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~~TOP SECRET~~
THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

JCSM-567-67

23 October 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Holiday Standdowns in Vietnam (U)

1. ~~(S)~~ Reference is made to:

a. American Embassy Saigon message to the Department of State, 8432/130935Z October 1967 (JCS 42411), in which the US Ambassador to South Vietnam submitted a recommended US position for a holiday military posture for Christmas, New Year's, and Tet 1967-68.

b. CINCPAC message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC 200132Z October 1967 (JCS 54974), in which CINCPAC strongly recommends no cease-fire or standdown of military operations during any holiday period.

c. JCSM-25-67, dated 18 January 1967, subject: "US Policy for TET 1967 (U)," and previous memorandums in which the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed the Tet and other standdowns because of the high military cost to US, Republic of Vietnam, and allied forces resulting from the relaxation of military pressures on the enemy.

2. ~~(S)~~ The Joint Chiefs of Staff are opposed to any stand-down during Christmas, New Year's or the Tet period.

3. ~~(S)~~ Past experience with holiday standdowns supports the judgment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that a heavy price must be paid for any psychological or political advantages which might accrue to the Free World. In the past, these standdowns have resulted in increased casualties to US and allied forces. Similarly, increased casualties can be expected to result from a future standdown. These casualties cannot be justified on the basis of the value attached to traditional or religious observances.

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4. (TS) A standdown of any kind in our operations for even so much as 24 hours is disadvantageous to our forces; longer standdowns are substantially more advantageous to the enemy, whose ability to exploit them is greatly increased as the respite afforded him is prolonged. In this regard, we are particularly concerned with the military implications of the total freeze recommended by Ambassador Bunker. The enemy has already demonstrated that his logistic and replacement activities can be accomplished clandestinely, whereas our forces require an uninterrupted flow of logistic support and personnel which cannot be concealed. A total freeze on logistics, force repositioning, and rotation and replacement of personnel would place the US/GVN/FWMA forces in an untenable position if, for any reason, the standdown were extended.

5. (TS) Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that the United States urge the Republic of Vietnam and its allies to announce, as soon as possible, their intention not to standdown for Christmas, New Year's, or Tet, or any other holiday period.

6. (S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff request that their views be made known to the President, and they recommend that the proposed joint State/Defense message attached as the Appendix hereto, which reflects their views, be passed to the Department of State for concurrence and dispatch.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Earle G. Wheeler

EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Attachment

APPENDIX

DRAFT

ACTION	AMEMB SAIGON CINCPAC	PRIORITY	130935Z is JCS IN 42411
INFO	JCS COMUSMACV AMEMB VIENTIANE	PRIORITY PRIORITY PRIORITY	200132Z is JCS IN 54974

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JOINT STATE/DEFENSE MESSAGE

Subj: Holiday Cease-Fire (U)

Refs: a. AMEMB SAIGON 8432/130935Z Oct 67.

b. CINCPAC 200132Z Oct 67.

1. (U) We agree that there is no military justification for a cease-fire or standdown of military operations during holiday periods. We are convinced that the political and psychological value of our proposing or agreeing to a standdown for Christmas, Tet, or any other holiday, is not worth the heavy price that must be paid. Our experience is that the communists have flagrantly exploited previous cease-fire periods and US/RVN/FWMA forces have suffered greater casualties as a result.

2. (U) Under any circumstances, we see a commitment to a total freeze on all movements of military personnel and materiel in both NVN and SVN as being of far greater disadvantage to us than to the enemy. He can conceal his logistical activities; we cannot. He would surely realize that we cannot stand a logistical freeze of any appreciable length and would probably call for an extended freeze for the political value to be gained from our having to reject it. He would know that we would have difficulty obtaining release from such a commitment even though he violated it. We are convinced that it would be

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extremely disadvantageous for us to support a total freeze 1
on logistics and force repositioning by both sides. 2

3. ~~(S)~~ Our intention not to standdown military operations 3
for Christmas, Tet, or any other holiday season, and the 4
overriding military necessity therefor, should be made 5
known before any proposals for such standdowns are made by 6
Hanoi, the NLF, or anyone else. Accordingly, President 7
Thieu should be consulted along these lines at an early 8
opportunity. If he agrees, announcement should be made in 9
Saigon. Please send proposed text as far in advance of 10
announcement as possible. It is assumed here that GVN will 11
coordinate with our other allies in Saigon. GP-3. 12

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