS 4296 to CINCPAC, 271341Z Oct 72.

"hot pursuit" was authorized only up to 20°30' north.[133]

(TS) Shortly before the curtailment of the air operations against North Vietnam, Admiral Moorer gave the Secretary of Defense an assessment of both the LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY campaigns. The mining, the Chairman told the Secretary on 12 October, had forced a fundamental revision in the basic method by which North Vietnam received supplies. Except for minor offshore activities near Hon La and Hon Nieu Islands, the North Vietnamese coast had been closed to foreign shipping. This development had forced North Vietnam to shift movement of supplies to rail and road networks--a method less effecient and more susceptible to air interdiction. Moreover, the adjustment had lengthened enemy supply lines, causing delays as well as manpower and economic drains.

(TS) Despite the restrictions on attacks in the Chinese buffer zone and in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas, air interdiction had destroyed bridges on both the northeast and northwest railroads between Hanoi-Haiphong and the Chinese border. This destruction necessitated extensive shuttling from railcar to trucks and water craft. With bridges out, the enemy used ferries and barges to cross rivers, and this tactic had been countered by implanting destructors in inland waterways. Within the existing prohibitions, attacks had been conducted against the Hanoi-Haiphong

133. (TS-EX) CM-2273-72 to SecDef, 27 Oct 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "SEAsia Operating Authorities," 2 Nov 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972).

area to destroy the major distribution points and industrial complexes there. While progress had been made, strike restrictions accounted for significant targets remaining. Below Hanoi and Haiphong, Admiral Moorer continued, the air interdiction had placed maximum pressure on lines of communication before supplies moved into South Vietnam. Extensive daily tactical reconnaissance had exposed supply points that were attacked as identified. In addition, major and minor bridges were destroyed and rail traffic had been greatly restricted below Hanoi.[134]

(U) By October, the LINEBACKER campaign had inflicted heavy damage on North Vietnam, and together with POCKET MONEY, had caused serious logistical problems for the enemy. But the extent to which the damage and problems had influenced the enemy will and determination to continue the war in South Vietnam was a matter of some question. To date, the North Vietnamese had shown no serious inclination to end the fighting, and separate but concurring Central and Defense Intelligence Agency reports to the National Security Council in September had concluded that North Vietnam could sustain the current level of fighting for the next two years, even with the heavy US bombing.[135]

(~~TS~~) Nonetheless, by the time of the restriction of US air operations in October 1972, the South Vietnamese, with US assistance, had not only stopped the offensive but had pushed the enemy back nearly to positions existing before the campaign began. While

134. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-2241-72 to SecDef, 12 Oct 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72.
135. NY Times, 13 Sep 72, 1.

the enemy still controlled areas of South Vietnamese territory, only 400,000 people of the total population of 19 million remained under enemy control. Moreover, North Vietnamese casualties during the offensive were estimated at 100,000 killed or seriously wounded, and the Central Intelligence Agency predicted that it would take 18 months for North Vietnam to resupply and refit its main forces.[136]

136. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 28 Sep 72, NSC Files.