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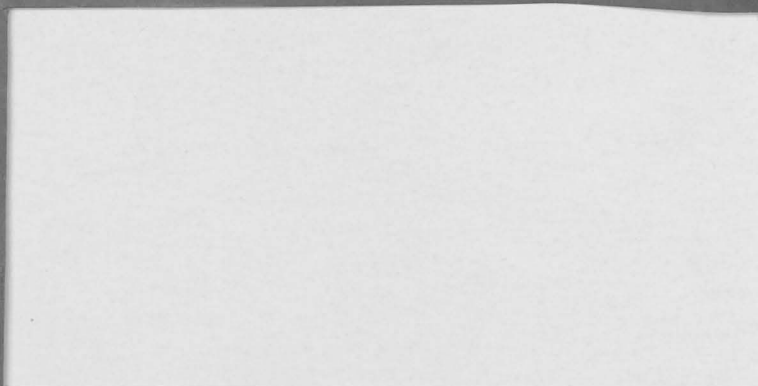
c. Volume III: Program 6

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# UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

## 1945 - 1967



**VIETNAM TASK FORCE**

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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U.S. GROUND STRATEGY  
AND FORCE DEPLOYMENTS  
1965--1967

VOLUME III

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AND OUTLINE

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VOLUME III  
U.S. GROUND STRATEGY AND FORCE DEPLOYMENTS, 1965--1967

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V. PROGRAM NO. 6

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## V. PROGRAM 6

### 1. Emergency Augmentation

Thus, the year ended with the combat elements of Program 5 either closing in Vietnam or on their way to Vietnam on an accelerated schedule. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, could only promise that, even with these deployments, the rate of progress in Vietnam would continue to be slow in light of the continuing restrictions imposed on the conduct of military operations.

In his year-end assessment of the military situation, however, COMUSMACV had a somewhat more optimistic outlook. He indicated that the Program 5 deployments had "provided us with an increased force structure and logistics base for offensive operations". The past year, he indicated, had been marked by steady free world progress, a noticeable deterioration of the enemy's combat effectiveness, and his loss of control over large areas and population.

"During 1967, the enemy lost control of large sectors of the population. He faces significant problems in the areas of indigenous recruiting, morale, health and resources control. Voids in VC ranks are being filled by regular NVA. Sea infiltration through the Market Time area has diminished to near-insignificant proportions. Interdiction of the enemy's logistics train in Laos and NVN by our indispensable air efforts has imposed significant difficulties on him. In many areas the enemy has been driven away from the population centers; in others he has been compelled to disperse and evade contact, thus nullifying much of his potential. The year ended with the enemy increasingly resorting to desperation tactics in attempting to achieve military/psychological victory; and he has experienced only failure in these attempts. Enemy bases, with sparse exception, are no longer safe havens and he has necessarily become increasingly reliant on Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries..."

"The friendly picture gives rise to optimism for increased successes in 1968. In 1967, our logistics base and force structure permitted us to assume a fully offensive posture... A greatly improved intelligence system frequently enabled us to concentrate our superior military assets in preempting enemy military initiatives leading us to decisive accomplishments in conventional engagements. Materiel and tactical innovations have been further developed and employed: Long range reconnaissance patrols, aerial reconnaissance sensors, new O-2A observation aircraft, Rome plows, 47 (Spooky) gunships, air-mobile operations and the Mobile Riverine Force (MRF), to name

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a few. The MRF has been significantly successful in depriving the enemy of freedom and initiative in the population and resources rich Delta areas. The helicopter has established itself as perhaps the single most important tool in our arsenal -- and we will welcome more. To air support in both RVN and NVN (Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force) goes much of the credit for our accomplishments." 1/

The enemy's TET offensive, which began with the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Saigon on 31 January 1968, although it had been predicted, 2/ took the U.S. command and the U.S. public by surprise, and its strength, length, and intensity prolonged this shock. As the attacks continued, the Secretary of Defense, on 9 February, requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to furnish plans which would provide for emergency reinforcement of COMUSMACV.

After extensive backchannel communication with General Westmoreland, the JCS forwarded these plans on 12 February. 3/ The Joint Chiefs' assessment of the current Vietnam situation differed markedly from COMUSMACV's year-end assessment submitted only 17 days earlier:

"a. The VC/NVA forces have launched large-scale offensive operations throughout South Vietnam.

"b. As of 11 February 1968, Headquarters, MACV, reports that attacks have taken place on 34 provincial towns, 64 district towns, and all of the autonomous cities.

"c. The enemy has expressed his intention to continue offensive operations and to destroy the Government of Vietnam and its Armed Forces.

"d. The first phase of his offensive has failed in that he does not have adequate control over any population center to install his Revolutionary Committees which he hoped to form into a coalition with the NLF.

"e. He has lost between 30 and 40 thousand killed and captured, and we have seized over seven thousand weapons.

"f. Reports indicate that he has committed the bulk of his VC main force and local force elements down to platoon level throughout the country, with the exception of six to eight battalions in the general area of Saigon.

"g. Thus far, he has committed only 20 to 25 percent of his North Vietnamese forces. These were employed as gap fillers where VC strength was apparently not adequate to carry out his initial thrust on the cities and towns. Since November, he has



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increased his NVA battalions by about 25. The bulk of these and the bulk of the uncommitted NVA forces are in the I Corps area.

"h. It is not clear whether the enemy will be able to recycle his attacks in a second phase. He has indicated his intention to do so during the period from 10 to 15 February.

"i. South Vietnamese forces have suffered nearly two thousand killed, over seven thousand wounded, and an unknown number of absences. MACV suspects the desertion rate may be high. The average present for duty strength of RVN infantry battalions is 50 percent and Ranger Battalions, 43 percent. Five of nine airborne battalions are judged by MACV to be combat ineffective at this time."

Based on this assessment, COMUSMACV voiced to the Joint Chiefs three major concerns:

"a. The ability of the weakened RVNAF to cope with additional sustained enemy offensive operations.

"b. Logistic support north of Danang, because of weather and sea conditions in the Northern I Corps area, enemy interdiction of Route 1, and the probability of intensified combat in that area.

"c. The forces available to him are not adequate at the moment to permit him to pursue his own campaign plans and to resume offensive operations against a weakened enemy, considering the competing requirements of reacting to enemy initiatives, assisting in defending Government centers, and reinforcing weakened RVNAF units when necessary."

The three plans for emergency reinforcement examined by the Joint Chiefs of Staff were:

"a. Plan One, which is based upon prompt deployment of the 82nd Airborne Division and 6/9 Marine division/wing team, callup of some 120,000 Army and Marine Corps Reserves, and appropriate legislative action to permit extension of terms of service of active duty personnel and the recall of individual Reservists.

"b. Plan Two, which would deploy as many Marine Corps battalions as are now available in CONUS, less one battalion in the Caribbean, the battalion in the Mediterranean, and the Guantanamo Defense Force. This plan would not be based upon a callup of Reservists or legislative action.

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"c. Plan Three, which would deploy the 82nd Airborne Division but would leave Marine Corps battalions in CONUS. This plan would likewise envisage no Reserve callup and no legislative action."

Under Plan One, elements of one brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division could commence movement within 24 hours and the division itself 36-48 hours later. 6/9ths of a Marine Corps Division/wing team could be ready for deployment to Vietnam in one week without utilizing Vietnam replacement drafts. Dependent upon the availability of aircraft and the degree of drawdown on the current level of Southeast Asia airlift support, the deployment could be completed within three to four weeks.

Under Plan Two, elements of two CONUS Marine Divisions, consisting of 12 battalions could be air transported to Vietnam, although two weeks preparation would be required. This deployment, however, would deplete Marine Corps assets except for three battalions -- one afloat in the Mediterranean, one afloat in the Caribbean, and one ashore at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Under Plan Three, as under Plan One, elements of one brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division could commence movement in 24 hours, the division itself 36-48 hours later.

All of these plans, however, would require drawdowns on previously protected CONUS stocks during procurement lead-time for new production and would further aggravate the shortage of long procurement lead time items currently short, such as helicopters, tracked combat vehicles, and ammunition.

An examination was also made of the feasibility of an increased acceleration in the deployment of the four infantry battalions scheduled to deploy in March-April under Program 5. It was concluded that these units could not be deployed earlier "except under the most critical circumstances."

In examining the capacity to meet the possibility of widespread civil disorder in the United States, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that, whether or not deployments under any of the plans were directed, it appeared that sufficient forces would still be available for civil disorder control.

However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned that the residual CONUS-based active combat-ready ground forces that would result from the extension of each of the plans examined would be:

- "a. Plan One - 6/9 Marine Division/Wing Team.
- b. Plan Two - One Airborne Division.



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c. Plan Three - One and 3/9 Marine Division/Wing Team."

Moreover, these forces were at various levels of readiness and a high percentage of their personnel were Vietnam returnees or close to the end of the obligated active service. The capability of these uncommitted general purpose forces was further constrained, the Joint Chiefs pointed out, by shortages of critical skilled specialists and shortages in mission essential items of equipment and materiel. Thus, the Joint Chiefs emphasized, our posture of readily available combat forces was seriously strained. Any decision to deploy emergency augmentation forces should be accompanied by the recall of at least an equivalent number, or more prudently, additional Reserve component forces and an extension of terms of service for active duty personnel. Indeed, the Chiefs, warned,

"It is not clear at this time whether the enemy will be able to mount and sustain a second series of major attacks throughout the country. It is equally unclear as to how well the Vietnamese Armed Forces would be able to stand up against such a series of attacks if they were to occur. In the face of these uncertainties, a more precise assessment of USMACV's additional force requirements, if any, must await further developments. The Joint Chiefs of Staff do not exclude the possibility that additional developments could make further deployments necessary."

Based on this assessment of the situation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded and recommended that:

"a. A decision to deploy reinforcements to Vietnam be deferred at this time.

"b. Measures be taken now to prepare the 82nd Airborne Division and 6/9 Marine Division/Wing team for possible deployment to Vietnam.

"c. As a matter of prudence, call certain additional Reserve units to active duty now. Deployment of emergency reinforcements to Vietnam should not be made without concomitant callup of Reserves sufficient at least to replace those deployed and provide for the increased sustaining base requirements of all Services. In addition, bring selected Reserve force units to full strength and an increased state of combat readiness.

"d. Legislation be sought now to (1) provide authority to call individual Reservists to active duty; (2) extend past 30 June 1968 the existing authority to call Reserve units to active duty; and (3) extend terms of service for active duty personnel.



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"e. Procurement and other supply actions be taken now to overcome shortages existing in certain critical items of materiel and equipment such as munitions, helicopters, and other combat aircraft."

Thus, for perhaps the first time in the history of American involvement in Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended against deploying the additional forces requested by the field commander, in the absence of other steps to reconstitute the strategic reserve. At long last, the resources were beginning to be drawn too thin, the assets became unavailable, the support base too small.

Notwithstanding the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense almost immediately approved the deployment of one brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division and one Marine regimental landing team to South Vietnam. A total strength of almost 10,500 was assumed and publicly announced. These deployments were directed by the JCS on 13 February. Airlift of the brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division, at a strength of approximately four thousand, was to begin on 14 February and the brigade was to close in-country not later than 26 February 1968. 4/ After coordination with CINCSTRIKE and USCONARC, the strength of this unit was fixed at 3,702. 5/

The Marine Corps Regiment was to close in SVN not later than 26 February also. The Regiment (reinforced) less one battalion, was to be deployed by air from California at a strength of about 3,600. One battalion (reinforced) which was then embarked, was to be deployed by surface at a strength of about 1,600. 6/

In view of the wide variation of strength associated with a Marine Corps Regiment (reinforced), CINCPAC was directed to advise all concerned of the identity, composition and strength of the force selected for deployment. 7/ CINCPAC nominated the 27th Marine Regiment, which included 5247 Marine and 327 Navy personnel. Additionally, he included the deployment of a logistic support element of 389 personnel from Okinawa to reduce the impact on the already heavily committed logistic units in I CTZ. In addition, CINCPAC took the precautionary step of identifying, for follow-on deployment, a sea-tail of reinforcing units totalling 1,400 personnel. This element, scheduled to follow in April 1968, would provide the regiment the necessary self-sustaining combat power in the event early replacement was not provided. 8/ Thus, the total number of troops deployed or alerted for the follow-on sea-tail numbered 11,065. 9/

The Joint Chiefs of Staff reacted almost immediately to the national decision to deploy these forces without a concomitant reserve callup. On 13 February 1968 they forwarded to the Secretary of Defense their recommendations for actions which should be taken relative to callup of reserves, obtaining legislation and instituting procurement actions to provide support for these forces and to sustain their deployment. 10/

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A minimum callup of Reserve units to replace deploying forces and to sustain and support them was justified, the Joint Chiefs stated, by the following situation:

"a. Army. The 82nd Airborne Division represents the only readily deployable Army division in the CONUS-based active strategic reserve. The impending reduction of this division by one-third to meet approved deployments establishes an immediate requirement for its prompt reconstitution which is possible only by the callup of Reserve units. In order to replace the forces deployed from the strategic reserve, to provide support units to meet anticipation requirements in I CTZ and to provide a wider rotation base of requisite ranks and skills, it will be necessary for the Army to call up two infantry brigade forces of the Reserve components. This callup will total approximately 32,000 personnel. These two brigades should attain a combat-ready and deployable status in 12 weeks following callup.

"b. Marine Corps.

"(1) The Marine Corps cannot sustain additional deployments to Southeast Asia under current personnel policies. Thus, the force authorized for deployment must be replaced with a comparable Reserve unit as soon as possible. The Reserve force required for this purpose will consist of one Marine regiment, reinforcing combat support and combat service support units, and one composite Marine Air Group with one VNA, one VMP, and two medium helicopter squadrons (HMM).

"(2) The Reserve force will consist of approximately 12,000 personnel. It will provide the capability to deploy a balanced, self-sustaining air/ground combat force in relief of the lightly structured 27th Marines (Rein) and permit return of the 27th Marine Regiment (Rein) to the training/rotation base in CONUS/Hawaii. This exchange would commence as soon as the Reserve unit becomes combat-ready (approximately 60 days after callup) and must be completed not later than 120 days after deployment of RLTF-27.

"(3) It is envisioned that the Reserve forces will be redeployed to CONUS without replacement after 13 months in South Vietnam. However, if this does not occur, it will be best to deploy a relief brigade from the 4th Marine Division/wing team. Alternately, an adequate rotation base in CONUS to sustain the continued deployment can be created but to do so requires extensions of terms of service and other personnel policy changes.

"(4) In addition, it must be recognized that the anticipated proportionate increase in personnel losses will require an increase in the end strength of the active forces to sustain these losses.



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"c. Navy. Support of the newly authorized deployments will require the callup of two Navy mobile construction battalions (NMCB) totalling 1,700 personnel and 600 individual medical/dental/chaplain Reservists. These callups will provide for bringing recalled Marine units up to strength, sustaining the Navy personnel organic to the deployed RLT, and adding medical staffing required by the increased level of activity in Southeast Asia to forward hospital facilities including Guam.

"d. Air Force. The Air Force plans to support this approved deployment operation without recall of individuals or units. Reserve airlift augmentation needed to supplement the deployment airlift can be accomplished by Reservists on a voluntary basis."

In addition, the Joint Chiefs indicated that it would be both prudent and advisable to reach a readiness level that could be responsive to further COMUSMACV force requirements, if the remainder of the 82nd Airborne Division and one more RLT were required. COMUSMACV had already indicated the potential need for these units at an early date. To reach such a readiness level, the Joint Chiefs indicated that the following Reserve forces would have to be activated:

"a. Army. Should the additional deployments be made, it would be necessary for the Army to recall (in addition to the two brigade forces previously discussed) one infantry division force and one infantry brigade force of the Army Reserve components, totalling 58,000 men. These forces will be needed to reconstitute the strategic reserve and to broaden the source of critical ranks and skills to be applied against the increased rotation base requirements. The Reserve units should be recalled at this time to bring them closer to a combat-ready status prior to the probable deployment of the balance of the 82nd Airborne Division. The Reserve division force should attain a combat-capable status in 15 weeks after recall and the brigade force should require 12 weeks.

"b. Marine Corps.

(1) The most desirable Reserve callup consists of the entire 4th Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), plus other units and selected individual Reserves. This totals about 51,000. Mobilization and subsequent deployment of the Reserve forces should be accomplished incrementally. This callup permits the early and orderly replacement of the 5th Marine Division (-) in South Vietnam and the subsequent redeployment of the 5th Marine Division (-) to CONUS, or, alternatively, the 4th Division/Wing Team can meet the additional requirements....

"c. Navy. Support of these additional deployments would require the callup of an additional three NMCB (total of five) totalling 4,150 personnel and an additional 400 (for a total of 1,000) medical/dental/chaplain Reservists. These callups



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would provide for 14 NMCB in RVN for direct construction support and an adequate rotation base to maintain these deployments. The additional medical/dental/chaplain personnel will provide for bringing recalled Marine units up to strength, sustaining the Navy personnel in the additional deploying RLT, and adding some medical staffing to forward hospital facilities. Recall of an additional 2,800 personnel would be required to augment the logistic operations in Vietnam. The increased requirement for naval gunfire support for the larger deployments would necessitate the activation of two heavy cruisers to fill CINCPAC's requirements for additional shore bombardment capability to maintain two large calibre gun ships on station in the SEA DRAGON area and off RVN. Additionally, 15 destroyers should be activated from the mothball fleet to replace 15 Naval Reserve Training destroyers to be called to active duty. This would fill CINCPAC's requirement for an additional five destroyers on station off Vietnam and provide the rotation base to support them. The recall of 6,000 Naval Reserve personnel would provide the additional manpower and skills base to man these reactivated ships.

"d. Air Force. The deployment of the remainder of the 82nd Airborne Division to Southeast Asia will require the support of three tactical fighter squadrons, a tactical reconnaissance squadron, necessary elements of the Tactical Air Control System, one PRIME BEEF unit, and one security squadron. In order to provide support of the deployment and the broadening of the training and rotation base and to retain a minimum acceptable number of combat-ready deployable squadrons in the CONUS, these Air Force organizations will have to be replaced by activation of the following Air Reserve Forces: eight tactical fighter squadrons, five tactical reconnaissance squadrons, one Tactical Control Group, two military airlift groups, and one tactical airlift wing, totalling 22,497 spaces. Activation of these Air National Guard/Reserve units include organizations not currently manned under COMBAT BEEF standards (100 percent)."

The Joint Chiefs reiterated their recommendation that legislation be sought to: "(1) provide authority to call selected individual Reservists to active duty; (2) extend beyond 30 June 1968 the existing authority to call Reserve units to active duty; and (3) extend terms of service for active duty personnel." The provisions of such legislation would, the Joint Chiefs indicated, impact on the Services in the following manner:

"a. Army.

(1) Extension of terms of Service. Provides an immediate impact on readiness worldwide in that critical skill specialists in short supply are retained on active duty. It is estimated that

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between 30,000 and 40,000 additional trained personnel will be retained in the Army for each month of extension. For example, during the first six-month period of extension of terms of service, the Army would gain in excess of 500 helicopter pilots, of which there is a critical shortage. Other critical skill shortages would be similarly affected.

"(2) Selective callup of individual Reservists. The Army Immediate Ready Reserve contains 490,000 personnel, of which more than 90 percent are in grades of E-4 and E-5. A selective callup of individual Reservists, coupled with an extension of terms of service, will alleviate virtually all of the Army's current critical skill shortages.

"b. Marine Corps.

(1) Involuntary extension of enlistments of all enlisted personnel would produce an average of 5,766 enlisted men per month through June. Within this gain, an average of 1,728 experienced NCOs per month would be gained.

"(2) Selective recall of individual Reservists would be necessary in order to bring mobilized units up, to provide the essential rank and skills not contained in the organized Reserve. Within the Marine Corps Reserve, but outside of the organized units, there is an invaluable pool of key personnel: noncommissioned officers, officers (particularly pilots), and Marines possessing long lead time "hard skill" Military Occupational Specialties.

"c. Navy. In the deploying ships of the Navy, there is a shortfall of 32,500 in officers and the top six enlisted pay grades.

(1) Involuntary extension of Reserve Officers and selected recall of Reserves would fulfill officer manning requirements in one to three months.

"(2) Cancellation of early releases and selective involuntary extensions, recall of Fleet Reserves, deferral of transfers to Fleet Reserve, and recall of Ready Reserves would achieve 100 percent enlisted requirements by rate/rating in one to three months.

"d. Air Force. If extension of terms of service were granted the Air Force could, on a selective basis, hold approximately 20,000 skilled personnel out of a possible 70,000 that would be discharged over a six-month period. Retaining these critical skills would sustain the force at an acceptable level. Should



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additional forces be deployed to meet possible future MACV requirements, legislation would be necessary in order that active units can be replaced by activation of corresponding Air National Guard units after 30 June 1968."

Based on all the foregoing, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that:

"a. The following Reserve component units be called to active duty immediately:

- (1) Two infantry brigade forces.
- (2) One Marine regiment, plus the support forces indicated in paragraph 3b(1).
- (3) Two NMCBs.

"b. The following Reserve component units be brought to a high state of readiness for probable call to active duty on short notice:

- (1) One infantry division force and one infantry brigade force, in addition to the two brigade forces indicated above.
- (2) The remainder of the 4th Marine Expeditionary Force.
- (3) Three NMCBs, in addition to the two indicated above. Also, de-mothball work and long lead time procurement should begin on two heavy cruisers and 15 destroyers. Fifteen Naval Reserve Training destroyers should be placed on active duty and commence immediate installation of modern communications/electronics equipment.
- "(4) Eight TPS, five TPS, one TACS, five ARS, one PRIME BEEF unit, and one security squadron.

"c. Measures be taken immediately to obtain the legislation to (1) provide authority to call selected individual Reservists to active duty; (2) extend beyond 30 June 1968 the existing authority to call Reserve units to active duty; and (3) extend terms of service for active duty personnel.

"d. A supplemental appropriation be requested to cover the unprogrammed cost of the approved and probable future deployments."



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In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicated that an updated assessment of U.S. military posture worldwide pertaining to additional problems for U.S. military capabilities, to include specific recommendations for required improvement, would be reported in the near future.

This request was overtaken, as we shall see, by subsequent requirements submitted by COMUSMACV.

## 2. The Troop Request

Although the new Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, was formally sworn into office by the President on 1 March, his work had begun many days before.

In order to ascertain the situation in SVN and to determine subsequent MACV force requirements, General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had been sent by the President to Saigon on 23 February. His report was presented to the President on 27 February 1968.<sup>11</sup> On the basis of this report, and the recommendations it contained, the President ordered the initiation of a complete and searching reassessment of the entire U.S. strategy and commitment in South Vietnam. The Secretary of Defense-designate, Mr. Clifford, was directed to conduct this review, aided by other members of the Cabinet.

In his report, General Wheeler summarized the situation in Vietnam as follows:

- The enemy failed to achieve his initial objective but is continuing his effort. Although many of his units were badly hurt, the judgment is that he has the will and the capability to continue.

- Enemy losses have been heavy; he has failed to achieve his prime objectives of mass uprisings and capture of a large number of the capital cities and towns. Morale in enemy units which were badly mauled or where the men were oversold the idea of a decisive victory at TET probably has suffered severely. However, with replacements, his indoctrination system would seem capable of maintaining morale at a generally adequate level. His determination appears to be unshaken.

- The enemy is operating with relative freedom in the countryside, probably recruiting heavily and no doubt infiltrating NVA units and personnel. His recovery is likely to be rapid; his supplies are adequate; and he is trying to maintain the momentum of his winter-spring offensive.

- The structure of the GVN held up but its effectiveness has suffered.

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- The RVNAF held up against the initial assault with gratifying, and in a way, surprising strength and fortitude. However, ARVN is now in a defensive posture around towns and cities and there is concern about how well they will bear up under sustained pressure.

- The initial attack nearly succeeded in a dozen places, and defeat in those places was only averted by the timely reaction of US forces. In short, it was a very near thing.

- There is no doubt that the RD Program has suffered a severe set back.

- RVNAF was not badly hurt physically -- they should recover strength and equipment rather quickly (equipment in 2 - 3 months -- strength in 3 - 6 months). Their problems are more psychological than physical.

- US forces have lost none of their pre-TET capability.

- MACV has three principal problems. First, logistic support north of Danang is marginal owing to weather, enemy interdiction and harassment and the massive deployment of US forces into the DMZ/Hue area. Opening Route 1 will alleviate this problem but takes a substantial troop commitment. Second, the defensive posture of ARVN is permitting the VC to make rapid inroads in the formerly pacified countryside. ARVN, in its own words, is in a dilemma as it cannot afford another enemy thrust into the cities and towns and yet if it remains in a defensive posture against this contingency, the countryside goes by default. MACV is forced to devote much of its troop strength to this problem. Third, MACV has been forced to deploy 50% of all US maneuver battalions into I Corps, to meet the threat there, while enemy synchronizes an attack against Khe Sanh/Hue-Quang Tri with an offensive in the Highlands and around Saigon while keeping the pressure on throughout the remainder of the country, MACV will be hard pressed to meet adequately all threats. Under these circumstances, we must be prepared to accept some reverses. 12/

As to the future, General Wheeler saw the enemy pursuing a strategy of a reinforced offensive in order to enlarge his control throughout the countryside and keep pressure on the government and the allies. The enemy is likely, the Chairman indicated:

To maintain strong threats in the DMZ area, at Khe Sanh, in the highlands, and at Saigon, and to attack in force when conditions seem favorable. He is likely to try to gain

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control of the country's northern provinces. He will continue efforts to encircle cities and province capitals to isolate and disrupt normal activities, and infiltrate them to create chaos. He will seek maximum attrition of RVNAF elements. Against US forces, he will emphasize attacks by fire on airfields and installations, using assaults and ambushes selectively. His central objective continues to be the destruction of the Government of SVN and its armed forces. As a minimum he hopes to seize sufficient territory and gain control of enough people to support establishment of the groups and committees he proposes for participation in an NLF dominated government. 13/

General Wheeler stated that MACV believed the central thrust of U.S. strategy must be to defeat the enemy offensive. If this were done well, the situation overall would be greatly improved over the pre-TET condition.

While accepting the fact that its first priority must be the security of the GVN in Saigon and in provincial capitals, MACV described its objectives as:

--First, to counter the enemy offensive and to destroy or eject the NVA invasion force in the north.

-- Second, to restore security in the cities and towns.

-- Third, to restore security in the heavily populated areas of the countryside.

-- Fourth, to regain the initiative through offensive operations. 14/

In discussing how General Westmoreland would accomplish these objectives, General Wheeler indicated the following tasks:

(1) Security of Cities and Government. MACV recognizes that US forces will be required to reinforce and support RVNAF in the security of cities, towns and government structure. At this time, 10 US battalions are operating in the environs of Saigon. It is clear that this task will absorb a substantial portion of US forces.

(2) Security in the Countryside. To a large extent the VC now control the countryside. Most of the 54 battalions formerly providing security for pacification are now defending district or province towns. MACV estimates that US forces will be required in a number of places to assist and encourage the Vietnamese Army to leave the cities and towns and reenter the country. This is especially true in the Delta.



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(3) Defense of the borders, the DMZ and the northern provinces. MACV considers that it must meet the enemy threat in I Corps Tactical Zone and has already deployed there slightly over 50% of all US maneuver battalions. US forces have been thinned out in the highlands, notwithstanding an expected enemy offensive in the early future.

(4) Offensive Operations. Coupling the increased requirement for the defense of the cities and subsequent reentry into the rural areas, and the heavy requirement for defense of the I Corps Zone, MACV does not have adequate forces at this time to resume the offensive in the remainder of the country, nor does it have adequate reserves against the contingency of simultaneous large-scale enemy offensive action throughout the country. 15/

The conclusion was obvious:

Forces currently assigned to MACV, plus the residual Program Five forces yet to be delivered, are inadequate in numbers and balance to carry out the strategy and to accomplish the tasks described above in the proper priority.

However, it was the extent and magnitude of General Wheeler's request that stimulated the initiation of a thorough review of the direction of U.S. policy in SVN. To contend with, and defeat, the new enemy threat, MACV indicated a total requirement of 206,756 spaces over the 525,000 ceiling imposed by Program Five, or a new proposed ceiling of 731,756. All of these forces, which included three Division equivalents, 15 tactical fighter squadrons, and augmentation for current Navy programs, were to be deployed into country by the end of CY 68. These additional forces were to be delivered in three packages as follows:

(1) Immediate Increment, Priority One: To be deployed by 1 May 68. Major elements include one brigade of the 5th Mechanized Division with a mix of one infantry, one armored and one mechanized battalion; the Fifth Marine Division (less RLT-26); one armored cavalry regiment; eight tactical fighter squadrons; and a groupment of Navy units to augment on going programs.

(2) Immediate Increment, Priority Two: To be deployed as soon as possible but prior to 1 Sep 68. Major elements include the remainder of the 5th Mechanized Division, and four tactical fighter squadrons. It is desirable that the ROK Light Division be deployed within this time frame.

(3) Follow-On Increment: To be deployed by the end of CY 68. Major elements include one infantry division, three tactical fighter squadrons, and units to further augment Navy Programs. 16/

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A fork in the road had been reached. Now the alternatives stood out in stark reality. To accept and meet General Wheeler's request for troops would mean a total U.S. military commitment to SVN -- an Americanization of the war, a callup of reserve forces, vastly increased expenditures. To deny the request for troops, or to attempt to again cut it to a size which could be sustained by the thinly stretched active forces, would just as surely signify that an upper limit to the U.S. military commitment in SVN had been reached.

3. "A to Z" Reassessment

These thoughts were very much on Secretary Clifford's mind during his first meeting on 29 February with the people who were to conduct the reassessment of U.S. strategy. Present, in addition to Clifford, were McNamara, General Taylor, Nitze, Fowler, Katzenbach, Rostow, Helms, Bundy, Warnke, and Habib. 17/ Mr. Clifford outlined the task as he had received it from the President. He indicated to the group that he felt that the real problem to be addressed was not whether we should send 200,000 additional troops to Vietnam. The real questions were: Should we follow the present course in SVN; could it ever prove successful even if vastly more than 200,000 troops were sent? The answers to these questions, the formulation of alternative courses open to the U.S., was to be the initial focus of the review. To that end, general assignments were made concerning papers to be written. These papers were to be prepared for discussion among the Group on Saturday, March 2. The general division of labor and outline of subjects assigned was indicated by Mr. Bundy in a memorandum the subsequent day, as follows:

1. What alternative courses of action are available to the US?

Assignment: Defense - General Taylor - State (Secretary)

2. What alternative courses are open to the enemy?

Assignment - Defense and CIA

3. Analysis of implications of Westmoreland's request for additional troops.

Series of papers on the following.

Military implications - JCS

Political implications - State

(Political implications in their broadest domestic and international sense to include internal Vietnamese problem).

Budgetary results -- Defense

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Economic implications - Treasury

Congressional implications - Defense

Implications for public opinion - domestic and  
international - State.

#### 4. Negotiation Alternatives

Assignment - State 18/

In addition, Secretary Clifford indicated that certain military options were to be examined in this review. These options were:

Option I: Add approximately 196,000 troops to the present total authorized force level, i.e. Program 5 (525,000) plus the six additional battalions already deployed (10,500). Restrictions currently imposed on air and ground operations in Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam are relaxed to permit destruction of the ports, mining of the waterways, attack of complete target systems in NVN and offensive operations against VC/NVA Army forces in Laos and Cambodia.

Option IA: No change from Option I except that current restrictions on ground and air operations in Cambodia, Laos, and NVN are maintained.

Option II: No change to total authorized force level (525,000 plus 10,500 augmentation) except to deploy 3 fighter squadrons authorized within the ceiling but not deployed.

Option III: Add 50,000 troops above those currently authorized.

Option IV: Add 100,000 troops above those currently authorized. 19/

The main work in preparing a paper for Secretary Clifford to present to the President was to be done in the Defense Department by a group of staff action officers working intensively under the direction of Mr. Leslie Gelb. These staff officers worked as a drafting committee while a group consisting of Mr. Warnke, Mr. Enthoven, Mr. Halperin and Mr. Steadman acted as a policy review board. Of the work done outside the Pentagon, only the papers on negotiations and SVN domestic policies prepared by Mr. Bundy and Mr. Habib at State and General Taylor's paper on alternative strategies went to the White House. The other materials contributed by CIA, State, Treasury, and the Joint Staff were fed into the deliberative process at the Pentagon but were not included as such in the final product. Thus, the dominant voice in the consideration of alternatives as the reassessment progressed was that of the OSD.



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These agency views were, however, read and assessed by the working group and, although they were not furnished to the President, they were part of the background of the deliberative process. It would be misleading, therefore, to say that they were not considered or had no influence on the decisions taken. In any case, they provided some sense of the ideas and alternatives being considered and debated during these few frantic days of late February - early March, 1968.

The CIA furnished three papers which were considered in the reassessment. The first, dated 26 February 1968, was prepared for the Director of Central Intelligence prior to the formation of the Task Group. Entitled "The Outlook in Vietnam," this paper stated the following conclusion:

We believe that the Communists will sustain a high level of military activity for at least the next two or three months. It is difficult to forecast the situation which will then obtain, given the number of unknowable factors which will figure. Our best estimate is as follows:

a. The least likely outcome of the present phase is that the Communist side will expend its resources to such an extent as to be incapable thereafter of preventing steady advances by the US/GVN.

b. Also unlikely, though considerably less so, is that the GVN/ARVN will be so critically weakened that it can play no further significant part in the military and political prosecution of the struggle.

c. More likely than either of the above is that the present push will be generally contained, but with severe losses to both the GVN and Communist forces, and that a period will set in during which neither will be capable of registering decisive gains. 20/

The second CIA paper, dated 29 February, was entitled "Communist Alternatives in Vietnam." Two main military alternatives were identified, as follows:

a. maintain widespread military pressure in Vietnam at least for the next several months;

b. increase the level of military pressures by one or more of the following measures:

(1) committing all of their reserves from NVN, tantamount to an all-out invasion, to gain decisive results as quickly as possible;

(2) committing two or three additional divisions;

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(3) seeking one major battle which promised significant political gains.

(4) expanding current efforts in Laos. 21/

Based on this analysis, Communist intentions were assessed as follows:

The Communists probably intend to maintain widespread military pressures in Vietnam for at least the next several months. A special effort will be made to harass urban areas and keep them under threat. They will probably calculate that the US/GVN will be forced to defend the towns and the countryside will be left more vulnerable to Communist domination. At some time, new Communist attacks will probably be launched to seize and hold certain cities and towns. Where conditions appear favorable they will engage US forces, seeking some significant local success which would have a major political return. The total result of their campaign, they hope, will be to so strain the resources of the US and the GVN/ARVN, that the Saigon government will lose control of much of the country and the US will have little choice but to settle the war on Communist terms. 22/

The third CIA paper, submitted on 1 March 1968, attempted to answer specific questions posed by the Secretary of Defense in his initial meeting with his senior working group on 29 February. Pertinent questions and the CIA assessment are listed below:

Q. What is the likely course of events in South Vietnam over the next 10 months, assuming no change in U.S. policy or force levels?

A. In the assumed circumstances a total military victory by the Allies or the Communists is highly unlikely in the next 10 months. It is manifestly impossible for the Communists to drive U.S. forces out of the country. It is equally out of the question for US/GVN forces to clear South Vietnam of Communist forces. It is possible, however, that the overall situation in this period will take a decisive turn.

We think it unlikely that this turn could be in the US/GVN favor....We see no evidence yet that the GVN/ARVN will be inspired to seize the initiative, go over to the attack, exploit the Communist vulnerabilities, and quickly regain the rural areas. We doubt they have the will and capability to make the effort.

Far more likely is an erosion of the ARVN's morale and effectiveness. We do not believe that the GVN will collapse, or that the ARVN will totally disintegrate. But

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there is a fairly good chance that Communist pressures will result in a serious weakening of the GVN/ARVN apparatus and an end to its effective functioning in parts of the country. In these circumstances, virtually the entire burden of the war would fall on US forces.

\* \* \*

In sum, there is a high risk that both the ARVN and GVN will be seriously weakened in the next months, and perhaps decisively so. Our best estimate is that in the assumed circumstances the overall situation 10 months hence will be no better than a standoff.

Q. What is the likely Communist reaction to a change in US strategy toward greater control over population centers, with or without increased forces?

A. In general the Communists would view this move as a success for their strategy. Their tactical response in such circumstances would depend mainly on the nature of US enclaves. If these were fairly large and embraced much of the outlying countryside, the Communists would believe them to be porous enough to infiltrate and harass, much as they are doing now. If the defensive perimeters were fairly solid, however, the Communists would not try to overrun them in frontal assaults. Instead, they would concentrate for a time on consolidating the countryside and isolating the various defended enclaves, in particular interdicting supply lines and forcing the US to undertake expensive supply movements from out of country. A Communist-controlled regime with a "coalition" facade would be set up in "liberated" areas and attempts at terrorist activity inside the enclaves would be undertaken. Hanoi would hope that a combination of military and political pressure, together with the dim prospect for achievement of the original US aims in the Vietnam struggle, would eventually persuade the US to extricate itself through negotiations.

Q. What is the likely NVA/VC strategy over the next 10 months if US forces are increased by 50,000, by 100,000, or by 200,000?

A. We would expect the Communists to continue the war. They still have resources available in North Vietnam and within South Vietnam to increase their troop strength. Their



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strong logistical effort and their ability to organize and exploit the people under their control in the South enable them to counter US increases by smaller increases of their own. Over a ten-month period the Communists would probably be able to introduce sufficient new units into the South to offset the US maneuver battalion increments of the various force levels given above. 23/

These CIA assessments, then, painted very bleak alternatives for U.S. policymakers. If U.S. policy and force levels did not change, there was a high risk that ARVN and the GVN would be seriously weakened, perhaps decisively so. The US would assume the major burden of the war, and the situation would be no better than a standoff. If U.S. forces were increased by as much as 100,000, the Communists would probably be able to introduce sufficient new units in the South to offset this increase. If the U.S. changed its strategy toward greater control over population centers, with or without increased forces, the Communists would adjust their strategy so as to preclude the achievement of U.S. aims.

In his various papers for the Working Group, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy attempted a deliberate approach. He furnished one paper which outlined alternative courses of action which he considered deserved serious consideration. 24/ Another paper outlined a checklist "to serve as a rough guide to the papers that need preparation under a systematic code." 25/

The alternative courses listed by Mr. Bundy were:

a. Accept the Wheeler/Westmoreland recommendation aimed at sending roughly 100,000 men by 1 May and another 100,000 men by the end of 1968.

b. Change our military strategy, reducing the areas and places we seek to control and concentrating far more heavily on the protection of populated areas.

c. Adopt option b above in the south, but extend our bombing and other military actions against the North to try to strangle the war there and put greater pressure on Hanoi in this area.

d. Accept immediately those elements of the Wheeler/Westmoreland proposals that could hope to affect the situation favorably over the next four months or so, but do not go beyond that in terms of force plans and related actions.

e. "Cut and shave" the Wheeler/Westmoreland proposals and their action implications, but carry on basically in accordance with present strategy.

f. "All-out option." "Announce that we were prepared to hold in Vietnam no matter what developed." 26/

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The Department of State also prepared papers on the following subjects:

- a. Introductory Paper on Key Elements in the Situation 27/
- b. Probable Soviet, Chinese, Western European Reactions 28/
- c. Ambassador Thompson's Cable on Soviet Reactions to Possible U.S. Government Courses of Action 29/
- d. European and Other Non-Asian Reactions to Major Force Increases 30/
- e. Asian Reaction to a Major U.S. Force Increase 31/
- f. Options on our Negotiating Posture 32/

These papers were presented to the Clifford Group at the meeting on 3 March 1968. However, as will be seen, they were quickly overtaken by the rapidly moving situation and, with the exception of the paper on negotiating options, did not figure in the final memorandum which was forwarded to the President on 4 March.

General Maxwell Taylor's paper on alternative courses of action is of greater interest in that it was furnished both to the Clifford Working Group and to the White House directly through General Taylor's capacity as Military Advisor to the President. Although it is not known what weight was given to this paper, it was received by the President even prior to the Memorandum from the Clifford Group, and thereby could have gained some special weight in the deliberations of the President.

After a brief listing of the U.S. objectives in SVN, General Taylor concluded that, since there was no serious consideration being given at the moment to adding to or subtracting from our present objective, the discussion should be limited to considerations of alternative strategies and programs to attain that objective. 33/

General Taylor concluded that, basically, our government had only two choices:

- a. We can tell General Westmoreland that he must make do with his present forces in Viet-Nam and ask him to report to us what he is capable of accomplishing therewith. This would be an invitation to him to cut back sharply upon the military objectives he has defined in his latest Combined Campaign Plan (1968). Alternatively, while making this decision to provide no further forces, we could give new strategic guidance to General Westmoreland which would assist him in establishing the priorities for his efforts necessary to bring his mission within capabilities of the forces allotted him.



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b. The other broad alternative is to increase his present forces by some amount varying from less than his figure of 205,000 and ranging up to the full amount. Also in this case, we might well consider giving him revised strategic guidance in the light of what we have learned from the Tet offensive and its sequel.

General Taylor thus indicated that in the reassessment of our strategy, the government would be required to answer the following questions:

- (1) Do we decide at this time to send any additional reinforcements to General Westmoreland?
- (2) If the answer is affirmative, should we agree to send all or part of the 205,000 requested by General Westmoreland?
- (3) Whether the response is affirmative or negative, should we send General Westmoreland new strategic guidance, hoping to limit further demands on U.S. military manpower?
- (4) What Strategic Reserve should be retained in the U.S. in the foregoing situations?

General Taylor then listed some of the political considerations of the military course of action decided upon. He listed the following political actions as worth considering in connection with any decision on reinforcement:

- (1) A renewed offer of negotiation, possibly with a private communication that we would suspend the bombing for a fixed period without making the time limitation public if we were assured that productive negotiations would start before the end of the period.
- (2) A public announcement that we would adjust the bombing of the North to the level of intensity of enemy ground action in the South.
- (3) As a prelude to sharply increased bombing levels, possibly to include the closing of Haiphong, a statement of our intentions made necessary by the enemy offensive against the cities and across the frontiers.
- (4) Announcement of the withdrawal of the San Antonio formula in view of the heightened level of aggression conducted by North Viet-Nam.
- (5) Keep silent.



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In choosing among these alternatives, General Taylor argued that the present military situation in South Vietnam argued strongly against a new negotiation effort or any thought of reducing the bombing of the North. He further argued that, in any case, we would appear well-advised to withdraw from the San Antonio formula.

Thus, he concluded, there seemed to be at least three program packages worth serious consideration. They were:

Package A

- a. No increase of General Westmoreland's forces in South Viet-Nam.
- b. New strategic guidance.
- c. Build-up of Strategic Reserve.
- d. No negotiation initiative.
- e. Withdrawal of San Antonio formula.
- f. Pressure on GVN to do better.

Package B

- a. Partial acceptance of General Westmoreland's recommendation.
- b. New strategic guidance.
- c. Build-up of Strategic Reserve.
- d. No negotiation initiative.
- e. Withdrawal of San Antonio formula.
- f. Pressure on GVN to do better.

Package C

- a. Approval of General Westmoreland's full request.
- b. New strategic guidance.
- c. Build-up of Strategic Reserve.
- d. No negotiation initiative.
- e. Withdrawal of San Antonio formula and announcement of intention to close Haiphong.
- f. Pressure on GVN to do better.
- g. Major effort to rally the homefront.

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The working group within ISA had access to all of these documents. In addition, and at the request of the working group, other papers were prepared within the Department of Defense by the Assistant Secretary (Systems Analysis) and the Assistant Secretary (Public Affairs).

Initially, Systems Analysis undertook a capability study in order to determine if the MACV requirement could indeed be met. They concluded that, with the exception of Army aviation units, the MACV manpower request could be filled essentially as desired. This could even be done, the analysis concluded, without changing the one-year tour policy, without drawing down on Europe, and without widespread second tours with less than 24 months in CONUS. This assumed a reserve recall, added funds, and the required strength increases.

Our maximum capability would be to provide 6 maneuver battalions in May, 9 more in June, 9 in July and as many as 6 more in August -- faster than the MACV request. These units would have the necessary artillery, transportation and engineer support. Added tactical air units could deploy on a matching schedule.

The only significant shortfall would be in Army Aviation. Even with a reserve recall, present deployment schedules cannot be significantly accelerated. Production limitations are such that at least one year would be required to increase the output of UH-1/AF-1 helicopters. Thus, it would be mid-1969 before any added aviation units could deploy and mid-1971 before the total MACV requirement could be met. 34/

This SA paper also considered several other deployment options, as follows: cut 50,000 from present authorization; no increase in current authorization; increase by 50,000; increase by 100,000; increase by 200,000. The units required under all these options, it was concluded, could deploy to Vietnam in a matter of months. The 50,000 man package could arrive in May and June; the 100,000 man package by August; and the full 200,000 (with minor exceptions) by December. The principal exceptions under all options would continue to be Army aviation units. A summary of the various options considered is shown below:

	<u>Optional Deployments</u>				
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>
	Cut	Current	Add	Add	Add
	<u>50,000</u>	<u>Plan</u>	<u>50,000</u>	<u>100,000</u>	<u>200,000</u>
Total U.S. personnel	485,000	535,000	585,000	635,000	631,000
U.S. Maneuver Bns	103	112	118	124	133
Artillery Bns	68	72	77	83	92
Tac Air Sqds	44	45	51	56	60
Annual Cost	\$23 Bil.	\$25 Bil.	\$28 Bil.	\$30 Bil.	\$35 Bil.
Reserve Recall	--	--	65,000	200,000	250,000 <u>35/</u>

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Other papers prepared by Systems Analysis during this period were furnished to the ISA working group upon their request. Indeed, the subject matter and thrust of these papers indicated fairly early the bias of the people preparing them as well as the direction in which the reassessment of U.S. strategy was moving, at least within the working group in ISA.

Papers were also furnished concerning pacification, costs and probable results of alternative U.S. strategies in South Vietnam, the status of RVNAF, problems of inflation, and data for analysis of strategies. The main thrust of most of these papers was that "more of the same" in South Vietnam would not achieve decisive results and, indeed, would not be satisfactory. The paper on pacification indicated that:

Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) reports for CY 1967 indicate that pacification progressed slowly during the first half of 1967, and lost ground in the second half. Most (60%) of the 1967 gain results from accounting type changes to the HES system, not from pacification progress; hamlet additions and deletions, and revised population estimates accounted for half of the January-June increase and all of the June-December increase. In the area that really counts--VC-D-E hamlets rising to A-B-C ratings--we actually suffered a net loss of 10,100 people between June and December 1967. 36/

Based on General Wheeler's statement in his report to the President, that "to a large extent the VC now control the countryside," the paper concluded that "the enemy's current offensive appears to have killed the program once and for all." 37/

In analyzing the status of RVNAF, the Systems Analysis paper concluded:

Highest priority must be given to getting RVNAF moving. In the short run re-equipping the Vietnamese and helping them regain their combat power insures that we can prevent unnecessary loss should the enemy attack the cities or put pressure there while hitting Khe Sanh. Further, present US force commitments mean that only a recuperated RVNAF will permit release of US units for other missions and accomplish any objectives in pacification. Finally, restoration of security in the cities in conjunction with the National Police is a major new mission for RVNAF which requires forces.

What can we do? There are many indications that the manpower situation is worse than reported. Every effort must be made to determine how many deserters there are and to approach them. Rounding up trained manpower delinquent in returning from Tet will help. US advisors can pressure the JGS to upgrade selected RF/PF into ARVN in addition to measures already initiated by RVNAF.



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COMUSMACV must identify weak RVNAF units. III Corps need special study and preparation of revised contingency plans. Priority on remanning, re-equipping and retraining must be given to the RVNAF elite units (VNMC) which constitute the general reserve. COMUSMACV must plan for the use of this reserve and earmarked US units to defeat VC attack of weak RVNAF units during the interim period.

RVNAF modernization should take precedence over equipping all US forces except those deploying to the combat zone. The remaining 82,000 M16 rifles must be delivered ASAP. It is also in the US interest to equip the RF/PF with M16s before equipping the US training base, which is already programmed.

Lastly, COMUSMACV must make decisions about what missions RVNAF need not accomplish now. RVNAF is stretched too thin given its past and expected missions. It alone cannot protect the cities and hold the countryside where it is still deployed. Decision is needed to permit the build-up of weak units and better integrated use of US and RVNAF against whatever enemy scenario develops. 38/

The paper entitled "Alternate Strategies" painted a bleak picture of American failure in Vietnam:

We lost our offensive stance because we never achieved the momentum essential for military victory. Search and Destroy operations can't build this kind of momentum and the RVNAF was not pushed hard enough. We became mesmerized by statistics of known doubtful validity, choosing to place our faith only in the ones that showed progress. We judged the enemy's intentions rather than his capabilities because we trusted captured documents too much. We were not alert to the perils of time lag and spoofing. In short, our setbacks were due to wishful thinking compounded by a massive intelligence collection and/or evaluation failure.

Indeed, in examining U.S. objectives in SVN, the picture of failure was manifest:

Since the original commitment of large US forces in 1965, our stated objectives have been to:

(1) Make it as difficult and costly as possible for NVN to continue effective support of the VC and cause NVN to cease its direction of the VC insurgency.

(While we have raised the price to NVN of aggression and

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support of the VC, it shows no lack of capability or will to match each new US escalation. Our strategy of "attrition" has not worked. Adding 206,000 more US men to a force of 525,000, gaining only 27 additional maneuver battalions and 270 tactical fighters at an added cost to the US of \$10 billion per year raises the question of who is making it costly from whom.)

(2) Extend GVN dominion, direction and control over SVN.

(This objective can only be achieved by the GVN through its political and economic processes and with the indispensable support of an effective RVNAF. The TET offensive demonstrated not only that the US had not provided an effective shield, it also demonstrated that the GVN and RVNAF had not made real progress in pacification -- the essential first step along the road of extending GVN dominion, direction and control.)

(3) Defeat the VC and NVA forces in SVN and force their withdrawal. (The TET offensive proves we were further from this goal than we thought. How much further remains to be seen.)

(4) Deter the Chinese Communists from direct intervention in SEA. (This we have done successfully so far; however, greatly increased U.S. forces may become counter-productive.)

We know that despite a massive influx of 500,000 US troops, 1.2 million tons of bombs a year, 400,000 attack sorties per year, 200,000 enemy KIA in three years, 20,000 US KIA, etc., our control of the countryside and the defense of the urban areas is now essentially at pre-August 1965 levels. We have achieved stalemate at a high commitment. A new strategy must be sought. 39/

Several alternative strategies were briefly discussed and all but one were quickly dismissed as being unlikely to bring success:

(1) No change but increase the resources.

This strategy alternative is implicit in the recommendations of MACV and CJCS....In brief, the MACV and CJCS recommendations are for additional forces to regain this ground lost since January, 1968. Nothing is said as to whether still more US forces will be required to finish the job. Another payment on an open-ended commitment is requested.



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(2) Widen the War.

Adoption of this alternative would require more forces than are now being considered and it runs further risks of involving China and the USSR. The course of events already set in motion could lead to adoption of this alternative; increasing US forces in SVN would undoubtedly increase the possibilities of it. And the option is open for North Korea or other aggressive countries to test our will elsewhere.

(3) Opt Out of the War.

The price of quitting now would include the undermining of our other commitments world-wide, bitter dissension at home, and a probable resurgence of active Chinese-USSR territorial aggrandizements.

Before TET we could have done this with less risk than now.

(4) Resuscitate GVN and RVNAF.

This option is to return to the concept of a GVN war with US assistance instead of the present situation of a US war with dubious GVN assistance.

Adoption of this alternative requires:

(a) A solid commitment to a US force ceiling. This commitment must be communicated to the highest levels of GVN/RVNAF and our own military leaders.

(b) A skillful conditioning of US and world opinion to the limited US commitment to the South Vietnamese war and to our right of withdrawal if GVN/RVNAF determination or performance wavers.

(c) A statement that the US objective in SVN is to develop the GVN capability to defeat the VC and NVA forces in SVN and force their withdrawal. 40/

The remaining Systems Analysis paper cited statistics to show that, in the past, the North Vietnamese had been able to match the U.S. buildup in SVN with their own buildup. Also statistics were used to project the cost to the U.S. in casualties resulting from various deployment options and various strategies on the ground. These projections showed that a shift to a population control strategy which was unchallenged by the enemy would stabilize casualty rates, as some units would be underemployed. 41/



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The paper prepared by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) was entitled "Possible Public Reaction to Various Alternatives." Five alternative options were examined:

1. Increased mobilization and deployment. This includes sending General Westmoreland 50,000 to 200,000 more troops and the additional moves this would require at home -- calling reserves, extending enlistments, extra expenditures, bigger tax bill, etc.
2. Increased mobilization/deployment plus expanded bombing of North Vietnam.
3. Increased mobilization/deployment plus a bombing pause.
4. Denial of the Westmoreland requests and continuation of the war "as is" -- as it was being fought prior to the Tet offensive and Khe Sanh.
5. Denial of the Westmoreland requests and a change in war-fighting policy with greater concentration on defending populated areas and less on search-and-destroy in unpopulated areas. This would include an announced program to begin troop withdrawal at a fixed date. 42/

The Assistant Secretary, Mr. Goulding, emphasized that all options were being examined from a public reaction standpoint only. He also emphasized that no action would unite the country. The question to be attacked was which option will most coalesce supporters and most isolate the opposition.

In analyzing the various options above, Mr. Goulding divided the public into hawks, doves, and middle-of-the-roaders. Under Option 1, he argued, increased mobilization and deployment moves, without other new actions:

...will make the doves unhappy because we become more and more enmeshed in the war. They will make the hawks unhappy because we still will be withholding our military strength, particularly in the North. And the middle-of-the-roaders who basically support the President out of conviction or patriotism will be unhappy because they will see the ante going up in so many ways and still will not be given a victory date, a progress report they can believe or an argument they can accept that all of this is in the national interest. (Further, they will read in the dissent columns and editorials that 18 months from now, when the North Vietnamese have added 30,000 more troops, we will be right back where we started.)

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Thus, public reaction to this option would be extremely negative, and would become increasingly so as the deployment numbers, the financial costs, and the life-disrupting actions increase.

The next two options, Mr. Goulding indicated, should be considered together since, from a public affairs standpoint, the decision to deploy additional troops of any significant number must be accompanied by some "new" move. The two options discussed were deployment plus expanded bombing of the North, and increased mobilization plus a bombing pause.

The first course, Goulding concluded, would elicit more support in the country than does the present course.

This course would clearly bring aboard more hawks and further isolate the doves. It would also make the war much easier to accept by the middle-of-the-roaders. It would help unite the country. Some fence sitters, however, would be added to those who already view the war as an unforgiveable sin. I think the campus and "liberal" reaction would surpass anything we have seen.

The other option envisioned continuing to fight as we are in the south, strengthening General Westmoreland with part or all of his request, and coupling these moves with a visible "peace" campaign based upon a cessation of the bombing in the North. This course, Goulding concluded:

...would alienate those who take the hardest line. We would be adding much to our cost, both by the extra deployment and the military price paid for the pause, without receiving any immediate or concrete results. If the Communists took advantage of the bombing halt, the hawks and many of the military would react strongly.... The doves, of course, would enthusiastically endorse the pause and would immediately begin pleading and praying that it be continued long enough to explore every possible and conceivable corridor.... Additionally, the doves would deplore the extra deployments. They would complain that the pause was not unlimited or unconditional. They would argue that the deployments plus the failure to be "unconditional" detracted from the effort. This two-pronged approach -- strengthen but seek negotiation -- would give new confidence to the middle-of-the-roaders. They would applaud the government for doing "something" different, for seeking a way out of the quagmire. They would be more patient than the hawks to give the pause a chance, and less disturbed than the doves at the mobilization. For them, it could be a way out -- and even a "could be" is better than the frustration they now feel.... The deploy/pause option would be more favorably received by the nation than the deploy/escalate North, since it would, in the public mind, offer more hope of an eventual solution to the war.

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The fourth option, denial of the Westmoreland request and continue the war "as is," would please no one, according to Mr. Goulding. The hawks (and the military) would protest vehemently. They would be less satisfied, and the doves would be no more satisfied by this failure to take new initiatives toward peace. However, Mr. Goulding concluded, since fewer people would be affected by this course than by Option One, and therefore it would be preferable to that Option.

The advantages of Option Five - denial of General Westmoreland's requests and a change in strategy in South Vietnam -- from a public affairs standpoint were overwhelming, the paper concluded.

.....The pain of additional deployments, Reserve callups, increased draft calls, increased casualties, extended tours would be eliminated. The hazards of bombing escalation would be eliminated. The dangers of a bombing pause would be eliminated. The frustration of more-and-more-and-more into the endless pit would be eliminated. What the people want most of all is some sign that we are making progress, that there is, somewhere, an end. While this does not necessarily show progress, it does show change. It does show the search for new approaches.....It would prevent the middle-of-the-roaders from joining the doves. While the doves want a pause, I would think they would prefer this to deployment-mobilization plus pause. While the hawks want to escalate in the North, most of them (not all) also want an end to increased ground strength in the South. I believe that we would be successful in getting members of Congress to make speeches in support of this.

In summary, then, and strictly from a public reaction standpoint, Mr. Goulding noted the options as follows:

Acceptable: Only #5 -- Denial of requests and a change in policy in the South.

Most acceptable of the others: #3 -- Deploy and pause.

Next most acceptable: #2 -- Deploy and expand Air War North.

Next most acceptable: #4 -- Deny Westmoreland and continue as is.

Most objectionable: #1 -- Deploy and continue as is, north and south. 43/



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#### 4. Drafting a Memorandum

There is, of course, no way of knowing how much consideration and weight were given to each of these papers by the small group of action officers in the Pentagon who were, in the last analysis, charged with digesting all of these factors, considerations, and views and actually drafting the reassessment of U.S. strategy required by the President of his new Secretary of Defense. The predilections of these drafters, perhaps were hinted at by the subject matter of the backup papers prepared at their specific request and summarized above.

By 29 February, this group had produced an initial draft of a memorandum for the President which examined the situation in SVN "in light of U.S. political objectives and General Westmoreland's request for additional troops, as stated in General Wheeler's report." 44/

This draft was slightly revised by senior officers in ISA and apparently was discussed within the Defense Establishment on 1 March. 45/

This paper began with an assessment of the current situation in South Viet Nam and a discussion of the prospects over the next 10 months. Quoting General Wheeler's report, the draft memorandum indicated that the most important VC goal in the winter-spring offensive was the takeover of the countryside. In many parts of the country, it was stated, they may have already succeeded in achieving this goal.

The 'main event' thus is still to come, not in a one-night offensive but in a week-by-week expulsion of GVN presence and influence from the rural areas, showing up on the pacification maps as a 'red tide' flowing up to the edges of the province and district towns, and over some of them. 46/

Although ARVN held up well under initial assaults, the ISA memorandum concluded that they would not soon move out of their defensive posture around the cities and towns. They would, in the future, challenge the VC offensively much less than before.

In the new, more dangerous environment to come about in the countryside, and as currently led, motivated, and influenced at the top, ARVN is even less likely than before to buckle down to the crucial offensive job of chasing district companies and (with U.S. help) provincial battalions. In that environment, informers will clam up, or be killed; the VC will get more information and cooperation, the GVN less; officials and police will be much less willing to act on information or VC suspects and activities. 47/

The memorandum was even more pessimistic concerning the future direction and abilities of the South Vietnamese Government, and read more into the TET offensive than had been noted there by other observers.

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It is unlikely that the GVN will rise to the challenge. It will not move toward a Government of National Union. Current arrests of oppositionists further isolate and discredit it, and possibly foreshadow the emasculation of the Assembly and the undoing of all promising political developments of the past year. Furthermore, it is possible that the recent offensive was facilitated by a newly friendly or apathetic urban environment, and a broad low-level cooperative organization that had not existed on the same scale before. If, in fact, the attacks reflect new VC opportunities and capability in the cities, then the impact of the attacks themselves, the overall military response, and the ineffective GVN political response may still further improve the VC cause in the cities, as well as in the countryside. Even if the political makeup of the GVN should change for the better, it may well be that VC penetration in the cities has now gone or will soon go too far for real non-communist political mobilization to develop. 48/

Based upon this bleak assessment of the future of the Government and Army of South Vietnam, the ISA draft memorandum undertook to examine alternative military strategies. Two such strategies were to be compared, the current one and an alternative which emphasized population security. (Actually, only one was analyzed in detail.) The two strategies were to be compared at current force levels and with added increments of 50,000, 150,000 and 200,000.

In analyzing our current strategy, the memorandum undertook a review of how our strategy in Vietnam evolved. At the time U.S. forces were first committed in South Vietnam in early 1965, the draft Presidential memorandum indicated, the political situation was a desperate one. There was imminent danger of a North Vietnamese-controlled seizure of power in SVN and the imposition of a communist regime by force. Thus, the immediate objective of the U.S. was a military one--to arrest this trend and to deny to the NVA/VC the seizure of political control by force.

Once U.S. forces were committed in increasingly large numbers, however, the military and political situation began to improve significantly. By the end of 1966, our initial military objective had been achieved--no longer was it possible for NVN to impose its will upon SVN by force. By this time, however, our military objectives had been expanded at the expense of our political objectives.

In the absence of political directives limiting the goals to be attained by U.S. military force, our objectives became:

- a. To make it as difficult and costly as possible for NVN to continue effective support of the VC and to cause NVN to cease direction of the insurgency.

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b. To defeat the VC and NVA forces in SVN and force the withdrawal of NVN forces....

c. To extend GVN control over all of SVN.

Indeed, in asking for increased forces, General Wheeler and General Westmoreland described their current tasks as follows:

a. Security of Cities and Government.

b. Security in the Countryside.

c. Defense of the Borders, the DMZ, and the Northern Province.

d. Offensive Operations. 49/

The question to be answered, then, suggested the memorandum, was what we could hope to accomplish with these increased force levels in pursuit of our current strategy. The answer was not encouraging.

With current force levels we cannot continue to pursue all of the objectives listed by General Wheeler. Can we do so with increased forces?

MACV does not clearly specify how he would use the additional forces he requests, except to indicate that they would provide him with a theater reserve and an offensive capability. Even with the 200,000 additional troops requested by MACV, we will not be in a position to drive the enemy from SVN or to destroy his forces. MACV's description of his key problems makes clear that the additional forces would be used to open Route 1, north of Danang; support ARVN units, particularly in the Delta; and to maintain a reserve against enemy offensives. With lesser increases of 50,000 or 100,000, MACV would be in an even less favorable position to go on the offensive. Moreover, even before the TET offensive the enemy was initiating about two-thirds of the clashes and could, in response to our buildup, adopt a casualty limiting posture.

The more likely enemy response, however, is that with which he has responded to previous increases in our force levels, viz., a matching increase on his part. Hanoi has maintained a constant ratio of one maneuver battalion to 1.5 U.S. maneuver battalions from his reserve in NVN of from 45-70 maneuver battalions (comprising 40,000-60,000 men in 5-8 divisions).



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Even if the enemy stands and fights as he did before TET, the results can only be disappointing in terms of attriting his capability.

Over the past year the United States has been killing between 70 and 100 VC/NVA per month per U.S. combat battalion in theater. The return per combat battalion deployed has been falling off, but even assuming that additional deployments will double the number of combat battalions, and assuming that the kill-ratios will remain constant, we could expect enemy deaths, at best, on the order of magnitude of 20,000 per month, but the infiltration system from North Viet Nam alone could supply 13,000-16,000 per month, regardless of our bombing pattern, leaving the remainder -- 4,000 -- to be recruited in South Viet Nam -- a demonstrably manageable undertaking for the VC.

The current strategy thus can promise no early end to the conflict, nor any success in attriting the enemy or eroding Hanoi's will to fight. Moreover, it would entail substantial costs in South Viet Nam, in the United States, and in the rest of the world. 50/

These substantial costs, the paper indicated, would indeed preclude the attainment of U.S. objectives. In South Vietnam,

...the presence of more than 700,000 U.S. military can mean nothing but the total Americanization of the war. There is no sign that ARVN effectiveness will increase, and there will be no pressure from the U.S. or the GVN for ARVN to shape up if the U.S. appears willing to increase its force levels as necessary to maintain a stalemate in the country.

The effect on the GVN would be even more unfortunate. The Saigon leadership shows no signs of a willingness--let alone an ability--to attract the necessary loyalty or support of the people. It is true that the GVN did not totally collapse during TET, but there is not yet anything like an urgent sense of national unity and purpose. A large influx of additional U.S. forces will intensify the belief of the ruling elite that the U.S. will continue to fight its war while it engages in backroom politics and permits widespread corruption. The proposed actions will also generate increased inflation, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the GVN and making corruption harder to control. Reform of the GVN will come only when and if they come to believe that our continued presence in South Viet Nam depends on what the GVN does. Certainly, a U.S. commitment to a substantial troop increase before the GVN commits itself to reform and action can only be counterproductive. Whatever

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our success on the battlefield, our chances of leaving behind an effective functioning national government when we at last withdraw will be sharply diminished.

In the United States, the effects would be equally unfortunate.

We will have to mobilize reserves, increase our budget by billions, and see U.S. casualties climb to 1,300-1,400 per month. Our balance of payments will be worsened considerably, and we will need a larger tax increase--justified as a war tax, or wage and price controls....

It will be difficult to convince critics that we are not simply destroying South Viet Nam in order to "save" it and that we genuinely want peace talks. This growing disaffection accompanied, as it certainly will be, by increased defiance of the draft and growing unrest in the cities because of the belief that we are neglecting domestic problems, runs great risks of provoking a domestic crisis of unprecedented proportions. 51/

Thus, if our current strategy, even with increased troops, could not promise an early end to the conflict, what alternatives were available to the United States? No U.S. ground strategy and no level of U.S. forces, alone, could by themselves accomplish our objective in South Viet Nam, the draft memorandum stated.

We can obtain our objective only if the GVN begins to take the steps necessary to gain the confidence of the people and to provide effective leadership for the diverse groups in the population. ARVN must also be turned into an effective fighting force. If we fail in these objectives, a military victory over the NVN/VC main forces, followed by a U.S. withdrawal, would only pave the way for an NLF takeover.

Our military presence in South Viet Nam should be designed to buy the time during which ARVN and the GVN can develop effective capability. In order to do this, we must deny the enemy access to the populated areas of the country and prevent him from achieving his objectives of controlling the population and destroying the GVN.

The memorandum concluded that MACV should be told that his mission was to provide security to populated areas and to deny the enemy access to the population; that he should not attempt to attrite the enemy or to drive him out of the country. MACV should be asked to recommend an appropriate strategy and to determine his force requirements to carry out this objective with the minimum possible casualties.



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However, in the next section of the Presidential draft memorandum, the Working Group relieved MACV of this responsibility by sketching one possible strategy (obviously the preferred one) which should be able to be pursued "without substantially increasing our level of forces in South Viet Nam, thus avoiding the adverse domestic and foreign consequences sketched above." 52/

The strategy outlined in the memorandum was designed to attain the initiative along the "demographic frontier." It consisted of the following:

Those forces currently in or near the heavily populated areas along the coast should remain in place. Those forces currently bordering on the demographic frontier\* should continue to operate from those positions, not on long search-and-destroy missions, but in support of the frontier. Eight to 10 battalions from the DMZ areas would be redeployed and become strategic reserve in I Corps; six battalions from the interior of II Corps would be redeployed to Dien Binh province as a strategic reserve for defense of provincial capitals in the highlands. As security is restored in the previously neglected populated areas of coastal Viet Nam, additional U.S. battalions would move forward to the demographic frontier....

Based just beyond the populated areas, the forces on the demographic frontiers would conduct spoiling raids, long-range reconnaissance patrols and, when appropriate targets are located, search-and-destroy operations into the enemy's zone of movement in the unpopulated areas between the demographic and the political frontiers. They would be available as a quick reaction force to support RVNAF when it was attacked within the populated areas. Where RVNAF patrolling in the populated areas is inadequate, U.S. forces would be in a position to assist. 53/

The advantages of the "demographic strategy of population security" were listed as follows:

1. It would become possible to keep the VC/NVA off balance in their present zone of movement. This area is now largely available to them for maneuver and massing, no more than a day's march from any of the major cities north of Saigon.

2. It would lengthen enemy LOC's from their sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia. Base areas and LOC's within SVN would be the subject of attack and disruption, without extending the war to neighboring countries.

\* This frontier runs along the eastern foothills of the Annamite chain, from Quang-Tri Province to Phan Thiet in Binh Thuan, cuts across SVN along the northern edge of the Delta from Phuc Tuy to the Cambodian Border in Tay Ninh. Garrisons would be established as at Bong Son and An Khe.



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3. RVNAF, knowing the availability of support from U.S. reaction forces, would perform more aggressively.

4. This would permit the patrolling and securing of populated areas to be accomplished primarily by Vietnamese forces.

5. U.S. forces would keep active in what is now the enemy's zone of movement, no longer presenting static positions against which the enemy can mass and attack. This, plus his increased logistical problems, would reduce U.S. casualties while increasing his. In effect, we would force him to come to us, fight on terrain of our choosing.

6. The increased patrolling of the populated areas by RVNAF combined with U.S. actions in the zone of movement would make it harder for the enemy to mass against and attack targets within the populated areas. This would reduce civilian casualties and refugee generation.

7. Garrisoning U.S. forces closer to RVNAF would facilitate joint operations at the maneuver level (battalion, company), again increasing RVNAF aggressiveness.

8. With RVNAF thus supported by U.S. forces, it can be expected to remain in uniform and engage in operations as long as it is paid and fed. 54/

No disadvantages of this strategy were noted or listed in the memorandum.

Details of this strategy, by Corps area, were examined in an appendix. In I Corps, our present precarious position could be relieved.

Were MACV to be provided guidance to forego position defense in areas remote from population centers and concentrate upon mobile offensive operations in and contiguous to the coastal plain, one division equivalent - eight to 10 U.S. maneuver battalions - could eventually be relieved from operations in, or related to defense of Khe Sanh. Undoubtedly, however, these eight to 10 battalions would be required to restore tactical flexibility to and insure logistical sufficiency for the forces presently disposed in the Quang-Tri-Hue-Danang area. MACV presently is planning operations in the Aeschau [sic] Valley after April 1968; the new guidance would preclude these.

Guidance to MACV in II Corps

"...should counsel continued economy of force and should specifically exclude determined defense of all but province

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capitals in the highlands. Permission to withdraw from Special Forces camps (e.g., Dak To), and other exposed positions remote from the coastal plain should be included. Under this guidance, six U.S. battalions could be withdrawn from border defense operations in the highlands for use as a mobile reserve or for operations on the coastal plain.

In III Corps, no redeployment from present positions, with U.S. forces concentrated in the immediate environs of Saigon were envisaged.

The guidance to MACV should be to concentrate on offensive operations in and around the densely populated portions of III CTZ. MACV should maintain a mobile strike force for defense of remote province capitals, but he should otherwise forego long range or regional search-and-destroy operations. Withdrawals from Special Forces camps should be authorized.

Fourth Corps - the Mekong Delta region - is the only region of SVN in which the burden of the war was still borne, chiefly by RVNAF. U.S. strategy should avoid Americanizing the conflict there. Instead, our efforts should be aimed at catalyzing increased RVNAF efforts there.

Guidance provided to MACV should be geared to galvanizing RVNAF by a strategy of:

1. Defending province capitals, major towns, principal communication centers, and commercially important routes.
2. Extending GVN control into the countryside, consistent with RVNAF capability to defend RD teams and other public administration there.
3. Stimulating RVNAF operations by providing U.S. forces on an occasional basis for combined operations against particularly promising targets, or in conjunction with key defensive operations. U.S. forces in the Delta for this effort should draw on the existing Dong Tam and Saigon bases.
4. Providing limited assistance to RVNAF with sophisticated engineer equipment and reconnaissance apparatus where such would improve their ability to perform the missions sketched above.
5. Bringing serious pressure to bear on RVN leaders in Saigon and within IV CTZ to mount active, sustained, offensive operations consistent with the foregoing missions. Consideration should be given to:

Providing additional RVNAF battalions to IV CTZ on a temporary basis from III CTZ--conceptually, battalions or regiments from the 5th or 18th ARVN Divisions would be deployed to IV CTZ, minus dependents, for periods of one month or more of active operations. 55/

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In another appendix, the memorandum analyzed the effects of this strategy on those interior provinces outside the "demographic frontier." It would be desirable to maintain all interior Province capitals, the appendix concluded, because "the political consequences of withdrawal from whole Provinces would be to recreate the atmosphere of 1954 or 1965, and while the situation may be that grim, we should at least strive to make it appear otherwise."56/

The Province capitals would be garrisoned with ARVN units of the 22nd and 23rd Divisions and, initially, some American units. These units would have as their mission the holding of the Province town for a minimum of four days, giving time for the arrival of a relief strike force.

Having secured the Province capitals, however, this strategy envisaged evacuating other installations in the interior Provinces,

...such as the frontier series running from Bu Dop to Dak To and the interior but vulnerable points as Vo Dat and Vinh Thanh. Although these points are not held by allied main force units, they do tie down other assets, such as Special Forces, CIDG, PF, and RF. Furthermore, their combined existence represents a potential strain for the limited reaction ability currently available since we must respond, as we did at Dak To, when the enemy massed for an attack. If a presence is required in some of these areas, it should be in the form of a mobile striking unit, and not a garrison.

Based upon this "analysis" of our current strategy and a strategy of protecting the demographic frontier, the draft memorandum recommended the following actions to the President:

1. Approve a NSAM, stating that our political objective is a peace which will leave the people of South Viet Nam free to fashion their own political institutions....The NSAM should state that the primary role of U.S. military forces is to provide security in the populated areas of South Viet Nam rather than to destroy the VC/NVA or drive them out of the country. We should plan on maintaining the posture necessary to accomplish this objective for a considerable period.

2. Approve the immediate dispatch of an additional 10,500 military personnel to South Viet Nam.

3. Approve an accelerated and expanded program of increased fire power and mobility for ARVN and other elements of the GVN Armed Forces.

4. Send General Taylor to Saigon to explain the NSAM to MACV and the GVN, and to request General Westmoreland to develop a strategy and force requirements to implement the military objectives stated in the NSAM.



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5. Dispatch one or two high-level civilians to Saigon with General Taylor to warn the GVN that it must broaden their base of political support, end its internal bickering, purge corrupt officers and officials, and move to develop efficient administration and effective forces. They should also begin a discussion of negotiations while informing the GVN of the increased support to be provided for ARVN.

6. Deliver a Presidential address to the American public, explaining our new strategy in light of the enemy's new tactics. 57/

In short, then, this initial reassessment of our strategy in SVN indicated to the President that no ground strategy and no level of additional U.S. forces alone could achieve an early end to the war. That could be done only if the GVN took the steps necessary to provide effective military and political leadership to its population. In order to speed up this process, the U.S. should limit its objectives in SVN and adopt a strategy of population security. This would give the GVN time to organize and develop democratic institutions, and would give RVNAF time to grow in effectiveness while our forces provided a protective screen for the populated areas at minimum cost in resources and casualties.

This paper was discussed within the military community at a meeting in the Secretary of Defense's office on 1 March. General Wheeler, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was appalled at the apparent repudiation of American military policy in South Viet Nam contained in the ISA Draft Memorandum. He detected two "fatal flaws" in the population security strategy.

1. The proposed strategy would mean increased fighting in or close to population centers and, hence, would result in increased civilian casualties.

2. By adopting a posture of static defense, we would allow the enemy an increased capability of massing near population centers, especially north of Saigon.

In addition, General Wheeler was equally appalled at the statement in the ISA Draft Presidential Memorandum to the effect that "MACV does not clearly specify how he would use the additional forces he requests, except to indicate that they would provide him with a theater reserve and an offensive capability." MACV had indeed clearly and specifically indicated to CINCPAC on 27 February, concurrent with General Wheeler's original memorandum to the President, the locations and missions of the requested add-on units. These had been transmitted through the Joint Staff to each of the Services, who indeed were engaged in studying and staffing these proposals. 58/ Apparently, this information had not specifically been furnished to the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

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The debate within the Defense Establishment continued into the following day. In a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, dated 2 March, Assistant Secretary of Defense Warnke gave his answer to General Wheeler's "two fatal flaws" of the population control strategy.

1. Increasing Fighting in the Cities. General Wheeler is concerned that the proposed strategy will mean increased fighting in or close to population centers and, hence, will result in increased civilian casualties. This argument overlooks, I believe, the fact that the enemy demonstrated during the TET offensive his willingness and ability to attack populated centers regardless of our strategy. He is demonstrating that capability again right now in the Quang Tri-Hue area and may soon do so in the Delta. If the enemy continues to choose to fight in the cities, we will have no choice but to engage him in those areas at the cost of civilian casualties. The proposed strategy may actually reduce civilian casualties if we can succeed in attacking enemy concentrations before he can attack the cities. Moreover, in attacking the cities, the enemy will face American as well as ARVN forces engaged in offensive patrolling operations around the cities. This should result in fewer casualties than have come from the liberation of cities in the post-TET period. By freeing forces now engaged along the DMZ and in lightly populated highlands for active offensive operations near population centers, we should make the enemy effort against cities less effective.

2. Enemy Ability to Mass Near Population Centers. General Wheeler's concern that under the proposed strategy the enemy will be more capable of massing near population centers north of Saigon is difficult to understand. In fact, prior to TET, because we were operating primarily along the coast, along the DMZ, and in the highlands, we were permitting the enemy to mass along the demographic frontier as he did prior to the TET offensive. In fact, one of the advantages of the new strategy is that we will be able to keep the enemy off-balance in this area. General Wheeler may believe we advocate a posture of static defense. This is not true. In the strategy sketched in the paper, one of the primary missions of U.S. forces would be to operate in this area, remain highly mobile and carry out attacks against suspected enemy base camps. 59/

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General Wheeler fought back with arguments contained in two documents. The first was a backchannel message from COMUSMACV, dated 2 March, which answered specific questions concerning the planned use of additional forces. These questions had been asked by General Wheeler in a backchannel message the previous day. The first question concerned the military "and other" objectives additional forces were designed to advance. General Westmoreland was ambitious, indeed, and stated that these objectives were to:

(1) Defeat and evict from SVN the new NVA units now present in Western Quang Tri and Central Thua Trien provinces, to include the Ashau Valley and base areas 131 and 114.

(2) Maintain positive governmental and military control over Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces, particularly the populous areas of the coastal lowlands and the DMZ area. Be prepared to block or interdict the infiltration/invasion routes from NVN through Laos.

(3) Destroy VC/NVA main force units and base areas in the remainder of I Corps and in the northeastern coastal and northwestern Laos border areas of II Corps.

(4) Reduce the "calculated risk" currently entailed in our economy of force posture in II and III Corps by providing the added flexibility and "punch" of an armored cavalry regiment.

(5) Conduct aggressive and continuing offensive campaigns throughout the coastal areas of II Corps and into traditional enemy base areas and sanctuaries in III Corps along the Cambodian border; especially in war zones "C" and "D". Restore the offensive combat and pacification momentum lost in III Corps as a result of the enemy's TET offensive and the requirement to transfer the 101st Airborne Division (-) to I Corps to stem the NVA incursion into Quang Tri.

(6) Be prepared for contingency operations if required.

The second question asked by General Wheeler was:

Question B: What specific dangers are their dispatch to SVN designed to avoid, and what specific goals would the increment of force aim to achieve -

In the next 6 months?

Over the next year?



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In his answer, General Westmoreland was equally optimistic

...additive forces would serve to forestall the danger of local defeats due to the tactical degeneration or temporary disorganization of some ARVN units in the event of another general enemy offensive coupled with a massive invasion across the DMZ. The need to be prepared to support or reinforce ARVN units that are surprised by the nature and intensity of VC/NVA attacks became manifest during the enemy's TET drive and must be recognized in US troop requirement and deployment plans for the foreseeable future. By providing a two division mobile "swing force" which could be positioned and employed as required, the need to draw down on forces directly engaged in territorial security tasks probably would be reduced. Thus the danger of losing popular confidence in and support for GVN/US capabilities, policies and aspirations as a result of temporary military or psychological setbacks would also be diminished.

(2) Provision of the immediately required additional forces also would make it possible to apply continuous pressure to some degree in all corps areas and thus reduce the danger of allowing the enemy the opportunity to solicit support from the population and to reorganize, refit and recoup so that he could soon field rejuvenated units, despite heavy losses suffered during the TET offensive. This is particularly important in view of the enemy capability to move additional divisions south through the panhandle or DMZ without any clear intelligence indicators of such action. (This matter is of particular concern to me) these forces will also make it possible to retain that degree of flexibility and rapid responsiveness necessary to cope with an apparent new enemy tactic of searching for thin spots in our force structure or deployment in order to launch his concentrated mass attacks.

(3) In the next six months the presence of the armored cavalry regiment in II or III Corps would reduce the degree of calculated risk inherent in the economy of force posture in those areas, provide added territorial security and further the goal of providing added combat flexibility. Addition of another Marine regiment and its division headquarters in I Corps would thicken troop density in critical I CTZ, add to combat flexibility and improve command and control capabilities in that critical area.

(4) Over the next year the increment of force would make it possible to:

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A. Move progressively from north to south with a continuing series of hard hitting offensive campaigns to invade base areas, interdict and disrupt infiltration routes, and eliminate or evict VC/NVA forces from SVN.

B. At the same time, the highly mobile exploitation force (two divisions) would be available to counter enemy aggression or to exploit opportunities for tactical success anywhere in SVN without reducing the minimal essential force necessary to guarantee maintenance of security in those areas where successful military campaigns have already been waged.

C. Addition of the new division in III Corps during this time frame would re-establish the capability for conducting constant operations in and around war zones "C" and "D" and make possible the constant use of a division size force in the IV CTZ which capability was removed with transfer of the 101st Airborne Division (-) to I Corps. In addition, combat operations conducted by this division would provide added security for LOC and the vital seat of government and economic center of Saigon.

D. With the total additive combat forces requested it will be possible to deal with the invader from the north, and to face with a greater degree of confidence the potential tank, rocket and tactical air threat as well as the ever present possibility that he may reinforce with additional elements of his home army. 60/

The second document available to General Wheeler was an analysis of the military implications in South Vietnam of the deployment of various increments of U.S. forces. This analysis was done by the Short Range Branch, Plans and Policy Directorate, Joint Staff. It was an informal staff document which had not been addressed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff or any of the military services separately. 61/ The five options addressed were those indicated by the Secretary of Defense in his meeting of 29 February (see pages 7-8). This paper documented the large enemy buildup in South Vietnam:

1. The enemy, since November, has increased his forces in South Viet Nam by at least 41 maneuver battalions, some armored elements, a large number of rockets, and additional artillery. There are indications he is preparing for the use of limited air support, including logistical air drops and bombing missions.

The Joint Staff paper took exception to COMUSMACV's stated first priority of insuring "the security of the GVN in Saigon and in the provincial capitals."

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The basic strategy which must be followed by MACV in any circumstances is to defeat the current enemy offensive both in Northern I Corps Tactical Zone where it is the most formidable, in the Highlands where it is highly dangerous, and throughout South Vietnam in defense of the government and the cities and towns....Allied forces are not conducting offensive operations of any great magnitude or frequency and therefore they are not wresting control of the countryside from the enemy....

If the enemy offensive can be broken with sustained heavy casualties, then, and only then, will the cities be secure and the countryside reentered. Even with the largest force contemplated (Option 1) it will not be possible to perform adequately all of the tasks unless the current enemy offensive is decisively defeated. This, therefore, is the first and most important task upon which all else depends....

If the forces now in Vietnam or the forces under any of the options prove to be inadequate to break the enemy offensive, or if, conversely, the enemy sustained offensive breaks the Vietnamese armed forces (even short of destroying the GVN), then our objectives in South Vietnam and the tasks associated with them will be unobtainable. Specifically, we would be unable to regain the initiative, that is, we would not be able to conduct offensive operations at the scope and pace required either to prevent further enemy buildup or to reenter the countryside. This would force US and allied forces into a defensive posture around the major population centers....

Therefore, immediate action to break the enemy's current offensive is not only the first but the decisive requirement.

In specifically addressing each of the options, the Joint Staff reached the following conclusions:



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OPTIONS

I

Add approximately 196,000 to the present MACV Program 5 authorized level (525,000) plus 6 additional bns already deployed (10,500). Relaxation of restrictions on operations in Cambodia/Laos/NVN.

TOTAL - 133 maneuver bns

I-A

Same additive forces as Option I.

No relaxation of restrictions on operations.

II

No change to present MACV Program 5 authorized level (525,000) plus 6 additional bns already deployed (10,500).  
TOTAL - 112 maneuver bns

III

Add 50,000 US troops to the approximately 535,000 in Option II.  
TOTAL - 118 maneuver bns

IV

Add 100,000 to the approximately 535,000 in Option II.  
TOTAL - 124 maneuver bns

CONCLUSIONS

(To Defeat the VC/NVA in SVN)

This Option would:

- a. Assuming no additional deployments break enemy offensive and permit early and sustained operations against the enemy.
- b. Permit simultaneous operations against enemy main force, base areas, and border sanctuaries.
- c. Permit resumption of program to develop effectiveness of RVNAF.
- d. Permit greater employment of air assets in conducting an expanded air campaign against NVN, Laos, Cambodia.

Essentially the same as Option I except:

- a. The rate of conducting operations would be reduced by higher military risk.
- b. The enemy would enjoy sanctuary across the Cambodian/Laotian/NVN borders.
- c. The rebuilding of the RVNAF would be at a slower pace.

US objectives in SVN cannot be achieved as allied forces must remain in defensive posture.

At present levels, allied forces can expect increasingly grave threats to their security with high casualty rates.

This option could probably secure the cities but would be insufficient to counter the current enemy offensive or to restore security in the countryside.

The results of this Option are essentially the same as Option I, except:

- a. The rate of progress would be slower.
- b. The enemy would retain the initiative in the border areas.

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The paper, then, concluded that the larger forces of Option I and IA would "greatly reduce risks to Free World forces in SVN and will accomplish U.S. objectives more rapidly than the forces of the other options," and recommended that immediate action be taken to provide the forces of Option I.

Read another way, however, the Joint Staff analysis could be taken to indicate that the United States could successfully pursue a strategy of "population security" by adopting Option III, adding 50,000 troops to the current level in SVN.

At the 2 March meeting of the senior members of the Secretary of Defense's Working Group conducting the reassessment, no consensus was reached on a new U.S. strategy. Apparently, Mr. Warnke and Mr. Goulding were given the task of drafting a new memorandum for the President which would be less controversial than the initial ISA document.

The draft memorandum for the President, dated 3 March 1968, which was prepared by these two individuals, differed markedly in tone from the initial memorandum presented to the Clifford Group on 2 March. Gone was any discussion of grand strategy. This memorandum recommended simply:

1. Meeting General Westmoreland's request by deploying as close to May 1 as practical 20,000 additional troops (approximately 1/2 of which would be combat).
2. Approval of a Reserve call-up and an increased end strength adequate to meet the balance of the request and to restore a strategic reserve in the United States, adequate for possible contingencies.
3. Reservation of the decision to deploy the balance of General Westmoreland's new request. While we would be in a position to make these additional deployments, the future decision to do so would be contingent upon:
  - a. Continuous reexamination of the desirability of further deployments on a week-by-week basis as the situation develops;
  - b. Improved political performance by the GVN and increased contribution in effective military action by the ARVN;
  - c. The results of a study in depth, to be initiated immediately, of a possible new strategic guidance for the conduct of US military operations in South Vietnam.

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Two appendices to this paper addressed the basis for these recommendations and the context in which additional troop commitments to Vietnam should be examined.

In explaining the basis for the recommendation to deploy 20,000 troops, the memorandum indicated that the first increment of forces requested by General Westmoreland should be provided as an emergency measure to meet the prospect of continued abnormal levels of enemy activity. "This would, by May 1st, furnish him with an additional 20,000 troops, 10,500 of whom would be for combat purposes. Because of the possibility that the North Vietnamese leaders may decide to launch a larger scale invasion by main force units, we should put ourselves in a position to provide the other 185,000 ground, sea, and air forces involved in General Westmoreland's request." 63/

Additional forces, however, should not be dispatched until the situation in Vietnam developed.

A continuing and intensive review should focus not only on future enemy activity but also on the demonstrated ability of the GVN and the ARVN to pull themselves together, to get back into business, and to demonstrate significant improvements both in their ability to win popular support and their willingness to fight aggressively for their own security. Unless these qualities are evidenced, there can be no real hope for the accomplishment of our political aims.

Finally, we believe that the striking change in the enemy's tactics, the willingness to commit at least two additional divisions to the fighting in the South over the past few weeks, the obvious and not wholly anticipated strength of the Viet Cong infrastructure, there can be no prospect of a quick military solution to the aggression in South Vietnam. Under these circumstances, we should give intensive study to the development of a new strategic guidance to General Westmoreland. This guidance should make clear the fact that he cannot be expected either to destroy the enemy forces or to rout them completely from South Vietnam. The kind of American commitment that would be required to achieve these military objectives cannot even be estimated. There is no reason to believe that it could be done by an additional 200,000 American troops or double or triple that quantity....

The exact nature of the strategic guidance which should be adopted cannot now be predicted. It should be the subject of a detailed inter-agency study over the next several weeks. During the progress of the study, discussions of the appropriate strategic guidance and its nature and implications for the extent of our military commitment in South Vietnam should be undertaken with both General Westmoreland and Ambassador Bunker. 64/



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In placing these additional troop commitments in a larger context, an additional appendix concluded:

No matter what the result in South Vietnam itself, we will have failed in our purposes if:

a. The war in Vietnam spreads to the point where it is a major conflict leading to direct military confrontation with the USSR and/or China;

b. The war in Vietnam spreads to the point where we are so committed in resources that our other world-wide commitments -- especially NATO -- are no longer credible;

c. The attitudes of the American people towards "more Vietnams" are such that our other commitments are brought into question as a matter of US will;

d. Other countries no longer wish the US commitment for fear of the consequences to themselves as a battlefield between the East and the West.

Under these circumstances, we recommend that under the leadership of the State Department, with the assistance of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the JCS, and the Treasury, a review of our Vietnamese policy in the context of our global politico-military strategy be undertaken with a due date of May 15. 65/

Thus, the net result of this period of frantic preparation, consultation, writing, and reassessing was similar to all previous requests for reinforcement in Vietnam. The litany was familiar: "We will furnish what we can presently furnish without disrupting the normal political and economic life of the nation, while we study the situation as it develops." No startling reassessment of strategy was indicated, although for the first time it was recognized that such a reassessment was needed, that a limit to U.S. involvement in SVN had to be determined, and that any number of U.S. troops could not achieve our objectives without significant improvement in the ability of the GVN to win popular support and to fight aggressively for their own security.

5. Recommendation to the President

This draft memorandum was discussed again within the Defense Department on 3 March, and several changes were made. The 4 March draft memorandum for the President was apparently approved by the Secretary of Defense and forwarded to the President. The paper which was forwarded to the President bore a great resemblance to the 3 March draft, although the Systems Analysis influence on the 4 March paper was evidenced by its greater detail, especially concerning actions to be required of the GVN.

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The memorandum recapitulated General Westmoreland's request for personnel and indicated that General Wheeler believed that we should meet this request, and should act to increase and improve our strategic reserve in the United States. To achieve both these goals, the paper stated, staff examination indicated that the following actions would be required:

- a. A call-up of reserve units and individuals totaling approximately 262,000 (194,000 in units, 68,000 as individuals).
- b. Increased draft calls.
- c. Extension of terms of service. These actions would produce a total increase in end strength in the Armed Forces of approximately 511,000 by June 30, 1969. (The staff examination referred to above included spaces to add 31,500 troops in South Korea and a US naval proposal to add two cruisers and fifteen destroyers to the naval forces in Southeast Asia. If these proposals are disapproved in their entirety, the figures above will be decreased to approximately 242,000 and 454,000 respectively.

The Secretary of Defense then recommended:

1. An immediate decision to deploy to Vietnam an estimated total of 22,000 additional personnel (approximately 60% of which would be combat). An immediate decision to deploy the three tactical fighter squadrons deferred from Program 5 (about 1,000 men). This would be over and above the four battalions (about 3700 men) already planned for deployment in April which in themselves would bring us slightly above the 525,000 authorized level....
2. Either through Ambassador Bunker or through an early visit by Secretary Clifford, a highly forceful approach to the GVN (Thieu and Ky) to get certain key commitments for improvement, tied to our own increased effort and to increased US support for the ARVN....
3. Early approval of a Reserve call-up and an increased end strength adequate to meet the balance of the Westmoreland request and to restore a strategic reserve in the United States, adequate for possible contingencies world-wide....
4. Reservation of the decision to meet the Westmoreland request in full. While we would be putting ourselves in a position to make these additional deployments, the future decision to do so would be contingent upon:



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a. Reexamination on a week-by-week basis of the desirability of further deployments as the situation develops;

b. Improved political performance by the GVN and increased contribution in effective military action by the ARVN;

c. The results of a study in depth, to be initiated immediately, of possible new political and strategic guidance for the conduct of US operations in South Vietnam, and of our Vietnamese policy in the context of our world-wide politico-military strategy....

5. No new peace initiative on Vietnam. Re-statement of our terms for peace and certain limited diplomatic actions to dramatize Laos and to focus attention on the total threat to Southeast Asia....

6. A general decision on bombing policy, not excluding future change, but adequate to form a basis for discussion with the Congress on this key aspect. Here your advisers are divided:

a. General Wheeler and others would advocate a substantial extension of targets and authority in and near Hanoi and Haiphong, mining of Haiphong, and naval gunfire up to a Chinese Buffer Zone;

b. Others would advocate a seasonal step-up through the spring, but without these added elements. 66/

In proposing this course of action, the Secretary of Defense indicated that he recognized that there were many negative factors and certain difficulties. Nevertheless, he indicated the belief that this course of action, at least in its essential outline, was urgently required to meet the immediate situation in Vietnam, as well as wider possible contingencies there and elsewhere.

Eight tabs to the draft memorandum elaborated upon the reasoning which led to the recommendations contained therein. TAB A reviewed the justification for immediately sending additional forces to Vietnam. The situation in SVN was analyzed as follows:

Hanoi has made a basic change in its strategy and scale of operations. Perhaps because they thought they were losing as the war and pacification were going, Hanoi is pressing hard for decisive results over the next few months. They are committing a high proportion of their assets, although it appears likely that they would retain both the capability and will to keep up the pressure next year if this effort does not succeed. There is hope that, if this year's effort could be thwarted, Hanoi and Viet Cong morale would be sufficiently affected to open up possibilities of peace, but this cannot be assessed as likely.



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Within South Vietnam, there are key variables that could move the situation sharply, one way or the other, in the coming months. Specifically:

a. The degree to which Hanoi and the VC are able to keep pressing, and how effectively they are countered in the military sphere.

b. The degree to which the VC are able to extend their control in the countryside and recoup their losses -- or whether conversely the South Vietnamese can take the initiative and either neutralize such recoupment or set in motion a new favorable trend.

c. The degree to which the GVN improves its performance and galvanizes potentially greater popular support than it can now have.

Thus, there was created an urgent need, both practical and psychological, to send such forces as could be effective within the next four or five months.

The following additional forces of about 22,000 men could be deployed by June 15 in accordance with the schedule set forth below:

Six Tactical Fighter Squadrons	- 3,000 men
2 Squadrons by	- 1 April
3 Squadrons by	- 1 May
1 Squadron by	- 1 June

4th Marine Expeditionary Force (minus)	- 18,100 men
by	- 15 June

Naval Mobile Construction Battalion	- 700 men
by	- 1 May

In addition, it was reiterated that an urgent effort was required to improve and modernize the equipment of the SVN Armed Forces.

Tab B elaborated on what should be done to increase the effectiveness of Vietnamese efforts in conjunction with the U.S. troop increase. Two possible GVN reactions were foreseen to the deployment of additional U.S. forces. The reaffirmation of the U.S. commitment would be welcomed, would add to the feeling of confidence, and might stiffen the GVN's will at a time "when the tasks it faces are rather monumental." On the other hand, there was always the danger that the Vietnamese would be tempted to relax behind the refuge of American power, and the sense of anxiety and urgency which had resulted from the TET offensive could suffer. The memorandum indicated, however, that the GVN had the capacity to take those civil and military actions which would materially improve the political and security

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climate of South Vietnam, as well as the image of the GVN in the United States. This involved, the memorandum indicated, a readiness for the U.S. to make specific demands upon the GVN in order to get it to take a wide range of decisions and actions. Among those things considered essential and feasible, the following actions were listed:

1. Mobilization - The Vietnamese Armed Forces should be increased to the maximum. As a first step, present plans to increase Vietnamese forces by 65,000 men should be amended to provide for an additional 30,000 men under arms by the end of 1968. The draft of 18 and 19 year olds should proceed as presently scheduled. This should be consistent with the ability to train and supply the forces, but avoid undercutting the need for key civilians in other governmental functions by diversion of skilled personnel.

2. The Thieu-Ky Relationship and Unity of Leadership - The failure of Thieu and Ky to cooperate fully and apply their individual talents to the needs of the situation has continued to plague the effective management of the Vietnamese effort. In turn this has had ramifications down the line in both the military and civilian chain of command. It has also complicated the chances of rallying the various elements in the society, as the rivalry translates itself into interference with attempts at forming a national anti-communist front.

Thieu and Ky and their followers, as well as other elements in the society not associated directly with them, must be brought to realize that we are no longer prepared to put up with anything but the maximum effort on their part. A clear and precise role for Ky should be defined. Thieu and Ky must bring their followers into line. The government should be prepared to engage the services of people with administrative and executive talent who are now not participating in the common task. Our expectations in this regard have to be made crystal clear to each and every Vietnamese leader in and out of Government. Without this fundamental change in the attitude and dedication of the leadership, the necessary reforms and the necessary inspiration of the Vietnamese people will not be forthcoming quickly or sufficiently.

3. Getting the Government Back into the Countryside - We must win the race to the countryside, go on the offensive, re-establish security in the rural areas, and restore the government's presence in the villages. The ARVN and other security forces must deploy aggressively, the RD cadre must return to their tasks, and governmental services reach out from the province capitals.



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In the final analysis rural security, the sine qua non of popular identification with the GVN, must be provided by the Vietnamese themselves. The two keys here are (1) the calibre and role of the 44 province chiefs (and their supporting staffs) and (2) a properly offensive sense of mission on the part of ARVN units - and their commanders - assigned to rural security support missions. In every area (village, district, province, DTZ and corps) the RVNAF unit commanders responsible for security in that area must be graded (i.e. promoted, commended or sacked) primarily on their ability to find, fix and eradicate the VC Force indigenous to that area. They must also be graded (with commensurate effect on their careers) with respect to the behavior of their troops vis-a-vis the populace in that area.

4. Drive on the Viet Cong Infrastructure - In our concern over the behavior of our allies, we must not neglect our enemies and the present opportunity to compound and exacerbate communist problems. Operation Phoenix which is targetted against the Viet Cong must be pursued more vigorously in closer liaison with the US. Vietnamese armed forces should be devoted to anti-infrastructure activities on a priority basis. The Tet offensive surfaced a good deal of the infrastructure and the opportunity to damage it has never been better. This would force the VC on the defensive and head off the establishment of local VC administrative organizations and VC attempts to set up provisional governmental committees.

5. US-ARVN Command Relationships - While we accept the Mission's reluctance to create a joint command, we believe that alternative arrangements which give the US a greater role in ARVN employment are necessary. This can be done at the Corps level and below. It would involve US participation in the planning and control of ARVN operations. It might even call for the prior approval by US advisors of ARVN operational plans -- this now exists in certain cases depending upon individual advisor relationships. We should request MACV to study the matter and come up with a specific plan to meet the requirement.

6. Government Reform and Anti-Corruption Campaign - The beginning steps at administrative reform which President Thieu has announced must be accelerated. This should be directly associated with a new deal on corruption, which must be dealt with by relief of a specified list of corrupt officials now and the promise of severe action in the future. A capable Inspectorate should be established. Incompetent ARVN officers must be removed, beginning with a specific list that should be made available by MACV. Incompetent province chiefs who have plagued our efforts in the past must be removed. The removal of incompetent commanders



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and officials is now more feasible in the light of performance during the Tet offensive. We should not hesitate to make our desires known and back them up by refusing to provide support for the incompetent. For key commanders, we should require the right of prior approval on a secret and discreet basis. The precise tools of leverage to be applied in this regard should be left to the US Mission, but could include withholding advice and assistance at local levels in extreme cases.

7. The Prime Minister - We should solicit Ambassador Bunker's views on the desirability of replacing the Prime Minister. If he is to be replaced we should agree on his successor beforehand, in consultation with Thieu and Ky.

8. The United Front - A nationalist spirit of cooperation and unity came to the fore in the immediate wake of the Tet offensive. It is being manifested incompletely in attempts to organize groups in support of the national task. Despite the personal misgivings of old antagonists there has been some success. This is now threatened by personal rivalries, and most significantly by differences between Thieu and Ky. We need to find a formula for joint efforts. Ambassador Bunker suggests that the optimum result would be a "super front" of the anti-communist groups. Although not directly tied to the government, such a front could serve to rally the people broadly and emotionally against the Viet Cong. To succeed it must be backed by the leadership of the government - both Thieu and Ky - but not appear to compete with the National Assembly. It should encompass all elements in the society, but not be the vehicle for any one power group.

9. Economic Measures - There will be increased inflation in Vietnam this year, and additional US troops will make it more severe. Steps need to be taken now to counter the threat of inflation, if we are not to be faced with a severe crisis next fall and winter. The GVN needs to move on tax increases, and U.S. and GVN expenditures for non-essential programs in Vietnam should be restrained. On the other hand, wage increases for civil and military personnel in the GVN are needed if inflation is not to weaken their will and support.

Additionally, we must demand of the GVN some measure of action on their part to compensate for the effect of additional US troops on the US balance of payments. This can be done by having the GVN provide to the US at no cost the additional piaster costs incurred by our troop increase. We should also insist that GVN reserves be reduced to \$250 million from the present maximum reserve level of \$300 million and that a significant portion of the reserve be invested in medium and long term US securities. The details of these

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economic measures cannot be discussed in this paper, but a comprehensive economic package should be prepared and presented to the GVN - to include what the US is prepared to do in the way of increased financing of commercial imports.

10. Resource Allocation - Non-essential use of resources should be eliminated. Present government programs to eliminate new luxury construction must be tightened and continued. Bars and night clubs should remain closed. Austerity should be fostered. 68/

The Appendix recommended that a high-level mission, probably headed by the Secretary of Defense, should go to Saigon to emphasize to the GVN that we consider improved GVN performance essential; that any further U.S. support must be matched by GVN actions; and that the above recommendations would be used as a checklist for judging Vietnamese performance. In addition, this Appendix emphasized that we should do what was necessary to improve the capability of RVNAF. Although no details were given, the statement was made that: "On the basis of current planning estimates, this would involve additional expenditure of about \$475 million over a period of 18 months."

Tab C of the Memorandum for the President consisted of a brief justification for increasing the strategic reserve. The basic argument was that we would then be prepared to provide the additional ground, sea, and air forces involved in General Westmoreland's request if the military situation required. In addition, the paper indicated:

If these additional forces are not deployed to Vietnam, our action in thus reconstituting the strategic reserve would nevertheless be fully warranted. Our strategic reserve has been appreciably depleted because of Vietnam demands. At present, the active division forces in the Continental United States, Hawaii and Okinawa, and including the Marine units in the Caribbean and Mediterranean, consist of 4-2/3 Army divisions and 1-1/3 Marine divisions. This compares with the 9 Army divisions and 3 Marine divisions in our strategic reserve on 30 June 1965. A call-up of 245,000, with no deployments to South Vietnam in excess of the 20-30,000 now recommended, would yield a strategic reserve of 7 Army divisions and 2 Marine divisions. The unsettled situations in many parts of the world make this build-up a prudent action entirely apart from possible Vietnam contingencies. 69/

Relegated to Tab D of the Memorandum for the President was what had begun as the major task of the Working Group--the necessity for in-depth study of Vietnam policy and strategic guidance.

General Westmoreland's request, this Appendix pointed out, does not purport to provide any really satisfactory answer to the problem in Vietnam.



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There can be no assurance that this very substantial additional deployment would leave us a year from today in any more favorable military position. All that can be said is that the additional troops would enable us to kill more of the enemy and would provide more security if the enemy does not offset them by lesser reinforcements of his own. There is no indication that they would bring about a quick solution in Vietnam and, in the absence of better performance by the GVN and the ARVN, the increased destruction and increased Americanization of the war could, in fact, be counter-productive. 70/

There were many other reasons for conducting a study of our Vietnamese policy in the context of the U.S. worldwide political/military strategy. No matter what the result in Vietnam itself, we will have failed in our purpose, the memorandum stated, if:

- a. The war in Vietnam spreads to the point where it is a major conflict leading to direct military confrontation with the USSR and/or China;
- b. The war in Vietnam spreads to the point where we are so committed in resources that our other world-wide commitments -- especially NATO -- are no longer credible;
- c. The attitudes of the American people towards "more Vietnams" are such that our other commitments are brought into question as a matter of US will;
- d. Other countries no longer wish the US commitment for fear of the consequences to themselves as a battlefield between the East and the West. 71/

In addition, any intensive review should focus on the ability of the GVN and the ARVN to demonstrate significant improvement, both in their ability to win popular support and their willingness to fight aggressively for their own security.

Finally, the memorandum stated:

...the striking change in the enemy's tactics, his willingness to commit at least two additional divisions to the fighting in the South over the past few weeks and the obvious and not wholly anticipated strength of the Viet Cong infrastructure, shows that there can be no prospect of a quick military solution to the aggression in South Vietnam. Under these circumstances, we should give intensive study to the development of new strategic guidance to General Westmoreland. This study may show that he should not be expected either to destroy the enemy forces or to rout them completely from South Vietnam. The kind of American commitment that might be required to achieve these military



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objectives cannot even be estimated. There is no reason to believe that it could be done by an additional 200,000 American troops or double or triple that quantity....

The exact nature of the strategic guidance which should be adopted cannot now be predicted. It should be the subject of a detailed interagency study over the next several weeks. During the progress of the study, discussions of the appropriate strategic guidance and its nature and implications for the extent of our military commitment in South Vietnam should be undertaken with both General Westmoreland and Ambassador Bunker. 72/

Thus, the "A to Z reassessment" of U.S. strategy requested by the President was relegated by the Working Group to a future date.

Tab E remained intact from the original 29 February draft memorandum. Prepared by the State Department, it discussed negotiating options and possible diplomatic actions in connection with a buildup of U.S. forces. Concerning our negotiating posture, three broad options were listed:

1. Stand pat on the San Antonio formula and on our basic position toward the terms of a negotiated settlement -- the Geneva Accords plus free choice in the South, rejecting a coalition or any special position for the NLF.
2. Take some new initiative, either privately or publicly, that might involve a change in our position on the San Antonio formula and/or a change in our position on the elements of a settlement.
3. No change in our position for the present, but pitching our course of action toward a strong move for negotiations when and if we have countered Hanoi's offensive -- i.e., in a matter of four months or so perhaps. 73/

The crucial question, the paper indicated, was really to examine what we could conceivably do by way of a new initiative under Option 2. After examining the situation, however, the conclusion was reached that:

...any change in our position on the terms of a peaceful settlement would be extremely unwise at the present time. We may well wish to work on opening up channels to the NLF, but this must be done in the utmost secrecy and in full consultation with the GVN. We do not know what the possibilities may be in this direction, but any public stress on this avenue would feed the fires of a VC propaganda line that has already had significant disturbing effect in South Vietnam.

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As to our conditions for stopping the bombing and entering into talks, we continue to believe that the San Antonio formula is "rock bottom." The South Vietnamese are in fact talking about much stiffer conditions, such as stopping the infiltration entirely. Any move by us to modify the San Antonio formula downward would be extremely disturbing in South Vietnam, and would have no significant offsetting gains in US public opinion or in key third countries....

This being said, we believe that it would strengthen our over-all posture, and involve no significant risks in Vietnam, if we were to reiterate our basic position on our terms of settlement in South Vietnam. A systematic restatement of our position on the Geneva Accords and free choice in the South could be a vital part of selling our whole course of action to the public, to Congress, and the world. Although we have stated all the elements at different times, we have not pulled them together for a long time and we could get a considerable impression of freshness, even novelty, and certainly reasonableness by identifying more precisely the elements of the Geneva Accords; our position on free choice, and perhaps adding something on external guarantees, which have always been a generalized part of our position and that of the South Vietnamese. 74/

Further diplomatic actions, the Appendix indicated, would be designed to dramatize the Communist threats to Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia. Among the actions suggested were the following:

First, that the restatement of our position on South Vietnam include substantial emphasis on restoration of the Laos Accords of 1962 and on the preservation of the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia under the 1954 Accords.

Indeed, we could go still further and take the occasion to talk in terms of an over-all settlement for Southeast Asia that would specifically provide that each nation was free to assume whatever neutral or other international posture it wished to take. We could explicitly state that we were prepared to accept a Southeast Asia that was "neutral" in the sense of not adhering to any power bloc or forming a part of any alliance directed at others.

We could say a favorable word about regional arrangements in Southeast Asia consistent with the concept, and could indicate our willingness to join with other outside nations to consider what kind of general assurances of support could be given to such a Southeast Asia....

Second, there are strong diplomatic steps that could be



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taken to dramatize the situation in Laos. We could encourage Souvanna to take the case to the UN where Laos and Souvanna have strong appeal. Concurrently, but we believe less effective in practice, Souvanna could press the British and Soviets to take action or even to reconvene the Geneva Conference of 1962.

Third, we could attempt similar action for Cambodia. This might be through the Australians, to get Sihanouk to take his case also to the UN. Even if he made some accusations against us in the process, he would be likely at the present time to highlight his internal Chinese-backed threat, and the net result could be useful.

A further possibility would be to seek to enlist India more deeply in the Cambodian situation. This is worth trying, but the Indians are a weak reed for action or for effective diplomatic dramatization.

Fourth, we could consider getting the Thai to dramatize their situation more than they have done. This takes careful thought, since they do not wish to alarm their own people. 75/

Other possibilities discussed were the enlisting and engaging of other Asian nations in the search for peace in Vietnam and the Soviet Union in an effort to find peace in Southeast Asia.

In Tab F appeared a discussion of military action against North Vietnam. This tab contained two contrary views concerning the bombing campaign against NVN, and is discussed in detail in another Task Force paper. This is the first place that any written discussion of the bombing campaign against the North appears in any of the papers of the Working Group. It is interesting to note, in the light of subsequent developments, that neither the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff nor the Secretary of Defense made mention of a partial or complete bombing suspension of the North at this time. They differed only on the extent to which the bombing campaign against North Viet Nam should be intensified. 76/

Tabs G and H, the final Tabs, considered the public affairs problems in dealing with increased U.S. troop commitments to SVN and to the calling up of reserve forces. In dealing with public opinion and with Congress, these Appendices concluded that from a public affairs viewpoint:

Beyond the basic points of establishing that the war is in the national interest, that there is a plan to end it satisfactorily and that we can identify the resources needed to carry out that plan, we must prove:

1. That General Westmoreland needs the additional troops being sent him.



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2. That he does not need further additional troops at this time.
3. That the Strategic Reserve does need reconstitution at this time.
4. That the possible need of General Westmoreland for possible future reinforcement is sufficiently important to merit the callup.
5. That there is not a bottomless pit.
6. That the nation still has the resources for the ghetto fight. 77/

Thus, the memorandum forwarded to the President by the Secretary of Defense in response to the Presidential request for an "A to Z reassessment" of our Vietnam policy again represented a compromise. In this case, it was a compromise brought about by differences between the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and his staff, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and his officers. Initially, ISA had prepared a draft Presidential memorandum which had indeed reassessed U.S. strategy in SVN, found it faulty, and recommended a new strategy of protecting the "demographic frontier" with basically the U.S. forces presently in-country. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff found "fatal flaws" in this strategy, could not accept the implied criticism of past strategy in the ISA proposal, did not think that the Defense Department civilians should be involved in issuing specific guidance to the military field commander, and supported this field commander in his request for the forces required to allow him to "regain the initiative." The compromise reached, of course, was that a decision on new strategic guidance should be deferred pending a complete political/military reassessment of the U.S. strategy and objectives in Vietnam in the context of our worldwide commitments.

The recommendation for additional forces was also a compromise and was based, as had past decisions of this nature, on what could be done by the forces in-being without disrupting the nation. However, there were additional reasons adduced for not meeting all of COMUSMACV's requirements for forces. The situation in SVN was not clear. The ability of the Government and of the Army of South Vietnam to survive and to improve were in serious question. The ability of the U.S. to attain its objectives in SVN by military force of whatever size was not clear. Weighing heavily upon the minds of the senior officials who prepared and approved the 4 March memorandum to the President was, indeed, what difference in the war, what progress toward victory such a buildup as requested by MACV would make. These leaders were, finally, prepared to go a long way down the road in meeting COMUSMACV's request. They recommended to the President that the first increment of this request be met. They also recommended a partial mobilization so as to be prepared to meet additional requirements if and when it was demonstrated that these forces were necessary and would make a strategic difference.

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More importantly, however, these officials finally came to the realization that no military strategy could be successful unless a South Vietnamese political and military entity was capable of winning the support of its people. Thus, for the first time, U.S. efforts were to be made contingent upon specific reform measures undertaken by the GVN, and U.S. leverage was to be used to elicit these reforms. South Vietnam was to be put on notice that the limit of U.S. patience and commitment had been approached.

Concerning negotiations and the bombing of the North, the Memorandum for the President was conventional. No changes in our negotiating position were recommended and no really new diplomatic initiatives were suggested. Concerning the bombing of the North, the only issue indicated concerned the degree of intensification. There was no mention made of a partial reduction or cessation.

Thus, faced with a fork in the road of our Vietnam policy, the Working Group failed to seize the opportunity to change directions. Indeed, they seemed to recommend that we continue rather haltingly down the same road, meanwhile consulting the map more frequently and in greater detail to insure that we were still on the right road.

#### 6. The Climate of Opinion

This memorandum was presented to the President on Monday evening, 4 March, and at his request, the recommendations were passed to General Westmoreland for his comments. These comments were received by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and passed to the Secretary of Defense on 8 March 1968. General Westmoreland welcomed the additional airpower which "would greatly enhance the tactical air support available to ground units." The chairman indicated, however, that there had been no change in General Westmoreland's requirements as originally proposed and, indeed, additional combat service-support forces had been requested.

General Westmoreland states that although immediate authorization for deployment of 22,000 additional personnel would provide much needed combat and combat support forces, the combat service support forces now in Vietnam are insufficient to support our present force structure. This is especially critical in view of the recent deployment of the 3rd Brigade of the 82d Airborne Division and RLT 27 to the I Corps tactical zone without the appropriate slice of combat support. He emphasizes the absolute requirement to provide the support forces identified with the increased deployments prior to or at the same time the tactical forces are deployed. In this regard, General Westmoreland has this date forwarded his specific strength recommendations for the immediate essential combat service support forces to provide adequate support for combat units in I CTZ, including the 3rd Brigade of the 82d Airborne Division, RLT 27 and Army units which have been redeployed to Northern I Corps tactical zone. This request



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has not yet been validated by CINCPAC, but is currently under consideration here by the Joint Staff in anticipation of early action by Admiral Sharp's headquarters.

Finally, General Westmoreland recognizes that the forces which were contained in the Committee's recommendations were apparently based upon the capabilities of the Services to produce troops for deployment. He states that there has been no change in his appraisal of the situation since my visit to Vietnam and thus there has been no change in his requirements as originally proposed. 78/

From the 4th of March until the final Presidential decision was announced to the country, the written record becomes sparse. The debate within the Administration was argued and carried forward on a personal basis by the officials involved, primarily, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State.

The decision, however, had been placed squarely on the shoulders of the President. The recommendations of the 4 March memorandum had left him a profound political/military dilemma. The memorandum had recommended "a little bit more of the same" to stabilize the military situation, plus a level of mobilization in order to be prepared to meet any further deterioration in the ground situation. Any new strategic guidance, any new direction in policy, however, were to be left to a subsequent study.

But many political events in the first few weeks of March 1968 gave strong indications that the country was becoming increasingly divided over and disenchanted with the current Vietnam strategy, and would no longer settle for "more of the same" with no indication of an eventual end to the conflict. That the President was aware of these external political pressures and that they influenced his decision is evident.

Focus to this political debate and sense of dissatisfaction was given by a startlingly accurate account, published in The New York Times on 10 March, of General Westmoreland's request and of the strategic reassessment which was being conducted within the executive branch of the government. It also indicated the growing doubt and unease in the nation concerning this policy review.

Written by Neil Sheehan and Hedrick Smith, the article stated:

General William C. Westmoreland has asked for 206,000 more American troops for Vietnam, but the request has touched off a divisive internal debate within high levels of the Johnson Administration.

A number of sub-Cabinet civilian officials in the Defense Department, supported by some senior officials in the State Department, have argued against General Westmoreland's plea



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for a 40 per cent increase in his forces 'to regain the initiative' from the enemy.

....Many of the civilian officials are arguing that there should be no increase beyond the movement of troops now under way....

The contention of these high ranking officials is that an American increase will bring a matching increase by North Vietnam, thereby raising the level of violence without giving the allies the upper hand.

Senior Pentagon civilians have put forward a written counter-proposal to President Johnson, calling for a shift in American strategy to a concept of close-in defense of populated areas with more limited offensive thrusts than at present. Much of the military hierarchy is reported to oppose this approach....

The President has not yet decided on the question of substantial increases in American forces in Vietnam....

Nonetheless, the scope and depth of the internal debate within the Government reflect the wrenching uncertainty and doubt in this capital about every facet of the war left by the enemy's dramatic wave of attacks at Tet, the Asian New Year holiday, six weeks ago. More than ever this has left a sense of weariness and irritation over the war.

Officials themselves comment in private about widespread and deep changes in attitudes, a sense that a watershed has been reached and that its meaning is just now beginning to be understood....

But at every level of Government there is a sense that the conflict, if expanded further, can no longer be called 'a limited war.' Officials acknowledge that any further American involvement carries serious implications for the civilian life of the nation--not only the call-up of military reserves and enactment of a tax increase but problems with the budget, the economy and the balance of payments.

In Congress, uneasy and divided, as the Senate debate on Thursday showed, there is a rising demand that Capitol Hill be consulted before any critical new step is taken. Even supporters of Administration policy, such as Senator Richard B. Russell, Democrat of Georgia, who is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, are openly critical of American combat strategy. Mr. Russell has suggested that the

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United States has lost the battlefield initiative not only through the enemy's bold tactics but by what he calls its own defensive, gradualist psychology....

General Westmoreland's request for another 206,000 troops, beyond the present authorized 525,000-man level to be reached by next fall, was brought from Saigon last month by Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff....

General Wheeler presented the request to President Johnson at the White House on Feb. 28, when he delivered a report on his three-day survey of the war situation in South Vietnam. The request was also forwarded to the President by the Joint Chiefs as a body 'with our approval'....

Military leaders also contend that only a massive infusion of troops will restore the allied initiative. They say it would also permit the allied forces to resume the pacification of the countryside and the war of attrition against the Vietcong that they contend was being successfully waged before the Tet offensive.

The main lines of the case against General Westmoreland's request are contained in a position paper prepared over the last weekend by senior civilian officials in the Defense Department, including assistant secretaries. Most of these officials were brought into the Government by former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara.

The argument goes like this:

Since the United States military build-up began in 1965, Hanoi has gradually increased its forces in South Vietnam and maintained a reasonable ratio to the fighting strength of the American Forces. There is every reason to believe, these officials contend, that Hanoi is able and willing to continue to do so if more American troops are sent to Vietnam within the next year.

The reinforcements that General Westmoreland wants would thus not restore the initiative. They would simply raise the level of violence. The United States would spend billions more on the war effort and would suffer appreciably higher casualties.

North Vietnam would likewise endure substantially greater losses. But the experience of the Tet offensive shows, according to this line of reasoning, that American Military commanders have gravely underestimated the capacity of the enemy to absorb such punishment and to be still able to launch bold offensive operations.

'So there would just be a lot more killing,' one analyst said.



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The White House is also reported to have received an analysis from the Central Intelligence Agency that support this view of North Vietnam's manpower resources and its will to resist.

'Essentially,' said one official, 'we are fighting Vietnam's birth rate.'

The Defense Department's paper was verbally endorsed by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul T. Nitze and forwarded by him to Clark M. Clifford, the new Defense Secretary, for transmittal to the President on Monday.

Mr. Clifford was impressed with the caliber of the analysis, informants said, but it is not known whether he endorsed the document personally.

The thrust of the argument in the Pentagon paper is reported to have gained the sympathetic support of a number of senior State Department officials, including Under Secretary Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and others close to Vietnam policy.

'I can tell you that all of us in this building are against a troop increase,' one State Department official said. However, Secretary Rusk's position on the matter was unknown.

The defense position paper concludes by proposing a change in American strategy in South Vietnam. This would entail withdrawing from exposed positions like Khesanh in the sparsely populated frontier regions and concentrating on a mobile defense of the cities and populated areas nearer the sea.

But some military officials contend this is not a realistic option.

'Each town will become a Khesanh,' they assert, and civilian casualties will soar.

Although most civilian officials declined to use the term 'enclave' to describe their proposed strategy, some conceded that it does amount to a modification of the theory advanced by Lieut. Gen. James M. Gavin, retired. He has for months urged that the allies pull back to defensive positions around cities and other important enclaves along the coast.

The Pentagon document suggests that on the political side the United States encouraged the Saigon regime to broaden itself by including non-Communist opposition elements such as the followers of the militant Buddhist leader Tri Quang. A broader base would help the regime establish a better relationship with its population and make its army more effective, the paper asserts.



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In their discussion of the American predicament in Vietnam, some civilian officials go significantly further and suggest that the Administration should concede that 'you cannot completely defeat the enemy.' The United States, they say, should instead 'buy time' with its present forces while the non-Communist South Vietnamese can strengthen themselves to the point where they 'believe in their ability to survive against the Communists after some sort of internal compromise.'

Officials are vague about the ingredients of this compromise, but they acknowledge that it would probably involve negotiations between the Vietcong and the non-Communists in the South.

Although it clearly entails abandonment of the military solution that is implicit in current Administration policy, they argue that such a compromise would not violate any public American commitment to South Vietnam.

While avoiding any decision so far, President Johnson has gained time by putting pressure on General Westmoreland to obtain maximum use of the troops he now has. The President has instructed the general to justify in detail his request for reinforcements.

Mr. Johnson has also set in motion extensive staff studies of the full political, economic and military ramifications of giving General Westmoreland more troops. Included among these may be an examination of the possibility of acquiring additional forces from Washington's allies in South Vietnam--Australia, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines.

The thrust of the President's concern, however, has been with the consequences of troop increases. There is no indication at this time that Mr. Johnson and his closest advisers, Mr. Rusk, Mr. Clifford and Mr. Rostow are seriously interested in extending the war to Cambodia and Laos or in changing to a strategy of close-in defense of populated areas.

They reject a political compromise with the Vietcong at this point. Some senior civilian officials, in fact, believe Mr. Johnson is 'still intensely committed to a military solution.'

These officials consider General Westmoreland's request for an additional 206,000 men 'unrealistic,' however, and do not believe the President will grant it. 79/

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Even prior to this article, there had been a great deal of speculation in the press concerning the need for additional troops in SVN, and the general conclusion seemed to be that some additions would be required. Members of Congress had already demanded that Congress be consulted before any decision was made to increase troop strength in Vietnam significantly. A number of prominent senators had interrupted debate on civil rights on 7 March to make this demand because of "disturbing information that a Presidential Decision was imminent." 80/

The Sheehan article appeared one day before Secretary of State Dean Rusk appeared to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. His 2-day grilling indicated a considerable growth in open dissent within the Committee concerning U.S. policy in South Vietnam. Rusk even came under criticism from one of the few Administration supporters on the Committee, Senator Karl E. Mundt (R-SD), who warned him, "You are as aware as we are that the shift of opinion in this country is in the wrong direction" - meaning away from support of U.S. policy in Vietnam. "Something more convincing," said Mundt, "has to come from the Administration as to what this is all about 'to match' the sacrifices we are making." Rusk sidestepped all attempts by Senators Fulbright, Gore, and other questioners to pin him down on a possible increase in troops or other element of future Vietnam strategy. It would "not be right for me to speculate about numbers of possibilities," said Rusk, "while the President is consulting his advisors." 81/

Later, on 12 March, both friends and foes of the President's policy in Vietnam served notice that the present course must be reassessed before more troops were sent to Vietnam.

"Senator Fulbright (D-Ark), Foreign Relations Committee chairman, warned against an escalation that could lead to 'all-out war,' and insisted during a televised hearing with Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, that Congress be consulted before crucial new decisions are made."

But Senator Russell (D-Ga), Armed Services Committee chairman, took a different tack, contending that air and sea power should be used to the fullest extent before ground-force levels are increased.

"If we are not willing to take this calculated risk," Russell told a Veterans of Foreign Wars dinner, "we should not still be increasing the half-million men in Vietnam who are exposed to danger daily from weapons that might have been kept from the hands of our enemies." 82/

These comments from two powerful committee chairmen demonstrated the cross-currents of opinion swirling around the President as he contemplated General Westmoreland's request and the recommendations of his advisors.

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Adding fuel to this controversy was the unexpected triumph in the New Hampshire Presidential Primary on 12 March of the Democratic "peace" candidate, Senator Eugene McCarthy. This triumph was widely heralded as a repudiation by the voters of the present Administration and its Vietnam policies, and it encouraged another critic of these policies, Senator Robert Kennedy, to announce on 16 March his intention to seek the Democratic Presidential nomination.

7. The President Ponders

At a meeting at the White House on 13 March, the President decided to deploy 30,000 troops to South Vietnam in addition to the 10,500 emergency augmentation already made. This would substantially meet General Westmoreland's initial package request. Army forces would replace those Marine Corps forces requested, as the Marine Corps could not sustain the requested deployments. Also an additional Army brigade (7,363 personnel) would be deployed to replace Marine RLT 27, and its associated support. RLT 27 would begin to return to CONUS on 15 July. The forces to be deployed were as follows:

		<u>Deployment Date</u>
A. US ARMY		
Inf Bde (3 Inf Bns)	4,500	15-30 June
Mech Bde (1 Inf Bn, 1 Inf Bn (Mech), 1 Tk Bn)	5,041	12 July
Avn Co, Sep Bde	238	15 July
Armd Cav Sqdn	1,030	15-30 June
MP Bn	955	15-30 June
Cbt Svc Spt	3,316	15-30 June
Cbt and Cbt Svc Spt	9,120	15-30 June
SUB-TOTAL	24,200	15-30 June
B. 7th AF		
4 TFS	2,164	5 April
FAC/TACP	191	1 June
Airlift	741	1 June
Support	929	1 June
SUB-TOTAL	4,025	
C. USN		
NSA Da Nang Support	1,775	1 June
SUB-TOTAL	1,775	
D. TOTAL MACV	30,000	



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There would be two reserve callups to meet and sustain these deployments, one in March and one in May. The callup in March would support the 30,000 deployment. The one in May would reconstitute the strategic reserve at seven active divisions. Other ground rules decided upon were: (1) those Reservists to be called in May would not now be notified; (2) there would be no extensions of terms of service for personnel presently on active duty; (3) no individuals would be recalled, only units. 83/

This decision was formalized by the Deputy Secretary of Defense in a memorandum to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 14 March 1968. Mr. Nitze asked the chairman to inform General Westmoreland of these proposals, and to ask him whether he considered the substitutions satisfactory. 84/

On 14 March, the Secretary of the Army forwarded to the Secretary of Defense his recommendations concerning these Program Six deployments, and the Reserve callup necessary to sustain them and to reconstitute the strategic reserve. Secretary Resor pointed out, however, that an additional 13,500 men would have to be added to the figure of 30,000 to be deployed. "If the 3d Brigade of the 82nd Airborne is to be left in-country permanently and if the Army is to replace the RLT with an infantry brigade on a permanent basis then units with TO&E strength of 13,500 must be included in the March 15 call-up and deployed....In addition, the MACV ceiling will have to be increased from 565,000 to 578,500, unless MACV can provide trade-off spaces for all or part of this add-on." 85/

The strength of units to be called up in March would be 45,000, as follows:

- a. Units to provide for the additional deployments - 31,563.
- b. Units to provide the sustaining troops for 82d Airborne and RLT 27 replacement - 13,437.

The May 15 callup would comprise the following:

1 division plus 1 ISI	32,000
1 brigade	4,000
Post, camp and station complement to open 1 additional station	5,000
Total	<u>41,000</u>

This would reconstitute the STRAF at the following levels:

Division	6
ISI	6
SSI	1-1/3 <u>86/</u>

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In addition, the Secretary indicated that the Chief of Staff of the Army recommended:

...that one division, its ISI and the station complement, a total of 37,000 TOE strength, be alerted 15 March and called up 15 April instead of 15 May in order to provide an earlier capability to react to the unpredicted, a stronger STRAF in light of growing uncertainties in Southeast and Northeast Asia and to assure an earlier improvement of the sustaining base to support the increased deployments and to avoid drawdown on Europe. 87/

The approval of an additional 13,500 deployment to support the emergency augmentation was apparently approved very quickly.

In a memorandum for the record on 16 March, the latest tentative plan for Vietnam Deployments and reserve call-ups were listed as follows by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis):

1. Deployment

Program #5	525,000
Emergency Augmentation	10,500
Support for 10,500	13,500
Additional Deployment	<u>30,000</u>
Total	579,000

2. The March reserve call, to be announced around 20 March will be:

Support deployment	36,621
Support personnel for the 10,500	<u>13,437</u>
Total	50,058

The March call will waive the 30 days notice, so troops will report around March 27.

3. Around a week or 10 days later, "after a study" there will be a second call of 48,393....These reservists will be given 30 days, therefore reporting around 1 May. 88/

Still, the President was troubled. In public he continued to indicate firmness and resoluteness, but press leaks and continued public criticism continued to compound his problem. On March 17, the New York Times, again amazingly accurate, forecast that the President would approve dispatch of an additional 35,000 to 50,000 men to Vietnam over the next six months.. 89/ On March 18, nearly one-third of the House of Representatives, a total of 139 members, - 98 Republicans and 41 Democrats - joined in sponsoring a resolution calling for an immediate Congressional review of the United States policy in Southeast Asia. 90/



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On that same day, 18 March, Mr. Johnson answered these critics, as he charged in a speech before the National Farmers' Union Convention in Minneapolis, that Hanoi is seeking "to win in Washington what it cannot win in Hue or Khe Sanh. Your President welcomes suggestions from commissions, from congressmen, from private individuals or groups," he continued, "or anyone who has a plan or program which can stand inspection and open a hope of reaching our goal of peace in the world." 91/

At this time, the President sought the advice of a group of his friends and confidants outside of government. These men came to Washington on 18 March at the request of the President to receive briefings on the latest developments in the war and to advise the President on the hard decision he faced. Present were: former Undersecretary of State George Ball; Arthur Dean, a Republican New York lawyer who was a Korean War negotiator during the Eisenhower Administration; Dean Acheson, former President Truman's Secretary of State; Gen. Matthew B. Ridgeway, the retired commander of United Nations troops in Korea; Gen. Maxwell Taylor, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Cyrus Vance, former Deputy Defense Secretary and a key troubleshooter for the Johnson Administration; McGeorge Bundy, Ford Foundation President who had been special assistant for National Security Affairs to Mr. Johnson and former President Kennedy; former Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon and Gen. Omar Bradley.

The only published account of this consultation, which is considered reliable, was written by Stuart H. Loory and appeared in the Los Angeles Times late in May. According to this report, the group met over dinner with Secretary of State Dean Rusk; Defense Secretary Clark M. Clifford; Ambassador W. Averell Harriman; Walt W. Rostow, the President's special assistant for National security affairs; General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Richard Helms, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Paul Nitze, Deputy Defense Secretary; Nicholas Katzenbach, Under Secretary of State; and William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

The outsiders questioned the government officials carefully on the war, the pacification program and the condition of the South Vietnamese government after the Tet offensive. They included in their deliberations the effect of the war on the United States.

After dinner the government officials left and the group received three briefings.

Philip C. Habib, a deputy to William Bundy and now a member of the American negotiating team in Paris, delivered an unusually frank briefing on the conditions in Vietnam after the Tet offensive. He covered such matters as corruption in South Vietnam and the growing refugee problem.



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Habib, according to reliable sources, told the group that the Saigon government was generally weaker than had been realized as a result of the Tet offensive. He related the situation, some said, with greater frankness than the group had previously heard.

In addition to Habib, Maj. Gen. William E. DePuy, special assistant to the Joint Chiefs for counterinsurgency and special activities, briefed the group on the military situation, and George Carver, a CIA analyst, gave his agency's estimates of conditions in the war zone.

The briefings by DePuy and Carver reflected what many understood as a dispute over enemy strength between the Defense Department and the CIA which has been previously reported. Discrepancies in the figures resulted from the fact that DePuy's estimates of enemy strength covered only identifiable military units, while Carver's included all known military, paramilitary and parttime enemy strength available.

The morning of March 19, the advisory group assembled in the White House to discuss what they had heard the previous evening and arrived at their verdict. It was a striking turnabout in attitude for all but Ball.

After their meeting, the group met the President for lunch. It was a social affair. No business was transacted. The meal finished, the advisers delivered their verdict to the President.

Their deliberations produced this verdict for the chief executive:

Continued escalation of the war--intensified bombing of North Vietnam and increased American troop strength in the South--would do no good. Forget about seeking a battlefield solution to the problem and instead intensify efforts to seek a political solution at the negotiating table.

He was reportedly greatly surprised at their conclusions. When he asked them where they had obtained the facts on which the conclusions were based, the group told him of the briefings by Habib, DePuy and Carver.

Mr. Johnson knew that the three men had also briefed his governmental advisers, but he had not received the same picture of the war as Rostow presented the reports to him.

As a result of the discrepancy, the President ordered his own direct briefings. At least Habib and DePuy--and almost certainly Carver--had evening sessions with the President.

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Habib was reportedly as frank with the President as he had been with the advisory group. The President asked tough questions. 'Habib stuck to his guns,' one source reported.

Whatever impact this group's recommendations and the direct briefings he received had on the President was not immediately apparent in any decision which affected the deployment of forces. Even as the President announced, on 22 March, that General William C. Westmoreland would be recalled from Vietnam to become the Army Chief of Staff, 93/ the Defense Department continued to plan for the deployment of 43,500 additional troops. In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 23 March 1968, the Assistant Secretary (Systems Analysis) forwarded his Program #6 Summary Table based on 579,000 men in South Vietnam, 54,000 over the approved Program #5 ceiling. This 54,000 was made up of the 10,500 emergency reinforcement package, the 13,500 support forces for it, and the 30,000 additional package. The Assistant Secretary added, that upon notification of approval and desire to announce the new plan, the tables would be published. 94/

However, these particular tables were not to be published. The President sought further advice as he wrestled with the problem which had plagued his Administration. On March 26, General Creighton Abrams, Deputy COMUSMACV, arrived suddenly and without prior announcement, and was closeted with the President and his senior officials. These conferences were conducted in the utmost secrecy amid press speculation that Abrams would be named to succeed General Westmoreland. Further press speculation was that the conferences dealt primarily with expansion and modernization of the South Vietnamese armed forces and that this tended to buttress earlier predictions that any increase in American forces in South Vietnam would be modest. 95/

#### 8. The President Decides

Apparently the Presidential decision on deployment of additional U.S. forces to Vietnam was made on 28 March and concurred in by General Abrams. In an undated memorandum (probably written on 27 or 28 March) for the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, Lt General Lemley, indicated that the Joint Staff had informed him of:

....tentative decisions arising from the recent conference between the President, the Chairman, and General Abrams, as well as telecons between the Chairman and General Westmoreland. It is believed that a Presidential decision may be made by Friday (29 March) morning.

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New ceiling in RVN: 549,500

- a. Program 5: 525,000.
- b. Emergency deployment of 82d Abn, 27th RLT: 11,000.\*
- c. Support and sustain emergency deployment: 13,500.\*
- d. Total: 549,500.

\*Includes estimated 1,444 Air Force and Navy.

1st Bde, 5th Inf Div (Mech) will replace 27th RLT.  
Reserve call-up of approximately 62,000.

- a. Army 53,957  
(13,301 - Support of 3/82d Abn Div & 1/5th Inf Div)  
(40,656 - Reconstitute STRAF)
- b. Navy 1,453
- c. Air Force 6,590
- d. Total 62,000 96/

A Joint Staff paper entitled "MACV Troop List of Program 6 Add-on," dated 28 March, summarized service capability to satisfy "MACV's 28 March 1968 request for U.S. forces" as follows:

Two Brigade Increment (Combat Forces)

	<u>STRENGTH</u>	<u>CONUS AVAIL DATE*</u>
USARV - Inf Bde, Sep	4,639	In-Country as 3d Bde/82d Div
- Mech Bde, Sep	4,882	Jul 68
- Armored Cav Sqdn	1,049	Aug 68
7th AF - 2 TFS (F-100) (469 ea)	994	Jun/Jul 68
Total Brigade Increment	11,564	

Support Increment (Combat Support and Combat Service Support Forces)

	<u>STRENGTH</u>	<u>CONUS AVAIL DATE*</u>
USARV - 2 FA Bn (155mm)	1,132	Aug/Sep 68
- Engr Bn (Cbt)	812	Aug 68
- Other Support Units	169	Jun/Jul 68
	2,752	Aug 68
	2,219	Sep 68
	1,411	Oct 68
	900	Unknown/May 69
NAVFORV -	1,775	Jun 68
7th AF -	895	Jun/Jul 68
	707	Unknown
III MAF -	496	Apr/Sep 68
Total Support Increment	13,268	

TOTAL DEPLOYMENT

24,832 (Excess over 24,500 can be taken from existing credit/debit account)

\* CONUS availability date based on decision to call up reserve elements. 97/



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9. The Decision is Announced

On Sunday, 31 March, it was announced that the President would address the nation that evening concerning the war in Vietnam. The night before, Saturday, 30 March, a cable was dispatched to the U.S. Ambassadors in Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Laos, the Philippines, and South Korea. This cable, slugged "Literally Eyes Only for Ambassador or Charge", instructed the addressees to see their respective heads of government and inform them of the following major elements of the President's planned policy announcement on Sunday night: 98/

a. Major stress on importance of GVN and ARVN increased effectiveness, with our equipment and other support as first priority in our own actions.

b. 13,500 support forces to be called up at once in order to round out the 10,500 combat units sent in February.

c. Replenishment of strategic reserve by calling up 48,500 additional reserves, stating that these would be designed to strategic reserve.

d. Related tax increases and budget cuts already largely needed for non-Vietnam reasons.

3. In addition, after similar consultation and concurrence, President proposes to announce that bombing will be restricted to targets most directly engaged in the battle-field area and that this meant that there would be no bombing north of 20th parallel. Announcement would leave open how Hanoi might respond, and would be open-ended as to time. However, it would indicate that Hanoi's response could be helpful in determining whether we were justified in assumption that Hanoi would not take advantage if we stopping (sic) bombing altogether. Thus, it would to this extent foreshadow possibility of full bombing stoppage at a later point.

This cable offered the Ambassadors some additional rationale for this new policy for their discretionary use in conversations with their respective heads of government. This rationale represents the only available statement by the Administration of some of its underlying reasons and purposes for and expectations from this policy decision.

a. You should call attention to force increases that would be announced at the same time and would make clear our continued resolve. Also our top priority to re-equipping ARVN forces.

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b. You should make clear that Hanoi is most likely to denounce the project and thus free our hand after a short period. Nonetheless, we might wish to continue the limitation even after a formal denunciation, in order to reinforce its sincerity and put the monkey firmly on Hanoi's back for whatever follows. Of course, any major military change could compel full-scale resumption at any time.

c. With or without denunciation, Hanoi might well feel limited in conducting any major offensives at least in the northern areas. If they did so, this could ease the pressure where it is most potentially serious. If they did not, then this would give us a clear field for whatever actions were then required.

d. In view of weather limitations, bombing north of the 20th parallel will in any event be limited at least for the next four weeks or so -- which we tentatively envisage as a maximum testing period in any event. Hence, we are not giving up anything really serious in this time frame. Moreover, air power now used north of 20th can probably be used in Laos (where no policy change planned) and in SVN.

e. Insofar as our announcement foreshadows any possibility of a complete bombing stoppage, in the event Hanoi really exercises reciprocal restraints, we regard this as unlikely. But in any case, the period of demonstrated restraint would probably have to continue for a period of several weeks, and we would have time to appraise the situation and to consult carefully with them before we undertook any such action.

Thus, in reassuring our allies of our "continued resolve", the cable clearly indicated that not very much was expected of this change in policy. It could possibly reinforce our sincerity and "put the monkey on Hanoi's back for whatever follows." It was not expected that Hanoi would react positively although they might "feel limited in conducting any major offensives at least in the northern areas", admittedly a highly dubious likelihood.

What, then, was the purpose of this change in policy? If it was not expected that Hanoi would respond positively, or that any other major military benefits would accrue, what then was expected? The answer to these questions, of course, could only be speculation at the time, although many of the answers were to be contained in the President's speech on 31 March.

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10. I Shall Not Seek, and I Will Not Accept...

The President's speech to the nation on 31 March began with a summary of his efforts to achieve peace in Vietnam over the years. 99/

Good evening, my fellow Americans.

Tonight I want to speak to you of peace in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

No other question so preoccupies our people. No other dream so absorbs the 250 million human beings who live in that part of the world. No other goal motivates American policy in Southeast Asia.

For years, representatives of our government and others have travelled the world -- seeking to find a basis for peace talks.

Since last September, they have carried the offer that I made public at San Antonio.

That offer was this:

That the United States would stop its bombardment of North Vietnam when that would lead promptly to productive discussions -- and that we would assume that North Vietnam would not take military advantage of our restraint.

Hanoi denounced this offer, both privately and publicly. Even while the search for peace was going on, North Vietnam rushed their preparations for a savage assault on the people, the government, and the allies of South Vietnam.

This attack during the TET holidays, the President indicated, failed to achieve its principal objectives:

It did not collapse the elected government of South Vietnam or shatter its army -- as the Communists had hoped.

It did not produce a 'general uprising' among the people of the cities as they had predicted.

The Communists were unable to maintain control of any of the more than 30 cities that they attacked. And they took very heavy casualties.



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But they did compel the South Vietnamese and their allies to move certain forces from the countryside, into the cities.

They caused widespread disruption and suffering. Their attacks, and the battles that followed, made refugees of half a million human beings.

The Communists may renew their attack any day.

They are, it appears, trying to make 1968 the year of decision in South Vietnam -- the year that brings, if not final victory or defeat, at least a turning point in the struggle.

This much is clear:

If they do mount another round of heavy attacks, they will not succeed in destroying the fighting power of South Vietnam and its allies.

But tragically, this is also clear: many men -- on both sides of the struggle -- will be lost. A nation that has already suffered 20 years of warfare will suffer once again. Armies on both sides will take new casualties. And the war will go on.

There is no need for this to be so.

In dramatically announcing the partial suspension of the bombing of North Vietnam as a new initiative designed to lead to peace talks, President Johnson did not voice any of the doubts of the State Department cable of the previous night that this initiative was not expected to be fruitful. Indeed, the central theme of this portion of the speech was that our unilateral action was designed to lead to early talks. The President even designated the United States representatives for such talks.

There is no need to delay the talks that could bring an end to this long and this bloody war.

Tonight, I renew the offer I made last August -- to stop the bombardment of North Vietnam. We ask that talks begin promptly, that they be serious talks on the substance of peace. We assume that during those talks Hanoi will not take advantage of our restraint.

We are prepared to move immediately toward peace through negotiations.

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So, tonight, in the hope that this action will lead to early talks, I am taking the first step to de-escalate the conflict. We are reducing -- substantially reducing -- the present level of hostilities.

And we are doing so unilaterally, and at once.

Tonight, I have ordered our aircraft and our naval vessels to make no attacks on North Vietnam, except in the area north of the DeMilitarized Zone where the continuing enemy build-up directly threatens allied forward positions and where the movements of their troops and supplies are clearly related to that threat.

The area in which we are stopping our attacks includes almost 90 percent of North Vietnam's population, and most of its territory. Thus there will be no attacks around the principal populated areas, or in the food-producing areas of North Vietnam.

Even this very limited bombing of the North could come to an early end -- if our restraint is matched by restraint in Hanoi. But I cannot in good conscience stop all bombing so long as to do so would immediately and directly endanger the lives of our men and our allies. Whether a complete bombing halt becomes possible in the future will be determined by events.

Our purpose in this action is to bring about a reduction in the level of violence that now exists.

It is to save the lives of brave men -- and to save the lives of innocent women and children. It is to permit the contending forces to move closer to a political settlement.

And tonight, I call upon the United Kingdom and I call upon the Soviet Union -- as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conferences, and as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council -- to do all they can to move from the unilateral act of de-escalation that I have just announced toward genuine peace in Southeast Asia.

Now, as in the past, the United States is ready to send its representatives to any forum, at any time, to discuss the means of bringing this ugly war to an end.

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I am designating one of our most distinguished Americans, Ambassador Averell Harriman, as my personal representative for such talks. In addition, I have asked Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, who returned from Moscow for consultation, to be available to join Ambassador Harriman at Geneva or any other suitable place -- just as soon as Hanoi agrees to a conference.

I call upon President Ho Chi Minh to respond positively, and favorably, to this new step toward peace.

If peace did not come through negotiations, however, the President indicated that our common resolve was unshakable and our common strength invincible. As evidence of this, he listed the achievements of the South Vietnamese nation.

Tonight, we and the other allied nations are contributing 600,000 fighting men to assist 700,000 South Vietnamese troops in defending their little country.

Our presence there has always rested on this basic belief: the main burden of preserving their freedom must be carried out by them -- by the South Vietnamese themselves.

We and our allies can only help to provide a shield -- behind which the people of South Vietnam can survive and can grow and develop. On their efforts -- on their determinations and resourcefulness -- the outcome will ultimately depend.

That small, beleaguered nation has suffered terrible punishment for more than twenty years.

I pay tribute once again tonight to the great courage and endurance of its people. South Vietnam supports armed forces tonight of almost 700,000 men -- and I call your attention to the fact that that is the equivalent of more than 10 million in our own population. Its people maintain their firm determination to be free of domination by the North.

There has been substantial progress, I think, in building a durable government during these last three years. The South Vietnam of 1965 could not have survived the enemy's Tet offensive of 1968. The elected government of South Vietnam survived that attack -- and is rapidly repairing the devastation that it wrought.



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The South Vietnamese know that further efforts are going to be required:

- to expand their own armed forces,
- to move back into the countryside as quickly as possible,
- to increase their taxes,
- to select the very best men that they have for civilian and military responsibility,
- to achieve a new unity within their constitutional government,
- and to include in the national effort all of those groups who wish to preserve South Vietnam's control over its own destiny.

Last week President Thieu ordered the mobilization of 135,000 additional South Vietnamese. He plans to reach -- as soon as possible -- a total military strength of more than 800,000 men.

To achieve this, the government of South Vietnam started the drafting of 19-year-olds on March 1st. On May 1st, the Government will begin the drafting of 18-year-olds.

Last month, 10,000 men volunteered for military service -- that was two and a half times the number of volunteers during the same month last year. Since the middle of January, more than 48,000 South Vietnamese have joined the armed forces -- and nearly half of them volunteered to do so.

All men in the South Vietnamese armed forces have had their tours of duty extended for the duration of the war, and reserves are now being called up for immediate active duty.

President Thieu told his people last week:

"We must make greater efforts and accept more sacrifices because, as I have said many times, this is our country. The existence of our nation is at stake, and this is mainly a Vietnamese responsibility."

He warned his people that a major national effort is required to root out corruption and incompetence at all

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levels of government.

We applaud this evidence of determination on the part of South Vietnam. Our first priority will be to support their effort.

We shall accelerate the re-equipment of South Vietnam's armed forces -- in order to meet the enemy's increased firepower. This will enable them progressively to undertake a larger share of combat operations against the Communists invaders.

The token increase in U.S. troop deployments to South Vietnam which presaged for the first time a limit to our commitment and pointed to a change in ground strategy, an issue which had caused such great speculation in the press and controversy in Congress and within the Administration, received short mention in the speech. It seemed almost a footnote to the dramatic statements which had preceded it.

On many occasions I have told the American people that we would send to Vietnam those forces that are required to accomplish our mission there. So, with that as our guide, we have previously authorized a force level of approximately 525,000.

Some weeks ago -- to help meet the enemy's new offensive -- we sent to Vietnam about 11,000 additional Marine and airborne troops. They were deployed by air in 48 hours, on an emergency basis. But the artillery, tank, aircraft, and other units that were needed to work with and support these infantry troops in combat could not accompany them on that short notice.

In order that these forces may reach maximum combat effectiveness, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended to me that we should prepared to send -- during the next five months -- support troops totalling approximately 13,500 men.

A portion of these men will be made available from our active forces. The balance will come from Reserve Component units which will be called up for service.

The next portion of the President's speech detailed the cost of the Vietnam War and made a plea for Congressional action to reduce the deficit by passing the surtax which had been requested almost a year before.

In summary, the President reiterated the U.S. objectives in South Vietnam, and gave his appraisal of what the U.S. in pursuit of those objectives, hoped to accomplish in Southeast Asia.

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I cannot promise that the initiative that I have announced tonight will be completely successful in achieving peace any more than the 30 others that we have undertaken and agreed to in recent years.

But it is our fervent hope that North Vietnam, after years of fighting that has left the issue unresolved, will now cease its efforts to achieve a military victory and will join with us in moving toward the peace table.

And there may come a time when South Vietnam -- on both sides -- are able to work out a way to settle their own differences by free political choice rather than by war.

As Hanoi considers its course, it should be in no doubt of our intentions. It must not miscalculate the pressures within our democracy in this election year.

We have no intention of widening this war.

But the United States will never accept a fake solution to this long and arduous struggle and call it peace.

No one can foretell the precise terms of an eventual settlement.

Our objective in South Vietnam has never been the annihilation of the enemy. It has been to bring about a recognition in Hanoi that its objective -- taking over the South by force -- could not be achieved.

We think that peace can be based on the Geneva Accords of 1954 -- under political conditions that permit the South Vietnamese -- all the South Vietnamese -- to chart their course free of any outside domination or interference, from us or from anyone else.

So tonight I reaffirm the pledge that we made at Manila -- that we are prepared to withdraw our forces from South Vietnam as the other side withdraws its forces to the North, stops the infiltration, and the level of violence thus subsides.

Our goal of peace and self-determination in Vietnam is directly related to the future of all of Southeast Asia --



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where much has happened to inspire confidence during the past 10 years. We have done all that we knew how to do to contribute and to help build that confidence....

Over time, a wider, framework of peace and security in Southeast Asia may become possible. The new cooperation of the nations in the area could be a foundation-stone. Certainly friendship with the nations of such a Southeast Asia is what the United States seeks -- and that is all that the United States seeks.

One day, my fellow citizens, there will be peace in Southeast Asia.

It will come because the people of Southeast Asia want it -- those whose armies are at war tonight, and those who, though threatened, have thus far been spared.

Peace will come because Asians were willing to work for it -- and to sacrifice for it -- and to die by the thousands for it.

But let it never be forgotten: peace will come also because America sent her sons to help secure it.

It has not been easy -- far from it. During the past four and a half years, it has been my fate and my responsibility to be commander-in-chief. I have lived -- daily and nightly -- with the cost of this war. I know the pain that it has inflicted. I know perhaps better than anyone the misgivings that it has aroused.

Throughout this entire, long period, I have been sustained by a single principle:

-- that what we are doing now, in Vietnam, is vital not only to the security of Southeast Asia, but it is vital to the security of every American.

Surely we have treaties which we must respect. Surely we have commitments that we are going to keep. Resolutions of the Congress testify to the need to resist aggression in the world and in Southeast Asia.

But the heart of our involvement in South Vietnam -- under three Presidents, three separate Administrations -- has always been America's own security.

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And the larger purpose of our involvement has always been to help the nations of Southeast Asia become independent and stand alone, self-sustaining as members of a great world community.

-- At peace with themselves, and at peace with all others.

With such an Asia, our country -- and the world -- will be far more secure than it is tonight.

I believe that a peaceful Asia is far nearer to reality, because of what America has done in Vietnam. I believe that the men who endure the dangers of battle -- fighting there for us tonight -- are helping the entire world avoid far greater conflicts, far wider wars, far more destruction, than this one.

I pray that it will not be rejected by the leaders of North Vietnam. I pray that they will accept it as a means by which the sacrifices of their own people may be ended. And I ask your help and your support, my fellow citizens, for this effort to reach across the battlefield toward an early peace.

Finally, the President addressed himself in a highly personal manner to the issue that had seemed uppermost in his mind throughout the preceding month of deliberation, reassessment and reappraisal of our Vietnam policy -- the issue of domestic unity.

Yet, I believe that we must always be mindful of this one thing, whatever the trials and the tests ahead. The ultimate strength of our country and our cause will lie not in powerful weapons or infinite resources or boundless wealth, but will lie in the unity of our people.

This, I believe very deeply.

Throughout my entire public career I have followed the personal philosophy that I am a free man, an American, a public servant and a member of my Party, in that order always and only.

For 37 years in the service of our nation, first as a Congressman, as a Senator and as Vice President and now as your President, I have put the unity of the people first. I have put it ahead of any divisive partisanship.

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And in these times as in times before, it is true that a house divided against itself by the spirit of faction, of party, of region, of religion, of race, is a house that cannot stand.

There is division in the American house now. There is divisiveness among us all tonight. And holding the trust that is mine, as President of all the people, I cannot disregard the peril to the progress of the American people and the hope and the prospect of peace for all peoples.

So, I would ask all Americans, whatever their personal interests or concern, to guard against divisiveness and all its ugly consequences.

Fifty-two months and ten days ago, in a moment of tragedy and trauma, the duties of this office fell upon me. I asked then for your help and God's, that we might continue America on its course, binding up our wounds, healing our history, moving forward in new unity, to clear the American agenda and to keep the American commitment for all of our people.

United we have kept that commitment. United we have enlarged that commitment.

Through all time to come, I think America will be a stronger nation, a more just society, and a land of greater opportunity and fulfillment because of what we have all done together in these years of unparalleled achievement.

Our reward will come in the life of freedom, peace, and hope that our children will enjoy through ages ahead.

What we won when all of our people united just must not now be lost in suspicion, distrust, selfishness, and politics among any of our people.

Having eloquently stated the need for unity in a nation divided, the President then made the dramatic announcement which shocked and electrified the nation and the world, an announcement intended to restore unity to the divided nation:

Believing this as I do, I have concluded that I should not permit the Presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year.

With America's sons in the fields far away, with America's future under challenge right here at home, with our hopes



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and the world's hopes for peace in the balance every day, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office -- the Presidency of your country.

Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my Party for another term as your President.

But let men everywhere know, however, that a strong, a confident, and a vigilant America stands ready tonight to seek an honorable peace -- and stand ready tonight to defend an honored cause -- whatever the price, whatever the burden, whatever the sacrifices that duty may require.

Thank you for listening.

Good night and God bless all of you.

11. Epilogue

On April 4, 1968, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, in a memorandum for the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff established Southeast Asia Deployment Program #6. This program added 24,500 personnel to the approved Program #5, and placed a new ceiling of 549,500 on U.S. forces in South Vietnam. 100/ None of the some 200,000 troops requested by General Westmoreland on 27 February were to be deployed.

Late in the afternoon of April 3, 1968, the White House released the following statement by President Johnson:

Today the Government of North Vietnam made a statement which included the following paragraph, and I quote:

"However, for its part, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam declares its readiness to appoint its representatives to contact the United States representative with a view to determining with the American side the unconditional cessation of the United States bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam so that talks may start."

Last Sunday night I expressed the position of the United States with respect to peace in Vietnam and Southeast Asia as follows:

"Now, as in the past, the United States is ready to send its representatives to any forum, at any time, to discuss the means of bringing this war to an end."

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Accordingly, we will establish contact with the representatives of North Vietnam. Consultations with the Government of South Vietnam and our other allies are now taking place. 101/

The first step on what would undoubtedly be a long and tortuous road to peace apparently had been taken. In one dramatic action, President Johnson had for a time removed the issue of Vietnam from domestic political contention. In an unexpectedly prompt and responsive reply to his initiative, Hanoi had moved the struggle for South Vietnam into a new path.

As has been indicated, little had been expected to result from the partial bombing halt and the limitation upon U.S. troop commitments to South Vietnam. Why, then, were these steps taken?

In March of 1968, the President and his principal advisers were again confronted with a dilemma which they had faced before, but which they had postponed resolving. Although seldom specifically stated, the choice had always been either to increase U.S. forces in South Vietnam as necessary to achieve military victory or to limit the U.S. commitment in order to prevent the defeat of our South Vietnamese allies while they put their political-military house in order. In the past, the choice had not been so clear-cut. Progress toward military victory had been promised with small increases in force levels which did not require large reserve call-ups or economic dislocations. Military victory would then assure a viable South Vietnamese political body capable of protecting and gaining the support of its people.

In March of 1968, the choice had become clear-cut. The price for military victory had increased vastly, and there was no assurance that it would not grow again in the future. There were also strong indications that large and growing elements of the American public had begun to believe the cost had already reached unacceptable levels and would strongly protest a large increase in that cost.

The political reality which faced President Johnson was that "more of the same" in South Vietnam, with an increased commitment of American lives and money and its consequent impact on the country, accompanied by no guarantee of military victory in the near future, had become unacceptable to these elements of the American public. The optimistic military reports of progress in the war no longer rang true after the shock of the TET offensive.

Thus, the President's decision to seek a new strategy and a new road to peace was based upon two major considerations:

(1) The convictions of his principal civilian advisers, particularly Secretary of Defense Clifford, that the troops requested by General Westmoreland would not make a military victory any more likely; and



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(2) A deeply-felt conviction of the need to restore unity to the American nation.

For a policy from which so little was expected, a great deal was initiated. The North Vietnamese and the Americans sat down at the conference table in Paris to begin to travel the long road to peace; the issue of Vietnam largely was removed from American political discord; a limit to the commitment of U.S. forces was established; and the South Vietnamese were put on notice that, with our help, they would be expected to do more in their own defense.

The "A to Z" reassessment of U.S. strategy in South Vietnam in the wake of the TET offensive did not result in the announcement of a new ground strategy for South Vietnam. But in placing General Westmoreland's request for forces squarely in the context of the achievement of U.S. political-military objectives in South Vietnam, the limited political nature of those objectives was for the first time affirmed. A new ground strategy, based on these limited objectives and upon the ceiling on U.S. troops became a corollary for the new U.S. commander.

American forces initially were deployed to Vietnam in order to prevent the South Vietnamese from losing the war, to insure that aggression from the north would not succeed. Having deployed enough troops to insure that NVN aggression would not succeed, it had been almost a reflex action to start planning on how much it would take to "win" the war. Lip service was given to the need for developing South Vietnamese political institutions, but no one at high levels seemed to question the assumption that U.S. political objectives in South Vietnam could be attained through military victory.

However, it was quickly apparent that there was an embarrassing lack of knowledge as to how much it would take to win the war. This stemmed from uncertainty in two areas: (1) how much effort the North Vietnamese were willing to expend in terms of men and materiel; and (2) how effective the South Vietnamese armed forces would be in establishing security in the countryside. As the war progressed, it appeared that our estimates of the former were too low and of the latter too high. However, committed to a military victory and having little information as to what was needed militarily, the civilian decision makers seemed willing to accept the field commander's estimate of what was needed. Steady progress was promised and was apparently being accomplished, although the commitment of forces steadily increased.

The TET offensive showed that this progress in many ways had been illusory. The possibility of military victory had seemingly become remote and the cost had become too high both in political and economic terms. Only then were our ultimate objectives brought out and re-examined. Only then was it realized that a clear-cut military victory was probably not possible or necessary, and that the road to peace would be at least as



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dependent upon South Vietnamese political development as it would be on American arms. This realization, then, made it possible to limit the American military commitment to South Vietnam to achieve the objectives for which this force had originally been deployed. American forces would remain in South Vietnam to prevent defeat of the Government by Communist forces and to provide a shield behind which that Government could rally, become effective, and win the support of its people.

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4. JCS Msg 9926, 130218Z Feb 68, Subject: "Deployment of Brigade Task Force of 82nd Airborne Division to SVN (S)."
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6. JCS Msg 9929, 130341Z Feb 68, Subject: "Deployment of Marine Corps Regiment (Reinforced) to SVN (S)."
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