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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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JCSM-698-67

16 December 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Study of the Political-Military Implications in Southeast Asia of the Cessation of Aerial Bombardment and the Initiation of Negotiations (Short Title: SEA CABIN (U))

1. (U) Reference is made to the subject study, copies of which were provided to you and to the Deputy Secretary of Defense by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

2. (S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff have noted the SEA CABIN study. There is an ever present possibility that the Government of North Vietnam (NVN) may accept an offer, such as that made at San Antonio or may ask for clarification of terms. The terms of reference for the study required an examination of the political-military implications to the United States of such a NVN response. The SEA CABIN study contributed to this objective.

3. (TS) Further, the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the study should be useful to DOD planners in helping to identify: (a) a range of risks over time to the US military position in South Vietnam following a possible cessation of bombing; (b) certain actions required to minimize these risks; and (c) some criteria for a resumption of bombardment.

4. (TS) The SEA CABIN study was restricted by the lack of sufficient reliable intelligence to permit the development of a more precise evaluation of the over-all impact of the air campaign on the war-making capability of NVN. This condition necessarily results in imprecise conclusions, which the Joint Chiefs of Staff cannot validate. For example, the Joint Chiefs of Staff affirm their judgment that the bombing in the north continues to impose accumulating pressure on NVN that will contribute significantly to the achievement of US military objectives in South Vietnam.

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5. (TS) It would seem appropriate and essential for governmental agencies jointly to examine the problem of NVN acceptance of the San Antonio offer, or other possible offers, and to recommend a US national position. The recent Sigma-67 war game indicated diverse agency views on the complex problem of negotiating while maintaining military pressure. Since SEA CABIN includes a wide spectrum of material on this subject, it is one source of background data for military representatives in interdepartmental study.

6. (TS) An interdepartmental study by a specially appointed group under the auspices of the Senior Interdepartmental Group would be the most appropriate approach to the preparation of a national response to the subject. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that (a) such a study be initiated; (b) that representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff participate and provide input to this study; and (c) that the Joint Chiefs of Staff be afforded the opportunity to review the findings of that study.

7. (U) Meanwhile, the Joint Chiefs of Staff will analyze the SEA CABIN Study and, as early as practicable, will submit their judgments on the substantive issues.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Earle G. Wheeler

EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff