

January 1964–March 1965

THE GREENE PAPERS

GENERAL WALLACE M. GREENE JR.
AND THE ESCALATION OF THE VIETNAM WAR



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AND THE ESCALATION OF THE VIETNAM WAR

January 1964–March 1965



Edited with an Introduction by Nicholas J. Schlosser

HISTORY DIVISION
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
QUANTICO, VIRGINIA

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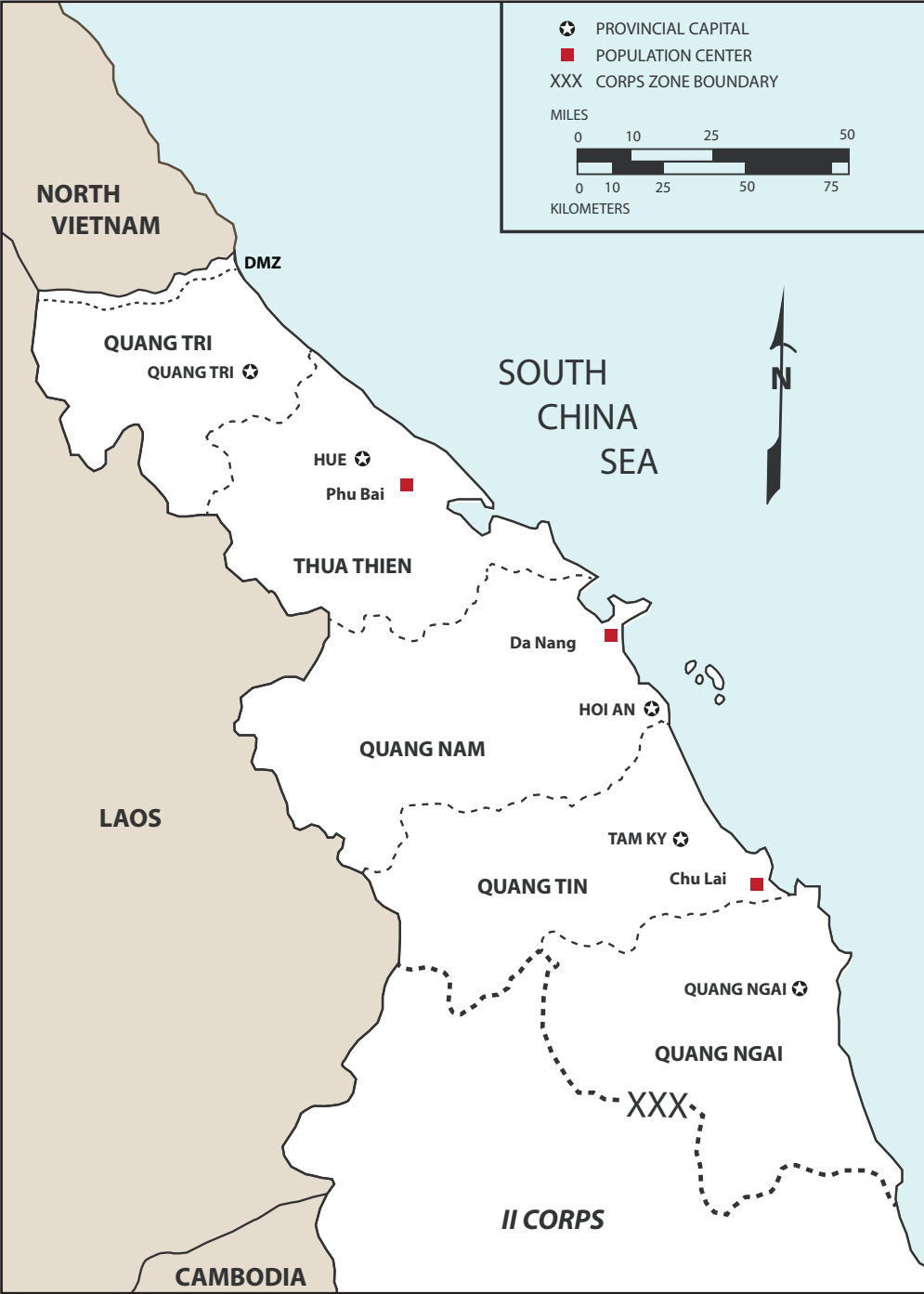
The Western Pacific



Mainland Southeast Asia



Corps Tactical Zones at the End of 1964



I Corps, 1965

Foreword

General Wallace M. Greene was only the fourth Commandant of the Marine Corps to serve as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Upon the start of his tenure in January 1964, he believed he had a twofold mission: to lead the Marine Corps as its senior officer and to serve as a counselor to the president of the United States as a Service chief. Greene's efforts to complete the latter part of his mission were repeatedly stymied by a president, Lyndon B. Johnson, who was uneasy around the military and a secretary of defense, Robert S. McNamara, who often believed that the Joint Chiefs lacked the political and diplomatic skills needed for understanding the world of the Cold War.

Greene nevertheless made every effort he could to see that his opinions on military matters reached President Johnson. This was particularly so during the run-up to the United States' intervention in the Vietnam War. As the Johnson administration debated the various courses of action available to the United States in Southeast Asia, Greene took down copious notes from every meeting he attended, saved cables and memoranda, and worked to lay a documentary foundation for future historical works on the Marine Corps and the Vietnam War. Most of these documents remained classified until 2011, when the Marine Corps History Division and the Marine Corps Archives worked to declassify them and make them available for research. This volume presents, in edited form, the bulk of that material from January 1964 until just before the landing of Marine units in South Vietnam in March 1965.

The editor, Nicholas J. Schlosser, earned his doctorate in history from the University of Maryland in 2008 and worked as a historian with the History Division

from 2009 to 2014. He is the editor of *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2004–2008: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography* (2010) and the author of *U.S. Marines in Battle: Al-Qaim, September 2005–March 2006* (2013) and *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare Training and Education, 2000–2010* (2015), all published by Marine Corps History Division. He is also the coeditor of *Counterinsurgency Leadership in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond* (2011), published by Marine Corps University Press. In addition, he has written numerous articles and book reviews for *Fortitudine* and the *Marine Corps University Journal*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C.P. Neimeyer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer
Director of Marine Corps History

Preface

This collection is a point of departure for the Marine Corps History Division. In the past, the History Division has published primary sources and other historical documents as occasional papers; the present work contains the first edited volume of personal papers to be printed by the division as a monograph. The volume includes more than 100 documents from the personal papers of General Wallace M. Greene, Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1964–67. As Commandant during the critical early years of direct U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, Greene played an important role in the decision-making process as the United States escalated its role in the conflict. He was also afforded a remarkable vantage point and was an eyewitness to some of the most important decisions made by President Lyndon B. Johnson during this period.

These papers have been collected and edited for both research purposes and to chronicle the events of this period of escalation; they begin right before the Khanh coup of January 1964 and end just prior to the landing of Marines at Da Nang in March 1965. The majority of the documents come from notes, memoranda, letters, and cables collected by Greene under the title “Notes on the Situation in South Vietnam.” They also include a substantial oral history recorded by General Greene for the Historical Division (as History Division was then known) between 1971 and 1972. These papers comprised about 15 archival boxes and were kept classified until 2011. This book is part of the Marine Corps History Division’s effort to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Vietnam War. Along with a series of

commemorative histories and an illustrated chronology, the present volume represents the division's continuing work to both record Marine Corps history and make it available to the public.

Nature of the Documents and Editorial Methodology

General Greene took long, detailed notes for most of the meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff held during his term as Commandant. For meetings he could not attend, Greene collected notes from his operational deputies instead. These were graded "Top Secret," separated from the rest of his personal papers, and organized into a multivolume collection called "Notes on the Situation in South Vietnam." Relevant cables, reports, and memoranda were also included in this collection. The set was deposited with the Marine Corps History and Museums Division in Washington, DC, and later transferred to the Marine Corps Archives at the Gray Research Center in Quantico, Virginia. The papers were declassified in 2011. All original material, unless otherwise noted, can be located at the Marine Corps History Division and Marine Corps Archives in Quantico.

During the first months of his term, Greene took the time to summarize his notes into a narrative form, which was then transcribed by his assistant, Chief Warrant Officer Francine Van Curen. Perhaps due to the increasing pressure of preparing the Marine Corps for a greater role in Vietnam, Greene slowly ended this practice by the middle of 1964. With a few exceptions, his remaining notes were left in their original, handwritten outline form.

In 1971, Greene recorded an interview with Historical Division historian Benis M. Frank. The total sessions lasted well over 22 hours and usually featured General Greene speaking with Frank about specific documents and summarizing the notes. Beginning in 1972, Greene recommenced the process of summarizing his notes and recording those summaries with the intention of having them transcribed. For years, Greene pored over notes, memoranda, and other documents as he pieced together the Joint Chiefs' tense and troubled relationship with President Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. These recordings were added to the tapes of the interview with Frank and combined to form a long, discursive oral history. A significant amount of this oral history was transcribed by History and Museums Division. The tapes and transcriptions were included with the rest of the material on South Vietnam.

Unless noted in a footnote accompanying the document, the papers and notes reproduced in this volume come from the “Notes on the Situation in South Vietnam” collection. The papers can be roughly divided into three types of documents. First are memoranda, cables, and other official documents produced by the Commandant’s office or received by the Commandant that Greene placed in his Vietnam notes. The second are the narrative summaries of notes taken by Greene during important meetings that were subsequently recorded and transcribed by Chief Warrant Officer Van Curen. The third are the narrative summaries recorded by Greene himself and then transcribed by Marine Corps official historians. These summaries were produced several years after Greene’s term as Commandant ended, and each has been designated in this collection as an “Oral Summary,” with the year they were recorded indicated with the document title.

The documents have been organized in chronological order and provided with a numbered heading. The official memoranda and documents and the summaries transcribed by Chief Warrant Officer Van Curen are reprinted and edited in such a way that they are as close to the original as possible. All significant edits have been recorded in footnotes accompanying each document. Notations and marginalia have also been reproduced. Contemporary handwritten corrections and notations have been rendered in italics and indicated in an explanatory footnote. Parts of the text that have been crossed out in pen or pencil have also been indicated with a strikeout.

Greene’s oral summaries of his notes have necessitated a greater deal of editing. A significant amount of the original audio files of Greene’s oral history has been lost. This has left the History and Museums Division transcript as the only record of substantial parts of the oral history. At times, it is clear the transcription was written by an individual with little knowledge of Vietnamese terms (Hue City is often spelled “Whey City,” for example). Furthermore, when he was recording material on his own, Greene used a very rudimentary device that did not produce a particularly clear audio. As a result, the transcript is marred by several mistakes and omissions. In a few cases, contradictions exist between Greene’s original handwritten notes, his recorded summary of those notes, and History and Museum’s Division’s transcription of his oral history. In these cases, I have edited the summary so that it reflects what Greene wrote down at the time he wrote the notes, and I have included a footnote so that readers will be aware of the discrepancy. I

have also used the original handwritten notes to fill gaps left in the History Division and Museums transcript. These changes are placed in brackets with an accompanying explanatory note.

On several occasions, a specific report or memoranda drafted by one of Johnson's advisors, such as Secretary of Defense McNamara or National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, prompted intense debate and discussion within the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Familiarity with the contents of these particular documents is often helpful toward understanding a number of General Greene's own reports, memoranda, and notes. Since these documents are readily available in such publications as the *Foreign Relations of the United States* volumes on Vietnam and the Senator Mike Gravel edition of the *Pentagon Papers*, it is unnecessary to reprint them in their entirety here. In their place, I have included an "Editor's Summary" of the most salient points and included references to allow readers to locate a complete text of the document.

The editorial treatment of the documents adheres to the style guidelines found in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, sixteenth edition, and the Marine Corps History Division writing guide, augmented by recommendations from the managing editor and senior editor. Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization appear as they occurred in the source text, with the exception that obvious typographical errors have been silently corrected and words with variant spellings have been standardized for consistency. Bracketed insertions have been used for other errors and omissions in the source text; corrected passages are indicated by italic type, while additions appear in roman type. Abbreviations, acronyms, and contractions in the source documents are maintained as they appear there; a list of common abbreviations is included as part of the front matter.

Acknowledgments

This volume would not have been possible without the contributions of numerous individuals at the Marine Corps History Division, including chief historian Charles D. Melson, senior editor Angela J. Anderson, senior reference historian Annette D. Amerman, historian Paul D. Westermeyer, and editor Wanda J. Renfrow. Managing editor Shawn H. Vreeland carefully edited the manuscript and supervised the publication process, and Robert A. Kocher designed the book and laid it out. I would also like to thank Kenneth H. Williams, History Division's senior

editor from 2008–13, who helped initiate the project and provided valuable advice and guidance as we moved forward with preparing the papers. Special thanks also goes to Zayna N. Bizri, History Division intern, who carried out timely and valuable research and editing work.

Dr. Nicholas J. Schlosser
Marine Corps History Division

Common Abbreviations

ACMC	Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps
AID	Agency for International Development
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BDA	Bomb Damage Assessment
BLT	Battalion Landing Team
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
CAS	Controlled American Source (CIA Station, Saigon)
CAS	Close Air Support
CG	Commanding General
Chicom	Chinese Communists/People's Republic of China
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CinC	Commander in Chief
CinCMEAfSA	Commander in Chief Middle East, Africa, South Asia
CinCPac	Commander in Chief, Pacific Command
CinCPacFlt	Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet
CinCSTRIKE	Commander in Chief, Swift Tactical Reaction In Every Known Environment Command

CMC	Commandant of the Marine Corps
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
CO	Commanding Officer
ComInt	Communications Intelligence
ComUSMACV/ COMUSMACV	Commanding General, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
ComUSMACThai	Commanding General, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Thailand
ConAD	Continental Air Defense Command
ConUS	Contiguous United States
C/S	Chief of Staff
COS	Chief of Staff
CSA	Chief of Staff of the Army
CSAFM	Chief of Staff of the Air Force Memorandum
DA	Department of the Army
DC/S(P&P)	Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Policies
DoD	Department of Defense
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
FAR	Forces Armée de Royaume (Royal Lao Armed Forces)
FMFPac	Fleet Marine Force, Pacific
G-2	Chief of Intelligence on a General Staff
GRC	Gray Research Center

GVN	Government of South Vietnam
HNC	High National Council
Hist&MusDiv, HQMC	History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps
ISA	International Security Affairs
J-3	Operations Directorate of the Joint Staff
J-5	Plans and Policy Directorate of the Joint Staff
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KIA	Killed in Action
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAF	Marine Amphibious Force (division/aircraft wing task force)
MarOps	Maritime Operations
MATS	Military Air Transport Service
MEAfSA	Middle East, Africa, South Asia
MEB	Marine Expeditionary Brigade (regiment/aircraft group task force)
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force (division/aircraft wing task force)
MIA	Missing in Action
MiG	Mikoyan-and-Gurevich Design Bureau. Describes both the Soviet design bureau and the aircraft that they produced.
MP	Military Police
MR	Memorandum for the Record
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate

NLF	National Liberation Front, “Viet Cong”
NSA	National Security Agency
NSAM	National Security Action Memorandum
NSC	National Security Council
NVN	North Vietnam
OASD (ISA)	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs)
ONI	Office of Naval Intelligence
OPDEPS/Op Deps	Operations Deputies
PacAF	Pacific Air Forces
PIO	Public Information Office
POL	Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricants
RCI	Office of Current Intelligence Indications (State Department)/State Department, Office of Intelligence Resources
RVN	Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SACSA	Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SecDef	Secretary of Defense
SECNAV	Secretary of the Navy
SHAPEX	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe Exercises
SIOP	Single Integrated Operational Plan

SLF	Special Landing Force
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SV/S.V./SVN	South Vietnam
Strike Command/STRICOM	Swift Tactical Reaction In Every Known Environment Command
UN	United Nations
USA	U.S. Army
USAF	U.S. Air Force
USARPAC	U.S. Army Pacific
USMACThai	U.S. Military Assistance Command, Thailand
USMACV/MACV	U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
USMC	U.S. Marine Corps
USN	U.S. Navy
USOM	United States Operations Mission
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union)
VC	Viet Cong
VNAF	South Vietnamese Air Force
Westy	General William C. Westmoreland, USA
WIA	Wounded in Action

Prominent Individuals

Name	Office/Billet at the Time General Greene Was Commandant (1964–67)
Carl Albert	Representative from Oklahoma, 1947–77/ House of Representatives Majority Leader, 1962–71
MajGen Rollen H. Anthis, USAF	Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities, 1964–66
Col James O. Appleyard	Military Secretary to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, 1964–66
George W. Ball	Under Secretary of State, 1961–66
Kenneth E. BeLieu	Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Installations and Logistics), 1961–65/Under Secretary of the Navy, 1965
Col Randolph C. Berkeley Jr.	Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2 (Intelligence), Headquarters Marine Corps, 1964–65

Gen William H. Blanchard, USAF	Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Operations), 1964–65/ Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, 1965–66
McGeorge Bundy	Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 1961–66
William P. Bundy	Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 1964–69
LtGen David A. Burchinal, USAF	Director of the Joint Staff, 1964–66
LtGen Henry W. Buse Jr.	Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs), 1963–67
LtGen Joseph F. Carroll, USAF	Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, 1961–69
LtGen Marshall S. Carter, USA	Deputy Director for Central Intelligence, 1962–66/Director of the National Security Agency, 1965–69
Gen Leonard F. Chapman Jr.	Chief of Staff to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, 1964–67/Assistant Com- mandant of the Marine Corps, 1967–68
MajGen Chester V. Clifton Jr., USA	Senior Military Aide to Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, 1961–65

MajGen Robert E. Cushman Jr.	Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 (Plans, Operations, and Training), 1962–64/Commanding General of Camp Pendleton, 1964–67
Charles de Gaulle	President of France, 1959–69
MajGen Paul S. Emrick	Director for Plans and Policy, Joint Staff (J-5), 1962–65
Adm Harry D. Felt, USN	Commander in Chief, Pacific Command, 1958–64
Gerald R. Ford	Representative from Michigan, 1949–73/ House Minority Leader, 1965–73
Michael V. Forrestal	Aide to National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, 1962–65
J. William Fulbright	Senator from Arkansas, 1945–75/Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 1959–74
Barry M. Goldwater	Senator from Arizona 1953–65 and 1969–87
Gen Andrew J. Goodpaster, USA	Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1962–66

Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr.	Commandant of the Marine Corps, 1964–67
Porter Hardy Jr.	Representative from Virginia, 1947–69
Gen Paul D. Harkins, USA	Commanding General of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, 1962–64
LtGen Charles H. Hayes	Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, 1963–65
Felix E. Hebert	Representative from Louisiana, 1941–77
Gen Harold K. Johnson, USA	Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, 1963–64/Chief of Staff of the Army, 1964–68
Lyndon B. Johnson	President of the United States, 1963–69
BGen Frederick J. Karch	Assistant Division Commander, 3d Marine Division, and Commanding General, 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, 1964–65/ Director of Command and Staff College, Quantico, Virginia, 1965–67

MajGen Nguyen Khanh, ARVN	President and Prime Minister of South Vietnam, 1964–65
Tran Thien Khiem	South Vietnamese Military Officer/South Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States, 1964–65
Nikita S. Khrushchev	First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1953–64/Chairman of the Council Ministers (Premier) of the Soviet Union, 1958–64
Alexei N. Kosygin	Chairman of the Council Ministers (Premier) of the Soviet Union, 1964–80
LtGen Victor H. Krulak	Commanding General of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1964–68
AMrshl Nguyen Cao Ky, VNAF	Chief of South Vietnam's Air Force, 1963–65/Prime Minister of South Vietnam, 1965–67/Vice President of South Vietnam, 1967–71
Gen Curtis E. LeMay, USAF	Chief of Staff of the Air Force, 1961–65
Henry Cabot Lodge Jr.	U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, 1963–64 and 1965–67

Robert J. Manning	Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, 1962–64
Michael J. Mansfield	Senator from Montana, 1953–77/Senate Majority Leader, 1961–77
John A. McCone	Director of Central Intelligence, 1961–65
Gen John P. McConnell, USAF	Chief of Staff of the Air Force, 1965–69
John W. McCormack	Representative from Massachusetts, 1928–71/Speaker of the House of Representatives, 1962–71
Adm David L. McDonald, USN	Chief of Naval Operations, 1963–67
Robert S. McNamara	Secretary of Defense, 1961–68
John T. McNaughton	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Interna- tional Security Affairs, 1964–67
MajGen Duong Van Minh, ARVN	President of South Vietnam, 1964

Gen Joseph H. Moore, USAF	Commanding General, 2d Air Division, 1964–66/Deputy Commander Air Oper- ations for U.S. Military Assistance Com- mand, Vietnam, 1965–67/Commanding General, 7th Air Force 1966/Vice Com- mander, Pacific Air Forces, 1966–67
Adm Thomas H. Moorer, USN	Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, 1964–65/Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlan- tic Fleet, 1965–66/Chief of Naval Operations, 1967–70
RAdm Lloyd M. Mustin	Director of Operations, Joint Staff, (J-3), 1964–67
Paul H. Nitze	Secretary of the Navy, 1963–67
Prince Souvanna Phouma	Prime Minister of Laos, 1951–54, 1956–58, 1960, 1962–75
Gen Thomas S. Power, USAF	Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command, 1957–64
BGen Charles J. Quilter	Director, Joint Planning Group for the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs), 1963–66

Adm Claude V. Ricketts	Vice Chief of Naval Operations, 1961–64
VAdm Horacio Rivero Jr.	Vice Chief of Naval Operations, 1964–68
L. Mendel Rivers	Representative from South Carolina, 1941–70/Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, 1965–70
LtGen Carson A. Roberts	Commanding General of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1962–64
D. Dean Rusk	Secretary of State, 1961–69
Richard B. Russell Jr.	Senator from Georgia, 1933–71/Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, 1955–69
Adm Ulysses S. G. Sharp Jr., USN	Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, 1963–64/Commander in Chief, Pacific Command, 1964–68
Bromley K. Smith	National Security Council Staff, 1953–80
Adlai Stevenson	U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, 1961–65
Gen Richard G. Stillwell, USA	Chief of Staff of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, 1964–65/Command- ing General of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Thailand, 1965–68

William H. Sullivan	Chair, Committee for the Management of U.S. Policy and Operations in South Vietnam, 1964/U.S. Ambassador to Laos, 1964–69
Gen Maxwell D. Taylor, USA	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1962–64/U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, 1964–65
Leonard S. Unger	U.S. Ambassador to Laos, 1962–64/U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, 1967
Cyrus R. Vance	Deputy Secretary of Defense, 1964–67
Carl Vinson	Representative from Georgia, 1914–65/ Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, 1949–53 and 1955–65
LtGen Lewis W. Walt	Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force, 1965–67/Deputy Chief of Staff (Manpower), 1967
W. Marvin Watson	White House Chief of Staff, 1963–68
Gen William C. Westmoreland, USA	Commanding General of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, 1964–68

Gen Earle G. Wheeler, USA	Chief of Staff of the Army, 1962–64/Chair- man of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1964–70
J. Harold Wilson	Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 1964–70
Eugene M. Zuckert	Secretary of the Air Force, 1961–65

Introduction

General Wallace M. Greene Jr. and the Escalation of the War in Vietnam, 1964–1965: A History in Documents

This is a history of the expansion of the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War as told in the documents and notes of General Wallace M. Greene Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1964 to 1967. Produced by a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Greene's notes provide readers with a firsthand account from one of the main participants in the decision-making process that led to the commitment of a large-scale American expeditionary force in Southeast Asia. Because of President Lyndon B. Johnson's reticence to regularly consult the Joint Chiefs on military matters, however, the notes also give readers a second point of view: that of a frustrated advisor kept on the outside and forced to look in, observe, and reflect on major military decisions often made without his input or support. Consequently, the following documents present two perspectives on decision making during Vietnam: that of the insider and that of the outsider.

There has been a wealth of scholarship produced on the Johnson administration's direction and management of the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Alongside the copious memoirs¹ and biographies,² more focused studies by schol-

¹ The most pertinent for this study are Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963–1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971); Robert S. McNamara with Brian VanDeMark, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), hereafter McNamara, *In Retrospect*; George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York: Norton, 1982); LtGen Victor H. Krulak, USMC (Ret), *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps* (New York: Pocket Books, 1984); Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1990), hereafter Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*; W. W. Rostow, *Concept and Controversy: Sixty Years of Taking Ideas to Market* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); U. S. Grant Sharp, *Strategy for Defeat: Vietnam in Retrospect* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978); William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Dell, 1980); and Lewis W. Walt with an introduction by Lyndon B. Johnson, *Strange War, Strange Strategy: A General's Report on Vietnam* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1970).

² Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961–1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), hereafter Dallek, *Flawed Giant*; Randall Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

ars such as George C. Herring, David M. Barrett, Leslie H. Gelb, Richard K. Betts, Robert Buzzanco, Harry Summers Jr., and H. R. McMaster have analyzed the inner workings of the Johnson administration and how the president made strategy and managed the war.³ McMaster's work stands as one of the few to examine the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their involvement in the Vietnam War. This limited bibliography includes the Joint Staff's multivolume official history of the conflict,⁴ some biographies of the individual Service chiefs,⁵ and general histories of the Joint Chiefs of Staff organization in which the Vietnam experience only forms a part.⁶ The most comprehensive general histories of the Vietnam War also explore, in varying degrees of detail, the role played by the Joint Chiefs in advising the president and planning Vietnam War strategy.⁷

³ George C. Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), hereafter Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*; David M. Barrett, *Uncertain Warriors: Lyndon Johnson and His Vietnam Advisers* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); Leslie H. Gelb with Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1979); Robert Buzzanco, *Masters of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), hereafter Buzzanco, *Masters of War*; Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982); H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), hereafter McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*.

⁴ Willard J. Webb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Prelude to the War in Vietnam, 1954–1959* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007); Jack Shulimson and Graham A. Cosmas, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2009–12), volume 2 appears hereafter as Cosmas, *Joint Chiefs and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, vol. 2; Willard J. Webb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969–1970* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2002); Willard J. Webb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1971–1973* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007).

⁵ Lewis Sorley, *Honorable Warrior: General Harold K. Johnson and the Ethics of Command* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), hereafter Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*; Douglas Kinnard, *The Certain Trumpet: Maxwell Taylor and the American Experience in Vietnam* (New York: Brassey's [US], 1991); John M. Taylor, *General Maxwell Taylor: The Sword and the Pen* (New York: Doubleday, 1985); Warren Kozak, *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2009). There have yet to be published biographies of the other Johnson Service chiefs: Wallace M. Greene; Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Earle G. Wheeler, USA; Chief of Naval Operations Adm David L. McDonald, USN; or LeMay's successor, Gen John P. McConnell, USAF.

⁶ Mark Perry, *Four Stars: The Inside Story of the Forty-Year Battle between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and America's Civilian Leaders* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1989), hereafter Perry, *Four Stars*; Lawrence Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Steven L. Rearden, *Council of War: A History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1942–1991* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2012); *The Chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1949–2012* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2012).

⁷ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking Press, 1983), hereafter Karnow, *Vietnam*; John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945–1975* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), hereafter Prados, *Vietnam*; Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), hereafter Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*; Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945–1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950–1975* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1996).

These works, especially the general histories, tend to treat the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a monolithic organization unified by a single mindset and approach to the Vietnam problem. This stems from a variety of reasons, though one of the more prominent is the fact that Lyndon Johnson rarely directly consulted the Joint Chiefs as a body on Vietnam War policy. They have subsequently often been consigned by scholars to the role of a belligerent Greek chorus pressing a reluctant president to escalate the war with more aggressive bombing campaigns.⁸ As H. R. McMaster's work has shown, the Joint Chiefs were far from a unitary body and were often divided on fundamental issues regarding the Vietnam War, their duties as Service chiefs, and the roles and responsibilities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a whole.

Consequently, this volume provides an exploration of how one member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff viewed the Vietnam War and his own role in planning America's involvement in it. Some of the documents in this collection will undoubtedly be familiar to historians of the Vietnam War. Yet most of them—notably the notes General Greene took down during meetings with the Joint Chiefs—have never been published before and have only rarely been utilized as a source by scholars.

This collection also fills a gap in the Marine Corps' official history of the Vietnam War. The History and Museums Division, as History Division was then named, began writing and publishing its official histories of the war in the 1970s, with the final volume completed in 1997. These 10 volumes provide a comprehensive overview of Marine Corps operations from 1954 to 1975.⁹ However, in line with His-

⁸ See Karnow, *Vietnam*; and David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972), hereafter Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*.

⁹ Capt Robert H. Whitlow, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Advisory and Combat Assistance Era, 1954–1964* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps [Hist&MusDiv, HQMC], 1977), hereafter Whitlow, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1954–1964*; Jack Shulimson and Maj Charles M. Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Landing and the Buildup, 1965* (Washington, DC: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1978), hereafter Shulimson and Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965*; Jack Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War, 1966* (Washington, DC: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1982); Maj Gary L. Telfer, LtCol Lane Rogers, and V. Keith Fleming Jr., *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Fighting the North Vietnamese, 1967* (Washington, DC: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1984); Jack Shulimson, LtCol Leonard A. Blasiol, Charles R. Smith, and Capt David A. Dawson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968* (Washington, DC: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1997); Charles R. Smith, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown, 1969* (Washington, DC: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1988); Graham A. Cosmas, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment, 1970–1971* (Washington, DC: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1986); Maj Charles D. Melson and LtCol Curtis G. Arnold, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The War that Would Not End, 1971–1973* (Washington, DC: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1991), hereafter Melson and Arnold, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1971–1973*; Maj George R. Dunham and Col David A. Quinlan, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Bitter End, 1973–1975* (Washington, DC: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1990); LtCol Gary D. Solis, *Marines and Military Law in Vietnam: Trial by Fire* (Washington, DC: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1989); *The Marines in Vietnam 1954–1973: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography* (Washington, DC: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1985).

tory Division's focus on operational history, they do not cover in as much detail the strategic decision making being made at the higher headquarters with the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command (CinCPac), and with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Vietnam War was the first major American war in which the Commandant of the Marine Corps served as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the critical years leading up to the conflict and for the entire duration of the conflict. For the first time, a Marine Corps Commandant was tasked with making strategic decisions on the same level as the Chiefs of the Air Force, Army, and Navy. As a result, a volume examining the Marine Corps' leadership before and during the war strengthens our understanding of how the Commandant approached and balanced his traditional duties as a Service chief with the new responsibility of serving as a military advisor to the commander in chief, President Johnson.¹⁰

Greene's appointment as Commandant was representative of a general shift in the history of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Up to that point, most members of the Joint Chiefs had been combat commanders with battlefield command experience. Greene was the first post–World War II Marine Corps Commandant not to have commanded a regiment or division in battle.¹¹ In contrast, Greene's career had been shaped by a series of prominent high-pressure and highly visible staff billets in which he worked under frequently volatile personalities. The most notable of these were his multiple experiences working with David M. Shoup, his predecessor as Commandant. Greene first served under Shoup during the Marianas campaign on Saipan: Shoup was chief of staff of the 2d Marine Division, and Greene was the division's operations officer. During that battle, the division command post came under Japanese attack. General Greene would recall Shoup's calm during the

¹⁰ The years after World War II saw a dramatic expansion of the Marine Corps' status within the national security structures of the United States as it rose from being a small force junior to the Navy to an equal Service in its own right. The National Security Act of 1947 confirmed the Corps' status as the Service responsible for amphibious warfare. Public Law 416 of 1952 stipulated the Marine Corps would have a standing force of three divisions and three air wings and also allowed the Commandant of the Marine Corps to participate in the meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in all matters relevant to the Corps. See Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), hereafter Millett, *Semper Fidelis*; and Aaron B. O'Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

¹¹ Alexander A. Vandegrift (Commandant of the Marine Corps [CMC], 1944–48) commanded the 1st Marine Division at Guadalcanal; Clifton B. Cates (CMC, 1948–52) commanded the 4th Marine Division at Saipan and Iwo Jima; Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. (CMC, 1952–56) commanded the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade on Guam and the 6th Marine Division on Okinawa; Randolph C. Pate (CMC, 1956–60) commanded the 1st Marine Division during the final year of the Korean War. Pate's successor, David M. Shoup (CMC, 1960–63), commanded the 2d Marines at Tarawa.

attack as they fought back with just a bayonet and a .45 caliber pistol, a reminder that lack of a battlefield command did not mean lack of battlefield experience. Both Greene and Shoup earned the Legion of Merit for their planning work on Saipan.¹²

Greene and Shoup would work together again during the 1950s following the Ribbon Creek incident. In 1956, a drill instructor at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in Parris Island, South Carolina, led a group of recruits on a march through some tidal marshes. Six drowned in an accident that provoked a scandal and public questioning of Marine recruit training practices. Commandant General Randolph M. Pate appointed Shoup and Greene to investigate and reform Marine Corps training practices: Shoup became Inspector General of Recruit Training and placed Greene in a new billet designated Recruit Training Command, Parris Island. While there, Greene faced considerable challenges as he convened a court-martial of the instructor in charge of the march and reined in drill instructors who felt they had no reason to alter their training standards. Greene also faced hostility from the civilian leaders of nearby Beaufort, who distrusted the “Yankee from Vermont.”¹³

Following his successful tenure at Parris Island, Greene was once again tasked to serve General Shoup, this time as chief of staff to the newly appointed Commandant in 1960. Greene would spend the final seven years of his Marine Corps career in Washington, DC, in service to the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson administrations. Having served with the National Security Council (NSC) during the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration, Greene was no stranger to serving as a staff officer in Washington and had gained firsthand experience navigating the partisan and byzantine halls of power at both the Pentagon and the White House. The Kennedy and Johnson years stood as a dramatic contrast to the Eisenhower administration, however. Neither president was comfortable with the military. Believing that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had failed to provide him with sound advice as he considered launching the Bay of Pigs invasion, Kennedy looked for military advice outside the chain of command, eventually appointing former Chief of Staff

¹² Howard Jablon, “David Monroe Shoup,” in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, ed. Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 365; and Allan R. Millett, “Wallace M. Greene Jr.,” in Millett and Shulimson, *Commandants*, 383–84, hereafter Millett, “Greene.” Millett’s chapter in this volume still stands as the best scholarly biographical sketch of Gen Greene.

¹³ Quotation and a personal account of his experience as commander at Parris Island can be found in Wallace M. Greene, “Notes on McKeon Situation,” in Gen Wallace M. Greene Collection (Gray Research Center [GRC], Quantico, VA), hereafter Greene Collection. See also Millett, “Greene,” 384; and Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 528–32.

of the Army General Maxwell D. Taylor as his personal military advisor.¹⁴ In effect circumventing the authority of the Joint Chiefs, Kennedy set a precedent that General Greene found troubling.

Although Taylor was eventually appointed chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Army general never quite shifted his mindset from that of serving as a personal advisor to the president. As he would remark in his own memoirs, Taylor believed the chairman needed to be a firm and committed supporter of the president's foreign policy, regardless of the attitudes of the rest of the Joint Chiefs.¹⁵ It was a vision of the chairman's office that was diametrically at odds with Greene's own conception. Perhaps stemming from insecurities about the Commandant's status on the Joint Chiefs of Staff (at the time, the Commandant was only to attend meetings of direct relevance to the Marine Corps), Greene was firm in his belief that each Service chief's opinion was as important as the other's and that the chairman was simply an administrative figure whose advice should carry no greater weight than that of his colleagues. Following his term as Commandant, Greene declared that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs "is not a man who votes and breaks a deadlock, but he is the man who is supposed to organize and run the Joint Staff and also to present the views of the Chiefs. If the views differ from his own or among the Chiefs, then these views should be presented for final decision by the Secretary of Defense or the President."¹⁶

It was an interpretation with considerable precedent, since this is largely how the Joint Chiefs of Staff had operated during World War II. However, such an arrangement was largely dependent on the personalities occupying the various positions on the Joint Chiefs. During World War II, the chief of staff to the commander in chief (the precursor to the chairman's position) had been the diplomatic and tactful Admiral William D. Leahy, a man content to allow more forceful and energetic Service chiefs such as Army General George C. Marshall and Admiral Ernest J. King have an equal and prominent voice in both Joint Chiefs of Staff sessions and with President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The institutional structures of

¹⁴ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 4–7.

¹⁵ Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, 252.

¹⁶ Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr. interview with Benis M. Frank, 21 September 1971 (Greene Collection).

the time, as well as the personality of Roosevelt, helped encourage the creation of this decentralized incarnation of the Joint Chiefs.¹⁷

Unlike Leahy, Maxwell Taylor was not content to allow himself to be overshadowed by other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Taylor regularly discouraged dissent, presented his own views as if they were shared by the entire Joint Chiefs, and often failed to provide the Chiefs with adequate information as they deliberated on military issues. Both Kennedy and his successor Johnson were more comfortable with this informal, often ad hoc, way of receiving military advice and making military decisions, and consequently they felt no need to counteract Taylor's approach. Taylor was aided in this regard by another of Greene's *bête noires*, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara.¹⁸

Perhaps no figure is the target of as much criticism and frustration in General Greene's notes and his oral history as Secretary of Defense McNamara. Greene's career during the 1960s was strongly shaped by the domineering and aggressive secretary. As chief of staff to General Shoup, Greene had been responsible for implementing McNamara's dizzying procedural reforms at Headquarters Marine Corps. The chief of staff was also the principal line of defense against the Office of the Secretary of Defense's efforts to reorganize the military by reducing Marine control over its installations, logistics, and aviation assets.¹⁹

Upon becoming Commandant, Greene would continue to joust with the secretary, especially over Vietnam, where McNamara's supreme confidence in his abilities as a military planner and his disdainful attitude regarding the Joint Chiefs rankled the Commandant. For Greene, the consummate planner and staff officer, McNamara was an arrogant intellectual unwilling to either recognize his own flaws or realize that the Joint Chiefs were better trained and more capable of planning military operations in Vietnam. In one meeting summary, Greene explained in exasperation that the secretary "appeared to think that he knew more about all the military aspects of the problems in Vietnam and the cures therefore than any of

¹⁷ Douglas T. Stuart, *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Laws That Transformed America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁸ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 54–56, 77–79; Perry, *Four Stars*, 111–31.

¹⁹ Millett, "Greene," 386.

the military persons present.”²⁰ A year later, he was more pointed: in notes written on a memorandum of a meeting of the Joint Chiefs with McNamara, Greene drew an arrow to a passage on McNamara and wrote “an arrogant individual who will eventually have his ‘come-uppance!’”²¹

For Greene, especially during his first year as Commandant, General Taylor and McNamara represented obstacles to ensuring President Johnson received sound and accurate military advice. Both Greene and his closest colleague on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Curtis E. LeMay, the Air Force chief of staff, were energetic commanders who vigorously lobbied for the interests of their respective Services and were constantly frustrated by McNamara and Taylor’s failure to pass on their ideas and concerns to the president.²² However, while LeMay was the parochial Service chief par excellence, the Marine general had a strong belief that his duty as Commandant required him to not only serve as head of the Marine Corps, but also to serve as a principal advisor to the commander in chief. Within days of becoming Commandant in January 1964, he visited South Vietnam on a fact-finding tour of the country. He found a country gripped by political instability. Just months earlier on 2 November, senior South Vietnamese generals had deposed and assassinated President Ngo Dinh Diem. The United States had backed the effort, believing that a change in government would stem the Viet Cong’s growing success against South Vietnam. The months following the November 1963 coup overthrowing Diem were marked by political chaos, ineffective governance, and increasing casualties for the South Vietnamese army against the Viet Cong. The officers who had overthrown Diem had set up a junta called the Military Revolutionary Council, led by Duong Van “Big” Minh. The council was largely ineffective as a governing organization, however, undermining U.S. hopes that the fall of the Diem regime would improve the situation.²³ When Greene visited, he observed that there was

²⁰ Document 12. The contents of the current volume are referred to by document number.

²¹ Memorandum for the Record: “Escalation of Effort in South Vietnam,” 10 July 1965 (Greene Collection).

²² Document 17.

²³ Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 275–87; George McT. Kahin, *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1986), hereafter Kahin, *Intervention*; Department of Defense (DoD), *Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force* (Pentagon Papers), 1969, National Archives and Records Administration, IV.B.5., 60–68, accessed at <http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers/>, accessed 9 June 2014. The DoD report known colloquially as the “Pentagon Papers” has been released to the public in a variety of formats. Excerpts were initially released by the *New York Times* in 1971. Shortly thereafter, Senator Mike Gravel of Alaska read the leaked parts of the document into the Congressional Record. This was subsequently published in five volumes by Beacon Press as *The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, 5 vols. (Boston: Bea-

a lull in the counterinsurgency effort and believed that a more aggressive posture toward North Vietnam was necessary.²⁴ Underlining the transient nature of South Vietnamese politics at the time, General Nguyen Khanh deposed the three-month-old junta on 30 January 1964, shortly after Greene returned to the United States.

Upon returning to the United States on 12 January, Greene immediately requested a meeting with President Johnson to relay his assessment of the situation there. It would be one of the few private meetings between Greene and Lyndon Johnson on the Vietnam issue.²⁵ Meetings between Lyndon Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were infrequent, and ironically they became less so as the war in Vietnam escalated. Greene saw Johnson as a man uncomfortable with the military and subsequently more at ease with the more personal, informal advisory system established during the Kennedy administration. Consequently, Greene observed what historians of the Johnson administration such as Dallek and Herring would later confirm: that the president relied on the majority of his military advice from a small coterie of civilian officials, such as Secretary of Defense McNamara, Secretary of State D. Dean Rusk, and National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, as well as from such personal friends as Abe Fortas and Clark M. Clifford. McNamara's and Taylor's disdain for the Chiefs only reinforced this system.

This chaotic, disorganized, and overly politicized approach to national security policy was anathema to a man who had built a career on diligent and thorough staff work. Greene believed the president and secretary of defense were seeking easy and simple solutions to an increasingly complex and difficult problem: the viability and sovereignty of the southern Vietnamese republic. Throughout his oral history, Greene repeatedly remarked that one of Johnson's gravest mistakes was in trying to treat the Vietnam problem as if it were not an actual war. The president failed, in Greene's eyes, to adequately explain why the United States had an interest in pre-

con Press, 1971–72). This version is the best known and the one that scholars most commonly cite. This version is incomplete, but it did include a collection of important documents not included with the original DoD report. In 2011 the National Archives released the complete document. Because significant differences exist between the two versions, I have found it necessary to reference each at different points in this volume. References from the Gravel edition are stated as coming from the *Pentagon Papers* (Gravel Edition). References to the complete version available at the National Archives are stated as coming from DoD, *Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force* (1969).

²⁴ Document 1.

²⁵ Lyndon B. Johnson, "Daily Diary," hereafter LBJ Diary, entry for 27 January 1964 (Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX), hereafter LBJ Library.

serving South Vietnam. Johnson exacerbated the problem by refusing to formally declare war, mobilize the reserves, and conduct an aggressive, large-scale bombing campaign against strategically valuable targets in North Vietnam. Greene was frustrated that the United States did not pursue the full mobilization of national resources for a long-term campaign against North Vietnam and the Viet Cong.²⁶

President Johnson's contentious relationship with the Joint Chiefs of Staff has been well chronicled by scholars of his administration.²⁷ What is interesting about Greene's own notes and recollection is that he targets McNamara and Taylor far more than he does Johnson. In the first year of his term as Commandant, Greene was convinced that it was not Johnson who was at fault. Instead, it was structural problems created by the advisory systems put in place by the Kennedy administration. In contrast to the Eisenhower administration, which relied on a permanently constituted NSC Planning Board and Operations Coordinating Board, both Kennedy and Johnson were more comfortable with an informal system, feeling that the two boards and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were slow, ungainly, and partisan.

Greene was convinced that the failure of the United States to take appropriate action in Vietnam stemmed from this ad hoc advisory system. The use of provisional boards, coupled with McNamara's arrogance and Taylor's desire to promote the president's policies, had combined to prevent Johnson from receiving an accurate and frank assessment of the situation in Southeast Asia. Greene believed that the only "practical solution to this problem would be the establishment of a U.S. National Staff which would function around-the-clock, 7 days a week, handling national problems as they might develop throughout the world."²⁸ During the spring and into the fall of 1964, Greene made both public and private proposals for the creation of what he variously called a "National Staff" or a "National General Staff." The plan called for the creation of a large, permanently constituted staff of military and civilian personnel tasked with the sole purpose of studying potential national security problems and devising appropriate policy solutions to those challenges. Though a civilian-operated organization, the National Staff

²⁶ Greene Oral History, 2 July 1971, GRC. All of the audio files for Greene's oral history can be found at the Gray Research Center.

²⁷ Dallek, *Flawed Giant*; Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*; McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*; Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*; Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*; Prados, *Vietnam*.

²⁸ Document 16.

would function in a similar manner to a military staff and also manage a National Command Center. The staff's ultimate purpose would be to "coordinate and direct the implementation by all Executive departments and agencies of approved policies and programs."²⁹ Thus, whereas the NSC served only as an advisory board, the National Staff would be given operational duties and the power to implement presidential decisions.

Greene spent much of the summer of 1964 lobbying for the National Staff. His proposals mostly fell on deaf ears, however. The plan was certainly ambitious, but it was also incompatible with the personal style of President Johnson. Furthermore, it threatened to trample on the prerogatives of the various agencies and departments involved in national security planning. NSC staff member Bromley K. Smith pointed out as much when Greene made the proposal to him in June 1964. Smith noted that President Kennedy would never have supported such an organization. While Johnson would perhaps be more receptive, his need for detailed and immediate information on military operations was better served by National Security Advisor Bundy's smaller, highly centralized staff.³⁰

Having discussed Greene's efforts to transform national security planning by creation of a National Staff and resurrecting old organs such as the NSC's Operations Coordinating Board, we must consider the following question: what were the recommendations that Greene felt were not being adequately relayed to President Johnson? Scholars on the Joint Chiefs have presented two Wallace Greenes in their works. According to Robert Buzzanco, Greene was a skeptic concerned with the expanding American presence in Southeast Asia. As that historian chronicles, Greene openly criticized the American buildup there during his term as chief of staff to Commandant Shoup, stating in a speech in late 1963 that "we [the Marine Corps] do not want to get any more involved in South Vietnam."³¹ Moreover, in public speeches such as an address to the Naval War College delivered in November 1963, Greene recommended against deploying a large American ground force in South Vietnam.³² Nevertheless, a second General Greene can also be seen in Hal-

²⁹ Documents 27 and 52. Quotation from latter document.

³⁰ Document 40.

³¹ Buzzanco, *Masters of War*, 157.

³² *Ibid.*, 183.

berstam and McMaster. These writers depict a hawkish, aggressive Commandant seeking large-scale and violent reprisals against North Vietnam to begin in 1964.³³

If Greene was a skeptic in public, he was a committed hawk in official meetings with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the secretary of defense, and with the president. Of the Joint Chiefs serving in 1964, Greene and Curtis LeMay were regarded by members of the Johnson administration as the most aggressive and hawkish in their recommendations for military action against North Vietnam.³⁴ Both came to believe that a comprehensive and destructive strategic bombing campaign against North Vietnam was the key to stopping that state's support of the Viet Cong insurgency. Such an offensive, Greene believed, would be the best means with which the United States could assert its firm and unwavering commitment to the preservation of South Vietnam.

This can be seen in a memorandum Greene wrote for the Joint Chiefs of Staff in February 1964 in which he laid out 24 proposals for improving the American position. The "24 Point Memo" (as Greene referred to it in his papers and oral history) represented the clearest distillation of his beliefs about the war in Vietnam and U.S. policy there. The opening point was a clear and unambiguous declaration in favor of maintaining the U.S. commitment to Southeast Asia:

If reemphasis on U.S. policy with respect to Vietnam and Southeast Asia is to carry any conviction—with both friends and enemies—it must be manifested in prompt, positive, dramatic, and consistent action. First, there must be a clear-cut decision either to pull out of South Vietnam or to stay there and win. If the decision is to stay and win—which is the Marine Corps recommendation—this objective must be pursued with the full concerted power of U.S. resources. Specific steps in the pursuit of this objective are indicated in the paragraphs which follow.³⁵

³³ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*; Halberstam, *Best and the Brightest*.

³⁴ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 64. See as well Memorandum from Michael V. Forrestal to the National Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy), Subject: Vietnam Planning, 16 April 1964, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. 1, *Vietnam, 1964* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 1992), 242–43, hereafter *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 1.

³⁵ Document 2.

Greene envisioned a double-tracked approach. First, the United States needed to “indicate unequivocally to Ho Chi Minh, to the Communists, and to the world that we intend to remain in South Vietnam until our objective has been attained.” At the same time, however, Greene was also concerned that the president makes “clear to the Congress and to the America people that the U.S. policy is to win in South Vietnam.” Thus, the overall goal (and the overriding theme of Greene’s subsequent 22 recommendations) was to assert that a state of war existed between the United States and North Vietnam and that this was a war whose outcome would greatly impact the interests of the United States. His proposals included expanding the authority of the Commanding General, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (ComUSMACV); censoring U.S. and foreign correspondents in South Vietnam; creating and enforcing a national identity card program; strengthening U.S. and South Vietnamese control of the Mekong River; extending the Strategic Hamlet Program; and withdrawing U.S. military dependents from the country.

At the same time, Greene also recommended an aggressive expansion of military operations built around an aerial campaign, in which the United States would commence “systematic destruction—in a rising crescendo—of targets in North Vietnam by air attack, amphibious raids, covert operations, and naval gunfire.”³⁶ Although Greene stipulated that South Vietnamese forces should be used at first, he noted that the United States should “prepare to augment and support as necessary with U.S. forces.” The Commandant also proposed moving “necessary U.S. ground, air, and naval units into South Vietnam to guarantee holding the country and the successful conduct of operations outlined herein.” The general recommended that a U.S. command base be activated in each of South Vietnam’s Corps Tactical Zones as well.³⁷

Greene did not specify from what Service the ground forces he believed needed to be deployed should come from, although he almost certainly was thinking of both soldiers and Marines. Thus, despite his claims two months earlier that he hoped not to see the Marine contingent in the country grow beyond the over 500 then operating in Da Nang, he was now recommending increasing their numbers (by how much is unclear). The CinCPac’s Operations Plan 32, which had been in

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

effect since 1959, along with seven other CinCPac and Southeast Asia Treaty Organization plans had stipulated that a Marine expeditionary brigade be ready to land at Da Nang in the event of any contingency requirements in South Vietnam. Any expansion of ground troops would have certainly included this brigade.³⁸

Throughout his tenure as Commandant of the Marine Corps, Greene felt that President Johnson's drive to avoid conducting a large-scale war in Vietnam, and consequently Johnson's wish to avoid asking the American populace to sacrifice and mobilize for that conflict, was the root cause of the United States' mistakes in that country. The war amounted to a contest of willpower, to a level in which the United States was unequivocal in its commitment to the South. In this regard, Greene believed the United States had failed. Regarding Johnson's management of the war, Greene related his views to Historical Division historian Benis Frank: "I mean the whole campaign in Vietnam is just marked with this type of timidity, and political expediency which in my opinion is the real reason why we were unsuccessful. And this is one of the great lessons that I feel should come out of Vietnam."³⁹ Greene would also state emphatically that had America followed recommendations for a large-scale bombing campaign, then "the problem in Vietnam would have soon been settled by compelling the North Vietnamese to come to the conference table. I felt this very strongly as the problem opened and continued and now, some six years later, I feel even more convinced that this would have been the proper solution to the problem."⁴⁰

One example of Johnson's timidity that rankled Greene was the president's failure to adequately and clearly state to the American people why the United States was in Vietnam and Southeast Asia in the first place. In Greene's estimation, the American people would have embraced the cause of fighting in Vietnam had the president explained to the population that the war involved American self-interest. Both Johnson's and Kennedy's preference for speaking about the war in terms of democratization and freedom rang false, according to Greene, and were an inadequate means for mobilizing the American people behind the conflict:

This was one thing that I hammered on for years, I think all the four years that I was Commandant, and that was for the

³⁸ Shulimson and Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965*, 3–15.

³⁹ Greene Oral History, 18 August 1971.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 July 1971.

administration to clearly point out to the people of this country the fact that we had a national security involvement and interest in the South Vietnamese campaign, and that it was of primary self-interest for us to win this campaign. But I could never get the White House, I could never get McNamara, I could never get the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, to really push this idea.⁴¹

As with other Johnson advisors, such as Walter W. Rostow, Greene saw the Vietnam War as just one theater of a broader conflict between the United States and Communist states for hegemony in Southeast Asia. Thus, Greene was a firm believer in the domino theory, and he worried that defeat in Vietnam would lead to Communist advances into Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Coupled to this belief was Greene's conviction that a general war with the Communist powers may even be inevitable. During a meeting with President Johnson held on 4 March 1964, Greene told the president his prediction of how the Vietnam War would proceed if the United States began retaliatory strikes against North Vietnam:

I told the President that, in my opinion, this would result in a major campaign, smaller perhaps, but similar to that which had taken place in Korea, and that there was risk of a possible escalation into another world war. However, the bitter fact was that we were going to have to take a stand somewhere and the decision which he was going to have to make, as President, was—whether or not SVN [South Vietnam] was the location where this stand should be made.⁴²

From the language here, Greene's advice was not necessarily an aggressive endorsement of escalation. He makes it clear that it was up to the president whether or not he believed South Vietnam was the right place to conduct a larger-scale war against the Communists. Nevertheless, based on his previous memoranda and comments made after his tenure as Commandant, Greene clearly believed that Vietnam was the right war in the right place and at the right time to take a stand against the Communists.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Document 4.

This firm conviction and its stark contrast with McNamara's and Johnson's equivocation and uncertainty produced considerable amounts of frustration for the Marine Corps general. Throughout Johnson's administration, Greene perceived the president's approach to Vietnam as confused and erratic. For instance, he ordered forceful retaliation after the Tonkin Gulf incident in August 1964, an incident that, at the time, officials in the White House were not convinced even happened.⁴³ Yet, he ordered that no retaliatory strikes be conducted following the Viet Cong attack on the American air base at Bien Hoa on 1 November 1964.

Johnson's and McNamara's equivocation would continue into the next year. Unsurprisingly, it would be one of the president's inner circle of advisors, McGeorge Bundy, rather than the Joint Chiefs who would tip the scales toward escalation. During Bundy's visit to South Vietnam in February 1965, the Pleiku airfield was attacked by Viet Cong forces. Bundy reacted by drafting a comprehensive strategy for a campaign of graduated pressure against North Vietnam aimed at forcing the Communist government there to desist in its support of the National Liberation Front.⁴⁴ Bundy's recommendation would serve as the foundation for the U.S. bombing campaign against North Vietnam: Operation Rolling Thunder.

From mid-February 1965 until the end of March, the Joint Chiefs' primary concern was overseeing the planning of the Rolling Thunder campaign while also ensuring that U.S. bases in South Vietnam were secure and protected. During the first weeks of March, the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (9th MEB) stood at the ready as CinCPac's special landing force in the event that Army General William C. Westmoreland (ComUSMACV) called for U.S. ground forces to reinforce Da Nang. The brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Frederick J. Karch, ultimately landed at Da Nang on 8 March 1965 to reinforce the Marine forces already stationed there.

The deployment of the 9th MEB to Da Nang was a watershed moment for the Marines in Vietnam, marking the official transition from the advisory mission

⁴³ For his part, at least as of 1971, Gen Greene never doubted that a second attack did indeed occur. His notes taken as the events of 4 August 1964 unfolded indicate no doubt that U.S. destroyers had been attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. He reaffirmed this conviction in his oral history in 1971. See Document 47.

⁴⁴ Document 90.

to a more active combat mission. The landing of the brigade also marked a new phase in Greene's term as Commandant. Over the course of the next three years, he would oversee a dramatic expansion of the Marine Corps and work to provide the guidance and forces necessary for a Marine Corps that was now at war.

I. JANUARY–EARLY MARCH 1964

1. Commandant of the Marine Corps Trip Report for Visit to South Vietnam

Washington, 15 January 1964

CMC Trip Report 1-64—Highlights¹

Situation in South Vietnam (10–12 Jan 1964)

- References
- (a) RVN I Corps Plan (Da Nang Area)
 - (b) RVN IV Corps Concept (Mekong Delta)
 - (c) RVN National Identity Card Plan
 - (d) RVN Material Resources Control Plan
 - (e) C/S Marine Corps Top Secret Analysis of Covert Operations in North Vietnam dated 8 Oct 1963
 - (f) Detailed Trip Report

(Note: All references are held by Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps)

Summary

A temporary lull exists in the political situation in South Vietnam caused by continued efforts of the military junta to reorganize the government and to resume large scale military operations. Ambassador Lodge is urging Big Minh, the Chief of

¹ Gen Greene's term as Commandant began in January 1964. Upon beginning his tenure, he embarked on an inspection trip to South Vietnam to assess the situation there, visiting the country from 12 to 14 January. Upon returning, Greene briefed President Lyndon Johnson on the trip on 27 January 1964 (in a rare, private face-to-face meeting). An account of the trip can be found in Whitlow, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: 1954–1964*, 145–46.

State, to personally get out among his people to tell them what his plans are.² The staff of COMUSMACV is being overhauled to improve its efficiency. Small scale military operations against the Viet Cong are underway in I Corps and IV Corps areas. The National Campaign Plan has been revised and is being issued by Corps Commanders to their Division Commanders in the form of operation plans. In the field morale is good. Weapons, ammunition, supplies and equipment are adequate and in good condition. RVN troops are willing to engage the enemy. U.S. Advisors are capable and enthusiastic. USOM plans for control of people and resources should be implemented. Destruction of economic targets in North Vietnam designed to bring Ho Chi Minh to the council table should be initiated immediately.³

Supplementary Data

1. Command (U.S.)

Requires closer coordination at Embassy—COMUSMACV level.

(Specific details available.)

2. National Campaign Plan (RVN)

The concept of operations has been revised. The construction of additional strategic hamlets has been halted or drastically reduced. A mobile offensive has been launched. The aims are to reduce Viet Cong operations to an “acceptable level,” i.e. to one which can be managed by a national police force. For implementing Corps Plan and Concept see references (a) and (b).

3. Readiness

(a) Training—good.

² The months following the 1 November 1963 coup overthrowing Ngo Dinh Diem were marked by political chaos, ineffective governance, and increasing casualties for the South Vietnamese army. The officers who had overthrown Diem had set up a junta called the Military Revolutionary Council, led by Duong Van “Big” Minh. The council was largely ineffective as a governing organization, however, undermining U.S. hopes that the fall of the Diem regime would improve the situation in South Vietnam. See Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 275–87; Kahin, *Intervention*; and DoD, *Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force* (1969), IV.B.5., 60–68.

³ The proposal for increased military action against North Vietnam was reiterated by the Joint Chiefs as a whole in a memorandum submitted to the secretary of defense on 22 January 1964. See Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, 22 January 1964, in *Pentagon Papers* (Gravel Edition), vol. 3, 496–99, hereafter Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, 22 January 1964.

(b) Weapons, ammunition, supplies and equipment—appear adequate and well maintained.

(c) Attitudes

(1) RVN armed forces—willing to fight.

(2) U.S. Advisors—in the field company grade officers are excellent, capable and enthusiastic. These young officers estimate that it will require 2–3 more years to “finish the job.” Colonels in the field—average abilities; most display no enthusiasm for their jobs.

(3) RVN Commanders—experienced, capable, in no hurry to see U.S. forces or support reduced or withdrawn, feel that until Communist problem in S.E. Asia is resolved and S. V. borders secured. Viet Cong activities will continue—target therefore is to reduce Viet Cong operations to an “acceptable level” which eventually can be handled by a national police force.

4. Control Measures

(a) National Identity Card Plan (control of people)—see reference (c).

(b) Material Resources Control Plan—see reference (d).

(c) Control of traffic on Mekong River—Captain Savage, USN, and team are making a survey for CINCPAC to determine the measures necessary to control river and ocean traffic in the Delta area. RVN commanders believe control of river traffic can be established without difficulty. This will stop movement of heavy equipment and large shipments to the Viet Cong.

(d) Control of ocean traffic off Mekong Delta coasts—This is major route originating in Cambodia for logistic support to Viet Cong. RVN commanders are of the opinion that this coastal traffic can be stopped by patrol and boarding operations. Additional patrol craft will be required.

(e) Border Control—RVN commanders do not believe that border control can be established so as to stop gun running and infiltration.

5. Special Operations

Covert demolition attacks from the sea against economic targets (e. g. POL—power plants—factories—dredges) in North Vietnam should be commenced immediately. Such destruction should be designed to force Ho Chi Minh to stop support of Viet Cong operations in South Vietnam and to bring him to the council table for a settlement. Such pressure together with an offer to negotiate and to provide limited food stuffs might well be successful in at least reaching a stalemate and a Korean-type armistice. This would permit withdrawal of U.S. Advisors. Responsibility for execution of such an operation should be assigned to COMUSMACV assisted by CAS.⁴ See reference (e) for analysis of possible covert operations in North Vietnam. CAS representatives in Saigon surprised me with statement that up until 1 December 1963 only one such covert maritime operation had been made. This and one more which followed were poorly executed and unsuccessful. COMUSMACV has experienced advisors, RVN armed forces the trained personnel and equipment and CAS the special assets to make such operations successful ones.

6. Activities visited in South Vietnam

Hqtrs COMUSMACV (Saigon)—U.S. Embassy (Saigon)

Hqtrs RVN I Corps (Da Nang)—Hqtrs RVN II Corps (PLEIKU)

Hqtrs RVN IV Corps (CAN THO)—Hqtrs RVN Marine Corps (Saigon)—USMC Helo Squadron 361 (Da Nang)—Strategic Hamlets in DELTA and MONTAGNARD areas—PHU BAI

7. Key Commanders and Personnel with whom discussions were held

Admiral Felt—CINCPAC (Honolulu and Sangley Point, P.I. [the Philippines])

Vice Admiral Sharp—CINCPACFLT

LtGen Roberts—CG FMFPAC⁵

⁴ In this instance, CAS stands for “Controlled American Source” and was a reference to Central Intelligence Agency activity in Saigon.

⁵ LtGen Carson A. Roberts was the commanding general of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific from July 1962 until March 1964. His successor was LtGen Victor H. Krulak.

General Harkins—COMUSMACV

Ambassador Lodge—U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam (two meetings)

LtGen Don—Cmdr in Chief, RVN Armed Forces

BGen Coa—CG RVN IV Corps

Colonel (?)—C/S II Corps

MajGen Khanh—CG I Corps

LtCol Lien—Cmdt RVN Marine Brigade

Wallace M. Greene, Jr.
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

2. Memorandum from the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the Joint Chiefs of Staff¹

Washington, 24 February 1964

CMCM 12-64/AO 3813-jop

Subj: Situation in Vietnam (U)

1. If reemphasis on U.S. policy with respect to Vietnam and Southeast Asia is to carry any conviction—with both friends and enemies—it must be manifested in prompt, positive, dramatic, and consistent action. First, there must be a clear-cut decision either to pull out of South Vietnam or to stay there and win. If the decision is to stay and win—which is the Marine Corps recommendation—this ob-

¹ The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army Gen Maxwell Taylor, established an ad hoc committee led by BGen Lucius D. Clay Jr., USA, of the J-3 Directorate. Each Service chief submitted his own recommendations. Gen Greene's recommendations were submitted in this memorandum. The document represents a solid synthesis of his attitudes about the Vietnam War at this time. The Joint Chiefs of Staff official history of their role in the Vietnam War cites the document as (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/326-2, 25 Feb 64. See Cosmas, *Joint Chiefs and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968*, vol. 2, 27.

jective must be pursued with the full concerted power of U.S. resources. Specific steps in the pursuit of this objective are indicated in the paragraphs which follow.²

2. Indicate unequivocally to Ho Chi Minh, to the Communists, and to the world that we intend to remain in South Vietnam until our objective has been attained. Warn North Vietnam to stop guerrilla troop and convoy movements into South Vietnam and to cease support of the Viet Cong.

3. Make clear to the Congress and to the American people that the U.S. policy is to win in South Vietnam. Notify our Allies.

4. Place a single military officer, COMUSMACV, in complete and total control of all operations. Provide him with a plan, tools (men, weapons, and equipment) and full authority. Give him operational control of South Vietnam forces and have him exercise such control through a U.S. command structure paralleling that of the Vietnamese armed forces. This should include control of all military assets and logistic resources.

5. Establish COMUSMACV's command structure as a subordinate unified command under CINCPAC designed for Southeast Asia as a whole, not just for South Vietnam. Bring CIA resources and activities into a CIA force component directly under COMUSMACV. Bring the public safety and national defense activities currently being pursued by USOM, for example, much of the strategic hamlet program, under military direction. Bring research and development activities under a clear military command of COMUSMACV.

6. Keep U.S. Ambassadors on station and their public stature undiminished. Modify their authority vis-a-vis military operations and the military command structure to the extent required in each country. In South Vietnam itself give the Ambassador a status similar to that which existed in Korea during active hostilities there.

² Several of Greene's recommendations, including placing a single U.S. military commander in charge of all operations in Vietnam, intensified aerial reconnaissance missions over Laos and Cambodia, and South Vietnamese raids along the Laotian border, had already been presented to Secretary of Defense McNamara on 22 January 1964 in a memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and again in a memorandum from 18 February 1964. The recommendations in both were guided by the assumption that cutting off outside logistical and personnel support of the National Liberation Front on the part of North Vietnam would ultimately destroy the insurgency against the South Vietnamese government. See Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, 22 January 1964; and Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara), 18 February 1964, in *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 1, 86-89.

7. Establish news censorship and rigid control of accreditation of U.S. and foreign correspondents.
8. Commence intensive aerial reconnaissance of North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to locate enemy formations and movements.
9. Establish firm control of traffic on the Mekong River and its tributaries and effective surveillance of the coast. Give a U.S. naval component commander operational control of the South Vietnam Navy to the extent necessary to establish firm control of SVN coastal waters and the Mekong River. Stop the smuggling of arms, ammunition, and supplies and the entry of guerrillas from the seas, especially across the coasts of the Mekong Delta. Establish a control point on the Mekong to regulate waterborne traffic to and from Cambodia. Establish a naval and air base on Phu Quoc island (an amphibious base in northern South Vietnam) and such shore facilities as are needed to control and exploit the Mekong.
10. Commence attacks against enemy movements in border areas of Laos and Cambodia.
11. Commence systematic destruction—in a rising crescendo—of targets in North Vietnam by air attack, amphibious raids, covert operations, and naval gunfire. Initially use South Vietnamese in these attacks but prepare to augment and support as necessary with U.S. forces.
12. Establish population controls within South Vietnam to include implementation and firm enforcement of the National Identity Card program, movement controls, and curfew.
13. Establish firm control of the movement of material within South Vietnam by implementation of the Material Resources Control Plan.
14. Intensify execution of the National Pacification Plan.
15. Extend and strengthen the Rural Life Program, i.e. strategic hamlets. This is a most important step in guaranteeing basic personal safety for the people of South Vietnam. Intensify land reform measures.

16. Warn Laos to stop convoy and guerrilla troop movements and support from North Vietnam through Laos into South Vietnam.

17. Warn Cambodia to stop border crossings and supply from sea to Viet Cong units in the Mekong Delta. Tell Sihanouk³ bluntly that if he does not cooperate we will be forced to consider partition of his country between South Vietnam and Thailand.

18. Make it known that the U.S. will not tolerate any more coups in South Vietnam.

19. Withdraw dependents and other Americans from South Vietnam if this action contributes clearly to the War effort.

20. Establish the Secretary of Defense as the Washington focal point for the expanded and concerted effort in Southeast Asia in recognition that, at this point of time, this is primarily a military rather than a diplomatic problem.

21. Move necessary U.S. ground, air, and naval units into South Vietnam to guarantee holding the country and the successful conduct of operations outlined herein. Establish a U.S. command, logistic, and training base in each corps area in South Vietnam.

22. Extend and accelerate the support and encouragement of the Thai armed forces. Position appropriate U.S. forces in eastern Thailand, focused on the support of Phoumi⁴ forces in southern Laos, and as a guarantee of the Thai border.

23. While maintaining the necessary tempo of operations to convince the Communists that we mean business, make it clear that the U.S. is willing to confer and negotiate any time with Ho Chi Minh. Listen patiently to our allies, friends, and enemies, but continue to press home the campaign in South Vietnam until a settlement on U.S. terms is reached.

24. Maintain the necessary defense posture with the United States and world-wide. Fund the expanded Southeast Asia effort by supplemental appropriations to avoid weakening our national readiness posture in other areas.

³ Norodom Sihanouk was the king of Cambodia from 1941 to 1955 and again from 1993 to 2004. From 1953 to 1970, he was essentially its head of state.

⁴ Phoumi Nosavan was a Laotian general supported by the United States who dominated the country until he was deposed following a failed coup attempt in April 1964.

25. It is recommended that copies of this paper:

- a. NOT be forwarded to commanders of unified and specific commands.
- b. NOT be forwarded to U.S. officer assigned to NATO activities.
- c. NOT be forwarded to the Chairman, U.S. Delegation, United Nations Military Staff Committee.

3. Summary of Meeting between the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff¹

Washington, 2:30 p.m., 2 March 1964²

The Secretary of Defense in conference with the Joint Chiefs³

SecDef stated that he was increasingly nervous with the situation in SVN. After listening to Major General Anthis's intelligence briefing, the Secretary said he could draw exactly opposite deductions from what Anthis had drawn and that he felt that appraisals of the situation in SVN could be improved. The Secretary said that he thought that we were in a hell of a mess, maybe close to another shift (coup) and that in his opinion it was highly questionable whether Khanh could survive; that Khanh should be warned that the United States would not stand for any more coups; that if another coup should take place, it might result in the establishment of a pro-French regime which would demand the neutralization of SVN and SEA

¹This meeting addressed Secretary of Defense McNamara's 21 February 1964 memorandum regarding the best means for forcing North Vietnam to end its support of the Viet Cong without incurring retaliation from Communist China or condemnation from the United States' allies (see Document 2). Interestingly, Greene's own account of the meeting does not focus on many of the issues discussed during that meeting, such as the use of air strikes and deployment of minimal ground forces to South Vietnam in order to support those air strikes. It also does not note McNamara's consideration for deploying Nationalist Chinese forces instead of American ground troops to South Vietnam. Greene Oral History, 17 September 1971. For another summary of the meeting, see Cosmas, *Joint Chiefs and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, vol. 2, 30.

² Handwritten in the margin: "4Aug67 CWO Franc. Curen." Next to this is written "This date is correct as checked w/MR 58-64 AT-jif of 4Mar64."

³The Joint Chiefs issued two memoranda on this date. JCSM 168-64 requested removal of restrictions on air operations against Viet Cong forces in the Laotian border areas. JCSM 174-64 recommended air strikes against North Vietnam. See Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara), 2 March 1965, *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 1, 110–11; and Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara), 2 March 1965, *ibid.*, 112–18.

as proposed by General De Gaulle.⁴ Under such circumstances, the United States would probably be requested to withdraw its efforts and support from SVN. The Secretary wanted to know if the report were true that the Viet Cong had offered \$250 for each American killed in Saigon. The Secretary reviewed the Communist–Viet Cong communication net originating in Hanoi. He was told that since 1961 the United States had been unsuccessful in breaking any of the military traffic. The Secretary directed that the military and political message activity in NVN be plotted for a selected period of one year from data already available for analysis and further presentation to him.

4. Summary of Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense (McNamara), and the President (Johnson)¹

Washington, 5:30 p.m., 4 March, 1964

The fourth and unscheduled item discussed at this conference was the Chairman's pending trip to Saigon with the Secretary of Defense to survey the current situation in SVN. The Chairman told the President that he recommended the re-establishment and stepping-up of the Counterinsurgency Program in SVN. He also advocated the progressive and selective attack against targets in North Vietnam. He mentioned an attack against Hanoi and principal reliance upon the use of air in the conduct of such operations against NVN. The President said that he did not want to lose SVN, and at the same time he did not want to start a war before November of next year. The President stated that the Secretary and the Chairman should make a point of openly supporting General Khanh² during their visit to Saigon. The President stated that Senator Mansfield had proposed that SVN be

⁴ Since 1963, French President Charles de Gaulle had proposed a new Geneva Conference, formal relations with the North Vietnamese regime, and a coalition government that included the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. His proposals also envisioned the withdrawal of American forces from the region. While both the Viet Cong and South Vietnamese governments were receptive to such a course, it was strongly opposed by both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. See Philippe Devillers, "Le General de Gaulle et l'Asie," in *De Gaulle et le tiers Monde*, *Institute Charles de Gaulle* (Paris: Pédone, 1984), 299–306; and Frederik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of the War in Vietnam* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), hereafter Logevall, *Choosing War*.

¹ This note is written in margin: "30 minute wait in Cabinet Room—and then 1 hr 15 min conf—ie until 1915."

² MajGen Nguyen Khanh had participated in the coup to oust and kill South Vietnam's President Diem in November 1963. On 30 January 1964, he staged a second coup against Diem's successors and established a new regime. For a summary of the coup and its consequences, see Kahin, *Intervention*, 203–35.

neutralized; that although he was the Leader of the Democratic Majority in the Senate, that he had done this without consultation with the President.³ The President had thought about the possibility of neutralization and had examined De Gaulle's⁴ proposal, as reported in the newspapers, but could find nothing specific to go on, either in Mansfield's or de Gaulle's words. The President then returned to the discussion of other possible courses of action in SVN and asked General Taylor what he would do if he were President. He told Taylor that he would like to hear Taylor's thoughts on this subject before he left for SVN, and then compare them with his ideas when he returned. The Chairman repeated again what he had previously said—that he felt that the campaign against the Viet Cong in SVN should be stepped-up, General Khanh and the South Vietnamese Government should be supported, and that attacks should be initiated against selected targets in NVN, including Hanoi. The President said that he felt that such action would almost certainly result in a war—that the Chinese Communists, and possibly the Russians, would actively enter the picture. He, the President, did not want a war—the many Congressmen who had conferred with the President definitely did not want a war—and he felt the people of the United States did not want one either. General Taylor stated that he did not feel that his recommendations would result in a stepped-up reaction on the part of the Communists. The President then asked General Wheeler for his views. Wheeler vaguely supported the recommendations of General Taylor. The President then asked me what my views on the subject were. I told him that what I had to say were my own views, resulting from my own analysis of the situation. I stated that there were four courses of action open to him. These were:

No.1: Continue the Present Plan of Support and Advice Now Being Executed in SVN. I told him that in my opinion that this could only result in a “slow bleed” of men and money and that it would only be a matter of time before the people of the United States would no longer put up with this course of action and would demand another remedy of the President.

³ On 1 February 1964, Senator Mike J. Mansfield sent President Johnson a memorandum stating that the “de Gaulle approach to Southeast Asia offers a faint glimmer of hope in a way to a solution at a cost to us somewhere commensurate with our national interests in Southeast Asia.” See Memorandum to the President from Senator Mansfield, “The Vietnamese Situation,” 1 February 1964, in *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers: A Documentary Collection*, ed. David M. Barrett (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 25–26. See also Logevall, *Choosing War*, 91–93.

⁴ See Document 3, footnote 4.

No. 2: Withdrawal of American Forces from SVN (this might also include the withdrawal of financial and logistical support). This action would stop the loss of American lives and possibly cut out the current expenditure of reportedly \$1 1/2 million dollars per day. This course of action would result in loss of tremendous prestige to the United States—not only in Southeast Asia, but throughout the world. However, it would forestall an immediate confrontation on a major scale with the Communists. I said that I did not agree with General Taylor's view that an extension of expansion into NVN would not result in a major reaction from the Communists. I told the President that, in my opinion, this would result in a major campaign, smaller perhaps, but similar to that which had taken place in Korea, and that there was risk of a possible escalation into another world war. However, the bitter fact was that we were going to have to take a stand somewhere and the decision which he was going to have to make, as President, was—whether or not SVN was the location where this stand should be made. I then discussed the third course of action.

No. 3 Neutralization. I told the President that I felt this could be brought about, as it had been in Laos, by the interested Countries being invited to sit down at a conference table, possibly under the aegis of the United Nations. I said that I felt that a Neutralization Agreement could be reached with the Communists because it was to their advantage, as it had been in Laos, and that this course of action, if pursued, would result in the take-over in SVN by the Communists. However, if the United States is going to withdraw from SVN, it perhaps could do so with less loss of face and prestige under the cover of a Neutralization Agreement, although in doing so, it and the rest of the world would know that it was giving up to the Communists.

No. 4 Immediate Expansion of Operations, to Include Targets in North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. I covered the principal points contained in my memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CMCM 12-64 tabled on 24Feb64, see TAB B⁵) as specific examples of actions which I felt could be taken.

The President listened very carefully to my ideas and when I had finished, stated to General Taylor that he subscribed to the analysis of “The Marine General” rather than to the Chairman, and he said that he believed that either course of action, No. 2 Withdrawal or course of action No. 4 Expansion of Operations, would

⁵ Document 2.

be the choice to be pursued. However he repeated again that the Congress and the Country did not want war—that war at this time would have a tremendous effect on the approaching Presidential political campaign and might perhaps keep the Democrats from winning in November. He said that he thought it would be much better to keep out of any war until December; that would be after the election and whoever was going to be President could then go to Congress for a supporting and joint resolution, and to the people of the United States to explain to them why we had to risk the chances of another war by expanding our operations in Southeast Asia. The political situation in December would be stabilized, there would be “4 years and 3 months” of permanency ahead, and the President and the new Congress could then actively advocate a stepped-up campaign. At this point, it struck me that what the President was actually doing was indirectly telling General Taylor that he did not want him to return from NVN with a recommendation that the campaign there be expanded to include NVN to the extent that the risk might arise of a Korean-type war, or all-out war with the Communists. The President did tell General Taylor that he had no objection to a “pin prick” type of covert operations in NVN, to be executed by the South Vietnamese.

There was some discussion then as to whether such operations, including air attacks, could be executed successfully by South Vietnamese personnel. Would they have the courage and technical ability to do these things by themselves? General Taylor then discussed possible air operations indicating that he felt the attacks would have to be made by American pilots with at least one South Vietnamese in each plane. This would provide the necessary “cover” or “sheep dipping” to mask the attacks with the appearance of South Vietnamese initiated—with United States advisors.

Following this discussion, the President asked General Taylor whether or not General Harkins had received everything he had asked for to support the operations in SVN. The Chairman replied that he had. The President then said, “He may have got everything he asked for, but the situation is still going from bad to worse.” The President then directed General Taylor to provide him with a written statement to the effect that Harkins had received everything he had requested. The President also directed General Taylor to provide a detailed analysis of pro-

posals for neutralization of Vietnam, contacting all sources—such as CIA, State,⁶ Lodge, and press reports. The President told Taylor that when he arrived in Saigon, he wanted Taylor to determine whether the press reports, such as *that of Keyes Beech article of 22 February 1964*,⁷ to the effect that “military officials” were telling the press about projected operations in NVN were correct, and, if so, to take action to stop such talk. The President also repeated he wanted the Chairman and the Secretary of Defense to appear publicly in Saigon with General Khanh in order to indicate that U.S. support was behind General Khanh.⁸

5. Summary of Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Washington, 9:00 a.m., 5 March 1964

The Chairman, in Executive Session with the Chiefs, reviewed the conversation which had been held the previous evening with the President.¹ I asked the Chairman what he expected to recommend upon his return from SVN, in view of the President’s position regarding the extension of operations into NVN. The Chairman said that he didn’t know what he might recommend at this time; however he knew that his neck and the SecDef’s neck were on the chopping block. He then stated that he hadn’t received any specific advice from anyone (meaning the Chiefs) as to what should be done in solving this problem. I told him that I did not agree with him in this statement in that specific recommendations in this matter had been tabled by me (my position paper CMCM 12-64²—and my reiteration of position CMCM 20-64³).

⁶ The State Department.

⁷ Italicized sections are handwritten on original document.

⁸ Robert McNamara later remembered: “Before Max [Gen Maxwell Taylor] and I left for Vietnam, President Johnson said he wanted to see a thousand photographs of me boosting Khanh, to demonstrate to the South Vietnamese people that the U.S. stood behind him every step of the way. To my everlasting embarrassment, LBJ got his wish.” See photo caption in McNamara, *In Retrospect*.

¹ Document 4.

² Document 2.

³ Document 3.

II. LATE MARCH 1964

6. Editor's Summary: Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to President Johnson, 13–16 March 1964

Upon returning from his March 1964 visit to South Vietnam, Secretary of Defense McNamara set about drawing up a series of proposals to submit to the president for future courses of action in Vietnam. McNamara's recommendations were based on a preliminary draft prepared before his journey by William Bundy, the assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs. About four to five versions of the memorandum exist, and they were routed to different security officials, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, between 2 March 1964 and 16 March 1964. The final version as submitted to and adopted by President Johnson can be found in volume 1 of *Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968*, pages 153–67.

In the memorandum, McNamara laid out a picture of a weak South Vietnamese government that was rapidly losing control of its territory and people to the Viet Cong insurgency. The Communists controlled about 40% of South Vietnam's territory, the armed forces of Vietnam suffered a high rate of desertion, and North Vietnam was increasing its support of the Communist insurgents in the south. He stated emphatically that the fall of South Vietnam to Communist forces would be a catastrophic event that would cause the collapse of neighboring American allies: "Unless we can achieve this objective in South Vietnam, almost all of Southeast Asia will probably fall under Communist dominance (all of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), accommodate to Communism so as to remove effective U.S. and anti-Communist influence (Burma), or fall under the domination of

forces not now explicitly Communist but likely then to become so (Indonesia taking over Malaysia).”¹

He made a number of recommendations as to how South Vietnam could improve its situation, but strongly argued against expanding the United States’ involvement in South Vietnam in any fundamental way. Along with reassuring the new Khanh government that the United States would back his regime, oppose future coups, and continue to furnish him with the supplies needed to defeat the Viet Cong insurgency, McNamara also proposed increasing the size of the South Vietnamese forces using mandatory national service, creating a civil administration corps for the provinces, and providing the South Vietnamese military with new aircraft and armored personnel carriers. Although he recommended American reconnaissance flights over South Vietnam be permitted to cross the Laotian border if attacked by Communist forces, he strongly recommended against changing the United States’ military posture in the country, likely because he was concerned that expanding U.S. influence over command and field operations would damage South Vietnamese morale and hinder the South’s ability to win the war on its own. Regarding expanding U.S. control, McNamara cautioned, “Again, the judgment of all senior people in Saigon with which we concur, is that the possible military advantages of such action would be far outweighed by its adverse psychological impact. It would cut across the whole basic picture of the Vietnamese winning their own war and lay us wide open to hostile propaganda both within South Vietnam and outside.”²

The Joint Chiefs saw the document as it existed on 13 March and were nearly unanimous in their criticism of McNamara’s recommendations to President Johnson. With the exception of the chairman, the other four chiefs felt that the proposals were not adequate and would not effect any major changes on the deteriorating situation in Southeast Asia.³ Disagreement was so heated that the Air Force chief of staff, General Curtis Lemay, insisted that the Joint Chiefs submit a memorandum summarizing their criticisms directly to President Johnson. General Taylor

¹ Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the President, 16 March 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 1, 154, hereafter Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense, 16 March 1964.

² *Ibid.*, 166.

³ Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara), 14 March 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 1, 149–50; McMaster, *Derelection of Duty*, 76–77.

ignored General LeMay's request, and he largely downplayed the Joint Chiefs' misgivings in his own memorandum to McNamara and created the impression that greater agreement existed than in fact did. In the end, the Joint Chiefs' memorandum acknowledged the Chiefs' disagreement but downplayed their strong opposition to McNamara's proposal.

The draft of the document used for discussion was also different than the one seen by Secretary McNamara, General Taylor, and President Johnson in that it did not include annotations from Director of Central Intelligence John A. McCone.⁴ On a number of points McCone disagreed with McNamara, most notably with regards to the secretary of defense's optimistic appraisal of the Khanh government and the ability of the South Vietnamese to defeat the Viet Cong with limited American intervention. Most of the Chiefs, including General Greene, concurred with McCone and believed that McNamara's recommendations, if implemented, would do little to alter the situation as it existed in South Vietnam.

The final version of McNamara's memorandum was submitted to President Johnson on 16 March 1964 and approved the next day as National Security Action Memorandum 288. McNamara's version reflected few of Greene's concerns or any of the other suggestions made by members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

7. Memorandum from the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Washington, 13 March 1964

AO3B13-gjk/CMCM 29-64

Subj: Alternate Courses of Action, Vietnam

Encl: (1) Outline Staff Study: Alternative Courses of Action Vietnam

Ref: (a) JCS 2343/326-2¹

(b) JCS 2343/326-6

⁴ Document 12.

¹ Document 2.

1. In the course of the current reappraisal of the situation in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have not been provided with a study which analyzes the pros and cons of the several courses of action open to the United States. I believe a requirement exists for such a study which would be, essentially, a concise but comprehensive commander's estimate of the situation.

2. My own views as to the program the United States should follow with respect to Vietnam are contained in reference (a). I reaffirmed these views in writing at the time of my concurrence in reference (b). In arriving at my position, I used the outline staff study appended as enclosure (1) hereto.

3. It is recommended that this memorandum and its enclosure be referred to an appropriate agency of the Joint Staff with the request that a suitably detailed study of alternative courses of action with respect to Vietnam and Southeast Asia be prepared.

4. It is recommended that copies of this paper:

- a. NOT be forwarded to commanders of unified and specified commands.
- b. NOT be forwarded to U.S. officers assigned to NATO activities.
- c. NOT be forwarded to the Chairman, U.S. Delegation, United Nations Military Staff Committee.

Wallace M. Greene, Jr.
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

21 February 1964

AO3B13-jd

Outline Staff Study: Alternative Courses of Action, Vietnam²

1. Problem. To analyze alternative courses of action open to the United States with respect to Vietnam and Southeast Asia and to recommend that course of action which offers the best chance of success for U.S. national objectives.

² Dated 21 February 1964.

2. Assumption. The fundamental U.S. national objective is a stabilized Southeast Asia and a free, independent, and pro-U.S. South Vietnam.

3. Courses of Action.

- a. Course One: Withdraw all U.S. forces from South Vietnam.
- b. Course Two: Neutralize South Vietnam (and perhaps North Vietnam).
- c. Course Three: Intensify present action (U.S. support and advice).
- d. Course Four: Extend and expand operations (no U.S. combat commitment).
- e. Course Five: Extend and expand operations (with U.S. combat commitment).

4. Analysis

a. Withdraw all U.S. forces from South Vietnam

(1) Advantages

- a. Relieves heavy continuing drain on U.S. resources.
- b. Relieves risk of escalation.
- c. Relieves criticism that U.S. is interfering in an internal struggle.
- d. Might aggravate Soviet-Chicom differences. (Red Chinese gains which would probably follow our withdrawal might cause the Soviets to seek a counterbalancing accommodation with the West.)

(2) Disadvantages

- a. Fails to achieve the fundamental objective of a stabilized Southeast Asia and a free, independent, and pro-U.S. South Vietnam.
- b. Causes loss of faith and confidence in the U.S. amongst our remaining friends and allies in the Far East; specifically, Thailand, Nationalist China, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and possibly Malaysia and the British commonwealth nations.

- c. Enhances the power and prestige of Red China and North Vietnam.
- d. Invites a complete Communist take-over of South Vietnam and, by domino effect, a Communist march around the rim of the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and Africa.
- e. Reduces the drain on Red China and North Vietnam resources.

b. Neutralize South Vietnam (and perhaps North Vietnam)

(1) Advantages

- a. Same as Course ONE plus some face-saving for the U.S.
- b. Offers some possibility of stabilizing (at least temporarily) the current situation in Vietnam without further intensifying the conflict and consequent disproportionate increase in cost in U.S. lives and money.

(2) Disadvantages

- a. All those of Course ONE except the loss of Asian confidence in the U.S. might be somewhat lessened.
- b. Increases the stature and prestige of France (de Gaulle) as the Western leader and arbiter of Asiatic affairs.
- c. Requires, at a minimum, a UN Force or an International Supervisory Commission (Remember the problems of Laos, Palestine, Korea, and the Congo).³

c. Intensify present actions (U.S. support and advice).

(1) Advantages

³ Following its independence from Belgium in 1960, the Congo disintegrated and was plunged into a civil war as rival groups attempted to assert control over the country and the Katanga Province seceded. Both the United States and Soviet Union backed rival factions, and the civil war soon became a Cold War proxy war. Laos had faced a civil war similar to the one in South Vietnam, with the Communist Pathet Lao insurgency threatening to seize control of that country. The Kennedy administration brokered a peace that attempted to neutralize the situation, but that cease-fire was tentative. The reference to Palestine likely refers to the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors. At the time, the Sinai Peninsula was occupied by a United Nations peacekeeping force (following the 1956 Suez Crisis) and the West Bank remained under Jordanian control. At the time Greene was writing, the Korean War had only been over for 11 years; thus, the tense situation there certainly seemed like one that could flare up at any moment.

- a. Minimum risk of escalation.
- b. Preserves status of a Vietnamese war fought by the Vietnamese.
- c. Continues U.S. military presence at least cost in men and resources.
- d. Is minimum action to forestall Communist take-over of South Vietnam and Southeast Asia.
- e. Continues to drain on Red China and North Vietnam resources. (But at a proportionately high cost to the U.S.)

(2) Disadvantages

- a. Does not ensure achievement of fundamental U.S. national objectives with respect to Vietnam and Southeast Asia within the foreseeable future.
- b. Concedes the initiative to Red China and North Vietnam to continue support to the Viet Cong on their own terms.
- c. Permits the continuance of cross-border sanctuary for North Vietnam/Viet Cong operations.
- d. Continues heavy drain of U.S. resources for long period.
- e. Does not promise early or decisive defeat of insurgent forces.
- f. Lays U.S. open to charges of interfering in an internal struggle.
- g. Causes U.S. to support a government now lacking popular support.

d. Extend and expand operations (No U.S. combat commitment).

(1) Advantages

- a. Offers hope of military victory and subsequent attainment of U.S. national objectives.
- b. Provides basis for overcoming stalemate and attracting popular support for South Vietnam government.
- c. Provides increased evidence of South Vietnam/U.S. intent and determination.

- d. Reduces cross-border sanctuary for North Vietnam/Viet Cong operations.
- e. Increases drain on Red China and North Vietnam resources.
- f. Presents Laos and Cambodia with clear requirement to support a regional security effort or face consequences.
- g. Maintains face of a Vietnamese war being fought by Vietnamese.

(2) Disadvantages

- a. Increases risk of escalation.
- b. Increases prospect of Red China/Soviet rapport and unified reaction.
- c. Increases drain on U.S. resources.
- d. Increases vulnerability of U.S. to charges of “interference.”
- e. Involves almost certain rupture with Cambodia and probably with Laos.
- f. Does not insure an early victory.

e. Extend and expand operations (With U.S. combat commitment).

(1) Advantages

- a. All of the advantages of Course FOUR except that the facade of a Vietnamese war being fought by Vietnamese is destroyed.
- b. U.S. combat power can be applied. In particular, U.S. air and naval superiority can be exploited.
- c. Removes any question as to U.S. intent and determination.
- d. Speeds timetable for winning the war.

(2) Disadvantages

- a. Maximizes risk of escalation. Risks confrontation of U.S. and Red China forces.

- b. Provides common cause to Red China and Soviet governments.
- c. Commits U.S. to an “unpopular” war.
- d. Alienates some neutral or unaligned nations.
- e. Creates further strains with some European powers.
- f. Increases sharply drain of U.S. resources including personnel.
- g. No assurance that military victory against the North Vietnamese will ensure support by South Vietnamese of an unpopular and autocratic regime.
- h. Requires degree of U.S. mobilization to offset commitment of substantial forces and to improve world-wide readiness posture.

5. Comparison of Courses of Action

- a. Neither Course One or Course Two, withdrawal or neutralization, offers any promise of achieving the U.S. national objective of a stabilized Southeast Asia and a free, independent, and pro-U.S. South Vietnam.
- b. Course Two, neutralization, has little to recommend it over Course ONE, withdrawal, except some slight face-saving which is more than offset by the further complications of the neutralization process.
- c. Course Three, intensification of present actions, portends the continuance of the present stalemate. It does not promise achievement of U.S. national objectives in the foreseeable future. The war is being fought under these ground rules now and is not going well.
- d. Course Four, extension and expansion of operations without U.S. combat commitment, involves carrying the war to North Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos by overt and covert means. It would let loose forces not completely under U.S. control. It involves risk of escalation. But the war would be fought on something like our own terms. Many of the advantages presently enjoyed by the enemy would be eliminated or reduced.

- e. Course Five, extension and expansion of operations including the use of U.S. combat forces, represents the ultimate that the U.S. can do to bring military victory to South Vietnam. It involves the largest risk of escalation but also offers the best promise of early victory and establishment of an environment conducive to achievement of U.S. national objectives.
- f. Courses Four and Five are not mutually exclusive as are the other courses of action. Course Four can logically precede Course Five, although once committed to Course Five, the U.S. cannot then back off to Course Four.

6. Conclusion

The course of action of Vietnam offering best chance of success, although not without considerable risk, would be Course Four with a clear policy decision to go to Course Five if required. Course Five, the overt use of U.S. combat forces, should not be implemented until Course Four has been tried, tested, and found wanting. In effect, Course Five, is the United States' hole card or ultimate reserve, to be committed at the moment of decision or withheld if not needed.

8. Memorandum from the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Washington, 14 March 1964

CMCM 31-64/AO3B8-jd

Subject: Comments on Secretary of Defense Draft Memorandum for the President;
Subject: South Vietnam dated 13 March 1964

I. Comments on the proposed recommendations:

1. To make it clear that we are prepared to furnish assistance and support to South Vietnam for as long as it takes to bring the insurgency under control.

Concur

2. To make it clear that we fully support the Khanh government and are opposed to any further coups.

Concur

3. To support a Program for National Mobilization (including a national service law) to put South Vietnam on a war footing.

Concur

4. To assist the Vietnamese to increase the armed forces (regular plus paramilitary) by at least 50,000 men.

Concur

5. To assist the Vietnamese to create a greatly enlarged Civil Administrative Corps for work at province, district, and hamlet levels.

Concur

6. To assist the Vietnamese to improve and reorganize the paramilitary forces and to increase their compensation.

Concur

7. To assist the Vietnamese to create an offensive guerrilla force.

The text indicates that this “offensive guerrilla force” would be used in South Vietnam. To create a guerrilla force for operations against the Viet Cong in areas in South Vietnam controlled by the Viet Cong appears an unacceptable admission of the instability of the Khanh regime. However the idea of lightly-equipped small units to operate for extended periods away from permanent supply bases in advance of larger, conventionally-organized forces is sound. These can be called rangers or raiders and can be organized and trained accordingly.

8. To provide the Vietnamese Air Force 25 AH-1¹ aircraft in exchange for present T-28s²

¹ Douglas A-1 Skyraider piston-engine attack plane.

² North American T-28 Trojan piston-engine trainer/attack plane.

Concur. However, these aircraft would only be an immediate replacement for the lost B-26³ capability and would be so recognized as such by the Viet Cong. The presence of these single seater aircraft, as well as the presence of the Carriers from which they would be flown, would subject the U.S. to an adverse propaganda barrage which would have to be weighed against the increased military capability. A far more significant increase in military capability could readily be attained by the movement into the area of two B-57⁴ jet squadrons as an additional force and certainly no greater adverse propaganda would be aroused.

9. To provide the Vietnamese Army 63 M-113⁵ armored personnel carriers (withdrawing the M-114s⁶ there), additional river boats, and approximately \$5–10 million of additional material.

Concur

10. To announce publicly the Fertilizer Program and to expand it with a view within two years to doubling the amount of fertilizer made available.

No comment

11. To authorize continued high-level U.S. overflights of South Vietnam's borders and to authorize "hot pursuit" and South Vietnamese ground operations over the Laotian line for the purpose of border control. More ambitious operations into Laos involving units beyond battalion size should be authorized only with the approval of Souvanna Phouma. Operations across the Cambodian border should depend on the state of relations with Cambodia.

Concur. However, this should not inhibit the commencement of an intensive aerial reconnaissance effort, to include low level flights over North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in order to locate enemy formations and movements.

12. To prepare immediately to be in a position on 72 hours' notice to initiate the full range of Laotian and Cambodian "Border Control" actions (beyond those authorized in paragraph 11 above) and the "Retaliatory Actions" against North Vietnam, and

³ Douglas B-26 Invader piston-engine light bomber.

⁴ Martin B-57 Canberra jet-engine bomber.

⁵ M113 armored personnel carrier.

⁶ M114 armored personnel carrier.

to be in a position on 30 days' notice to initiate the program of "Graduated Overt Military Pressure" against North Vietnam.

Concur. However, the necessary preparations should be made to be able to initiate a program of graduated overt military pressure in something like 5–10 days rather than the 30 days proposed.

II.

1. In summation, I do not believe that the 12 recommendations discussed above offer little more than a continuation of the present programs of actions in Vietnam.
2. As I have stated before, there must be a clear-cut decision either to pull out of South Vietnam or to stay there and win.
3. If the decision is to stay and win, then this objective must be pursued with the full concerted power of U.S. resources.
4. Half-measures won't win in South Vietnam.
5. Continuation of the present program of self-imposed restrictions on the use of U.S. power and strengths has these weaknesses:
 - a. It does not ensure achievement of the fundamental U.S. national objective (an independent, non-communist South Vietnam).
 - b. It continues to allow the initiative to rest with Red China and North Vietnam as to their continued support of the Viet Cong.
 - c. It does not solve the problem of cross-border sanctuary.
 - d. It does not promise the early or decisive defeat of the insurgents.
 - e. It would continue a heavy drain on U.S. resources for a long period.
 - f. It would generate dissatisfaction amongst the American people and would subject the [Johnson] Administration to mounting internal pressures.

6. Further, I find inconsistencies in the argument for withdrawal of U.S. forces presented by the draft. For instance, while recognizing that the South Vietnam government's position has weakened noticeably in the last 90 days and that the future of the Khanh government is uncertain, the paper predicts that substantial reductions in numbers of U.S. military should be possible before the end of 1965.

III. Service positions with respect to the situation in Vietnam and Southeast Asia have been tabled by the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps but have not been considered as separate agenda items by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have not developed a comprehensive position of their own which takes into account individual Service positions and examines all possible courses of action open to the United States.

IV. In the Marine Corps position paper, I recommended 23 specific steps which I believe to be necessary.⁷ I find only four of these actions reflected in the present recommendation. Therefore, I reaffirm my previous position (JCS 2343/336-2) as to the program required if we are to win in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

9. Summary of Meeting between the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Washington, 11:00 a.m., 14 March 1964¹

The Chiefs met with the Chairman. Present were: General Wheeler, USA; Admiral Ricketts, USN;² General McKee, USAF;³ and the Operational Deputies.

The Chairman reported upon his trip. The SecDef draft memorandum to the President was then considered. The consensus of the Chiefs was that the action advocated by the memorandum was not sufficient to cope with the existing problem in SVN. They stated that action should be taken against NVN in addition to

⁷ Document 2.

¹ Another record of this meeting can be found in the Harold K. Johnson Collection, Series II Official Papers, DC-SOPS Notes on Meetings, January–June 1964, Box 129 (Army History and Education Center, Carlisle, PA).

² The comments Greene attributes to Adm Claude V. Ricketts are attributed by LtGen Harold K. Johnson, USA, to the “CNO,” the Chief of Naval Operations, who was Adm David L. McDonald.

³ Gen William F. McKee, Air Force vice chief of staff, 1962–64.

those moves within SVN proposed in the SecDef memorandum. There was considerable discussion of this position in which Admiral Ricketts emphasized the necessity for control of the Mekong River and the South Vietnamese Coasts, and General McKee recommended an air attack against Hanoi. In an exchange between myself and the Chairman, I pointed out that the Joint Chiefs had never made a complete estimate of the situation in SVN, which I felt was essential before they could reasonably make a recommendation for action to be taken. The Chairman first maintained that such a study, or its equivalent, had been made extending over a period of months. However, neither he nor the Director of the Joint Staff were able to produce such a study. The Chairman told me if I felt that such an estimate should be made, that he suggested that I make one. I replied that I had already done so and that I would like to table this estimate. This I did.⁴ The Chairman then asked me if I had any other comments to make. I replied that I did and then spoke from my Top Secret memorandum dated 14 March 1964.⁵ The meeting recessed at 1215 and reconvened at 1330 with the previous representatives present. A proposed memorandum from the Chairman to the SecDef commenting on the Sec-Def draft memorandum, which had been the subject of the morning conference, was then examined. After some revision, the Chiefs approved the memorandum.

At the commencement of this afternoon session, the Chairman turned to me and said that during the noon hour he had looked at the Marine Corps Estimate of the Situation and thought it was a good one. He asked me what I wanted done with it—would I like it referred to the Joint Staff for consideration—I replied that as indicated in the Covering Memo to the Estimate, that I recommended that it be referred to the Joint Staff.

At this time, the following thoughts occurred to me: During the JCS Meeting which was attended by the SecDef on Monday, 091430Mar64,⁶ just prior to the departure of the Secretary and the Chairman to Saigon for their survey which was the subject of the SecDef memorandum which we had just been considering,

⁴ Document 7.

⁵ Document 8. LtGen Johnson's notes corroborate the tense account presented by Greene here: "Some discussion—argument—heat to just where we stand." He further noted, "CMC believes strongly that his 23 actions are imperative."

⁶ This date is incorrect because McNamara and Taylor were in South Vietnam between 8 March and 12 March. Since the topic of using Nationalist Chinese forces in South Vietnam was discussed by McNamara and the Joint Chiefs during a meeting on 2 March 1964, it can be surmised that it is that particular meeting that Greene is recalling here. Both 2 March 1964 and 9 March 1964 were Mondays; hence, it is likely this is a clerical error. See Document 3.

the Chairman had advocated, “Holding on the Mekong and attacking Hanoi by air.” The Secretary had eagerly indicated that he felt this way too and discussed the possibility of using Chinese Nationalist Forces in this course of action. Following this meeting and prior to departure for Saigon, the Chairman attended the meeting held on Wednesday 041730Mar64 at the White House,⁷ which was attended by the President and the Joint Chiefs. Here the Chairman had proposed, “Holding on the Mekong and launching an attack against Hanoi.” This proposal was met with opposition by the President who clearly indicated to the Chairman, as proposed in a previous Memorandum for Record (recorded as Item 7) that such a course of action would lead to a major war which the President did not want to risk at this time.⁸ With this attitude in mind, the Chairman was faced with a difficult dilemma when he departed for Saigon. It seems apparent that the President’s views in this matter were also known to the SecDef. The memorandum of the SecDef to the President reporting on the trip indicated that the SecDef and the Chairman had returned bearing a recommendation which was essentially what the President had told the Chairman he wanted before the party had departed for Saigon. This report, I feel, got both the SecDef and the Chairman off the hook, certainly at least temporarily. At the same time the Chairman voiced no violent opposition to the continued position of the Chiefs that the action posed by the SecDef memorandum was not enough and that additional action against NVN and the border sanctuaries should be taken at an early date. In other words, what he appears to have done is to have returned from his Saigon survey with a recommendation palatable to the President and is now letting the Joint Chiefs recommend essentially the actions involved in his original position and recommendation. This cleverly shifts the burden from his shoulders to the Joint Chiefs.

10. Summary of Meeting between the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Washington, 9:00 a.m., 16 March 1964

During the customary weekly conference of the SecDef, he covered his proposed memorandum to the President¹ and stated that he was scheduled to present

⁷ Document 4.

⁸ Ibid.

¹ Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense, 16 March 1964, 153–67.

this written report to the President sometime today, and to follow it up with an anticipated meeting with the National Security Council. In the conference room there was a display of captured Viet Cong weapons, most of which, including machine guns and recoilless weapons, were of Chinese Communist manufacture. The Secretary invited comments from those present. The Chief of Staff, Army (General Wheeler) discussed a recommendation contained in the Chairman's memorandum for the provision of the Army 63 M-113 Armored Personnel Carriers, indicating that he thought that this was a good idea. The CNO recommended that Saigon be placed on a "war footing" by the withdrawal of American dependents, saying that this would serve as a step indicating that the U.S. meant business. The SecDef replied that he had discussed this proposal in Saigon and that there were only about 400 families out of some 15,000 military personnel in SVN—that such an action would require a change of tour in the case of military personnel involved. He then let the subject drop. Neither the Chief of Staff, Air Force (General LeMay) or I made any comment at this time.

I feel that the Marine Corps position has been adequately made. This afternoon the Secretary will meet again with the Joint Chiefs at 1430 and the subject of SVN will again be discussed. If any reiteration of the Marine Corps position is necessary, it can be made at this time. General LeMay indicated to me following SecDef's meeting that he had been briefed on the Marine Corps position and agreed with it.

11. Summary of Meeting between the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Washington, 4:05 p.m., 16 March 1964

Deputy SecDef Vance, AsstSec (ISA) McNaughton, Mr. William P. Bundy (formerly AsstSecDef (ISA)) and newly appointed AsstSecState for Far Eastern Affairs—were present for a portion of the time.

Secretary McNamara stated that the President had approved all 12 of the actions which he had recommended in his memorandum to the President pending, however, final discussion with the National Security Agency Council. SecDef then directed AsstSec (ISA) McNaughton and requested AsstSecState Bundy to prepare the necessary papers initiating the action required by the 12 approved recommendations. SecDef stated that of first importance was the establishment of a

political base. It is noteworthy that at no time did SecDef invite the Chiefs to discuss his memorandum with him. In other words, it was a FAIT ACCOMPLI. He accepted without comment the Chiefs memorandum (covering his own memorandum to the President).

SecDef then left the meeting.

The Secretary Chairman informed the Chiefs that he felt NSC might meet tomorrow at 1000, and in all probability the Chiefs would be invited.¹ The plan then was to follow this meeting with a briefing by the President of the Congressional “Leadership” on Wednesday morning. In the afternoon of Wednesday, the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, and the Foreign Relations Committees would also be briefed. The SecDef would give the briefing to the Committees and the Chairman would participate by outlining the military ~~oppositions~~ operations. One of the problems was how far to go in the briefing of the Congressional Committees due to the possibility of leaks.

12. Summary of Discussions with the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Buse) and the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force (LeMay)

Washington, 3:30 p.m., 17 March 1964

General Buse showed me a State Department dispatch to Ambassador Lodge in Saigon which contained the full text of SecDef memorandum to the President.¹ He pointed out that this version of the memorandum contained lengthy comments by the Director of CIA (McCone)² which in substance emphasized the serious deterioration of our position in SVN and recommended that further and immediate action above and beyond that contained in the SecDef memorandum be initiated. General Buse then pointed out that these footnotes covering McCone’s views were not contained in the version of the SecDef memorandum which had been placed before the Chiefs for their consideration by the Chairman. Examination of the Chairman’s version indicated two places in the memorandum in which

¹ In pencil in the margin, Greene wrote, “However, they were not invited to attend.”

¹ Document 6.

² McCone’s annotations can be found in the aforementioned 16 March 1964 memorandum from McNamara to Johnson in *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 1, 153–67.

it appeared that references to McCone's footnotes had been inked out. The Chiefs therefore had considered the SecDef memorandum without any knowledge of McCone's footnotes. A general statement had been made by the Chairman during his discussion with the Chiefs when the SecDef memorandum was under consideration that McCone did, in general, feel that additional action should be taken. But at no time did the Chairman mention the existence of McCone's footnotes to the Chiefs. Upon learning this, I contacted General LeMay by telephone and inquired as to whether he was familiar with this situation or not. He stated that he had just been briefed by his action officers regarding the matter. I told him that I felt the Chiefs had been led around by the nose by the Chairman and that the Chairman should be confronted with the facts and asked to explain to the Chiefs why they had not been given access or knowledge of McCone's footnotes. General LeMay stated that he thoroughly agreed with this but that since he was going to "blast" the Chairman on another subject at the next meeting of the Chiefs that he would like to have me bring this matter up and that he would fully back me (General LeMay may be trying to use me as a tool here, but I intend to find out at the next meeting why no mention was made by the Chairman of these footnotes). Such action on the Chairman's part, in my opinion, was unethical to say the least and in my opinion was at this point dishonest. The possibility is that if the Chiefs had been able to consider McCone's footnotes they would even have taken a stronger position than they finally did in recommending additional action above and beyond the SecDef's recommendations. General Buse has a Memorandum for the Record covering the details of this meeting. I directed General Buse to prepare a talking paper for my use at the next meeting of the Chiefs—a paper to serve as a basis for opening a discussion with the Chairman asking for an explanation for his failure to bring McCone's notes to our attention. A point that struck me very forcibly during the Chiefs meeting with SecDef was the fashion in which Mr. McNamara dominated all discussions. He appeared to think that he knew more about all the military aspects of the problems in Vietnam and the cures therefore than any of the military persons present.

13. Summary of Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Washington, 2:00 p.m., 18 March, 1964

Present were: The Chairman (Taylor); General Wheeler, USA; Admiral McDonald, USN; General LeMay, USAF; and General Greene, USMC; and the Operational Deputies.

Just prior to the meeting, General LeMay approached me at the table and recommended that due to the fact that the Chairman would not be present for the entire meeting (this later proved to be incorrect) that he recommended that I take up the matter of the missing McCone footnotes which did not appear in the SecDef memorandum for the President regarding recommended actions in SVN.¹ Therefore, when the meeting was opened by the Chairman—who asked if any of the participants had items for consideration before we proceeded with the regular agenda—I stated that I had such an item and using the Talking Paper and Back-Up data provided by the DC/S (P&P)² immediately plunged into a discussion of this problem. The Chairman immediately replied that McCone's notes had been deleted following a discussion at the White House with the President in which McCone had participated. The Chairman pointed out that he had mentioned the substance of these notes to the Chiefs. I replied that I would have liked to have been told about the notes and to have seen them myself because I felt that they reinforced the Chiefs' position regarding the unsatisfactory situation in SVN and the inadequate proposals by the SecDef to correct the problem. I pointed out the first sentence to McCone's note, which I read, "MR. MCCONE BELIEVES THAT THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM IS SO SERIOUS THAT IT CALLS FOR MORE IMMEDIATE AND POSITIVE ACTION THAN I HAVE PROPOSED." I further stated that it seemed strange to me that someone had seen fit to delete the McCone notes on Page 11, but had left his notes in on Page 4. Furthermore, the text on Page 11, which apparently had contained referenced letters to the footnotes below, had been blotted out by pen so that the Chiefs, when they were considering the memorandum, had not realized that McCone's notes had initially been appended to this page. I also said that I could not understand why the full text, including McCone's notes, had been referred by State to Ambassador Lodge for comment, while the SecDef had not seen fit to refer these same notes with his proposal to the Joint Chiefs. I also pointed out the President in his dispatch reply to Lodge's comments which covered the SecDef memorandum, including McCone's notes, indicated no surprise that the notes had been referred to Lodge for comment. The Chairman then attempted to explain this by saying that the dispatch had been released by State with the notes left in by mistake. I made it clear to the Chairman that what really concerned me was whether

¹ Document 12.

² LtGen Henry Buse, deputy chief of staff (plans and programs).

or not the Chiefs' views were being fully presented in their entirety to the President. The Chairman, momentarily angered by this statement, looked around the table at the Chiefs and said that if any of the Chiefs believed that their views were not being properly presented to the President by the Chairman, they could exercise their privilege to go see the President. The Chairman then turned to me and said, "Why don't you do that?" I replied that I intended to do exactly just that when and if it became clear to me that such action was necessary. Only feeble remarks were made by the CNO to the effect that he had noted the difference between the original text and the one which the Navy had received (he was not present at the Saturday morning meeting, but had been represented by Admiral Ricketts). CNO's action was exactly what Ricketts had predicted to me by telephone (on Saturday night). General Wheeler merely stated that it appeared that McCone's views backed up the Chiefs views. General LeMay sat smoking his cigar during my exchange with the Chairman. He said nothing until it was over and then made the proposal that the Chiefs position be stated specifically in a new paper which would contain courses of action in SVN and that this position paper be forwarded to the SecDef for the President. The Chairman responded to LeMay by saying that such a paper was not necessary; that these proposed courses of action had already been presented to the SecDef in previous papers. The Chairman also said that if such a paper were to be put together, he wouldn't carry it to the SecDef. I entered the discussion again by stating that I agreed with General LeMay that such a paper should be prepared. I felt that this discussion had again pointed up what I had previously pointed out during last Saturday's (14Mar64)³ morning meeting—something that I had previously observed over several years of service in the Joint Staff, as Operational Deputy and now as Commandant—and that was that whenever the Chiefs had a problem, they usually made no estimate of the situation in an effort to come up with the logical and best course of action and then to outline the selected course with a list of specific implementing actions. The Chairman surprised me by agreeing with this statement, but said that in this case he felt that an adequate estimate had been made over a period of time and appeared in parts in a number of papers (the point is, however, that neither he nor the Director of the Joint Staff have been able to produce proof of this statement). The Chairman said he always made his own private estimate which he filed as a memorandum for the record and that his estimates were similar to the one tabled

³ Document 9.

by the Marine Corps in this particular case. After further discussion, and in spite of continuing opposition on the part of the Chairman, it was agreed that a draft paper, as proposed by General LeMay, would be prepared by the Joint Staff and presented to the Joint Chiefs for consideration at the meeting on Friday, 20 March. General LeMay tabled a purple⁴ which he said could be used as a basis for such a study.

14. Summary of Item Discussed with the Secretary of the Navy (Nitze) at Regular Weekly Conference

Washington, 11:30 a.m., 19 March 1964

In extension of previous discussions with SecNav regarding the situation in SVN, I again exchanged views with him for a period of 35 minutes regarding the current situation and the status of action insofar as the Joint Chiefs were concerned. From the very first it was clearly evident that he did not favor military action against the Hanoi Government. His position was in strict accord with the views of the SecDef, as expressed in his memorandum.¹ The various pros and cons for extending action into NVN were discussed, but at the conclusion of our conversation I still found myself on one side of the fence and the Secretary on the other. Prior to my departure, I told him that I intended to keep him informed as to what my views were in this matter and that I appreciated the opportunity of hearing what his opinions were. Our meeting came to a conclusion at 1220 and he departed to have lunch with Secretary McNamara!²

15. Summary of Action Taken at Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting in Regard to South Vietnam Problem

Washington, 2:00 p.m., 20 March 1964

Present were: General Taylor, General Hamlett,¹ Admiral McDonald, General LeMay, General Greene, and the Service Operational Deputies.

⁴ A Joint Staff memorandum.

¹ Document 6.

² Exclamation point added in pencil.

¹ Gen Barksdale Hamlett Jr., vice chief of staff of the Army, 1962–64.

The problem of SVN was again examined in some detail, based on two papers which were on the agenda for the day. One of these was the Air Force proposal to commence military action against the Hanoi Government. The Chairman and the Army argued against this recommendation—the Navy voice was weak, but in favor of their recorded position of making a Commander's Estimate of the situation. It was finally agreed that the Joint Staff would be directed to make an analysis of possible courses of action similar to a Commander's Estimate and that the paper would be ready for OpDep consideration on Wednesday, 25 March. When this had been agreed to, General Taylor suddenly announced that he would table an estimate of his own for consideration by the Joint Staff. I told General LeMay that I felt that this decision, although requiring additional time, would eventually lead to adoption of his proposal for stepped up action against NVN. I pointed out to him, in a personal memo which I passed to him at the table, that the staff study could only lead inevitably to the conclusion that actions above and beyond those presently approved by the President, as recommended to him in the 12 action items contained in SecDef memorandum to the President,² would have to be taken. When this estimate had been accepted by the Chiefs, a second paper would then evolve containing specific action items to implement the course of action adopted in the first paper. This second paper would contain—then—*among others*³ the action items which had been recommended by him in the paper under consideration today. Times should also be set for execution of the recommended actions. Both papers should be forwarded to the SecDef and, if necessary, be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the Chiefs with the President.

16. Summary of a Conversation between the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Senior Military Aide to the President (Clifton)

Washington, 9:15 a.m., 27 March 1964

Clifton's purpose in paying me a visit was to arrange for the transfer of Major Doster,¹ and the provision by the Marine Corps of a senior Captain, or prefera-

² Document 6.

³ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

¹ Maj Grover C. Doster Jr., assistant naval aide to the president, 1964.

bly a Major, as “Marine Corps Assistant” to Clifton. Clifton stated that he already had an Assistant Aide from each of the other three Services and that he wished that the Marine Corps would also assign a suitable officer to his office—this man to be familiar with Aviation and helicopters—possibly a flier—presentable—diplomatic—experienced staff officer—capable of accompanying the President on trips—one who could handle the “SIOP Emergency Briefcase”² and who temperamentally could stand being chewed out by the President from time to time. After checking with the Director of Personnel (while Clifton was still present) I directed General Fields³ to transfer Major Doster to MCS to report by 1 June and then to enter the next session of the Senior School. After my meeting with Clifton, I also called Doster and told him of this transfer which I informed him had been approved by General Clifton for the White House. I told Clifton, and later on directed General Fields to screen possible candidates for the White House position and to select three of the best suited individuals whose names and records would then be sent to General Clifton for review and final discussion with the CMC as to the individual to be assigned to the White House job.

A period of about one hour was devoted to a general discussion of “problems.” This was the morning on which the press reports of my speech before the National Press Club of yesterday appeared in the newspapers (*Washington Post* articles follow).⁴

I provided Clifton with two copies of my official position on armed helicopters and a copy of my National Press Club Speech which he said he would forward to the President in Texas for reading over the weekend. I did this because of the “commotion” which the press account of my talk had caused in the Army PIO Office.

We then talked about the Chiefs’ meeting with the President in the White House on the evening of 4 March.⁵ Clifton told me that after the meeting had broken up, that the President had recalled him and had directed him to make a SECRET-LIMITED DISTRIBUTION MEMO of the 4 courses of action

² Single Integrated Operational Plan, the main U.S. strategy for an all-out nuclear war.

³ MajGen Lewis J. Fields, director of personnel, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1962–65.

⁴ “Greene Criticizes Army Copter Job in Viet-Nam,” from the *Los Angeles Times* and reprinted by the *Washington Post*, 27 March 1964.

⁵ Document 4.

which I had discussed with him at this meeting. I told Clifton that I had deliberately done this because I was alarmed by what appeared to be the lack of information being provided the President in this and other similar serious and important security problems. I pointed out the absolute necessity for the Chiefs to prepare a detailed estimate of the situation in the case of any serious problem, such as SVN, for presentation in writing to the President, to be followed possibly later on by a group discussion. I made the point to Clifton that in my opinion the President was not getting a complete and full picture from his military advisors. Secondly, and connected with this point, I discussed the insulation, or walling away, of President Johnson from the Joint Chiefs and I pointed out to him as a specific example, that during the President's meeting with the National Security Council during which Secretary McNamara's recommendations were considered⁶ and decisions of national import were being made, the Joint Chiefs were not present (although the Chairman had indicated that he felt that they would be invited to attend the meeting). I told Clifton that in my opinion both the Security Council and the President were exposing themselves to some dangerous possibilities similar to those which occurred in connection with the "Bay of Pigs" failure, in that the military advisors to the President and the Security Council were not present nor consulted during the decision-making period. I told Clifton that I had no intention of being caught myself in such a position and that I had gone on record in writing before the Chiefs regarding the specific actions which I felt should be taken to remedy the SVN situation. I described my exchanges with the Chairman in this matter and outlined the after-the-fact decision of the Chiefs to direct the Joint Staff to prepare an estimate of the situation on SVN for the Chiefs' consideration. I noted that this estimate would not be ready until the week after Easter, and yet decisions on military actions in SVN had already been recommended by both the Chairman and the Secretary of Defense and decisions had been made on these recommendations by the President. I reiterated again that the President was not getting the full facts of all the Chiefs and that it was extremely dangerous not to do so prior to making decisions in military actions, such as that of SVN. I also told Clifton of the meeting of the SecDef with the Joint Chiefs just prior to the conference held in the White House between the Chiefs and the President.⁷ I described

⁶ Document 6.

⁷ Document 3.

the anxiety of the SecDef at this meeting and pointed out to Clifton that SecDef had seized upon the proposal of the Chairman to “hold along the Mekong and to attack Hanoi by air,”⁸ and the President’s violent political reaction to this suggestion. I related to Clifton that the Chairman had reacted to this question by saying that he realized full well that his neck and the neck of Secretary McNamara were “on the block.”⁹ I next pointed out to Clifton how the Chairman and the SecDef had got around this problem by returning from Vietnam with a report that General Khanh did not wish to extend operations into NVN until he had a sound political base established in his own country.¹⁰ I told Clifton that I was not sure [*if*] these words had been put in the mouth of Khanh or the idea [had been] inserted in his mind by the Chairman and/or the SecDef. At any rate, they had been able to return from Saigon and “save their necks” by using the purported statement of Khanh as a basis for their recommendation that actions against NVN not be instituted at the present, but that intensified support for Khanh be provided.

Clifton then discussed the difficulty he had getting problems staffed in the White House or among the various Governmental Agencies. He said that he wished the old Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) was back in business instead of the one-man way of trying to handle serious problems, like the Far East, which was in fashion at the White House. He cited McGeorge Bundy as a specific case, stating that it was through his efforts that the efforts of the National Security Council and OCB had been nullified or lessened. I agreed with Clifton that this was indeed an error and pointed out to him that the practical solution to this problem would be the establishment of a U.S. National Staff which would function around-the-clock, 7 days a week, handling national problems as they might develop throughout the world. I told him that the only staff, to my knowledge, in Washington which could even begin to meet this sort of requirement was the Joint Staff in the Pentagon and I described to him at some length the way a National Staff could be set up by using the Joint Staff as a nucleus and beefing it up with representatives from State—Budget—Treasury—and other Government Departments and Agencies involved in security, political, and economic problems. I showed Clifton how this U.S. National

⁸ Document 4.

⁹ See Document 5: “The Chairman said that he didn’t know what he might recommend at this time; however he knew that his neck and the SecDef’s neck were on the chopping block.”

¹⁰ Document 6.

Staff could analyze problems exactly as the Joint Staff did at the present time and prepare recommendations for the consideration of the National Security Council and the President. I tried to show Clifton how logical and how efficient and fast-reacting this type of staff could be in meeting the President's requirements. I pointed out to him how inefficient it was to use the ad hoc Committee method for handling important detailed and vital problems. I cited the Sullivan Ad Hoc Committee,¹¹ set up to handle the problem of SVN and SEA, as a prime example of how not to do it. I also reminded him that this weak method of solving problems had also been compounded by the President's designation of Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy as Action Officer for SEA and SVN, thus extending the confusion already caused by the Ad Hoc Committee. Clifton agreed with me regarding these deficiencies and seemed to be clearly interested in my proposal for a U.S. National Staff.

There was then a short discussion of the desirability of the CMC inviting the President to an Evening Parade at 8th and I,¹² and I showed Clifton a copy of the letter which I had mailed to him yesterday regarding this matter. Clifton thought that this was a good idea and that he would check the President's schedule and discuss the possibility of such a Parade with me later.

17. Talking Paper by Major General C. V. Clifton, USA¹

Washington, 27 March 1964²

I sense a potentially difficult—and even dangerous—situation in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On different occasions recently, three of them³ have expressed these various views.⁴ The major and current problem is the course of action in regard to

¹¹ President Johnson established the Committee for the Management of U.S. Policy and Operations in South Vietnam in February 1964 to assess U.S. policy in Vietnam. It was chaired by foreign service officer William H. Sullivan.

¹² The location of the Marine Barracks and the Home of the Commandants in southeastern Washington, DC.

¹ This document was originally found in the LBJ Library, Box 2, Papers of C. V. Clifton.

² This personal talking paper written by Gen Clifton bears the same date as his conversation with Gen Greene. Considering that Gen Clifton spoke with Gen Greene in the morning and this paper reflects many of the concerns relayed by Greene in that meeting, it is likely that this was written to chronicle Clifton's concerns with the situation on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

³ Two of these were certainly Gen Greene and Gen LeMay. The identity of the third member of the Chiefs to express his concerns about Secretary McNamara and Gen Taylor is less certain, though it was likely Adm McDonald.

⁴ Document 16.

South Viet Nam. Fundamentally the Chiefs are badly split on this and they do not all agree with what is being done.

*I*⁵

All of them agree that we should not get out, and that it would be a disaster to lose South Vietnam. They agree with the main objective, i.e., to secure South Vietnam so that it will be neutralized or taken over by the Communists, and will not be “neutralized.” But the course of action (which the Secretary of Defense says is agreed to by General Khanh) which states that we will secure the integrity of the country before we make any excursions against North Viet Nam they consider illogical and practically impossible.

General LeMay and General Greene point out that we have been trying to secure South Viet Nam for several years; that the French had as many as 500,000 men in there trying to save Indo-China; and that so far it has failed. The only course of action they see which could yield any better results than we have had so far would be to extend in some measure the contest to North Viet Nam. They give as one example the fact that certainly some covert operations could be launched against their petroleum supply and their shipping whenever the Viet Cong attack the petroleum supply and/or other supplies in South Viet Nam. Since the covert program has been a dismal failure so far, they even would go so far as to launch a marked aircraft against the petroleum supply center in North Viet Nam.

Short of any attacks in North Viet Nam, they advocate as a matter of urgency permission to work over the supply lines in Cambodia and in Laos. They feel that the last incident which occurred in Cambodia⁶ should not have been apologized for but rather should be increased; there should be many more like it. They feel that we could tell Sihanouk that there will be many more attacks like this and that if he doesn't permit us to tackle the Viet Cong in the Cambodian sanctuary, he might eventually face ~~the fact the partition of~~⁷ Cambodia ~~could be divided and given away~~

⁵ Written in ink on the original document.

⁶ It is likely that Clifton is referring to the Chantrea incident of 19 March 1964. On that date, ARVN forces and their American advisors pursued suspected Viet Cong across the South Vietnamese–Cambodian border. In the course of the pursuit, South Vietnamese Air Force units opened fire on the Cambodian village of Chantrea. The South Vietnamese government apologized to the Cambodian government and provided compensation following the incident.

⁷ Italicized sections in this document written in red ink.

to Thailand and perhaps Laos getting the other half. Similarly, they feel we should tell Laos the same thing and should tackle those supply lines in southern Laos.

Further, they feel that the “hot pursuit” tactics must be practiced both in the air and on the ground.

These are minimum measures which must be taken to achieve the security of South Viet Nam, which is advocated as our policy.

II

The Chiefs are not entirely agreed, ~~on this~~, but ~~they~~ *some* feel that the President has not been completely forewarned that the present “holding action” until November is insufficient, and could lead to a major disaster. They feel that the situation is much more serious than has been presented and that the ~~holding thing~~ *the present holding action* could collapse before November. ~~and the~~ *The* Administration would then face a great public outcry against the present McNamara-Taylor policy which we are pursuing.

They call this the Asian “Bay of Pigs” around their conference table, and this time they are sure that the Joint Chiefs of Staff cannot be blamed, because each of the members is keeping careful record of what he has advocated to General Taylor and the Secretary of Defense and they feel that the things they are advocating have not been presented *strongly* to the President.

III

Some of them feel that Ambassador Lodge has not been signed on completely to this series of steps—the holding operation until November—and that when the appropriate time comes, he might come out of South Vietnam to campaign, stating that he knew all along that this was a “no win” course of action and that it was not his program.

Omit He could also point, some of them think, to the fact that both President Kennedy and President Johnson sent Secretary McNamara and General Taylor out there on missions, this undercutting the authority of the ambassador in the eyes of the South Vietnamese.

The politics of this, they affirm, is not their business, but they do feel that this is a danger that the President faces.⁸

They feel that this latest series of steps was settled upon by Secretary McNamara and General Taylor without a thorough and complete estimate of the situation by the Joint Staff and backed up by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Greene especially feels that there should have been an estimate of the situation not only for South Viet Nam but for other places in Southeast Asia before this course of action was so readily accepted. (An estimate of the situation includes possible courses of action of the enemy as well as courses of action open to our own Government).

IV

They feel that the way this has been handled, following the last visit by McNamara and Taylor, is an abrogation of the relationship established by law between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff as his military advisors. In this sense, they do not feel that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as spokesman for the Chiefs, properly meets the requirement of giving the Joint Chiefs of Staff collectively the opportunity to advise the President.

V

Some of them are concerned that the second McNamara-Taylor mission had a built-in problem in that McNamara and Taylor, as a result of their first mission, came home with an optimistic report and course of action which was unsuccessful, and that the second mission was an understandable effort to justify their original finding. In other words, if the second look had revealed that the first estimate was entirely erroneous and that the only way we were going to win would be to attack North Viet Nam, then General Taylor and Secretary McNamara could not have possibly come home with this finding in view of the recommendations based on of their first mission.

Omit Another point: They feel that if the Joint Chiefs of Staff were going to carry out their complete legal responsibility, the McNamara-Taylor missions should have included at least one of the other Chiefs (and possi-

⁸ Indented section bracketed in original with "omit" written in the margin.

bly two of them) rather than just the Secretary and the Chairman going out ~~there together~~.⁹

VI

Another point: They point out that one of their members, the Chief of Naval Operations, has never visited South Viet Nam, and, consequently, whenever he attempts to make a point, the weight of his opinion is greatly diminished in any argument with the Chairman and the Secretary. This is a minor point in a way, but it reinforces their feeling that the opinions of the Chiefs are not given the weight they should have.

VI

In addition to the problem of Mr. Lodge resigning and coming home, they can see an inherent danger for the President if and when General LeMay retires (due June 1 unless he is reappointed). His feelings run so deeply that they feel he will be tempted to speak out on this matter, especially when he feels that so much more should be done against the North Viet Nam sanctuary, and especially when he feels that this proposition hasn't been reviewed thoroughly and that all the Chiefs haven't had a chance to speak on the matter before the "inadequate" courses of action were announced.

VII

Some of them are also convinced that the military out there, namely, General Harkins, is being made a patsy. They are convinced that Ambassador Lodge has been dealing with the Viet Nameese military without consulting his military advisor, and has actually been making military decisions without ~~any consultation with the adviser he has there~~. They even cite an example of Ambassador Lodge recommending a military course of action to the Secretary and the Joint Chiefs of Staff without even showing the dispatch to General Harkins before it was sent. They feel that Harkins is too nice a guy to confront the Ambassador and [will] offer to resign unless the situation is changed.

⁹ Indented section bracketed in original with "omit" written in the margin.

Omit Consequently, they feel that General Harkins has lost some heart for this business, has not been properly consulted in the present course of action that is being pursued, and when he retires will also be a possible source of strong criticism of the way the Viet Nameese situation has been handled since Ambassador Lodge arrived. Purely as an aside, they have great respect for General Westmoreland but feel he will be even less effective in dealing with Ambassador Lodge's high-handed methods than General Harkins has been.

Frankly, they are beginning to believe that the only thing that can save the situation militarily is to send a real s.o.b. out there, and the only one they know of—admittedly a dangerous man in a touchy political situation—is General Paul Adams.¹⁰

VIII

All of this sounds like a messy situation, and the real question is “What should the President do?” Without crying over spilt milk, here are my own ideas¹¹ on the subject:

First: Send a copy of that NSC paper directly to each of the five Chiefs of Staff and ask them to send back to the President posthaste their own individual views on the adequacy of the course of action we have set upon.

Second: Making the assumption that this course of action is the one we are going to follow until after November, demand an estimate the situation from the Joint Chiefs of Staff directly to the President on the possibilities of success or failure by November; and further, as Part II, an additional estimate of the situation after November, making the assumption that there is no disastrous *for the period* failure before November. ~~This second estimate of the situation should bring out courses of action after November on both our part and on the part of the enemy.~~

Third: Send the present NSC document out to Ambassador Lodge and ask him for a point-by-point opinion on each of these courses of action and invite his

¹⁰ Indented section bracketed in original with “omit” written in the margin. Gen Paul D. Adams, USA, was the commander of U.S. Strike Command from 1961 to 1966.

¹¹ Underlined in red ink in original document.

comment on what further steps should be taken (a) before November and (b) after November, assuming that we hold out own until then.

The purpose of this exercise is to get Ambassador Lodge signed on.

Fourth: The Joint Chiefs of Staff should solicit for the President separately from General Harkins his comments on the same paper, or make sure that General Harkins' views are included in Ambassador Lodge's response.

Fifth: And most urgently, have the Joint Chiefs of Staff in for a meeting on this, inviting them to bring their suggestions to the attention of the President ~~for a discussion~~ (even while they are studying the matters *as* outlined above) realizing that the informal meeting will only be a prelude to their more formal analysis of the situation.

Sixth: Direct the Chief of Naval Operations to go out to South Viet Nam and [*acquaint*] himself with the situation, especially in regard to Navy, as soon as possible.

Seventh: Give some consideration to the replacement of General Harkins by a tougher, more experienced old warhorse than General Westmoreland. There has been no public promise that Westmoreland was going to take over from Harkins, so he could continue on as overlapping deputy to Harkins and the successor. In this process, be sure that General Harkins is rewarded, perhaps with an appointment as Commander-in-Chief, United States Army Pacific, under CINCPAC. General Waters,¹² who will report there next week, has had a heart attack from which he is recovering and is on limited duty of four hours a day in April and six hours a day in May before he can resume a full schedule in June. This might not be feasible and some other post for Harkins might have to be found; in fact, he would be a good ambassador to Pakistan.

¹² Gen John K. Waters, USA, commander of U.S. Army, Pacific, 1964–66.

III. APRIL 1964

18. Summary of Discussion on South Vietnam Held at Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting

Washington, 2:00 p.m., 1 April 1964

I arrived at the JCS meeting at 1410, proceeding directly there from the Navy League Luncheon which had been held at the Statler Hotel. The Chairman was not present, being sick in quarters with bronchitis. Present when I entered the conference room were: General Wheeler, Admiral McDonald, General LeMay (Acting Chairman), and Lieutenant General Hayes. *Also LtGen Goodpaster.*¹ Also present were AsstSecState for Far Eastern Affairs, Mr. William Bundy; Mr. Sullivan (State) Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on South Vietnam; and Mike Forrestal, Special White House Assistant. This group was engaged in an active discussion of the SVN situation. I relieved General Hayes at the table and commenced to listen to the discussion.

The talk was a rambling one, covering various aspects of the SVN situation as they came to the minds of the talkers, and covering such items as:

“Hot pursuit² into Cambodia (No)”

“Low level reconnaissance into Laos (Not authorized as yet)”

“Farm Gate Operations³ (About which Mr. Sullivan didn't seem to know much and had to be enlightened by General LeMay).”

¹ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

² The issue of hot pursuit involved whether South Vietnamese and U.S. forces were permitted to follow retreating Viet Cong forces across the Cambodian and Laotian borders.

³ Code name for the U.S. Air Force's 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron and its advisory mission in South Vietnam.

... and ...

“Operations into North Vietnam.”

The conversation finally got around to the four options that were contained in SecDef speech of 26 March in which he had outlined the 4 options available to the United States in taking further action in SVN.⁴ Remembering that Item no. 6 on the day’s agenda was the Estimate of the Situation in South Vietnam which had been proposed by me⁵—and seconded by General LeMay—and referred to the Joint Staff for implementation and realizing also that Forrestal, representing the White House, was present and that I had previously talked with Bundy about the specific actions which I had proposed be taken, I decided to enter into the conversation in an attempt to insert the idea into the mind of Forrestal that the White House should ask for a thorough estimate of the situation for SVN. I opened my ploy by remarking about the SecDef’s speech and how excellently prepared I thought that it had been. (At this point I surmised that the talk had probably been prepared by Bundy and Sullivan, and later on in the conversation I was to discover evidence that this was true.) I said that it seemed to me that an excellent way to get hold of this problem and shake it down would be to take the four items (courses of action) set forth in the SecDef speech, options which I felt had not had the benefit of consideration by the Joint Chiefs, but had rather been prepared on a political basis, and to pair these options off against the same four options as viewed from a military basis. When this had been done, four well-rounded courses of action would result. Then the latest intelligence, both enemy (enemy reactions to each of these courses of action) and friendly, could be estimated and a conclusion arrived at. With this conclusion, one or more options could be recommended and a positive recommendation made to the President for his consideration. Sullivan, Bundy, and Forrestal immediately seized on this as being a sound idea. At this point Sullivan revealed that he and Bundy held a “Blue” paper containing an estimate of this type which had been prepared by them... (two civilians!). None of the Chiefs had ever heard of this Blue paper! I asked Sullivan to show me a copy, or better yet to make one available to the Chiefs. This he did not

⁴ On 26 March 1964, Secretary of Defense McNamara delivered an address at the James Forrestal Memorial Awards Dinner of the National Security Industrial Association. The four options laid out by McNamara in this speech were 1) withdrawal, 2) neutralization, 3) initiation of action against North Vietnam, and 4) assistance to South Vietnam to “win the battle in their own country.” See McNamara, *In Retrospect*, 115–17.

⁵ Document 13. This report was eventually added as an enclosure (JCSM-298-64) to the Joint Chiefs study (JCS 2343/345-3) submitted to McNamara on 14 April 1964.

do, politely saying that he had been asked to hold it “very closely” and only four copies had been distributed (to individuals unnamed). At this point the meeting then recessed temporarily while Sullivan, Bundy, and Forrestal departed. Lieutenant General Hayes also left at this time.

After a short recess the Chiefs reconvened, and, on my insistence which was seconded by the *acting* Chairman (LeMay),⁶ Item no. 6 (The Estimate of the Situation on South Vietnam) was brought out on the table. A purple had been tabled by the Army and another by the Navy. LeMay immediately proposed that the study be forwarded to the SecDef. He emphasized the necessity for getting military recommendations from the Chiefs before the SecDef and the President as soon as possible. Wheeler (Army) objected to this, reiterating his previous line that this was not necessary—that it already had been done in the paper which had been prepared by the Joint Chiefs and also because the matter had been discussed by the Chiefs with the President during the meeting on 4 March 1964.⁷ Wheeler further added that the Estimate was not complete nor as good as it should be and he felt that it should be sent back to the Joint Staff for further work using the purples which had been tabled by himself and the Navy. McDonald agreed to this. I then took the position that while I concurred with General LeMay that the paper should go forward as rapidly as possible nevertheless, if we could secure a copy of the “Blue” document which Sullivan had revealed that he and Bundy had that I would be willing to wait for a reasonable period of time (two days) while the Joint Staff considered the Blue paper and the two purples and then came up with a revised estimate for the Chiefs’ approval and forwarding. LeMay said that he felt that we could wait no longer and that this estimate had to go forward—split or not. At this point Lieutenant General Goodpaster (who was representing the Chairman at the meeting) stated that the Chairman had wanted the Chiefs to know that he had no objection to the Estimate going forward to the SecDef, but that he would take exception to a number of specific courses of action which were recommended in the outline plan accompanying the Estimate. This statement by Goodpaster surprised Wheeler and it was obvious that he was somewhat confused then as to what his position in this matter should be. I then asked him and McDonald whether their position was based on the feeling that an estimate should not be sent forward, or based on the view that the proposed estimate was not adequate. Both then stated that they were willing to forward an estimate, but were not satisfied

⁶ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

⁷ Document 4.

with the one laying on the table. I then suggested that possibly the last paragraph of the memo which forwarded the study to the SecDef could be modified to indicate that this particular estimate was being forwarded to the SecDef, in view of the press of time, to get military recommendations before him and that a later and better estimate would be provided. The planners then left the room at the direction of LeMay to revise the paragraph.

The Chiefs then proceeded with consideration of other items on the agenda. Just before the meeting adjourned, the revised paragraph was submitted by the planners. A change was made by the Chiefs in the specific working and it was finally agreed that the paper would lie over until Friday,⁸ when it would be given final consideration by the Chiefs and by the Chairman.

The meeting then broke up, and outside in the corridor LeMay approached me with a forecast of what would happen on Friday, in which he predicted that the Chairman would appear with a lengthy purple and suggest that the whole matter be referred back to the Joint Staff for revision—telling us at the same time that eventually the Estimate could go forward in proper form. This, LeMay said, would be nothing but a typical delaying action and that he hoped that I would be firmly behind him (LeMay) in insisting that the Estimate be forwarded immediately with nonconcurrences from the Army and the Navy. It is interesting to note that just before the meeting broke up, Admiral McDonald indicated to me and LeMay that he felt that he could go along with us provided a few minor revisions were made in the Estimate.

19. Conversation with the Commandant's Chief of Staff (Chapman)

Washington, 11:00 a.m., 11 April 1964

Lieutenant General Chapman (Chief of Staff) informed me that he had attended a stag dinner last evening (10 April) held at the residence of Rear Admiral Draper L. Kauffman (Director, Department of the Navy Program Appraisal Office). Among those present were: Mr. Carl T. Rowan (Director USIA¹), Dr. Alain C. En-

⁸ Written in the margin, with an arrow pointing to this section, is "Not considered on Fri. Chairman."

¹ The United States Information Agency (USIA) was a government agency focused on diplomacy in support of U.S. foreign policy; it operated from 1953 until 1999, when it merged with the Department of State.

thoven (DeputyAsstSecDef (Systems Analysis, Office of Comptroller)), Vice Admiral Horacio Rivero, Jr. (Director, Navy Program Planning), Rear Admiral Kauffman, and Mr. Hanson Baldwin (Military Writer for *New York Times*).

During the conversation it was revealed that Mr. Rowan was the author of the SecDef's speech to the National Security Industrial Association on 26 March 1964.² Among the items discussed by the group was the situation in SVN. Mr. Baldwin stated that in his opinion *The New York Times* and its correspondents knew more about what was going on in SVN than did the military in the Country or the Department of Defense. Mr. Baldwin demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the situation in SVN and possible courses of action, and when queried by Mr. Rowan stated that the option selected by the President clearly indicated that for political reasons no effective action was going to be accomplished in SVN until after the election in November—that everything was being shelved until then because of its unpalatable nature to the American public. Baldwin said that he did not believe that the situation in SVN could wait until after the election—that the coming events would require further and more drastic action and that if nothing more was done than that planned under the selected option, the United States would face disaster in SVN. When queried by Rowan, he stated that the requisite action by the United States, in his opinion, consisted of an intensification of operations in SVN and all-out support of Premier Khanh, together with an application of naval power (blockade) and air power (bombing of North Vietnam). General Chapman told me that he did not participate in this discussion, but only listened and that as a speculation he offered a thought that Mr. Rowan, Dr. Enthoven, and others who did discuss this problem perhaps would not comply with the current DoD regulation which requires that officials of the DoD (both military and civilian) report such talks as those with Hanson Baldwin to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs)!

20. Summary of Remarks Made by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Taylor) at Opening of Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting

Washington, 2:00 p.m., 14 April 1964

General Taylor stated that he had discussed the plan for the next meeting of the Chiefs with the President which would probably be scheduled within the next

² Document 18, footnote 4.

few days. Clifton had told him that he thought some of the Chiefs would want to discuss SVN with the President; he therefore asked the Chiefs if any of them wanted this subject placed on the agenda. I did not know just how much Taylor was acquainted with the substance of my discussion with Clifton on 27 March;¹ however from his attitude I felt sure that Clifton had informed him of our conversation. I made no reply to Taylor's question since I have never entertained the idea of broaching the subject of SVN initially myself. What I had hoped to do in my discussions with Clifton² and with Sullivan³ was to prepare the ground so that the President would ask for comments and recommendations on SVN himself and in so doing would give me the basis on which to make a reply. None of the other Chiefs (LeMay, Wheeler, Ricketts) indicated that they wanted this item included on the formal agenda for consideration during the meeting with the President, and the subject was then dropped. I do not object to any information which Clifton may have given Taylor because it puts Taylor on notice that I am determined that eventually the President is going to hear my further views regarding SVN and this may have some bearing on the way he⁴ handles the estimate of the situation which should be ready for the Chiefs to consideration within a few days.

After the meeting adjourned, I spoke privately with General LeMay and told him that in my opinion the Chairman's inquiry regarding the agenda was to determine ahead of time whether or not he⁵ and/or I intended to broach our position with the President. We both agreed that it was essential that the estimate of the situation, with our views therein, should be presented to the SecDef without delay and prior to our meeting with the President. I feel, however, that in the event the President queries me regarding my position that I will be bound to respond whether or not the JCS paper has been forwarded to the SecDef.

¹ Document 16.

² Ibid.

³ Document 18.

⁴ "Taylor" written in ink here.

⁵ "LeMay" written in ink here.

21. Summary of a Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Washington, 3:45 p.m., 17 April 1964

2E924 Pentagon¹

At this time, near the conclusion of the regularly scheduled JCS meeting, I raised three points regarding the situation in SVN:

The first concerned the trail-watching activity (Operation Hard Nose)² being conducted by the CIA in Laos. I stated that I could not understand why the Joint Chiefs, the Joint Staff, and the individual Services had not been informed about the existence of this organization in Laos (some 1,200 men with a communication facility maintained through CIA). Two weeks ago, *Monday 6 April 64*³ during the regular monthly meeting of the Joint Chiefs with the SecDef, the question of the Communist Viet Cong convoy movements along the Ho Chi Minh trail, as revealed by high-level U-2⁴ photography, had been discussed. This information had been presented by DIA and LtGen Joseph F. Carroll *DIA Director*⁵ had been present. After considerable questioning about details on the part of the SecDef, he (*Sec-Def*)⁶ appeared to be considerably irritated by the lack of answers to his questions and the lack of specific information as to the number of trucks and men and their destinations involved in these movements through Laos. He was unable to obtain a response as to whether or not the supplies and troops being moved in this fashion eventually crossed the border into SVN or not. He then issued orders that trail watchers would be established to determine the data which he wanted (it seemed to me at this time that he was groping for specific information which would clearly indicate that the Viet Cong were being supplied with armed men and equipment and that if this could be proved, it would serve as a basis for cross-border operations).

¹ The office in the Pentagon where the Joint Chiefs convened; known as the "Tank."

² The CIA had been conducting covert operations and collaborating with the Laotian government to observe and hinder the flow of supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail between North and South Vietnam since 1962. Operation Hardnose began in 1963. See Kenneth Conboy with James Morrison, *Shadow War* (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 1995); and Roger Warner, *Shooting at the Moon* (South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 1996).

³ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

⁴ Lockheed U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft.

⁵ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

⁶ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

On Monday, 13 April 1964, during a regular conference of the Joint Chiefs with the SecDef, a CIA representative revealed that a Trail-Watching Organization had been in existence in Laos for two years—financed by the U.S.—and that it consisted of some 1,200 indigenous individuals linked together by a radio net to CIA Headquarters in Vientiane. The SecDef appeared to be surprised by the fact that neither he nor the Joint Chiefs had been apprised of this Organization.⁷ Under close questioning by the SecDef, the CIA representative was unable to give any specific data, or answers which would indicate that the troop and convoy movements which had been under observation by the Trail Watchers were winding up across the border in SVN. In other words, the impression that I got was that here was an expensive operation (Operation Hard Nose) under the supervision of CIA which was producing little or nothing in the way of useful information. Furthermore, I was astounded by the fact that at the first meeting, no one present, including the Chief of DIA, the Joint Chiefs, and the Joint Staff, and SACS (General Anthis) had evidenced any knowledge of this CIA operation. My question to the Joint Chiefs was, “Why?” Furthermore, I was interested in finding out whether there were similar operations by CIA which were of importance to the Joint Chiefs and their military considerations of the military situation in SVN and SEA. I also wanted to know why CIA operations were not more closely integrated with the efforts of the Joint Chiefs and the Joint Staff and I felt that this was a serious defect in national security planning.

I then said that the second question which I desired to raise concerned the aerial photographic efforts over Laos. I read from a memorandum which had been provided [to] me by MarCorps G-2—a statement to the effect that high-level U-2 photographic coverage had not provided the basic information regarding troop and convoy movements and other military intelligence information required by COMUSMACV. This had been due to a variety of factors, including cloud coverage and quality of pictures. On 1 March 1964, the Photographic Intelligence Process-

⁷ McNamara had apprised President Johnson about Operation Hardnose in December 1963. In a memorandum from that month, he stated to Johnson: “One other step we can take is to expand the existing limited but remarkably effective operations on the Laos side, the so-called Operation Hardnose, so that it at least provides reasonable intelligence on movements all the way along the Laos corridor; plans to expand this will be prepared and presented for approval in about two weeks.” See Memorandum for the President from the Secretary of Defense, Subject: Vietnam Situation, 8 December 1963, in *Pentagon Papers* (Gravel Edition), vol. 3, 494–96.

ing Center at CUBI⁸ had informed those concerned of this defective photography, and on 5 March 1964 COMUSMACV had recommended that this type of high altitude photography be stopped since it was not producing the necessary results. My question to the Chiefs was then that if this is indeed a fact, I recommended that low-level photography over Laos be immediately authorized.

The third point which I raised concerned Recommendation No. 11 of the Sec-Def's Memorandum to the President regarding action to be taken in SVN, dated 17 March 1964.⁹ I pointed out that this recommendation called for certain border control operations into Laos (hot pursuit)—that this recommendation had been concurred [*with*] by the National Security Council and approved by the President.¹⁰ It was now one month later (17 April) and nothing had been done to execute this approved course of action. There had been an exchange of telegrams between State, the action agency designated by the President, and the American Ambassador in Laos, and judging from two Webb Lovett dispatches which I had at hand, the Ambassador felt that this type of operation should not be conducted in Laos because it would jeopardize our position with Souvanna Phouma. Phouma had just returned from a trip to Peking and Hanoi in which he had been assured by the Communists that they would stop using Laotian territory for moving troops and supplies into SVN. The Ambassador felt that if Phouma were to learn that the cross-border operations into Laos were being contemplated or executed that he would take serious issue over this with the United States on the basis that such actions were destroying any possibility of the Geneva Accords of 1954, regarding the neutralization of Laos, being carried out by the Communists. My question was how could such a recommendation as No. 11 be presented to the President for decision without the entire problem being examined beforehand (what I was trying to point

⁸ Part of Naval Base Subic Bay in the Philippines.

⁹ The recommendation read: "To authorize continued high-level U.S. overflights of South Vietnam's borders and to authorize 'hot pursuit' and South Vietnamese ground operations over the Laotian line for the purpose of border control. More ambitious operations into Laos involving units beyond battalion size should be authorized only with the approval of Souvanna Phouma. Operations across the Cambodian border should depend on the state of relations with Cambodia." See Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the President, 16 March 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 1, 167.

¹⁰ In a memorandum sent by Michael V. Forrestal to President Johnson, the NCS staffer wrote, "Recent high level photographic surveillance has revealed a new truckable road between Route 12 and the area of Tchepone in central Laos, together with some apparent supply bases. There is a feeling in the JCS that we should take direct ground and air action against these targets if intelligence proves them out." Memorandum from Michael V. Forrestal of the National Security Council Staff to the President, 29 April 1964, "Laos Cross Border Operations," *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 1, 275.

up was the fact that an adequate estimate of the situation had not been made either by the SecDef or the Joint Chiefs before the SecDef's paper had been presented to the President). The Acting Chairman (General LeMay) then directed that Lieutenant General Marshall S. Carter, the Deputy Director of CIA, be invited to confer with the Joint Chiefs to discuss items one and two which had been raised by me.

22. Summary of Conversation with the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Vance)

Washington, 4:15 p.m., 17 April 1964

During a conference, arranged by me, with Mr. Vance in his office on this date, I discussed several items—one of which was the current situation in SVN. I asked Mr. Vance point-blank what he thought of the current situation. He walked back and forth across his office a couple of times and replied that there were some favorable indications. I asked him what these were. He replied: “Strong leadership, in the person of General Khanh.” I agreed that I felt that Khanh was as good a leader as SVN could produce and that if he could keep from being assassinated during the coming months, that he might be able to bring some order out of the chaos which existed in SVN. The Secretary stated that there was a political consideration (United States) which had to be considered in studying possible solutions to the SVN situation. I told him that I was well aware of this, but the question in my mind was whether or not we could wait until November or December of this year, which would bring us through the Presidential election, before taking some action in SVN. I told him that in my opinion that during the period April to December that we would be waiting, that we would run the risk of assassination of Khanh, or another coup, plus the possibility of further deterioration in the current unsatisfactory military situation and that a wait would mean a continued “wearing down process” so far as our efforts in SVN were concerned. I told him that from a military point of view, I remained convinced that action was going to have to be immediately initiated against NVN if a satisfactory political and military solution were to be found within a reasonable time within SEA. I asked Vance if he had seen the Joint Chiefs’ estimate of the situation in SVN which had just been completed. He said that he had, and then I made the point that this type of estimate should be made in every case of problems of this type in order to insure that the SecDef

and [he] would be provided with a complete all-around-picture of the problem: possible courses of action—a conclusion—and a recommendation. It was evident to me that this problem of SVN was troubling Mr. Vance, but we closed our conversation on the indefinite note that there was a political consideration as well as a military consideration which had to be considered in any solution to the problem.

23. Summary of Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Washington, 2:00 p.m., 24 April 1964

Admiral Felt, *CinCPac*,¹ was present for a portion of this meeting. One of the items discussed with Felt was the current situation in SVN. I asked Felt the following questions:

1. What is your position regarding a present requirement for low-level photography in Laos and Cambodia?

Answer: We have such a requirement. For example, Communist activity in the Tchepone (Laos) area.² U-2 photographic coverage is not enough. Furthermore, there is a lot of activity in northern Laos which we believe is connected with the presence of Chinese troops in that area. Two jeep roads have been completed, we believe by Chinese. Low-level photography would determine whether this is true or not.

2. How do you feel about the requirement for hot pursuit at this time?

Answer: There is no question about the requirement for hot pursuit into Laos. I have previously made my position clear on this matter and still feel that this action could be taken without any undue risk. From a military point of view, hot pursuit into Cambodia is also desirable, but I appreciate that there is a political question involved here.

3. Considering the recent and comparatively large-scale battle in Chuong Thien Province³ (Delta Area), would an immediate action on our part by launching an air

¹ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

² Tchepone is a small Laotian town just across the border from South Vietnam. Located along Route 9, the town was an important logistical hub for the Ho Chi Minh Trail and a frequent target of American aerial interdiction raids during the Vietnam War.

³ Chuong Thien Province was in the Mekong Delta in the IV Corps area of operations. Its capital was Vi Thanh.

attack into NVN on a selected target be useful? As a specific target, I suggest the Viet Cong training camp located about 50 miles south of Hanoi.

Answer: We would all like to do it (Felt's manner of reply to this question indicated that from a military point of view it was desirable, but, that here again, a political question was involved).

4. In view of the current situation and future prospects in SVN, do you believe that the Marine Helicopter Squadron now at Da Nang will actually be withdrawn as scheduled in July 1964?⁴

Answer: Yes.

Following these questions and answers, General Wheeler offered the comment that during his recent visit to Saigon, he had discussed this question of retaliation, applying it specifically to a report that the American Dependents School in Saigon would be bombed. He said that he felt, and the "people" of Saigon believed, that if this were to occur, it would be an ideal time for a "tat" (he was referring to a counterblow or tit-for-tat action). He, Wheeler, had suggested that the fuel complex at Vinh⁵ would be an ideal target for such retaliatory action. Felt immediately replied that a target such as the Viet Cong training camp was much more appropriate and important to destroy in retaliation for such an attack than would be a fuel complex. General Taylor then asked Felt when he believed that we would be ready in SVN to launch an air attack against NVN. Felt gave the date of August 1964.

Following the regular meeting, the Chairman called an Executive Session during which he read a letter addressed to the Chairman from Deputy SecDef Vance. In this letter Vance indicated, as he had to me during his lunch at Headquarters Marine Corps on 23 April 1964, that CIA had been engaged in undercover activities in Zanzibar and had been involved in the expenditure of two sums—one of \$300,000—and the second of \$700,000—in an effort (bribing?) to nullify Communist action in that country. When he had finished reading the letter, I point-

⁴ In 1962, the United States deployed a Marine Corps helicopter unit to Soc Trang to provide logistical support to the South Vietnamese. That same year, the unit, which was built around Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 362 and code-named "Shufly," redeployed to Da Nang near the border with North Vietnam. See Whitlow, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1954–1964*.

⁵ City in North Vietnam in the coastal region, about 180 miles south of Hanoi.

ed out to the Chairman my previous position to the effect that CIA should make known to the Chiefs all such covert activities in countries in which the Chiefs had a direct military interest (CMC position made at regular JCS meeting of 17 Apr 1964 at which the Chairman had not been present).⁶ I cited again the case of the Trail Watchers in Laos and the fact that none of us had known anything about this activity when the matter had been discussed with SecDef.⁷ After fumbling around with various poor reasons as to why we weren't better coordinated with CIA, during which I held him firmly to the wall, he finally admitted that closer coordination should in fact exist between the Chiefs and CIA.

General Taylor then brought out a dispatch from General Harkins in which Harkins stated that he had been informed that LtGen William Westmoreland had just been summoned by the Ambassador and informed that he was going to relieve Harkins. Harkins in his dispatch asked the Chairman on what date this would take place. The Chairman stated that he thought that this was indeed another highhanded action by the Ambassador and said that Lodge had for a long time been trying to get (his boy!) fired from his job. LeMay challenged this statement, but the Chairman weakly stood by his position. Taylor also said that he felt that although Harkins was due to retire in May and would finish his "5 and 30" on 1 August, that he felt that Harkins should be retained in Vietnam until August when the political conventions would have finished and Lodge would have gone home.⁸ He also weakly added to this argument that he felt that Harkins should also stay for at least 6 months with Westmoreland before he turned his job over to Westmoreland. Taylor said that he had known that the President had notified Lodge by dispatch that he intended to have Westmoreland relieve Harkins and had asked for Lodge's comment. Taylor, therefore, last night had sent a notification of this coming action to Harkins by the "back channel."

⁶ Document 21.

⁷ In particular, Operation Hardnose.

⁸ In the margin, Greene has written next to this sentence: "This was approve by Pres. Sat 27 April 6'." Presumably, Greene meant to write "64." Since 27 April was a Monday, however, it would appear that he wrote down either the wrong day of the week or the wrong date.

IV. MAY 1964

24. Summary of Meeting between the Commandant of the Marine Corps and Congressman Carl Vinson

Washington, 7:30 a.m., 14 May 1964

Résumé of portions of a conversation CMC with Chairman Vinson of the House Armed Services Committee in Mr. Vinson's office (certain other portions of this résumé are contained in CMG MR of 18May64 relating to subjects other than the situation in SVN):

... The talk then turned to the current news situation focused primarily in SVN. In reply to questions from the Chairman, I told him that I felt our position in that country was a serious one which required the extension of current action beyond the border of SVN into NVN, Laos, and CAMBODIA. The Chairman agreed with this but stated—and I admitted that I recognized—the fact that there were important political factors connected with the initiation of such action. The Chairman then asked me if I thought the equipment which had been provided the South Vietnamese and our own forces in SVN was adequate for the job to be done. I told him that insofar as infantry battalions and lower units were concerned and our own helicopter squadron at Da Nang¹—activities which I had personally viewed during my January trip to Vietnam—were adequate and in plentiful supply to do the job that had to be done. However I told him that I was not sufficiently familiar with fixed wing aircraft which had been provided by the U.S. to give him an accurate answer based on my own personal observations.

¹ Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 364, part of the Shufly operations (Task Element 79.3.3.6).

25. Memorandum for the Record from the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Buse)

Washington, 18 May 1964

MR 121-64

AT-jrf

Subject: JCS Meeting, 1400 Friday, 15 May 1964

1. Those in attendance: General Taylor, General Wheeler, Admiral McDonald, General LeMay, and General Hayes.

2. The Chiefs went into Executive Session for 20 minutes with General Power.

3. General Taylor gave a short briefing on his trip to Vietnam in which he stated there was a thick memorandum for the record on all meetings which he attended which would be available.¹ He then gave his overall impression that there is still a downward trend in the progress of the war but the trend had been somewhat dampened since his last visit. He said there was an increase in incidents by the Viet Cong but a leveling off on the number of attacks. The attacks were now turned towards the populace and there was a general turning away from the Armed Forces due to the fact that the Viet Cong had suffered so many casualties. There was a general trend to attack the population.

General Taylor stated that he was impressed by the inadequacy of the present Government and that Khanh was really the only good man, although the Secretary of the Treasury, a Harvard graduate, was also impressive.² He said he was at a loss to know just what we could do about this, but that perhaps we should temper our eagerness. This might help Khanh to get established.

He then stated that he was interested in Time Tables and that by 1 June he was told that most, if not all, resources would be ready for actions against the North. By 1 September the pacification program should be in full swing and that it was now being worked on. 1 September to 1 October new aircraft would be in

¹ Taylor and McNamara made a second trip to South Vietnam from 11 to 13 May 1964, where they once again met with Gen Khanh and attempted to gauge the state of the conflict with the Viet Cong. For an account of the trip, see Cosmas, *Joint Chiefs and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968*, vol. 2, 65-67.

² Taylor was presumably referring to Nguyen Xuan Oanh, one of Khanh's deputy prime ministers tasked with economic policy.

and ready for operation, and by 1 January Khanh would be ready then to take actions against the North.

The Chairman said that he asked for the general sense of the new problems and how the whole program is going. It was interesting to note that Harkins stated that pacification of the country north of Saigon would be completed by 1 January 1965 and the rest of the country a year later. However, General Westmoreland said that it would be midsummer of 1965 before the pacification of the Northern area could be accomplished and two to three years before it could be accomplished in the South. General Taylor was impressed by the manpower situation, that in spite of the increase in authorized strength of the Armed Forces, the strength has really decreased. He thought this was due to the change in Government; to the tremendous turnover in the Provinces; and the inadequacies of the conscription system. He thought that the present program was probably scraping the barrel manpower-wise.

He was impressed with the activity in the Air Support Field and the improvements made. He stated that the Senior Corps Advisor is now responsible for proper use of air. He discussed pilot training and stated that the SecDef made a statement, a policy, in which he wanted the Farmgate actions reduced. He wants to get the VNAF into combat missions and obtain two Vietnamese pilots per aircraft, then phase out U.S. pilots from combat missions. He approved 25 more A-1Es for the VNAF and Mr. McNamara stated he never intended the US Air Force to participate in combat missions in Vietnam, that the U.S. should take over such things as transport aircraft and phase over Vietnamese transport pilots into fighter and attack aircraft. He established tentative optimum size of the Vietnamese Air Force at 150 A-1Es. Some of these would have to replace the RT-28s. He also stated that helicopters could be used primarily for transport, and may be used as gun platforms only for self-protection.

The Chairman then discussed their visit with Khanh which was almost at the end of their trip. Khanh, the Secretary, the Chairman, Lodge, and General Harkins were present. A briefing of this meeting by Lodge has been reported by dispatch. The Chairman stated that Khanh had been harassed by political-religious problems and was caught between the Buddhist and Roman Catholics. Khanh stated it would be a long pull and there was no need for a declaration of war, but that he would announce the country is on a war footing and then start action. The

Chairman stated that Khanh said he still needed a ground base prior to hitting the North; however, some action, for psychological reasons, could be conducted by the VNAF. Before moving into the North, Khanh wanted to be assured the U.S. is ready to protect him if the Chinese or the DRV actively intervene. Khanh stated that any decision on time must be the U.S. decision (that is with regard to movements to the North). The Chairman stated that this was discussed with the NSC and the leadership at a morning meeting.

He asked, in Saigon, what they thought of escalation and they were of the opinion that it was a possibility, but they didn't really believe that China wanted to get into the conflict and they weren't at all sure that Hanoi wanted China to get into the conflict.

Khanh discussed the possibility of actions similar to that against the French in which the Viet Cong could build up to division size in Cambodia or Southern Laos and then come across as a division and create a major disturbance. Khanh also requested a few jets to offset the Cambodian MiGs³ and the Chairman said this should be looked into very carefully. Khanh has budget problems and the Secretary gave very definite assurance of financial help with specific guidance of 56 million. When the Chairman was asked about the Generals, including Big Minh, Taylor mentioned that he had called on Big Minh and that he was still sulking in his tent.

4. The Chiefs went into Executive Session for 20 minutes.

5. The health of General O'Meara was discussed, and it appeared that he would be back to duty (light duty) on 30 May.⁴

6. Agenda Item #2. JCS 2304/212-4. U.S. Action in Event of Cuban Armed Attacked in the Area Surrounding Cuba, (G-3 DC LtCol Mackel⁵). Changes were made to the paper by the Chiefs and the Chairman had reservations on sending the paper to the White House in view of the paper that is already there, but the

³ The designation for a number of Soviet-designed military fighter aircraft; MiG-17s and MiG-21s, for instance, were used extensively by the North Vietnamese Air Force. The Soviets began supplying Cambodia with MiG-17s in 1964. See Sophie Richardson, *China, Cambodia, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 47.

⁴ Gen Andrew P. O'Meara, USA, commander in chief, U.S. Southern Command, 1961–65, and commander in chief, U.S. Army Europe, 1965–67.

⁵ LtCol Edward H. Mackel, plans officer, strategic plans section, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1962–65.

Chiefs said that it should go and the one now in the White House should be replaced. The paper was approved.

7. Agenda Item #3. JCS 2421/779-4 and SM 705-64. Report of the Chairman, JCS, Special Studies Group, Entitled “Study of Ballistic Missile Requirements for NATO, Part II”, (G-3 NDC LtCol Schening⁶). The Chairman’s flimsy⁷ was worked in the paper and the paper was approved.

8. Agenda Item #5. JCS 1478/103-5. Unified Doctrine for Air Defense from Oversea Land Areas, (Air DC LtCol Knapp⁸). This caused considerable discussion and two controversial paragraphs in the paper with regard to the commander responsible for Air Defense were finally worded in such a way that agreements were reached.

9. Agenda Item #7. JCS 2343/348-4. Implementation of South Vietnam Programs, (G-3 DC LtCol Codispoti⁹). The Chairman’s flimsy was amended and the paper was approved.

10. Agenda Item #8. JCS 1776/692-3. Study of Possible Redeployment, (G-3 DC LtCol Codispoti). A presentation was made by the action officers in which the alternate courses of action were outlined to the Chairman including the Army position which was tabled this morning at the OpDeps meeting.

It was the Chairman’s view that the paper was written in such a way that it couldn’t be done. The alternatives were considered, one by one, and it appeared that Hawaii was not desirable but could be used. The Chairman stated that this should be wrung dry. Okinawa would not be desirable as a site for redeployment unless something that was now there was moved out. The combination of Fort Lewis–Alaska was feasible.¹⁰ The Chairman expressed reluctance to invest any further American money in foreign overseas bases.

⁶ LtCol Richard J. Schening, plans officer, regional team, joint planning group, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1963–66.

⁷ A chiefly British term for a document printed on lightweight paper.

⁸ LtCol George C. Knapp, deputy chief of staff (air), joint matters section, plans and readiness branch, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1963–65.

⁹ LtCol Gildo S. Codispoti, joint planning group, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs), Headquarters Marine Corps, 1962–65.

¹⁰ Fort Lewis is located near Tacoma, Washington.

General Wheeler echoed that we would never get agreement to move anything into the Philippines. General Hayes brought up the subject of Camp Roberts¹¹ and then General Taylor philosophied the bit about the Pacific as becoming more important in the global scheme due to the recognition of Red China and other factors. He said that while the area is becoming more important, available real-estate was becoming more restrictive. In his opinion, Guam and Hawaii have the only real-estate which would be available to us. He stated he was confident we wouldn't regret 10 years from now that we had spent money in the Pacific, and using an example, in his opinion, we would not be on Okinawa 10 years from now.

General Hayes raised the question about consideration about the Trust Territories (Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian). From the briefing it appeared that the cheapest and quickest move which could be made in accordance with the NSAM would be to move the Army Division to Alaska and Fort Lewis; however, there was a general reluctance to move the division out of the Pacific. If facilities were to be developed in the Pacific, it appeared that Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and Hawaii should be closely explored. General Wheeler said we should stay in the Pacific and General Taylor said the same thing.

General Hayes, at this point, brought up consideration of Camp Roberts again and there was a little repartee between General Wheeler and General Hayes in which General Wheeler said he was falling off his position with regard to moving the Army into Okinawa and the Marines out and General Hayes said something to the effect: "Well, if you leave the Marines alone, I won't insist on consideration of Camp Roberts", at which point General Taylor said: "We won't do business in this fashion—we'll do what's best for the country."

To sum it up, the staff was directed to recast the paper saying in effect that Fort Lewis and Alaska were the fastest and cheapest available [options]. We'd explore Hawaii, Guam, Saipan, and Tinian and ask for the decision to be held up until fair exploration has been made.

11. Agenda Item #9. JCS 2343/370. RVN Pacification Plan, (G-3 DC LtCol Codispoti). A Chairman's flimsy was tabled and accepted, and the paper approved.

¹¹ Camp Roberts is in central California on the Salinas River.

12. Agenda Item #10. JCS 2343/361-1. Operational Planning, Vietnam, (G-3 DC LtCol Codispoti). The targets listed under Courses of Actions 1, 2, 4, and 5 were accepted with two exceptions. Under 1—the Chiefs noted that it was uneconomical to clear the road by use of parachute teams; and under 2—the lighthouses were to be taken off the target list. The Air Actions under paragraph 3 were to be treated as a separate paper and not considered with the rest of it. The paper was approved on this basis, and a new paper would be cast with regards to the Air Actions.

13. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force tabled a paper on the necessity for going to State on Wheelus Air Force Base,¹² and after some modifications to the paper, it was approved.

H. W. Buse, JR.
MajGen USMC

Copy to:
CMC
G-3 (Plans)
G-4
Col Thomas (Avn)

26. Highlights of Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting with the Secretary of Defense (McNamara)

Washington, 2:30 p.m., 18 May 1964

The first and principal item discussed during this meeting was the situation in Laos.¹ There was a review by the Director of the Joint Staff covering the actions which had been taken over the weekend by the Chairman and the Joint Staff. This included meetings at the White House and a spate of messages which had been released as a result. It is interesting to note that the Chiefs were not con-

¹² Wheelus Air Base was located on the Mediterranean coast, near Tripoli, Libya.

¹ The situation in Laos, which had been in a state of tense neutrality since 1961, flared up again in the summer of 1964 as the Communist Pathet Lao launched an offensive against the royal government and occupied the central Plaine de Jarres (also spelled Plain of Jars). In response, and with the sanction of Laotian Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, the United States began reconnaissance flights over the Communist-occupied territory. Timothy N. Castle, *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: U.S. Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government, 1955–1975* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 62–76.

sulted during these actions. At 1800 on Sunday night, 17 May, I was notified by the Marine Corps Command Center that several messages had been released on Laos and that the Chairman wanted all of the Chiefs to know about this. The dispatches were later sent over to MajGen Buse who discussed them with me over the telephone later that night. This summary of action by the Director was then followed by a general discussion of the situation in Laos which was interrupted by the Chairman returning from lunch at the White House. The talk then continued with the Chairman offering verbally several courses of action and attempting to find out from the Chiefs what their views were. In the midst of this discussion at about 1430, the SecDef with Mr. Vance and Mr. McNaughton arrived and a full discussion regarding Laos then ensued. Early in the discussion the Chairman stated ([and he] looked at Secretary McNamara, evidently relishing the idea) that just before leaving the White House “they” (presumably McNamara and Taylor) had been told by the President that the “President” did not at all like what was happening in Laos and that the boys in the Pentagon had better get going (to find a solution). This statement seemed to me to be reflected in a somewhat dejected attitude that appeared to have enveloped Secretary McNamara. He seemed to be preoccupied and worried and was obviously fishing around at random in his conversation with us in an effort to determine what should be done. Various alternatives were examined—such as the discussion of ground troops into Laos, which was rejected. If the Pathet Lao forces in Laos advance to the Mekong River, it was generally agreed that there would probably be a requirement to again put U.S. forces in Thailand. From the dispatches which were discussed, it was evident there were three or four raids against targets in the Plaine des Jarres area the day previous and that six or seven more attacks had been scheduled for today. The first attacks had been made without any before-or-after aerial photography and the Ambassador² (apparently turned “Field Marshal”) had reported that the strikes had been successful with 100 and 500 lb. bombs. The capabilities of Laotian pilots (not much) and the possibility of using Thai pilots and Thai civilians to pilot the T-28s (10 available) were examined. The ultimate necessity for U.S. involvement was also discussed. During this discussion I decided to probe McNamara’s views by asking him the following question (he had been discussing linkage of new action that might be taken with both SVN and Laos):

² Leonard S. Unger.

“Mr. Secretary, if you do not at this time desire to hit targets in North Vietnam, I believe that there are plenty of Communist targets in Laos which can be located by low-level aerial photography and which can be plastered with bombs.”

McNamara’s reaction was to say, “No, such bombing would be a waste of effort; we should strike against targets in North Vietnam.”

This was amusing to me because, of course, this has been General LeMay’s and my position for some time as previously recorded in this journal, and very definitely had not been McNamara’s idea nor General Taylor’s (they having been guided and influenced, as we know, by President Johnson’s initial attitude in this matter).³ Now we see both McNamara and Taylor deliberately fishing for courses of action to do “the something” that the President wanted done in Laos and SVN by alighting on the course of action which had been proposed and submitted in writing to SecDef in [which] an increasing tempo of strikes against NVN had been *proposed advocated*.⁴ Taylor repeatedly struggled to find some course of action which could be agreed upon, and essentially arrived at the conclusion that there were two actions which could be taken—each at the opposite end of the spectrum of possible courses of action.

The First Course of action was that of executing low-level photo reconnaissance by U.S. planes over Laos and North Vietnam as an indication of our purpose and interest in the current situation.

The Second Course of action was that of striking targets in North Vietnam.

The SecDef and party left the conference room about an hour after arrival and the Chiefs continued their discussion of the situation of Laos. At this time I reminded the Chairman of a statement which both LeMay and I had made to him prior to the SecDef’s arrival, and that was that the first action to be taken was one by the Administration and that was to decide whether or not they wanted to hold Laos. I told him that if this were done plans were already in existence, drawn by CINCPAC and previously examined by the Joint Chiefs, which outlined the necessary actions to accomplish this. In other words, I was reminding him that if a

³ See Document 5 and Document 16.

⁴ Italicized section is handwritten in pencil on the original document.

basic primary decision were made, that plans were already in existence and that it was not necessary for the SecDef and him to fish aimlessly to determine what should be done. He fended me off with a vague reply to the effect that Laos had to be linked with South Vietnam. Resuming the discussion, Taylor said that perhaps heavy bombing of targets within Laos might be a better initial action with less risk of escalation of involvement of the North Vietnamese and would serve as a forceful demonstration to the North Vietnamese that we meant business. This was exactly the tenor of the action which I had addressed to the SecDef and which he had turned down! The discussion finally wound up with the Chairman coming to his initial conclusions that there were two courses of action:

1. Low-level aerial reconnaissance.
2. The bombing of targets in North Vietnam.

I do not know what the Chairman intends to do with these conclusions, but it is plenty evident to him that he, and specifically McNamara, are “up the tree” on what to do. Up until now, McNamara has pretty much field-marshaled the entire effort in Southeast Asia, and, with the place starting to fall apart, his whiz-kid-Ford-Motor-Company management techniques apparently aren’t paying off. As a result, the cross of responsibility is almost entirely on his shoulders, rather than being on the shoulders of the Joint Chiefs where it properly belongs, if they had been consulted and used by SecDef to develop conclusions and operational directives which he could support, rather than a vice versa action which already has resulted in split positions among the Chiefs.

27. Commandant of the Marine Corps’ Remarks to the Armed Forces Staff College

Norfolk, VA, 21 May 1964

General Holtoner¹—Gentlemen.

It is a pleasure to return to Norfolk and to this College. The Armed Forces Staff College represents an important phase in the careers of many of the future

¹ MajGen J. Stanley Holtoner, USAF, commandant of the Armed Forces Staff College, 1963–65.

leaders of all our Services. The training you receive here will stand you in good stead as you continue your service in [a] military environment which increasingly reflects the fact that any major conflict in the future will require a team made up of the best of all the Services. I have always encouraged Marine Corps participation on the staff, the faculty and in the student body here, and I welcome the opportunity to meet with you whenever possible.

The announced purpose of this lecture, which I hope is not going to be a lecture but rather an exchange of ideas, is “to present the views of the Commandant of the Marine Corps on a topic of his own choosing.” During the preliminary period I will comment formally on three topics: First, [on] U.S. Strike Command;² second, on forward deployment; and, third, on a U.S. National General Staff. During the question and answer period which follows I am prepared: (1) to amplify on these three subjects, (2) to discuss your views as to what we should be doing in regard to the world situation today, e.g. in Southeast Asia, and (3) to talk about any other subject in which you may be interested. Much of the information I am ready to lay before you is Top Secret, Sensitive, and Non Attributable. In accordance with the custom of this school I ask you to observe this trust and these restrictions.

I. The Marine Corps and STRICOM

You may be aware of the many inquiries and comments which have been made recently as to the implications to the Navy and the Marine Corps resulting from the assignment of responsibility to CinCSTRIKE for the Middle East, Africa South of the Sahara, and South Asia, commonly referred to as MEAFSA. I will now spell out how the Marine Corps views this assignment—not only with regard to what we expect, but also as to what we do not expect from this revision of the Unified Command Plan.

The Marine Corps supported the initial concept of the Command since it was to provide a means of achieving full integration of the U.S.-based tactical forces

² Established in 1961, the U.S. Swift Tactical Reaction In Every Known Environment Command (Strike Command or STRICOM) was a combatant command based in the United States that was tasked with training and providing general purpose reserves as well as planning and conducting contingency operations. The command became U.S. Readiness Command (REDCOM) in 1972 and was eventually replaced by U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) in 1987.

of the Army and the Air Force into what we understood was to be an integrated air-ground team.

The establishment of this new functional command did not set a precedent since there were other functional unified commands already in existence, oriented toward specific types of operations and warfare—ConAD for Air Defense and SAC for Strategic Air Warfare. Within the original STRICOM Terms of Reference, only limited Navy and Marine Corps representation was required on CinCSTRIKE's staff.

However, with the recent decision to expand the responsibilities of General Adams³ by designating him concurrently as USCinCMEAFSA, responsible for the full range of U.S. military interests in the MEAFSA area, he became a full-fledged area unified commander with major planning and operational missions.

In recognition of the importance of sea power in any military plans the Navy and the Marine Corps then provided some 40 additional staff officers to General Adams' headquarters.

This staff augmentation does not, however, presage a departure from the traditional assignment of the ready amphibious forces of the Navy and the Marine Corps from their position within the Naval components of the Atlantic and Pacific Unified Commands. This assignment of forces accords with the historic "balanced fleet" concept which has guided the development of U.S. Naval power.

Marine Corps forces are primarily organized, trained, and equipped for the conduct of amphibious assault operations. They attain peak effectiveness only when they are employed together as elements of the striking fleets.

To dilute or to diffuse this capability by the assignment of Marine Corps forces alone and on a permanent basis to the double-hatted STRICOM would break up the skilled Navy–Marine Corps amphibious team, and be detrimental to the interests of National Defense. On the other hand, I fully expect that MEAFSA plans will include a requirement for Navy–Marine Corps forces. If and when any of those plans are executed, the required naval forces would be provided from the

³ Gen Paul D. Adams, USA, CinCSTRIKE, 1961–66.

other Unified Commanders to whom they are assigned. I would expect such naval forces to operate either:

- in support of USCinCMEAFSA or one of his subordinate commanders or
- as an assigned element of MEAFSACom or a subordinate Joint Task Force.

Whether naval forces operate in support of—or as an element of—a MEAFSA task force would be determined by the JCS.

I vigorously opposed the expansion of CinCSTRIKE's responsibilities to include a geographical unified command area. I believed then, when the proposal was under study, as I do now, that this extension of CinCSTRIKE's authority could be the first step in the establishment of a world-wide functional limited war command—a global general purpose forces' command under a single general—an organization which would eventually include:

All of the U.S. Army (less certain air defense units to remain in ConAD); all of the U.S. Navy (except the Polaris submarines and a few ships and aircraft involved in early warning tasks); all of the Fleet Marine Forces; and all of the U.S. Air Force combat forces (except those assigned to SAC and ConAD).

This, it seems to me, could lead to the loss of Service identities, (the wearing of a single uniform), the elimination of Service Secretaries, the establishment of a single Chief of Staff, the shelving of the Joint Chiefs and the further growth of a centralized overall General Staff system at the Department of Defense level.

I do not believe that this would be in the best interest of our Nation or its defense.

Next, I'd like to comment on our concept of forward deployments. We believe in training as many of our units as possible in positions of forward deployment so that they may gain area familiarity and, at the same time, through their presence, contribute in a positive manner to the security objectives of national policy.

The validity of the concept of actually deploying forward afloat forces has been proven with increasing emphasis in recent years. The Lebanon crisis in 1958 has been cited as the classic example of our afloat battalions being on the spot and pro-

viding that battalion or two of prevention which may have precluded the requirement for several divisions of cure.

I might add that these Marine battalions were subsequently joined by airlifted Army units, and that all forces ashore wound up under command of General Paul Adams as Commander of U.S. Land Forces there.

While the pattern of command structure was somewhat of a jury-rig in this case, I believe that the overall sequence of events was appropriate—that is to say, the amphibious forces went in within hours after the green light and were followed by airlifted Army units. Army divisions and their heavier lifts would have followed by airlift and sealift had the situation developed to a point requiring additional forces.

We came closer to this level of action in the Cuban situation of October 1962, when the battalion landing team which had been afloat in the Caribbean was landed at Guantanamo even as the late President Kennedy announced the quarantine.

This was joined by two additional battalions which were flown in, making a total of some 5,000 combat-ready Marines in 48 hours. I might add that by the 28th of that month—just eight days later—about 40,000 more Marines were afloat and ready for employment in Cuba, had it been necessary.

Earlier in 1962, 3,000 combat-ready Marines from our division/wing team in the Far East were landed in Thailand. This also took place within hours after the decision to assist the Thais in protecting their territorial integrity. These troops included the necessary supporting arms, ground and air—and they had their supplies and ammunition with them.

During the past year there has been ample additional evidence of the value of trained landing forces in amphibious assault shipping deployed in the Far East, the Caribbean, and in the Mediterranean. In the Far East the special landing force with the Seventh Fleet was twice positioned off the coast of Vietnam within striking distance of Saigon during coups there. The Haitian flare-up in April and May last year provided opportunity to demonstrate again the responsiveness of the battalion with the Second Fleet in the Caribbean. Then, too, a Marine battalion was in Panama in January of this year during the crisis there. This proved a very beneficial “fall-out” of our policy of training in forward areas. Al-

though these Marines in Panama were not required for missions other than the jungle training for which they were scheduled, their presence eliminated the requirement for additional forces.

With the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, there “just happened to be” twice as many Marines as usual available for possible use in Cyprus during early February of this year. The presence of two reinforced landing teams in this area resulted from a scheduled normal rotation of the landing team which had been on station, but like the Lebanon crisis in 1958, it came at what might have proven a most “conventional” time.

I cite these examples to show some of the “built-in” advantages of forward deployments by our Navy-Marine Corps Team.

Critics of this philosophy claim that these continual deployments can result in “mal-deployments” of our amphibious forces, and that they might not be “ready” for action in some other location.

To this I can only say that this is not supported by the record—and that in the present climate of international affairs there appear overriding reasons to have amphibious forces just over the horizon in areas of predictable tension.

As to actual “reaction time,” it is interesting to note that in planning for a scheduled amphibious exercise in Spain later this year, we found that the forces involved could actually “react” to a crisis in the Caribbean area more quickly from the Spanish coast than they could from their home bases in the ConUS. This is the result, of course, of being “boated up” and combat loaded.

The Army and Air Force gave a striking demonstration of their ability to pick up and go in Operation “Big Lift.” The Army exercised its forward floating depots for the first time in operation “Quick Release” earlier this year.

We think this is fine, and see in these exercises no serious conflict in issues of airlift versus sealift as some proponents would insist.

I'd like to suggest, however, that these exercises were carried out under closely controlled conditions and had certain inherent artificialities which limit to a considerable degree the application of these concepts. Even the strongest advocate of

airlift will plan to land only at an airfield which is relatively secure. Those “forward floating depots” must have a safe harbor, with port facilities, to carry out their role.

To be successful, such operations must be based on several assumptions. First the movement should be accomplished before hostilities have commenced; secondly, the airfields, ports and pre-positioned stocks of supplies and equipment should be intact; next the existing international political situation must be such as to permit the movement involved; and lastly, the point of “marrying-up” should be in the immediate area where there is an actual strategic requirement for the movement.

The capability to accomplish such rapid administrative movements of troops and aviation units is a valuable military asset. However, it cannot be considered as a substitute for all other forms of military movement—and especially when the military situation requires that entry be made by assault forces with the capability to initiate and sustain combat.

The primary advantage of this type of mobility, as I see it, is economic in that it is designed to maintain a smaller defensive force in place, with salutary effects on the balance of payments situation. It must be recognized, however, that such forces—after marrying-up with their equipment and supplies, which, incidentally, must be prepositioned largely by sealift—will require continued support by sealift for sustained operations.

On the other hand, Navy-Marine Corps amphibious forces, along with other elements of the balanced fleet, are self-sustaining to a large degree. The embarked landing forces carry with them 15–45 days of all classes of supply—the exact amount being dependent on the particular deployment. Plans provide for automatic resupply should these forces be committed.

These stocks are withheld from any other use so as to be available in a high state of readiness.

This concept provides a flexibility of response that no other combination of forces can offer. Amphibious forces operate on the high seas in an environment not subject to international agreement or susceptible to national sensitivities. Yet they do provide a credible force in readiness which can be employed with the degree of pressure required by the situation at hand.

As I have said, I do not believe that the basic military concepts of air mobility and sea mobility are actually in conflict. One must complement the other—and neither can substitute completely for the other. Together they provide the capabilities necessary to project U.S. military power in concert, with a diversity of force, to a greater degree than either concept would separately.

The point I am making is that there is a requirement for ready amphibious forces deployed in forward strike positions so as to be responsive to contingencies and to the requirements of national policy. By virtue of their amphibious nature these forces provide an essential element of strategic flexibility. They can be introduced into virtually any troubled spot in the world, whether or not it has harbors or airfields; they require no negotiation for over-flight rights and they take with them enough gear and support to get the job done.

In the final analysis, however, the problem at the national level is not one of conceptual differences, or of airlift versus sealift, but rather one of priority of the total available lift. I believe that this is the context in which you should evaluate this subject in your problems here—and as you go on to staff positions where they will become very real problems.

Thus far I have been talking about two points: First, the Marine Corps position regarding STRICOM, and, secondly, the Marine Corps concept of forward deployments.

Next I'd like to consider with you some aspects of command and control at the national level. In doing so we would be less than realistic if we did not acknowledge that any decision at the national level today must reflect consideration of a myriad of factors, not only the military aspects but also economic, political, international and even sociological facets. It is for this very reason that I believe that we must be certain that all these factors must be evaluated promptly, accurately, and "on balance."⁴

⁴ On the back of this page are some handwritten notes (handwriting denoted in *italics*), presumably to be used as extra material to be introduced with the written speech or during the question and answer period:

Sullivan Cmtee ("Ad Hoc")-14 Feb64
"Management of US policy & opns
in S Vietnam
Bundy _____ *17Mar64*
to coordin execution
of 12 recos of SecDef

Although I am convinced that this nation has always produced a wealth of talent—both military and civilian—I do not believe that the optimum organization to employ this talent has always been available, or used. It seems that in each crisis, whether it be a World War, a Cuba, or a Vietnam, we wind up getting the job done, but only after a great deal of reorganization, improvisation and generally floundering about.

I have given this matter considerable thought, and would like to present what I believe might be a solution.

II. Organization of a National General Staff

An apparent defect in our organization for dealing with problems in the field of national security is that there is no National General Staff in existence capable of operating in a fully integrated manner and on a continuing basis.

Because of this lack, the President and his principal subordinates do not have the benefit of continuity and consistency in planning. This is now performed on an ad hoc basis for each crisis, and implementing actions are necessarily delayed in execution because decisions do not flow through channels which are established and regularly exercised. How might this situation be improved?

There are two supra-departmental bodies within the Executive Branch of the Government which might be considered as candidates to provide the structure under which a truly national planning and operational staff might be formed. These two bodies are the Cabinet and the National Security Council, each of which is headed by the President, is advisory in nature, and is more or less broadly representative of the Executive Branch in its composition.

Neither body has a staff which is in any sense adequate to the task envisioned for a National General Staff.

The activation of a National General Staff to function under the Cabinet will not be discussed in detail because that body is manifestly inappropriate to the envisioned tasks. The Cabinet, unlike the National Security Council, has neither constitutional nor statutory sanction—its membership is too numerous to be an effective directing and operating body—and, through years of usage, it is accepted practice

that the Cabinet concerns itself almost exclusively with domestic affairs, and leaves the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies to the Security Council.⁵

The National Security Council (NSC) was created by the National Security Act of 1947 ~~as amended, primarily~~ *with the mission as shown on this slide*: “to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security . . . to assess and appraise the objectives, commitments, and risks of the United States . . . to consider policies on matters of common interest to the departments and agencies of the Government concerned with national security, and to make recommendations to the President in connection therewith.”⁶ Thus the role of the NSC is advisory only—it neither makes policy nor supervises its implementation.

The same law which created the NSC also provided that it should have a staff, headed by a civilian Executive Secretary, although the composition and duties of that staff were not prescribed. The law also establishes the membership of the NSC (President, Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and the Director of the Office of Emergency Planning), with provision for the appointment of additional members by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Thus, the NSC has some basic qualifications as the top-level, supra-departmental body under which a National General Staff might be formed. It has a statutory basis—it is organizationally placed within the Executive Office of the President—

⁵ Greene wrote the following notes on the back of the page where this text appears:

NAT. SEC COUNCIL

Statutory = 5 members

MEMBERS Pres—VP—STATE—DEF—OFFICE EMERG PLAN

Standing Request = 2

Members Treas—Budget

Special Request = 4

MEMBERS

Atty Gen—AEC—COMMERCE

UN repr

ADVISORS = 2

CLA—Chair ICS

Total 13 v.s. 14 cabinet

⁶ The quoted section is bracketed with this written note: “Let audience read.”

its small, compact membership provides the nucleus on which a viable “Board of Directors” may be built. The law also authorizes the NSC to have a staff, and ensures its capability in the field of intelligence by placing the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) under it.

What the NSC does not have is an operational function, as all executive authority is vested in the President and in the Heads of the several departments and agencies of the Government. Neither does it have the staff which it would require to assume full-time, across-the-board planning and operating responsibilities. If these shortcomings were removed, what kind of organization for national security might result, and how would operating responsibilities be assigned?

This chart⁷ shows, in simplified form, the existing organizational structure which provides advice to the President, accomplishes planning, and transmits operational direction to implement the decisions of the Commander-in-Chief.

This arrangement is basically that which has existed since 1953 and is in consonance with the applicable provisions of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended.

I shall not dwell here on that portion of the chart which depicts the place of the Cabinet in the scheme of things because, as has been noted, that body concerns itself primarily with domestic affairs. On the right hand side of the chart, you will note that the National Security Council (NSC) provides advice to the President as the principal basis for his decisions as to policies and programs in the field of National Security Affairs. The NSC is assisted in this advisory function by a planning board (PB)—the members of which serve only in a part time capacity, as each is additionally an Under or Assistant Secretary of an Executive Department—and is assisted by a small, permanent staff which performs only administrative functions.

In its deliberations, the NSC receives not only the viewpoints of the statutory members of that body, but also those of other senior officials of the government whom the President may designate to attend NSC meetings—either as “standing request” members, or in the role of “advisors” on particular agenda items.

⁷ The original chart is not included with the speech in Greene’s papers.

Turning now from the function of advice to that of operational direction, the chart shows how National Security decisions of the President are transmitted via the NSC mechanism to the Heads of Executive Departments for implementation. A conspicuous deficiency in this portion of the organization is the absence of any inter-departmental or supra-departmental body to coordinate the implementation of policies and programs. Because of the lack of such a body with inter-departmental membership, programs must be implemented through so-called “normal coordination” as is most usually the case, through ad hoc arrangements devised for individual problem.

The need for such a coordination mechanism was recognized by the placement in 1957 of the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) within the NSC structure. The OCB membership consisted of Under and Assistant Secretaries of Departments appointed thereto by the President. It was charged with assisting in the effective coordination and integrated implementation of national security policies and programs by advising the departments concerned as to their respective responsibilities. Thus, the aim of the OCB was to coordinate the inter-departmental aspects of operational plans developed by the departments so that each would make its full contribution to the attainment of national security objectives. The weaknesses of the OCB were: first, that its members were assigned to it only on a collateral basis, and, second, that it had no role in policy formulation, but only in coordinating the execution of approved policy.

In February 1961 the OCB was disestablished by Executive Order, and since that time execution of policies and programs has been the responsibility of the individual departments of the Executive Branch, with coordination effected on an ad hoc basis.

This system can be made to work—and it has worked—but it seems a poor substitute for regularized, standing arrangements which would ensure continuity and consistency of effort. One way in which this gap might be filled is depicted on this next chart.

This chart⁸ outlines an organization that aims at strengthening the planning support available to the NSC, and of providing to it a permanent body not only to

⁸ This chart is not included with the speech in Greene's papers.

accomplish detailed planning, but also to coordinate and follow up on the implementation of policy decisions. Once again omitting further consideration of the Cabinet, the principal points here are that:

- (1) The Planning Board (PB) is revitalized, with its members appointed by the President and assigned to this duty on a full-time basis, rather than as a collateral role; and
- (2) A National General Staff, composed of representatives of all departments and agencies concerned with overall national security, is formed to operate under the direction of the Planning Board.

This National General Staff, with a civilian Director, would have the capability to review, assess, appraise, and make recommendations; and then to act—as does a general staff—in a supervisory way to ensure coordinated implementation of policies. An inherent feature of this proposal, you will note, is the inclusion—as an element of the National General Staff—of a National Command Center (NCC) to function, on a truly national scale, in much the same way as does the National Military Command Center in the purely military field. The proposed National Command Center, in fact, might well be built upon the existing National Military Command Center.

An area of conflict in an organization such as proposed on this chart is the apparent downgrading of the advice of the JCS (and therefore a parallel reduction in the position of the Joint Staff) by the interposition, between the JCS and the NSC, of the National General Staff.

It can reasonably be argued, however, that the downgrading is more apparent than real. The JCS will still be the primary source for military advice—which is their statutory function—and what this new organization provides is simply for the integration, in the National General Staff, of that military advice with the views of other agencies of the Government. The relationship between the JCS and the unified and specified commanders would not be changed.

An important point to note in this organizational structure is that exactly the same channels are followed in the function of planning and advice as are energized in the coordinated implementation of decisions—that is, in operational direction.

Such an arrangement is not novel—it is, in fact, precisely what we are all accustomed to in planning for and conducting military operations.

With full representation on the National General Staff to ensure the capability to integrate the foreign, military, economic, and psychological factors—with the requisite communications and display facilities incorporated in the National Command Center to ensure rapid receipt of, and reaction to, information from all sources affecting the national security—and, with a strong full-time planning board to provide day-to-day assistance to the NSC, I believe that such an organization would represent a great increase in the national capability to anticipate and, as necessary, react to the security threats of every kind and from any quarter.

At this point an illustration of the structural similarity between this proposed National General Staff organization and the current organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff might be helpful.

Keeping in mind that these two organizations would not be on the same level, I believe you will see the close similarity of operating functions between them. For example, the Planning Board in the proposed organization would perform for the National Security Council a function paralleling that which the Operations Deputies perform for the JCS at present. The civilian Director of the National General Staff would play a role, for that staff, similar to that carried out in the Joint Staff by its Director, and the National General Staff would be comparable at the national level to the Joint Staff at the military level. And lastly, the National Command Center would operate within the proposed structure in much the same way as the National Military Command Center does within the Joint Staff.

This brief look at some of the factors involved in the question of organizing for national security certainly indicates that there is no easy solution, because, of course, the problem is quite complex. Our present system is certainly not perfect, nor is any system devised by man likely to be. However, the essence of progress is change, and we cannot afford to become wedded to certain procedures and practices just because they represent what we are used to understanding, and are comfortable with.

So in that spirit, let's briefly review what appear to be the pros and cons of our present organization, and the one I have just discussed.

The advantages of the present system, as shown on this slide, are self evident and require little elaboration. As a matter of fact, I would not expect that any revised organization which might be adopted would entail any substantial reduction in the consideration given at the highest national level to the views and advice of the Joint Chiefs—and certainly I would foresee no alteration in the broad administrative and support responsibilities now assigned to the Service Chiefs.

The disadvantages of our present organization, however, are substantial when considered from the overall national viewpoint, and this slide summarizes the principal ones which I have discussed with you. Existing procedures entail the use of ad hoc committees, under “jury rig” arrangements, to deal with individual security threats as they arise.

Such procedures are unsatisfactory because they dilute authority as they diffuse responsibility. The solution to this condition lies, I believe, in the creation of a truly integrated national level staff with the capability to deal with ALL of the factors involved in formulating and executing security policies.

Let me give you just one example of the kind of confusion that is generated by the necessity to resort to ad hoc arrangements. This has to do with the situation in Vietnam—a vexing problem that directly involves the individual responsibilities of a number of Executive departments and agencies, and thus obviously requires careful direction, management, and coordination. The existing system does not provide a regular mechanism to oversee the development of coordinated plans and the execution of integrated programs.

As a result, special procedures have been adopted—and, in this case, TWO ad hoc committees have been formed with overlapping functions and responsibilities.

The principal advantages of an organization such as I have outlined to you today are that, under such a system, the President would have at his service an integrated national level staff to assess problems, formulate plans for their solution, and supervise the integrated actions taken to accomplish prescribed objectives. Ad hoc committees would cease to be a constant—and confounding—factor on the national scene.

Of course, the proposed system—or any system—would have some disadvantages in comparison with the present arrangements. Perhaps a future President might not want to discharge the security responsibilities of his great office through such a mechanism—after all, the use which President Eisenhower and President Kennedy made of the National Security Council varied widely, reflecting in each case the incumbent's own way of doing business. My own feeling, though, is that an organization such as the one proposed would so prove its usefulness that it would be perpetuated and strengthened by any Chief Executive who had to face the tangle of problems that will continue to confront our nation as the Free World leader.

Undoubtedly, the operation of such a staff would require skilled and dedicated men in numbers beyond those now serving in the various Executive departments and agencies principally concerned with national security. This tail, however, should not wag the dog, and I am convinced that the numbers required could, under strong Executive persuasion, be held to an acceptable and realistic minimum.

And, as noted on the slide, there have been fears advanced that an all-powerful national general staff would become a super agency, arrogating unto itself the powers now reserved to the several departments and agencies. In my view, there is no real justification for such a specter as, in any case, all authority and responsibility exercised or assigned will be as directed by the President, and I think that the good to me achieved by such a reorganization far outweighs the suspected loss of stature that some might suffer.

And, as I have already said, I firmly believe that any organizational scheme adopted will ensure that the Joint Chiefs continue to have a loud and clear voice in contributing the military input to overall national security matters.

The proposed organization which I have outlined is not, of course, the only solution to the problem of improving our national capability to formulate and implement security policies. I do say, however, that it is a problem area which warrants the consideration of any professional military man.

Some of you sitting here today may someday be in a position to influence this structure—many of you will be affected by its development, or its failure to develop. What solution do you propose?

28. Summary of Action Taken in Special Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting

Washington, 8:30 a.m., 24 May 1964

This meeting was called by the Chairman in preparation for his attendance at two other meetings scheduled to be held at the White House today at 1000 and 1230 which he, the Chairman, will attend.

Four papers were under consideration at this JCS meeting. These had not been available to the Chiefs for study prior to 0400 this morning, and I was briefed on them at 0800 at Headquarters Marine Corps.

—Paper #1 was SNIE¹ 50-2-64, Probable Consequences of Certain U.S. Actions With Respect to Vietnam and Laos, 185741-a, dated 23 May 1964.

—Paper #2 was a draft memo for the President, Scenario for strikes on North Vietnam, prepared by ISA and dated 23 May 1964. The preparation of this paper had been assigned to Mr. McNaughton, AsstSecDef (ISA), during a previous White House conference.

—Paper #3 had been prepared by an ad hoc planning group, and was entitled “United States Role in Vietnam.” This paper proposed that American personnel should be integrated into Vietnamese chain of command, both military and civilian.

—Paper #4 dealt with U.S. advisory assistance to the Vietnamese civil guard and self- defense corps, and had been prepared by SACSA for the JCS.

All four of these papers are on file at Headquarters Marine Corps.

The Chairman spent almost the entire time discussing the paper containing the Scenario for Strikes on North Vietnam. In view of the short period of time available, this was done in a very hurried manner. The paper was a poor one, involving proposed military pressures on, as well as proposed negotiations with, North Vietnam. The bulk of the paper had to do with military pressures and had been prepared by Mr. McNaughton, a civilian, (*ISA, DepSecDef*),² instead of by the Joint

¹ Special National Intelligence Estimate.

² Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

Staff and Joint Chiefs, to whom this action had not been assigned. As a result, most of the proposed military pressure was poorly stated and the Chairman told the Chiefs after considerable discussion that he would indicate that the military portion should be carefully reexamined by the Joint Chiefs.

At 0930 I informed the Chairman that I desired to reiterate for record that the courses of action which had been recommended in a previous paper (JCS 2343/345-3) and which had been sent forward to the Secretary of Defense as a split, with the Air Force and the U.S. Marine Corps on one side and the remainder of the Chiefs and the Chairman on the other, still represented the Marine Corps' position relative to courses of action which should be taken in South Vietnam. At this point General Buse (Deputy Chief of Staff (P&P)) was in the ante-room attempting to determine the *reference*³ number of the split position paper. I was therefore unable to state this number when I reiterated my position. Later the number was supplied to the Secretaries for entry in the record. The Chairman replied to my statement by saying that he could not recall exactly what paper I was referring to in view of the fact that he looked at so many papers. However, LeMay, the Director (Burchinal), and Wheeler indicated that they were familiar (as they well should have been) with the paper in question. Ricketts, who was representing McDonald, listened but said nothing. After the meeting was over, he asked what the number of the paper was as he did not know that the Navy had split out on a position regarding action in South Vietnam.⁴

All of these papers represent a hurried turn-about in the past few days by the President; his advisors (including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs) are now essentially shaping policy to coincide with the recommendations which LeMay and I had outlined in the split position paper. So at this point in the "game" we find the Chairman and the Secretary of Defense who, in the early study of this problem, as recorded previously in this record, had called for defending the Mekong and attacking Hanoi by air and then who had reversed this position after receiving marching orders from the President, [*now*] advocating intensification of actions only within the perimeter of South Vietnam. Now we see these two individuals returning to what is essentially their original view being developed in detail to include the

³ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

⁴ Greene wrote an exclamation point in the margin next to this sentence.

possibility of all-out strikes against North Vietnam and even against a Chinese–North Vietnam invasion of Southeast Asia. We also see General Wheeler agreeing, as he usually does, with the Chairman in a reversal of position.

At this moment in time I am convinced that we are about to become deeply involved in South Vietnam and Laos, that as a minimum this will take on the nature of a Korean-type action, and there is a strong possibility of even greater involvement than that. If this happens there may be such an outcry that McNamara and his actions to date will be discredited (perhaps not the Chairman, because he has tried to play his part in this double shuffle). If this happens, McNamara and members of the Administration may attempt to “hang” the botch around the necks of the Joint Chiefs. I am determined that they are not going to blame the Marine Corps for their stumbling in this matter.

I believe that this turn of events has been caused by the rising pressure as reflected in the press for something to be done in Southeast Asia in view of the Communist successes in Laos and the unsatisfactory situation which exists in South Vietnam. This clamor, of course, is highlighted in Congress and the President senses that something must be done, so he is preparing to modify his initial position which he outlined to the Joint Chiefs at the White House meeting previously described herein.⁵ What I think he hopes to do is to get a Joint Resolution out of Congress before it adjourns in July giving their blessing to everything which he has done to date and authorizing him to take whatever action may be necessary in the future. If he can accomplish this he will have carte blanche to go ahead with whatever action he feels is necessary. Congress will have been adjourned, there will be no sounding board in that corner, and he will only have to cope with public opinion as expressed in the press. Furthermore, if he can bring this resolution about, he will be able to take the war in Southeast Asia completely out of the ring as a campaign issue prior to the convening of the political conventions.

What concerns me greatly is the fact that, as illustrated in paper #2 of this morning—the scenario for strikes on North Vietnam—we see that planning and recommendations in military matters, instead of being prepared and made by the Joint Chiefs, are being put together by civilians. Secondly, the way these papers and

⁵ Document 4.

the crisis is being handled through the customary ad hoc and action officer principle fully illustrates again the need for a U.S. National (Federal) General Staff, capable of round-the-clock operation at top levels in this government. It is interesting to note here that during my lecture to the Armed Forces Staff College on Thursday, 21 May, the item in which the student body was most interested was my proposal for the establishment of this type of national staff.⁶ As noted before in this record and as repeated here, I have discussed this proposal with the DepSecDef (Mr. Vance), AsstSecDef Horowitz,⁷ the Secretary of the Navy, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and the Military Aide to the President. On Thursday of this coming week in my scheduled lecture before the Air University⁸ I intend to outline this proposal to the students and to elicit their views and recommendations regarding the establishment of this type of organization.

Seriously deficient organizational problems at top levels in our government, plus the continued meddling of civilians in military matters and the “do nothing” attitude on the part of the Chiefs in insisting on their rights and duties, constitute a serious picture of our times.

29. Memorandum for the Record from the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Buse)

Washington, 25 May 1964

Subject: Debriefing at JCS Meeting at 1400 on Monday, 25 May 1964

1. At the JCS meeting at 1400 on Monday, 25 May 1964, LtGen Goodpaster debriefed the meetings pertaining to the Southeast Asia situation. He stated that three meetings have already been held, with one to follow this afternoon:

a. at 1000 on Sunday, 24 May: Mr. Rusk, McNamara, General Taylor, McGeorge Bundy, McCone, and Bell were in attendance.

b. at 1930 on Sunday, 24 May: The President, Mr. Rusk, McGeorge Bundy, McNamara, General Taylor, and McCone.

⁶ Document 27.

⁷ Likely a misspelling and a reference to Solis Horowitz, assistant secretary of defense, 1964–68.

⁸ Established in 1946, Air University is the U.S. Air Force’s center for professional military education.

c. at 1100 on Monday, 25 May: McGeorge Bundy, Bill Bundy, Sullivan, McNamara, LtGen Goodpaster, and Colonel Mount.

d. at 1600 on Monday, 25 May: Mr. Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy will meet to resolve a fundamental issue.

The meeting at 1000 on Sunday, 24 May, dealt primarily with the scenario which the Chiefs had considered and with Laos. Mr. Rusk stated that he was strongly impressed by the internal problems in SVN. He doesn't want to ask for resolution to go further in actions against the North and to extend beyond SVN, and then have the situation collapse around his ears. He viewed as specifics the difficulties of Khanh in dealing with the Generals who are under arrest,¹ and in dealing with General Minh further, [and] the increase of religious difficulties and political turmoil in SVN, evidenced by the political maneuvers and continual rumors of coups.

It was State's view that we must clean this up before going ahead and that we should use our consideration of extended operations to force Khanh to get going on the program within his country.

There was general agreement on the need for a scenario on Laos (the elements of which were worked out orally at the meeting) before any settlement on Laos could be reached. There were four conditions which Souvanna termed essential to a conference:

- a. The withdrawal of the Pathet Lao and the Viet Minh from the Plaine des Jarres.
- b. A cease-fire.
- c. A strengthening of the ICC (International Control Commission).
- d. Full power be granted to Souvanna.

There was some thinking that our objectives should be the withdrawal of the Pathet Lao from Laos and the opening of the corridor from Vietnam. The use of

¹ Most likely a reference to senior generals who had served on the junta that was deposed by Khanh on 30 January 1964 and who were subsequently placed under house arrest in Da Lat: Tran Van Don, Ton That Dinh, and Le Van Kim.

U.S. air operations against Highway 7 perhaps extended to NVN, if necessary, should be considered.

In the view of the State Department, we have a better legal and international case started out in Laos, but it was considered that this would not appeal to many nations as a bona fide reason for going into NVN.

It is apparent that State wants to go down the Laos track, while others present thought it a very weak approach. There was much discussion on this subject and Mr. Ball said that no matter which approach was taken, i.e., SVN or Laos, the two should be merged very shortly into an overall Southeast Asia operation.

A scenario was then discussed. Many changes in timing were introduced, some of which were the JCS recommended changes. Specifically, the change which had the military movements beginning on D-16² was incorporated. All other actions were keyed to this point.

A discussion was centered as to starting other actions at D-17³ in the event that military moves started at D-16, but this point was not resolved.

The approach and nature of Congressional action was not tied down since it was agreed it was difficult to go for a resolution at this time due principally to the Senate debate on Civil Rights. This might mean that all action would be held until the Civil Rights discussion had been finished, which they anticipate about the end of June.

General Taylor emphasized the view of the Chiefs that the most effective military method would be employment on a substantial scale from the outset with full U.S. participation. It was thought that other considerations outweighed this view.

Mr. Rusk thought it would be desirable for SVN to start on small-scale operations in the North, thus enabling the North Vietnamese⁴ to take action at the ap-

² In military parlance, D-Day refers to the date a military operation is set to begin. D+1 refers to the day after the operation begins, D+2 refers to two days after the start of the operation, and so on. D-16 indicates 16 days before a military operation is scheduled to begin.

³ This indicates 17 days before D-Day.

⁴ Gen Buse likely meant to write "South Vietnamese" here.

propriate time without losing face. This also might allow the U.S. to respond with the degree of pressure requested and required.

It was agreed that aerial mining would not be included initially. International complications would be too great over such action.

McNamara emphasized that we must be prepared from the outset to put in substantial ground troops and the implications as to employment must be recognized before any action is started. He stated that it would be wise to call up two National Guard Divisions to signal the resolution of the U.S. and to have readily trained forces available if required. This was not enthusiastically received by the group at the 1000 meeting, or by the President at the later meeting. However, it was emphasized that we must be ready with ground troops as required and must be prepared to show the seriousness of our intent.

The target systems were briefly discussed. The subject of target systems is to be a special study with separate alternative targets developed in detail. The President wants to know the absolute maximum capability of the Vietnamese Air Force to conduct covert actions. The main issue is what is needed, or desirable, for extending the operations into NVN.

The study on encadrement⁵ was discussed and was generally favorably received.

Interlarding⁶ was discussed and it was the view of the conferees that it was necessary to redefine the problem, that the paper took an extreme and undesirable position.

A thought was expressed that the people introduced should be advisors only, rather than control personnel. There was no challenge to the desirability, but the acceptability by the GVN was questioned.

On the basic question, "IS IT NECESSARY TO CARRY THE WAR INTO THE NORTH?" a question was asked, "What is the trend since Khanh

⁵ A proposal to integrate U.S. advisors into South Vietnamese military units in order to give them a more active role in training and carrying out military operations.

⁶ The process of integrating American civilian and military personnel into the various levels of the governments of selected South Vietnamese provinces in an effort to strengthen the advisory effort and allow the United States to take on a greater role.

took office and what is the present trend?" The reply, "The trend has been adverse and still is." General Taylor introduced an exception by saying: "It is still quite early to tell whether Khanh can bottom this trend and turn it around." It was agreed that Khanh is willing to do his best, but, with minor exceptions, he can't swing the tide by himself. The question was asked, "Has Khanh gone so far that his government will soon break up?" And the answer: "It is not likely unless he is assassinated or there is another coup."

So, with the background that what we are doing now won't stem the tide in SVN, the discussion turned to: "Would strikes against the North be successful? And what would be the result?" There is general concern that we must strike the North, but we are not sure that such action can save SVN. There was agreement that anything less than that would cause us to lose the war. So, assuming that we do strike the North, what should the timing be? Mr. Rusk thought that using the approach through Laos, it should be in a couple days or weeks.

McNamara expressed the view of going through SVN; says 2, 3, or 4 months [are] more appropriate. McNamara feels that there is slow deterioration in SVN.

Certain assignments were made at this meeting:

- a. Bill Bundy was to prepare the scenario on Laos as originally developed.
- b. State was to study a parallel track to use the United Nations.
- c. General Taylor, as a result of the meeting, assigned several projects to the Joint Staff:
 - (1) Work on the target systems, to point out which the Vietnamese can take on alone and which would require U.S. assistance.
 - (2) Study the ground forces as to the prepositioning and as to whether they were sufficient for deterrence and for response to action by the North Vietnamese.
 - (3) Consider the withdrawal of a U.S. Division from Korea to the Philippines or SVN.
 - (4) Whether the Chiefs favor U.S. advisors down to the company level.

(5) The advantages of moving the MACV Headquarters into the Joint General Staff of Vietnam.

Between this meeting and the one at the White House, Bill Bundy prepared his scenario which was not addressed, and McNaughton made available his revised scenario which was not addressed.

It appeared that the President is in favor of interlardation and encadrement.

The President and the group were solid in the view that extension of the conflict in NVN is inevitable unless the DRV desist in their present actions.

The timing was discussed as previously mentioned. The President wants the leadership to be briefed on what is involved if we go North, covering three aspects:

- a. Probable necessity for carrying the war to NVN.
- b. The desirability of getting the problem before the United Nations and SEATO.
- c. The necessity for Congressional support of the Aid Program.

It was later announced that the President was in favor of proceeding rapidly with this briefing.

The meeting broke up with the President saying he wanted to meet mid-week on the subject.

It was agreed that although tight security was required, the study on encadrement should be made available to the field commanders to get their views, and also to get their views on increasing the number of military advisors down to the company level, and on the reconnaissance policy which had just been sent to the field.

At the 1100 Meeting on Monday, 25 May 1964, McNamara and Bill Bundy were impressed by the amount of work to be done. At the mid-week meeting, the President wants proposals to be presented for decision, McGeorge Bundy stated that he thought decisions had already been taken along the following lines:

- a. The President is not prepared to bet on inactivity this summer. If other actions fail, we must go for strikes against NVN. The President views these actions as

a peacekeeping mission. He doesn't want to get involved in Laos or SVN, but to undertake a peacekeeping action by going against the NVN. He wants to go to the United Nations to state these views, and if not favorably acted upon by the UN, he will follow by pressure which in due time will result in military actions against NVN.

In the meeting with the President and the other meetings, it appeared necessary to resolve how Laos should fit into this operation. It was agreed that it should become an element in the sequence of action leading to attacks in NVN, although Rusk wanted to handle Laos separately.

Subject to the actions to take place at the 1600 meeting this afternoon to resolve this substantial difference, the scenario will be rewritten, which will enable the problem to go before the UN as a peacekeeping action. The scenario will be shifted from a theoretical D-Day to lay out a sequence of actions to start today and extend to actions against the North Vietnamese.

A case must be developed for use in the UN and a case to be presented to the public on the reasons for our actions against NVN. The single scenario will be reworked by the State Department.

The JCS will proceed with planning movement of forces to signify our intent.

A diplomatic track will be prepared to include a letter to Khrushchev, a visit to DeGaulle, and the Canadian effort previously discussed. It is planned to hold a conference in Pearl Harbor to include the President (possibly, although unlikely he will attend), Felt, Harkins, Westmoreland, Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, and Taylor. The time of this meeting is visualized as about 10 days from today.

Security was discussed and it was agreed that it should be an ever tightening and decreasing circle—there would be no debriefing and only essential staff members to do the work could be brought in on the subject.

There will be an NSC meeting on Wednesday or Thursday to present the proposals to the President for decision.

H. W. Buse, Jr.
MajGen, USMC

30. Memorandum for the Record from the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Buse)

Washington, 25 May 1964

Subj: Summary of Certain Actions at OpDep and JCS Meetings on Friday, 22 May 1964

In Reply refer to A-fvc 25 May 1964

1. At the OpDep meeting at 1000 on Friday, 22 May 1964, the Director¹ announced that there would be several days of real flap on the subject of Southeast Asia; that there was a significant meeting at the White House this morning in which it was announced that there was no lid on the situation as far as politics are concerned. The President had advanced a proposal to substantially increase U.S. military strength in SVN, to include encadrement at all levels of the military—for example, to increase the advisors at company level to 5 per company which would in effect double U.S. military strength. There would be a similar increase in civilian strength. The Director stated that he was worried about the Press on Southeast Asia and thought we would do better if positive action was taken. He was not opposed to reconnaissance. What he wanted was a skillful and delicate plan for increased pressure on NVN. The Director stated that they would go into all plans on a war-game type analysis. When asked to whom he referred by “they,” he said, “State and White House staff.” The Director stated that the Chiefs might want to assign someone on a permanent basis to General Clay’s² office in J-3 to keep abreast of the situation as it developed. Insofar as the Marine Corps is concerned, we decided to have twice daily contacts with the J-3 office in order to meet this requirement.

2. At the JCS meeting at 1400 on Friday, 22 May 1964, LtGen Goodpaster debriefed on a meeting held at the White House on this date. Present at the meeting were Mr. McNamara, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, Mr. Sullivan, two representatives from CIA, Mr. Bill Bundy and Mr. Ball from State Department, among others. The meeting was a general discussion of Southeast Asia from which the following actions [*were considered*]:

¹ LtGen David A. Burchinal, USAF.

² BGen Lucius D. Clay Jr., USAF, deputy director for operations, Joint Staff.

- a. Resolution should be prepared to be passed by Congress to provide increased support to SVN, then to permit operations in NVN and Laos by a combination of Vietnamese and U.S. forces.
- b. There should be attacks on North Vietnamese targets by GVN and U.S. forces.
- c. Concurrently, a conference should be convened against the backdrop of continued attack. A cease-fire would be agreed to only if the Viet Cong had stopped their actions in SVN. The conference would be a Geneva-type conference.
- d. There would be no termination of pacification actions in SVN.
- e. We would determine actions to strengthen the government in SVN and the armed forces in SVN.
- f. We should take steps to improve relations between the Vietnamese and the U.S. government, to include such matters as evacuation of U.S. dependents.

As a result of these actions, the following assignments were made:

- a. Mr. Ball of State was to prepare two or three alternate drafts of resolutions to show in detail our decision to carry on the fight in Vietnam and to allow the President, prior to the elections, to do what is necessary to support the Vietnamese and to provide U.S. participation as necessary. The resolution should be in very general terms and private briefings would be given to the leadership so that they might be informed on the specific actions to be taken.
- b. Mr. McNaughton of ISA was given the responsibility to prepare a revised scenario considering the JCS paper on the subject and with Joint Staff assistance as desired.
- c. Mr. McGeorge Bundy was to write a speech for the President to accompany the resolution to Congress.
- d. Mr. Sullivan was to contact the Canadians and through the Canadians signal to NVN the actions under consideration.
- e. A Working Group would be formed under Mr. Manning of State to ride herd on information policy and to ensure the maintenance of proper security.

f. The President was quoted as saying that we should do whatever is useful within SVN to strengthen the South Vietnamese and that he desired recommendations on whether or not additional advisors are needed.

g. The DoD was then assigned the responsibility to prepare a study on encadrement of regular and paramilitary forces. The requirement for the regular forces dropped out and the study would apply only to the Civil Guard and the Self Defense Corps.

h. Mr. Sullivan was given the responsibility to study means whereby U.S. effort could be placed in putting drive into the Provincial and National Governments of SVN. The addition of either military or civilian-political personnel to help the South Vietnamese with their military, economic, and pacification operations should be studied. Consideration should be given to a Government Operations Center. The Military and the AID personnel would assist Mr. Sullivan in this study.

The Working Groups were to report the results of their effort by 1800 on Saturday, 23 May, and furnish drafts of their efforts as they progressed.

A meeting was scheduled for 1000 on Sunday, 24 May, at the White House, to be followed by a meeting with the President, at which time he would be given:

- a. A summary of the present situation in Laos.
- b. Immediate position on reconnaissance.
- c. Position on over-flights of NVN.

The public posture and attitude during the next several days is considered to be critical. The President wanted to discuss this and Mr. McGeorge Bundy will bring him up to date.

General Taylor, who had been addressing the National War College and was not at the White House meeting, expressed an interest in the surge of activity on this subject and when he asked Mr. McNamara for the reason, he was informed that we were about to get moving on studies which should have been going on at an earlier date. General Taylor then asked the reason for the change in attitude and was given the following reasons:

- a. Presidential concern over the situation in Laos.
- b. The President is anxious to make it clear to the world that the actions by the U.S. will not be shackled.
- c. State Department considers that at some time there will have to be a conference on the subject and the United States cannot afford to enter this conference in a losing position.

General Taylor asked for a feel as to the time when it was considered that strikes might be made against the North and was told that it would be at least several weeks. At first there would have to be a debate in Congress and there would have to be time for the movement of forces.

The Chairman asked as to whether or not the Chiefs should cancel their planned trip to Desert Strike³ and was told by the SecDef that the trip should go on.

The entire situation would be discussed with Adlai Stevenson.

It was anticipated that the JCS would provide input to the study on encadrement—the reconnaissance policy—and the interlarding of the government at all levels.

A JCS meeting was scheduled for 0830 on Sunday, 24 May, on the subject.

H. W. Buse, Jr.
MajGen USMC

31. Memorandum for the Record from Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Buse)

Washington, 27 May 1964

Subject: JCS meeting at 1400 on Wednesday, 27 May 1964

1. At the JCS meeting at 1400 on Wednesday, 27 May 1964, the Chairman brought the Chiefs up to date on the SEA situation as follows:

³ A joint war game conducted in the American Southwest in May 1964.

a. He understood that on Monday and Tuesday additional papers were to be worked out to be presented to the President today or tomorrow.

b. That Rusk and McNamara had a meeting on Monday and had lunch with the President yesterday.

c. At these meetings they had gone over the scenarios and had gone over the situation in Vietnam and how it could be combined with Laos. There are two tracks being run; namely, Laos and Vietnam. It was the opinion that Laos was probably ahead on a political basis, particularly in regard to calling a conference. It is the [U.S.] Government's position that we favor having talks in Laos, and strictly limited to Laos; but some of the other Governments, particularly France, favored a Geneva parley. Souvanna reacted favorably to a meeting in Laos. The Chairman thought that we could have the meeting even though all the signatories to the Geneva conference did not send representatives to such a meeting.

With regard to a Geneva conference, Souvanna had some very strong conditions which had to be met before he would participate. These four points were recorded in the Memorandum for the Record on the 25 May meeting.¹

After the meeting in Laos, the next court of appeal would be the UN. The Chairman stated that the President was very anxious to go through all these steps, and the difference in timing lies in the method of our approach to the UN in that we will take up Laos as well as Vietnam. The two tracks must come together.

The Chairman stated that the President and his advisors all agree that there should be no military action against NVN without the resolution from Congress. The question is, "How do we get such a resolution?" It is the opinion of all concerned that Senator Morse² would block any effort for Senate consideration, and, therefore, we could not get the resolution until after the passage of the Civil Rights Bill. This is estimated to be 15 June at the earliest.

¹ Document 29.

² Senator Wayne L. Morse of Oregon.

With this background, the two Secretaries are trying again on an agreed scenario, but as of now have not reached an acceptable solution. In general, the following order of events will be considered:

- a. The communication of the President's decisions to Hanoi by the use of the Canadians. A plane is standing by to take McGeorge Bundy and Sullivan to Canada to approach Pearson³ tomorrow.
- b. It will be necessary to get some word of some kind to Red China, the USSR, NVN, France, and other Nations.
- c. There will be a Honolulu conference,⁴ to include Lodge, next Monday and Tuesday. Rusk is leaving today for the Nehru funeral⁵—will stop in Bangkok and Saigon on his way back—pick up Lodge and take him to Pearl Harbor for the conference. The Chairman and the SecDef will go out Sunday.

There is some work to be done by the staff on the agenda items.

d. Additional measures should be considered. McCone has a habit of saying that we are not doing enough on this situation, but when asked what else should be done, he has no answer. One thought advanced was that Khanh should settle his differences with the [South Vietnamese] Generals, with Minh, and settle the disagreements between the Catholics and the Buddhists.

e. Encadrement of paramilitary forces requires additional action. Admiral Felt's views were mentioned and the fact that he saw a requirement for about 1,000 personnel increase was noted. The Chairman said that this item would be discussed in Honolulu. As a related subject, the interlarding has some support. It had been decided to concentrate on 5 critical provinces and to try practice runs on these provinces only. Both civilian and military personnel would be included and there had been no discussion of interlarding above the province level.

³ Lester B. Pearson, prime minister of Canada, 1963–68.

⁴ On 1–2 June 1964, some 40 individuals responsible for Vietnam War policy-making decisions met in Honolulu, Hawaii, to discuss the situation in Southeast Asia. Their ranks included the secretaries of state and defense, Gen Taylor, CIA Director McCone, Ambassador Lodge, and Gen Westmoreland.

⁵ Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru died on 27 May 1964.

f. There should be improved public information provided inside SVN.

The Pearl Harbor conference will include these six items and anything which Ambassador Lodge may wish to discuss.

Are these points feasible? And what actions should be started now?

The scenario leading to military actions after the Pearl Harbor conference should include:

a. Taking the case to the UN with a new Jordan-type report proving the North Vietnamese support to the Communist forces.

It was noted that there had been no effort made to whip up enthusiasm on the part of the United States public. It was decided to leave a door open as an escape in the event the resolution does not pass the Congress. As to the timing, we should go to the UN first and then get the resolution. It was pointed out that once we get the resolution, we are fully embarked unless there is a turn around by the North Vietnamese. The next step should be to get a commitment from the SEATO Nations, and, after the resolutions are received, we should start making overt moves. A question arose: "Should we start military moves before going to the UN, such as moving in the B-57s and starting the training courses?" Further questions: "Having initiated these moves, when should we deploy our forces? When should we remove the dependents? And when should we start actual strikes?"

The Chairman thought there were several things the JCS should do:

a. Establish a position on encadrement.

b. Establish a position on movement and alerting of forces.

c. List the desirable military actions which would have an escalating effect.

d. Take a position on the Thailand situation and the requirement on basing our forces in Thailand.

e. Develop a target system which we recommend for striking.

f. Consider the recommended timing for withdrawal of dependents from Saigon.

g. Consider the SEATO contribution required.

The Chairman has the Joint Staff developing the necessary papers.

The Chairman stated that there are several points at loose ends which he intends to discuss this afternoon; that there is danger in showing our strength, but SecDef was eager to do it. The Secretary wants to move two U.S. Divisions into the Philippines. The Chairman said we were in danger of marching up the hill and then marching down again, and raised the question: "What evidence proves that the Communists are acting in good faith? How fast do we have to move on this question?" The Chairman said we should not get overcommitted until we are sure that we can move down the track and then go. Admiral Felt's estimate is about 45 days. Some will say, "This is adequate"; others will say, "Speed it up a bit"; and others will say, "Let's go now." But the Chairman sees a danger in being overcommitted.

The Chairman also said that we need a first-class domestic public relations program and pointed out that the U.S. public had little idea of what was going on. He asked for comments at the table and Admiral Ricketts stated that the monsoon season may have some effect on the timing. The Air Force pointed out that there would be no strain as far as air actions were concerned, regardless of the monsoon season. Admiral Ricketts pointed out that the public would respond to strong leadership, rather than having the leadership attempt to respond to the public. General LeMay stated that he thought we ought to go ahead and hit Vietnam a little bit; that if we gave them too much warning they would pull back just a little at this time to lull us into a sense of security, but then we would have to go through this all over again.

General Taylor discussed the system of hitting targets as to whether we should hit a few targets hard, or hit several targets with light blows. The Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps agreed that if we go after a target, regardless of what it is, it should be destroyed.

The Chairman left the meeting to attend a 1500 conference at the White House without the President, to be followed by a 1600 meeting at the White House with the President in attendance.

H. W. Buse, Jr.
MajGen, USMC

32. Memorandum from the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (Sharp)

Honolulu, 29 May 1964

Meeting on Southeast Asia

1. The basic proposition made by the State Department involves encadrement of U.S. personnel into the GVN civil and military structure, designating our people officially as assistants to the Vietnamese civil officials and military commanders. The purpose is to achieve more influence. The results, however, would be just the reverse.

2. The idea of mixing your own talent into the deficient capabilities of a weak ally is certainly not new. There are right and wrong ways to do it, which in fact the Communists have learned through long experience.

a. First, you can establish yourself in full and open command, as the French did in Indo China. This proconsul arrangement assumes automatically all responsibility. The indigenous group learns nothing, blames you for all misadventures and gradually turns against you.

b. Alternatively you can establish your talent in the authoritative system as subordinates to the local civil or military leaders, assuming [all] the while your superior knowledge and talent will automatically make itself felt. This also fails because, the native being in command and we being his subordinates, he has no obligation to accept our advice. What is done at all will be done his way. As our recommendations, as subordinates, are taken less and less often, natural caucasian pride causes us to expose ourselves less and less often, to the point where our influence is zero.

c. As a final alternative we can establish ourselves as advisors—technically without authority or responsibility. Our influence is exerted privately upon the person in command. His face is not hazarded, yet, in private we can be as straightforward and candid with him as we choose, using a degree of suasion (usually economic) that we desire. Implications of puppetry are diminished, the local authority knows that he gets the credit or censure for each act, his stature and his alone is affected by success or failure. As a result, he responds

to our suasion, takes our advice and more gets done. Or, put otherwise, our desires have a fair chance of being carried out because we have direct—albeit hidden—power behind them.

3. The first alternative stated above is a guaranteed failure. It worked for the United States in Nicaragua 40 years ago,¹ but that was a different era, before the emergence of today's dynamic nationalism. It cannot work now, as the French will testify.

The second alternative is the one now proposed by the State Department. It runs completely counter to human nature and can do us no good whatever. As designated “assistants” to Vietnamese commanders our people would never be permitted to carry a major share of the burden of decision and action. They would be subordinates only—in name and in fact—vicariously getting blamed for failures.

The third alternative is the one we have been pursuing. It is the only one offering any hope at all. However, it has been less than dramatically effective in Vietnam to date for two reasons:

- a. Our advisory mechanism has not extended far enough down the chain of authority (particularly on the civil/administrative side).
- b. Our advisors have never been given a definite, understandable and usable array of levers to use on their counterparts to induce them to do the right things.

Unless we cure these two defects, the third system will be ineffective, relatively speaking, also.

4. Therefore, I suggest that the following proposals may generate useful discussion at the Monday meeting:

- a. Abandon any idea of formally entering the chain of authority and responsibility in Vietnam at any point—top, middle or elsewhere.
- b. Continue with the behind-the-throne advisory system, as at present, but give it meaning and effectiveness which it has not had up to this time.

¹ The United States conducted a series of armed diplomatic interventions in Nicaragua during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Marines served as the principal armed force during these operations.

c. Specifically, extend our advisors into the Saigon ministries, into the political and economic part of all district headquarters except the most tranquil, into the regional force (civil guard) structure down to the battalion level equivalent, into the popular force (self defense corps, hamlet militia, etc.) and paramilitary forces to a similar level, and into the regular military structure wherever a deeper advisory penetration is shown to be warranted (Particular targets for study are the Navy and Air Force).

d. Finally, set up a formalized arrangement which places the final decision as to distribution of U.S. assistance (be it in the form of commodity import support, counterpart dollars or military assistance material) squarely in the hands of the U.S. authorities in Vietnam. Then make a judicious and well-controlled decentralization of this distribution authority within our advisory system. Our Vietnamese counterparts will soon learn of this authority and, while nothing will be said, our behind-the-scene advice will quickly assume urgency and validity.

V. H. Krulak

V. JUNE 1964

33. Memorandum for the Record from the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 (Cushman)

Washington, 1 June 1964

Subj: JCS Meeting at 1100 on Saturday, 30 May 1964

1. Prior to discussion of agenda items, LtGen Goodpaster briefed on meeting between SecDef, Attorney General, Ambassador Stevenson, General Taylor, General Carter (CIA), Mr. McGeorge Bundy, and Ambassador Harriman¹ on line of action re Laos. State to Bangkok to Sec 36 (S&C #14-3) of 29 May 64 gives the consensus reached.

2. In addition, General Taylor stated that SecDef expounded his views on any deployment of U.S. forces into Thailand as follows: that we must have a clear purpose as to the introduction and there must be some real use for them; further that we must at all times maintain the credibility of U.S. military action; and finally, that they must contribute to our objectives and not merely be stabilization of the Pathet Lao takeover of the Plaine des Jarres.

Robert E. Cushman

MajGen USMC

34. Chairman's Action on Joint Chiefs of Staff Paper, "Objectives and Courses of Action—Southeast Asia"

1 June 1964

During the regular meeting of the JCS on Monday, 1 June at 1400, the Director of the Joint Staff, (LtGeneral Burchinal) reported that just prior to General

¹ W. Averell Harriman was ambassador-at-large during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, as well as ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1943 to 1946 and, briefly, to Great Britain.

Taylor's departure for Honolulu with the SecDef to attend the SEA Conference, Taylor had directed Burchinal to withhold forwarding of the subject paper because Taylor was not sure that the wording therein was just what the Joint Chiefs had decided upon during their Saturday, 30 May meeting. LeMay, who was Acting Chairman during this Monday meeting, did not like this turn of events at all. Later when I talked with him privately, we both agreed that this action on the part of the Chairman had every appearance of a deliberate move to put the subject paper and the views of the Joint Chiefs on ice until after the Honolulu meeting. This would enable the Chairman to avoid presenting the views of the Joint Chiefs at this very important conference. In considering the situation, the Chiefs made some very minor changes in the wording of the paper, and then all agreed that the paper represented the understanding reached at the Saturday meeting. LeMay then proposed that the paper be forwarded to the SecDef. At this point I proposed that the Chairman be called by telephone in Honolulu and told that the paper represented the views of the Joint Chiefs, and these views were of such critical importance to the subjects to be discussed in Honolulu that the Chiefs wished their views expressed in the paper to be presented to the Honolulu conferees.

35. Telephone Conversation between the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak)

1 June 1964

This telephone call was made by secure telephone from the command center. I reiterated my reply to Krulak's message which I had sent to him on Sunday afternoon 31 May after receiving his message and going over it with G-2 (Colonel Berkeley). I also reminded Krulak that my views regarding the course of action to be taken in the South Vietnam situation included some drastic action against Cambodia and that I felt this was an important point that should be taken up during the conference. I also told Krulak that because of his former job as head of SACS, his present job as CGFMFPAC, and the fact that he is a close friend and former advisor to the Secretary of Defense that I felt he should attend all conferences in Honolulu on SEA. I said that I was sure that if McNamara remembered that Krulak was available in Honolulu that he would certainly invite him to be

present at the meeting. I told Krulak that if he were not invited, to make whatever contacts or arrangements he could to make sure of his presence *or representative*¹ at these meetings. In closing the conversation I told him that I was very much interested in exactly what views were presented at the conference by the various persons attending and especially those of the Chairman because I wanted to check what he said during the conferences against what he professed his positions to be during the JCS meetings. Krulak assured me that he would give me a daily readout by secure ComInt channels (this he started to do on Tuesday, 2 June, and he has indicated that McNamara has invited him to attend all plenary meetings in Honolulu). Copies of the ComInt messages are held in his G-2 Division.

36. Memorandum for the Record from the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Buse)

Washington, 3 June 1964

1. The Chairman debriefed the Honolulu conference by starting with the statement that it was probably the most overbilled conference he ever attended.¹ It was not worth 1/10th of the headlines it received and was a disappointment to him. He thought there were two reasons for this: first, the conference was too big. Secretary Rusk had a full plane load on his trip to Bangkok, and after picking up additional personnel in Saigon he required an additional plane for Guam and Pearl Harbor just for State Department personnel; secondly, Admiral Felt had not been furnished an agenda for the conference and was given little or no guidance as to topics to be discussed.

2. On the plane en route to Pearl Harbor, McNamara and Taylor put together an agenda which they thought to be a good one. The State Department representatives arrived a day earlier and had made out their own agenda. The two never really got together.

¹ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

¹ For records of this conference, see Summary Record of a Meeting, Honolulu, June 1, 1964, 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 1, 412–22; Summary Record of a Meeting, Honolulu, June 1, 1964, 2:15–6:15 p.m., *ibid.*, 422–28; and Summary Record of Meetings, Honolulu, June 2, 1964, 8:30–11:50 a.m. and 2:15–4 p.m., *ibid.*, 428–33.

3. The Chairman sensed that it was definitely the intention, particularly on the part of State, to hold back discussions on possible action against North Vietnam to the very end of the conference, and as a result they were never fully discussed.

4. Much of the time was used by briefings by all the important visitors allegedly bringing the conferees up to date. When they broke down into so-called principals and working groups, the principals group consisted of the two Secretaries; Westmoreland; Felt; Taylor; Ambassador Martin from Bangkok;² Chadburne, the Deputy Chief of Mission of Laos;³ Bill Bundy; Rowan;⁴ Lodge; McCone; and McNaughton as a writer who kept the record. As you can see, this is entirely too large a group.

5. Monday and Tuesday afternoons were taken up with discussions on improvement of the in-country program for South Vietnam. Military actions were not discussed until late Tuesday at which time CINCPAC presented a briefing of this outlined plan for defending the Mekong, using three brigades at different sites, and applying air pressure on Laos and NVN.

6. When the military actions were discussed the scenarios were never gone over in detail to get a State-Defense agreement. They were not addressed line by line.

7. Against this general background the Chairman listed what he considered to be the highlights of the conference:

a. The evaluation of the situation in Vietnam was most useful. Both Lodge and Westmoreland stated their opinion that the situation had bottomed out, was leveling off, and would start slowly up hill, continuing until the end of the year. There would be no collapse in SVN unless there was some unusual violent occurrence such as a coup or assassination. Lodge expressed the view that the recovery could be speeded up only by the addition of something new, and by that the Chairman thought Lodge meant actions against the North. It was agreed by the conferees that we are not racing the clock. McNamara and McCone took an opposite view and stated that the facts presented to them

² Graham Martin was U.S. ambassador to Thailand, 1963–67; U.S. ambassador to Italy, 1969–73; and U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, 1973–75.

³ Philip H. Chadbourn, counselor of the embassy in Vientiane. Buse is in error regarding both the name and post.

⁴ Likely Carl T. Rowan, director of the United States Information Agency.

indicated that the situation was still going downhill, but Westmoreland and Lodge stood firm in their opinion.

b. In-country improvements were discussed and nothing new was brought forward. Westmoreland was asked his views on how to tackle improvement in the Province Programs. There are now eight critical provinces singled out for this action. At best it is a complex program but all improvements advanced were based on the increase in numbers of U.S. military personnel assigned. There was lots of discussion about civilians and indigenous personnel being highly motivated, but the discussion always returned to increased U.S. military personnel—and there were hours spent hashing out this item. Lodge mentioned that he wanted an anti-terror campaign to be started. He considered that VC terrorism was a great threat to the Pacification Program. He had no solution other than making a Police State out of Vietnam similar to the Ho Chi Minh regime. Westmoreland was asked if he needed additional military people for military purposes, and his only request was to double the advisors at the battalion level. He stated that he did not want to increase advisors at the company level. He spoke in favor of having teams of about four people at the district level to serve as supervisors in para-military units. Increases desired would total 45 at the province level, of which 40 were to be military.

c. The evacuation of dependents was discussed, and Lodge stated that he didn't want to remove any dependents at this time, but he was interested in reducing the flow of dependents into Vietnam.

d. The Vietnamese police force was discussed and it was pointed out that they were short in numbers in training and it would be difficult to reach the 1,400 [officer] increase set as a goal by the end of the year.

e. Westmoreland made a strong pitch for dependent housing for the Vietnamese military.

f. An evaluation of the situation in Laos was given by the Deputy Chief of Mission and nothing new was presented. It was generally conceded that they were uncertain of the present objectives of the Pathet Lao, but they feel the Pathet Lao are satisfied by the present bite and would not move any further

at this time. They have a history of establishing lines and not crossing them. The lines are far enough from the Mekong so as not to be a threat to Thailand. Souvanna has a habit of advancing proposals and talks after military pushes.

g. CINCPAC then presented his military plan to hold the Mekong with three brigades separated by about 1,100 miles, and using air to pressure Laos and NVN. It was agreed that the fixed target system for such air pressure was very meager, but armed reconnaissance with missions formed frequently would be very helpful. Felt said that in his opinion he would put the three brigades on the Mekong immediately without staging troops or positioning back-up in Thailand. He concedes that this would only be a “trip-wire” action as a deterrent to restrain the Pathet Lao. Secretary McNamara disagreed with Felt with regard to the use of Thailand for staging and back-up.

h. The re-equipping and retraining of the FAR⁵ was discussed. Felt is shipping additional equipment to the Kong Le forces—principally trucks. There was general agreement that we should reestablish a MAAG in Laos as soon as possible and start training. Training by White Star⁶ teams is limited, and, although the MAAG would not be expected to do much, it would provide a source of intelligence information.

i. Ambassador Martin discussed the situation in Thailand—that Premier Thanum Kittikachorn would not stay in office for too long and that General Pra Phat Charusathien would probably be his successor. And he mentioned that Pra Phat would soon be coming to Walter Reed⁷ for surgery and he hoped that he would be given the full treatment there.

j. American forces would not be acceptable in Thailand unless preceded by a thorough discussion with the Thais and full explanation as to what these

⁵ Greene commented shortly afterward in his oral history: “Now, as an aside here, the organization labeled FAR, I can’t be specific about it, it was some sort of a guerrilla training organization or CIA-sponsored organization—the same thing for White Star teams, these were training teams of a special sort and we would have to go further to find out exactly what they were, how they were organized, and who sponsored them.” In fact, FAR was an acronym for the French name for the Royal Lao Armed Forces, the Forces Armées de Royaume. At the time, Kong Le was the commander of the Royal Lao Army.

⁶ Operation White Star was a U.S. military advisory mission to Laos during the early years of American involvement in Vietnam.

⁷ Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC.

forces would do. If it appeared that the forces would go on to Laos or NVN they would be welcomed by the Thai government—the Thais would even move their own troops to the Mekong to free our forces to move onward. There was considerable discussion on who would get to the Mekong first and what rate of build up would take place if the Chinese came into action.

k. Then there was a discussion of the public relations situation in Vietnam by Mr. Rowan, who pointed out that many defects existed, really nothing new presented here. Rowan stated the need for a “press czar,” presumably a civilian under the Ambassador. The PIO set up in MACV was criticized by Rowan, saying that there was no sense of news in the Headquarters. The Chairman thought this concept was fair.

l. With regard to discussions with reference to pressures on NVN—there was no hard discussion until the last hour of the conference. In an effort to turn the discussion toward the scenarios, the Chairman raised the point of time factors which were largely military critical points:

- (1) Absorption of new aircraft in Vietnam.
- (2) Increased strength of Vietnam forces.
- (3) The time for Khanh to get his house in order.
- (4) Training program.
- (5) Logistic factors. At this point it was pointed out the Army is deficient in logistic forces—that the Navy has a shipping problem—and the use of pre-positioning equipment must be studied.

m. Secretary Rusk was strong in his statements on the unpreparedness of the U.S. public to absorb increased military action by the U.S. in the face of escalation. It was agreed that follow-up action was needed here. Rusk pointed out that only the Vietnamese could act against NVN until a Joint Resolution is received from Congress. After which there would be the time factor in preparing the country for such action. When asked by the Chairman for a feel of the time involved—whether it would be days, weeks, or months—Rusk replied that it was a matter of months.

n. The optimum time for increased military actions from the point of military practice was agreed to be 1 November, but this was not a limiting factor assuming that Reserve forces could be called up. The Chairman stated that the Secretary was dismayed over the logistic position in the Army. General Wheeler said he shouldn't be, that this had been pointed out to the President and the SecDef by the CSA. The Chairman thought we would be asked to say that we were capable of doing militarily without calling up Reserves. (Note: In this connection USSTRICOM's 300621Z states, "The CONUS augmentation of combat service support forces for Phases 3 and 4 total of approximately 88,000 personnel—28,000 (35%) are from Reserve components.") This is in reference to logistic support for Phases 3 and 4 of CINCPAC OP-PLAN 32-64.

8. The Chairman concluded that there [*are*] a tremendous number of loose ends in the military business. There should be a CPX⁸ conducted by the theater backed up by a politico-military game in Washington to provide the type of governmental decisions which were suitable for the military play. The Chairman stated that he didn't think the conference was a waste of time, but that it was not beneficial.

9. At 1830 today the Secretaries were to report to the President, and the Chairman thought they were carrying in a mouse. The SecDef has stated that we must get a resolution from Congress at the first opportunity to allow freedom of action if anything happens in SEA.

10. General Westmoreland's study on aid to the provinces is to be reworked.

11. The following items were listed by Lieutenant General Goodpaster as items in the mill:

- a. Provide additional radio receivers to the population.
- b. Study economic aid necessary to advance political purposes.
- c. Study how we can expedite actions by the U.S. government.

⁸ Command post exercise.

d. McCone to locate qualified Americans to participate in the pacification program.

e. McNaughton to study third-country contributions.

f. McNaughton to review the tempo and scale of cross-border operations with a view toward removal of restrictions.

g. McNaughton to study the use of Thais up to the Mekong.

12. Lieutenant General Goodpaster also stated that there is a requirement for the following military studies:

a. Army service support required available.

b. Shipping availability including lighterage.

c. The reconfiguration of equipment in Thailand to conform to the present Army organization.

d. The possible reconfiguration of equipment on Okinawa.

e. The adequacy of stocks on Okinawa.

f. The tallying of the T/O⁹ and T/E¹⁰ for SEA.

Note: The Chairman raised the question as to whether we are paying sufficient attention to our forces marked for deployment and the equipment that is being taken with them to certain areas.

g. Verify the bombs as to adequacy of quantity and optimum types of the 37 and 32 plans.

h. The requirement for augmentation for Thailand airlift for contingencies.

i. In the CPX, check on the deployment and responsiveness of U.S. forces against the buildup of the ChiComs and the DRV.

⁹ Table of organization.

¹⁰ Table of equipment.

- j. CincPac review and comment on the effects of an interdiction campaign.
- k. CincPac study bombing concepts and target systems for actions on ascending scale.

13. General Myer was asked to comment and stated that there would be a requirement for increased readiness to respond in SEA, with or without a Resolution—that there would be a requirement for additional air lift in Thailand and that a paper had been turned green to retain the C-130¹¹ squadron now scheduled for return in October.

14. Admiral Sharp stated we needed more LSTs¹² in the Pacific.

15. General Clay, when called on, said they discussed the capability of the VNAF and the elimination by the VNAF of selected targets, mentioning specifically that the fuel storage dumps could be taken out by the VNAF without doing civilian damage.

16. The Chairman stated he didn't know where we would go from here—that there was a lot to be done “in-house.” He mentioned the contingency plan to really outline plans and we haven't had the opportunity to go into all the facets. He stated that Sharp was opposed to Felt's plan for defense along the Mekong and that in July we might have a different recommendation forthcoming.¹³

17. Wheeler stated he didn't like the plan either and questioned whether we weren't setting up for a series of Dien Bien Phus¹⁴ so that the communists could select one to knock off at their pleasure.

18. LtGen Hayes asked if Cambodia was discussed and it was apparent that beyond the fact that Prince Norodom Sihanouk was a nuisance, there was little discussion on Cambodia.

19. The Chairman mentioned Harkin's return and that he had misgivings that Harkins would be a “cause celebre” for the war on Southeast Asia. He stated he men-

¹¹ Lockheed C-130 Hercules cargo plane.

¹² Tank landing ship.

¹³ Adm Ulysses Sharp was scheduled to relieve Adm Harry Felt as commander in chief of Pacific Command in July 1964.

¹⁴ The decisive 1954 battle in which Communist Viet Minh forces defeated the French, signaling the end of French engagement in Indochina.

tioned it to the Secretary, but would take it up again. Harkins leaves on the 20th—has a day in Pearl [Harbor]—and arrives in the U.S. on the 22d.

H. W. Buse, Jr.
MajGen USMC

37. Memorandum for the Record from the Director, Joint Planning Group for the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Quilter)

Washington, 5 June 1964

Subj: JCS Meeting at 1400 on Friday, 5 June 1964

1. LtGen Goodpaster debriefed for the Chiefs the White House meetings of 3 June and 4 June:

Wednesday, 3 June, White House Meeting

- a. Those present: Chairman JCS, CIA, State, Defense, among others.
- b. The President expressed disappointment in the Honolulu report. The Chairman commented, “It looked like we were carrying in a mouse.”
- c. The President approved bringing in Thais through our Deputy ComSMAC-Thai and ambassador to Thailand. The President approved bilateral discussions with the Thais. The concept was: Hold on the Mekong; retaliate principally against NVN *with air strikes*.¹
- d. What does it take to hold the “pan handle” of Laos? SVN forces alone, capability of—or U.S. plus RVN contribution?
- e. The President said we must press forward on the diplomatic front with the U.S. taking the lead:

(1) Our pitch is maintaining peace while defending SEA from communist penetration.

¹ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

(2) The President also indicated that we must have an educational campaign in the U.S. to show U.S. people what we are doing and also what then may be necessary to do.

(3) The President indicated we must demonstrate our firm intentions in the areas of ~~the world~~.

Thursday, 4 June, White House Meeting

a. Those present were senior working level: Taylor, McNaughton, McCone, McNamara, Sullivan, and the two Bundy brothers, among others.

b. State accepted responsibility for the plan of action in connection with Laos; i.e., courses of action on the diplomatic front. This was followed by lengthy discussion. State is to prepare the scenario. There is to be no direct attack on NVN. The scenario is to go to the President at the earliest.

c. A second report for the President was discussed. This related to the group's thinking concerning education and information. Mr. Manning of State was in charge.

d. Mr. McNamara was to prepare a succinct account concerning actions in Vietnam, to include actions in connection with the last Honolulu meeting. Mr. McNamara had a list of military moves to prevent further losses in Laos and Vietnam. Decision:

(1) An Article 4 conference in Vientiane, plus the Polish formula.²

² The lack of context makes it difficult to ascertain Quilter's exact meaning here, though it is possibly a reference to past activities of Polish diplomat Mieczysław Maneli in Saigon. Maneli was the head of Poland's delegation to the International Commission for Control and Supervision (ICC), a body created by the 1954 Geneva Conference to supervise the election on reunifying Vietnam. The body consisted of representatives from Poland, Canada, and India, and although the elections were never held, the ICC continued to maintain offices in Saigon. This gave Polish diplomats access to South Vietnam's leadership, despite the fact that Poland's Communist government did not recognize the regime based in Saigon. In the fall of 1963, Maneli attempted to broker a neutralization agreement between North and South Vietnam, and although the efforts ultimately failed, the possibility of an outside party working to demilitarize the region was likely on the minds of American policy makers as they made decisions regarding Southeast Asia. See Margaret K. Gnoinska, "Poland and Vietnam, 1963: New Evidence on Secret Communist Diplomacy and the 'Maneli Affair,'" Cold War International History Project Working Paper 45 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, 2005), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHP_WP_45b.pdf.

(2) Conduct selective³ reconnaissance in NVN along the supply lines supporting Laos.

e. SecDef wants a plan for this action this afternoon. With reference to the Polish formula, it was estimated that the conference would come to an impasse. At that time these actions are contemplated:

(1) Reintroduce the MAAG into Laos.

(2) Implement education and information programs.

(3) Conduct SVN harassing actions into the Laos corridor with aerial support.

(4) No decision at this time on accompanying Vietnamese armed forces *into Laos*⁴ with the U.S. advisors.

(5) Conduct reconnaissance over Laos with fighter-bomber escort. It was estimated that we might lose the reconnaissance aircraft at any time.

f. A number of movements should be planned:

(1) Army Brigade—Hawaii to Philippines.

(2) Army Brigade—Hawaii to Okinawa.

(3) SLF to South China Sea.

(4) Ten Fighter Squadrons to the Philippines or elsewhere in WestPac.

(5) Aerial mining of Haiphong and its impact on nations dealing with North Vietnam.

(6) Brigade prepositioned stocks in Korat and Okinawa are to be sorted out and put in place for the ~~road~~ ROAD-type⁵ organization as soon as possible.

³ Written in the margin and with an arrow pointing to the word "selective" is "(Draft memo for SecDef approved by JCS)."

⁴ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

⁵ At this point, the Army was transitioning from the Pentomic Division structure to the Reorganization Objective Army Division, or ROAD (pronounced "Ro Add").

The implications of the foregoing actions to be brought out on the paper being prepared for SecDef. It was a feeling that we will get more substance on doing certain positive things in the future.

C. J. Quilter
Brigadier General, USMC

38. Summary of Joint Chiefs of Staff and White House Actions on Emergency Situation in Laos

6 June 1964

1st Meeting 0900 JCS Meeting, 2E924 Pentagon

2d Meeting 1100 at White House¹

3d Meeting 1330 JCS Meeting, 2E924 Pentagon

The JCS met in a special meeting at 0900 this date to discuss action to be taken in connection with the shooting down of an F-8 photographic reconnaissance plane² (on the Plaine des Jarres by the Pathet Lao). This plane was from the Aircraft Carrier *Kitty Hawk*³—the pilot successfully ejected from his cockpit and was seen surrounded on the ground by what appeared to be Pathet Lao troops.⁴ The SecDef and Deputy SecDef (McNamara and Vance) also attended this meeting. After considerable discussion during which the SecDef and Deputy SecDef left the room for approximately 30 minutes and then returned, it was finally decided to make the following recommendation to the President:

- a. Reconnaissance over Laos is a continued requirement and should be resumed immediately. Reconnaissance aircraft should be accompanied by an escort of fighter-bombers. If fired upon, the escort will attack the sources of the anti-aircraft fire.

¹ See Summary Record of the 533d Meeting of the National Security Council, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. 28, *Laos* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 1998), 141–42, hereafter Summary Record of the 533d Meeting.

² This was a Vought RF-8 Crusader, the photoreconnaissance version of an F-8.

³ USS *Kitty Hawk* (CVA 63).

⁴ The pilot was Lt Charles F. Klusmann, USN. He escaped from his captors on 21 August 1964. Jacob Van Staaveren, *Interdiction in Southern Laos, 1960–1968: The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia* (Washington, DC: Center for Air Force History), 27, hereafter Van Staaveren, *Interdiction in Southern Laos*.

At 1100 the Chiefs met in a special meeting at the White House which was attended by the President, Secretary of State Rusk, and a number of other interested individuals whose names are listed in the attached notes. Each Chief was asked for his opinions—each Chief briefly expressed his views and indicated concurrence in the course of action outlined on page 85.⁵ After some discussion, the President asked each of the other conferees present what their recommendation was and all concurred in the course proposed by the SecDef and the Chiefs. This meeting then broke up and the Chiefs returned to the Pentagon.

During this post White House meeting in the “tank” the Chiefs examined a proposed dispatch to CINCPAC ordering the execution of the course of action discussed on page 85. A few minor corrections were made in the wording and the Acting Chairman (LeMay) then left the meeting to check the dispatch with State prior to its scheduled release at 1200. A press release on this subject would be made later in the day, probably about 1800.

The Chiefs met again at 1330. At this meeting, in addition to BGen Quilter, who was Acting OpDep, I also had the ACMC (LtGen Hayes) attend in order that they might become familiar with the situation since I will be departing tomorrow morning at 0800 for SHAPEX⁶ and ACMC will be Acting Commandant.

At this afternoon’s meeting, the following subjects were discussed:

- a. Possible Pathet Lao reaction to the armed reconnaissance flights.
- b. U.S. capabilities in the event of escalation—this amounted to a review of existing CINCPAC plans.

At 1400 the SecDef and the Deputy SecDef joined the meeting and further discussion ensued on the subjects mentioned above.

During the early morning conference, conversation developed involving the Director of the Joint Staff (LtGen Burchinal) and the Deputy SecDef (Vance)

⁵ Recommendation “a” in this document. The record of the 553d Meeting of the National Security Council notes, “General LeMay and General Greene stated that they had personally recommended that the antiaircraft unit which had fired upon the downed aircraft be attacked but both concurred in the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of State [Defense]. Both were certain that future reconnaissance planes would be subject to ground fire.” See Summary Record of the 533d Meeting, 141–42.

⁶ Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe Exercises.

which indicated that about 3:00 o'clock (this Saturday morning) there had been telephone conversations involving search and rescue efforts for the Navy pilot who had been shot down on the reconnaissance mission. Vance apparently had issued an order that "U.S. resources" would not be used in an effort to recover the pilot. This order was contrary to the JCS dispatch which had already been issued sometime prior to the incident, authorizing the CINCPAC to execute search and rescue efforts with U.S. resources in the event a U.S. plane was shot down in Laos. Although I personally do not believe the pilot could have been rescued, in view of the report that he was seen surrounded on the ground by Pathet Lao military, nevertheless, this cancellation of JCS military directive, which I am sure had previously been known to Vance, is surprising and I am sure would produce a bad public reaction if it were to be known by the people of the U.S.

Following the afternoon meeting, Admiral Davis,⁷ in discussing this matter with me suggested that Vance had probably received instructions to execute the action which he did from the State Department. Perhaps these instructions were issued to avoid any chance of escalation of the incident by further involvement of U.S. forces.

Some other items which struck my attention today:

a. The lack of immediate data on plans, forces, and capabilities as provided by the Joint Staff representatives during the meetings. None of these important data were immediately available as they should have been, and, as a result, a great deal of the business had to be done in terms of generalities, guesses, and surmises.

b. BGen Hall, USAF (DIA),⁸ in giving an estimate of Pathet Lao reactions to armed reconnaissance, talked in terms of intention rather than capabilities and was immediately criticized by the Army for using this approach. General LeMay also, in my opinion, did not impress the SecDef with his belligerent and somewhat fumbling way of analyzing and making recommendations concerning the problem at hand.

⁷ RAdm James W. Davis, deputy director of the Joint Staff.

⁸ BGen Linscott A. Hall, Defense Intelligence Agency's assistant director for processing, 1961–64.

The armed reconnaissance action should be completed by 2300 Washington time and a report as to results will be made to the various Command Centers.

General LeMay, when asked by me, recommended that I proceed on to SHAPEX as planned and that if the situation should warrant later on, he would notify me to return.

ACMC (LtGen Hayes) will be the Acting Commandant during my absence and will represent the Marine Corps in meetings and consultations on this Laos incident.

Detailed work notes are attached at the rear of this brief.

39. Memorandum for the Record from Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Buse)

Washington, 16 June 1964

Subj: OpDeps Meeting at 1000 on Tuesday, 16 June 1964

1. At the meeting of the OpDeps at 1000 Tuesday, 16 June 1964, LtGen Goodpaster debriefed a meeting in the State Department which took place at 1800 on Monday, 15 June 1964. In attendance were:

STATE: Mr. Rusk
 Mr. Ball
 Mr. Bill Bundy
 Mr. Sullivan
 Mr. Alex Johnson
 Mr. Manning
 Mr. Harland Cleveland¹

WHITE HOUSE:
 Mr. McGeorge Bundy

 Mr. Forrestal
CIA: Mr. McCone

¹ Harland Cleveland, assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs, 1961–65, and U.S. ambassador to NATO, 1965–69.

AID: Mr. Colby
Mr. Cooper
Mr. Bell
Mr. Gaud
Mr. Stoneman
DoD: Mr. McNamara
Mr. Vance
General Taylor
Mr. McNaughton
LtGen Goodpaster

2. There was no set agenda but Mr. Rusk apparently had three points in mind:

First, Mr. Sullivan expressed the views on the internal morale situation in SVN. The discussion lasted about 30 minutes and was on the line as to whether we are obliged to take greater action in SEA to build up morale and what the action should be. Whether the actions should be against NVN, or increased activity in SVN, or actions in Laos. The discussion was inconclusive.

Second, they considered the Congressional Resolution. It was generally agreed that because of timing problems, the only orderly approach to get such a Resolution would be between the time that action is completed on the Civil Rights Bill and the time that the Congress recesses for the Republican Convention (this is estimated to be about 15 days). They agreed that it would be impracticable to obtain a Resolution in this time unless a coalescing event takes place in SEA which would present a big assist. It is apparent that no proper groundwork has been laid. There is some studying of how Dulles² obtained a similar resolution for Formosa and the Middle East. Mr. Rusk met with the Foreign Relations Committee yesterday and now has greater doubt than ever before that a good Resolution can be secured. In his opinion, if a clean, sharp, quick Resolution could be obtained, it would be helpful; but, that if the Resolution were woolly or there was any delay involved, the loss would be greater than the gain. This subject also borders on the morale question in that the insidious line advanced largely by bad press that we do not have serious intent in SEA is penetrating the bureaucracy at home and abroad. There is a general hedging of *views bets*³ coincident with a wait-and-see attitude.

² John Foster Dulles, U.S. secretary of state, 1953–59.

³ *Italicized section written in ink.*

Third, there was a general discussion of Bill Bundy's paper which was tabled at yesterday's meeting of the JCS. The discussion was very brief since the paper was based on obtaining a Congressional Resolution. There is no alternate paper covering the points in case no Resolution is obtained. There will be a meeting this morning to get a scenario on points that can be done in the next two or three weeks. This was proposed by McNamara who would like to see a list of expected responses as to what may happen in SEA in the next three weeks. This discussion was also inconclusive.

3. McNamara raised the issue of reconnaissance and General Taylor reflected the ideas which the Chiefs had discussed yesterday. McNamara then described specific missions he wanted to set up to relaunch the reconnaissance program. A message was discussed at the OpDeps this morning to reflect this desire and to give CINCPAC a general statement of reconnaissance policy. This message was to be carried by General Taylor to a meeting at 1200 this date at the White House at which time SecDef and General Taylor would present the policy to the President.

H. W. Buse, Jr.
MajGen USMC

40. Summary of Meeting with the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Council Affairs (Smith)

Washington, 12:00 p.m., 17 June 1964

Having worked with Bromley Smith on the Planning Board in 1953–54, I decided to invite him to lunch and a discussion on the organization of a National-Federal Staff. Prior to lunch, I talked with him for a few minutes privately, saying that following lunch I would present an organizational idea to him, and that the reason I wanted to do this was that I had recently become alarmed over the ad hoc/action officer method being used by the White House to deal with the SVN and Laos crisis. I told Smith that I had been here at Headquarters Marine Corps when the Bay of Pigs catastrophe had occurred and that I felt that this had happened because of a decision made as a result of a poorly designed organization to provide the President with advice. The current ripening crisis in SEA had again alarmed me that top executive decisions might be made—and were being made—

without properly integrated and poorly rounded estimates of the situation, and without proper advice for the decision-making authorities within the Administration. I told Smith that I had thought a great deal about this problem, and that my proposal was designed to improve the executive decision-making machinery and to accelerate and to insure the validity of top-level decisions.

Following lunch, we repaired to Room 2201. Colonels Appleyard,¹ Shuler,² and Williams³ were present with me during my discussion with Smith. It was somewhat difficult and awkward to come to grips with the proposal. I attempted to do so by using the lecture on the subject which I had employed at the Armed Forces Staff College and the Air War College.⁴ After some stumbling about, we finally got well into the subject and a full-blown discussion resulted. Smith got to talking about the methods which had been used under President Kennedy and were now shaping up under President Johnson. He stated that a proposal such as ours would never have been acceptable to President Kennedy. Kennedy wanted detailed facts and data and desired to make decisions himself. (I didn't say so, but this was probably the reason for the Bay of Pigs fiasco which certainly appeared to shake Kennedy to his roots and which in itself is a good reason for the establishment of a National Staff to properly furnish the President with proper estimates and recommendations). Smith said that President Kennedy had no use for the Security Council and Planning Board and relied principally on his own intuition and judgment in arriving at decisions. Kennedy did not care for verbal briefings—he wanted the problem presented in writing, and then would call for personal discussions in order to clear up any points in the written document. Smith said that Johnson was different in his approach—that he was willing to sit still for briefings on a problem; e.g., the Program of Underground Nuclear Tests which had recently been given to him in an oral briefing. However the President was interested in a great deal of detail; e.g., during the recent air strike against Viet Cong targets in Laos, he wanted to know when and where each of the strike planes had landed and when they were all safely home, even though it might be necessary to wake him

¹ Col James O. Appleyard, military secretary to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, 1964–66.

² Col Cecil W. Shuler, director of policy analysis division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1961–65.

³ Col John E. Williams, objectives branch for policy analysis, Headquarters Marine Corps.

⁴ Document 27.

in the middle of the night to acquaint him with these facts.⁵ As with Kennedy—since Johnson required so many details and data, the White House Staff, under McGeorge Bundy, had continued to build a highly sophisticated and remarkable communications center in the White House, into which today were pouring hundreds of dispatches from all over the world. The White House Staff had been built around McGeorge Bundy—this was a weakness, said Smith, because if anything happened to Bundy, the system would have great difficulty in continuing to function. The other Presidential Assistants in the White House had been organized into area action officers and each of these individuals attempted to handle the incoming traffic which related to their particular area. The Situation Room in the White House was not a Command Center, said Smith, but was used to portray the world situation for the President's appraisal. Smith said that the staff felt that President Johnson was going to be amenable to any sound suggestions regarding better organization of his Executive Staff, but Smith said he didn't feel much progress would be made in this area until after the election and Johnson knew for sure he had been elected as President for the next 4 years. However, said Smith, this was the most opportune time to commence consideration of any new ideas regarding organization and he greatly appreciated the opportunity to talk with us about a proposed organization of a National Staff. He asked a number of questions regarding the functioning of the Joint Chiefs of Staff organization, and pointed out the problems and the troubles which would be experienced in trying to organize a National Staff in which the civilian departments and many individuals, jealous of their prerogatives, would be involved.

Following his departure, I discussed the meeting with the officers who had been present with me. The consensus was that the major effort in establishing a Master Communications Center in the White House might possibly be leading to an undesirable situation in which the President would base his decisions on how he or his immediate advisors in the White House might interpret incoming messages without bothering to get proper advice from more competent expert members of the Government; e.g., he might make a military decision based on incoming dispatches without first seeking the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This possibil-

⁵ President Johnson authorized fighter escorts for U.S. reconnaissance flights over Laos to suppress anti-aircraft installations following the downing of an RF-8 Crusader on 6 June (see Document 38). On 9 June, eight North American F-100 Super Sabres, flying from Tan Son Nhut airfield in South Vietnam, attacked Communist anti-aircraft installations. Van Staaveren, *Interdiction in Southern Laos*, 27.

ity only served to highlight further the importance of establishing some sort of a National Staff organization—an institutionalized staff as Bromley Smith had put it. Smith had also told us that at some later time he would like to discuss our proposal further and also to tell us more about the way in which the White House advice and decision-making machinery operated. I told Shuler to get in touch with LtCol Moody⁶ immediately (Moody is Assistant to Mike Forrestal, Presidential Assistant) and to inform Moody of our conversation with Smith, and to arrange to have Moody observe the operation of the present organization in the White House as far as decision-making was concerned and to brief us further on this.

⁶ LtCol Clarence G. Moody Jr.

VI. JULY 1964

41. Telegram from Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak) to the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Honolulu, 6 July 1964

Exclusive for Gen Greene from LtGen Krulak

1. Attended meeting with ambassador designate Taylor¹ this morning at CINCPAC headquarters.² Present were component commanders and myself. Purpose, as described by Taylor, was to have a round-up on several key military subjects related to Southeast Asia before he moved on to Saigon.

2. First he addressed the command relationship item—just how he sees his function affecting military affairs. His presentation was unequivocal. It said that while he is going to pull the total U.S. effort in Vietnam together, he does not propose to alter the existing MACV-CINCPAC relationship, that he will expect Westmoreland to come to him with military problems that affect overall policy; on these he will convey his views to the State Department, always giving CINCPAC a copy, following an observation from Admiral Sharp that for COMUSMACV to undertake to supplant the current function discharged by CINCPAC would require a tremendous investment. Taylor agreed and said he had no thought of such a thing happening. He concluded this topic with the observation that the military relationship should, so far as he could see, continue just as in the past.

3. Next he addressed the Farm Gate subject with the purpose only of emphasizing the well-known policy that there should be a bona fide Vietnamese pilot or pilot trainee in the aircraft. He was unenthusiastic to a suggestion by PacAF that the GVN markings on Farm Gate planes be replaced by U.S. markings.

¹ Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, resigned his post to run for the Republican presidential nomination in the spring of 1964. President Johnson subsequently nominated Gen Taylor to serve as his replacement. Douglas Kinnard, *The Certain Trumpet: Maxwell Taylor and the American Experience in Vietnam* (New York: Brassey's, 1991), 132–62.

² Honolulu, Hawaii.

4. Discussion of Laos reconnaissance produced the view from Taylor that it has served a useful purpose, that it should be continued, and that we should be looking carefully at possible targets for armed attack: should such be required in the future. He talked briefly on the ComUSMACV-ComUSMACTHAI relationship. Saying that he hears of some dissatisfaction with the system on the part of the Thais; he plans to look into the matter when he gets to Saigon.

5. Finally, he recounted a memorandum which he had received from CIA covering among other things the subject of switchback. You will recall this to have been the scheme whereby CIA turned over the advisory responsibility for some of the Vietnamese irregulars to U.S. Army Special Forces, apparently CIA wants the job back and has proposed getting some Marines mixed up in it—presumably working under CIA. He said he had put cold water on the proposal. But you can never tell: so I recommend looking into it and knocking it solidly in the head if necessary. I would hate to see our people mixed up in a deal where they are in the middle between CIA and Vietnamese irregulars.

Warm regards.

42. Memorandum for the Record from the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Buse)

Washington, 25 July 1964

Subj: JCS Meeting at 1400 on Friday, 24 July 1964 (Subject: Government of South Vietnam)

1. At the meeting of the Chiefs on Friday, 24 July 1964, General Wheeler¹ announced receipt of four cables² which were causing him great apprehension about the stability of the present government of South Vietnam. He had asked LtGen Carroll of DIA to brief the Chiefs on the cables and give a DIA evaluation. General Carroll came in and briefed the cables as follows:

¹ Gen Earle Wheeler succeeded Taylor as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in July 1964. He was succeeded as Army chief of staff by Gen Harold Johnson. Wheeler would serve as chairman until 1970.

² Greene is referring to four cables from the CIA dated 24 July 1964 reporting on coup plots against Khanh. Most of the agency's sources predicted Khanh would be forced to step down in favor of MajGen Duong Van Minh following pressure from a clique of younger generals. While this did not happen in July of 1964, Khanh would eventually be forced to leave office under pressure from his commanders and other senior officials the following year. Cables, 24 July 1964 (Greene Collection).

a. Quoting a source of an officer close to Khanh who had gone to Da Lat³ and in Khanh's presence suggested to General Dan that he take over Big Minh's job as Chief of State.⁴ Dan refused and stated later that because the offer was made in Khanh's presence that Dan thought he was being baited. At a subsequent meeting Dan was offered the same job, but this time by Khanh himself and Dan again refused.

b. From a source identified as a functionary in the Ministry of National Economy came a report of a coup to oust Big Minh and to move Khanh up to Chief of State.

c. A source identified as LtCol Vong (or Bong) reported that on 24 July a group of Generals decided to remove Khanh and that his successor was not identified, but definitely was not to be Khiem.⁵ Khanh was to be eased out. He reported also that the public statements made by General Ky and Khanh with regard to moving against the North Vietnamese were really a last-ditch effort to rally public support behind Khanh.

d. From a source identified as Van Vy, on 23 July comes a report that Khanh plans to relinquish his position to Big Minh and that Khanh was willing to serve anywhere in the government, including Chief of State. A meeting of younger Generals told Khanh that he must give up his job to Minh. Propaganda tracks are alleged to have been distributed in Saigon with regard to this change.

2. General Taylor met with Khanh on the 23rd and had a private conversation with him after the meeting. Taylor asked Khanh about the rumors and was told that Khanh was aware of them. Further, Khanh stated that efforts against him were probably due to the fact that he placed Minh in the Chief of State's position over the objection of many of his Generals and one of the reasons for so doing was to please Ambassador Lodge. He stated that he knew Minh was now working against him and because of this another group of Generals want Khanh to remove Minh as Chief of State. He then asked General Taylor what the U.S. reaction would be

³ Da Lat, capital of Lam Dong Province.

⁴ Duong Van "Big" Minh, the leader of the November 1963 anti-Diem coup, had been retained by Khanh as nominal chief of state since the coup of January 1964.

⁵ Gen Tran Thien Khiem.

to a change in government. General Taylor told him quite clearly that the U.S. was against it and that Khanh is “our boy.” In reply to Taylor’s offer of assistance, Khanh told him that Taylor could pass the word that the U.S. did not want a change in government. Khanh then asked Max if he thought that he (Khanh) should resign and received the obvious reassurances.

3. General Carroll reported that General Taylor obviously played the whole situation in low key and the DIA evaluation was:

First, that there is clearly some substance in these messages and they indicate the instability of the government.

Second, there is a possibility that they could be feelers to see how he (*Khanh*)⁶ stood with the new regime.

Third, they could be feelers by an opposition group to see how Khanh stands with the new regime.

General Carroll reported that there is no indication either in ComInt or other sources of any activity or troop movements which would be associated with a coup, and the general tenor appeared to be that if in fact there was a change in government it would be a bloodless one.

H. W. Buse, Jr.
MajGen USMC

43. Memorandum for the Record from the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Buse)

Washington, 28 July 1964

Subj: Special JCS Meeting at 1000 on Monday, 27 July 1964

1. In attendance were: General Wheeler, General LeMay, Admiral McDonald, General Johnson, and Lieutenant General Hayes.

⁶ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

2. The Chairman gave a brief summary of the events of the weekend. He referred to the series of CIA messages debriefed by my MR of Saturday, 25 July 1964,¹ which brought up repeated rumors and counter-rumors. He stated that Khanh feels he is subjected to pressures from at least two directions by his own military and that he may be reflecting an attitude of defeatism.

3. General Wheeler and SecDef attended a White House meeting at 1130 on Saturday, 25 July, regarding Saigon to State 213,² 214,³ and 215,⁴ in which 215 dealt with the announcement of increased U.S. support which General Taylor proposed be made by Khanh in Saigon. 213 addressed the “go north” theme and pointed out that General Taylor and his associates are brooding over the slackness in attitude of the leadership of Vietnam and that General Taylor proposed joint planning with the Vietnamese.

4. The Secretary and the Chairman found that State had a draft cable which:

- a. Agreed on the proposals for the announcement;
- b. Flatly rejected the proposal for joint planning because of the possibility of a leak; and
- c. Proposed that GVN attention be diverted by a series of air actions against the panhandle in Laos.

5. When the Chairman was asked to speak on the State draft, he stated that the military actions proposed were not effective, and, although they may have a psychological value, they could also distract the Vietnamese government from its primary task.

6. The President made the following decisions:

- a. He approved the announcement by Khanh of the proposed increase. However, it is understood that the President informed the Chiefs of the wire services that an important announcement would soon be forthcoming in Saigon.

¹ Document 42.

² Telegram from the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State no. 213, 4:00 p.m., 25 July 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 1, 563-66.

³ Telegram from the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State no. 214, 5:00 p.m., 25 July 1964, *ibid.*, 566-68.

⁴ Telegram from the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State no. 215, July 25, 1964, Department of State, Central Files, POL 27 VIET S.

b. The President rejected the State thought that there should be no joint exploration of actions to the north. He did propose that there should be oral discussions between the U.S. and the Vietnamese representative to lay out terms of reference.

c.⁵ The President requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to recommend actions which would obtain maximum military results with minimum U.S. participation and minimum risk of escalation.

7. There was a subsequent meeting Saturday afternoon at the State Department which was attended by Mr. McNaughton and several members of the Joint Staff. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Bill Bundy, and, as a result of this meeting, State to Vientiane 89⁶ was drafted and sent to Unger. Unger's reply is contained in Vientiane to State 170,⁷ in which he flatly rejected the proposals set forth in the State message. The present terms of reference are that McNamara and Rusk would meet on the afternoon of the 27th to discuss a memorandum to be presented to the President on Tuesday the 28th. The Chiefs are meeting at this special session to consider a draft of a Joint Staff paper. In my opinion, this paper merely formalizes as a recommendation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff those actions proposed by the Bundy Committee and sent to the field last Saturday afternoon in State message to Vientiane 89.

8. General Wheeler stated that the President obviously does not want to be pushed by the Vietnamese to take actions which would adversely affect him at home. At the same time he wants to take some positive action if at all possible.

9. There was general discussion by the Chiefs of the Chairman's report. McDonald stated that he would hate to do anything just to boost Khanh's morale. LeMay stated he didn't think much would be accomplished by the items proposed. LtGen Hayes objected to the portions of the appendix which proposed 20 sorties a day and stated that the only effective air attack would be an all-out attack using the assets available. LeMay objected to the cross-border ground operations, and Mc-

⁵ The letter "c" is circled in the original document.

⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Laos no. 89, 6:21 p.m., 26 July 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 1, 574-75.

⁷ Telegram from the Embassy in Laos to the Department of State no. 170. Deptel 89, 5:00 p.m., 27 July 1964, *ibid.*, 579-82.

Donald said he hated to start action in NVN unless we were really ready to go. In this LeMay agreed and both were referring to the mental readiness of the U.S. to start action. LeMay also pointed out that this action may buck up Khanh's morale for a short time but the next week he might be down in the dumps again.

10. The Chiefs considered the paper; made considerable changes in the wording; and, although none were enthusiastic about it, an agreement was reached with the realization that the parameters set down by the President in the directive to General Wheeler were quite restrictive.

H. W. Buse, Jr.
MajGen USMC

44. Summary of Meeting between the President (Johnson) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the White House

Washington, 1:00 p.m., 31 July 1964

Present were: The President, General Wheeler, General LeMay, Admiral McDonald, General Johnson, General Greene, and Military Aide to the President MajGen Clifton.

The meeting was held in the Cabinet Room and lasted for approximately one hour. The conference was originally scheduled for 1230, but was delayed by a ceremony in observance of the Polish Uprising of 20 years ago,¹ in which a Congressional Resolution was signed by the President, and the usual crowd assembled and distribution of signature pens was made in the Rose Garden.

This was one of the customary periodic—although *irregular*²—scheduled meetings of the JCS with the President. General Wheeler had placed two items on the agenda. These were discussed with the President, principally in the form of a briefing by General Wheeler. The two items were:

(1) Exercise High Heels, and

¹ The Warsaw Uprising, launched by the Polish Resistance on 1 August 1944, was an effort to liberate Poland's capital from Nazi German occupation. The failure of the Soviets to intervene on the Poles' behalf ultimately led to the uprising's failure and the destruction of the city by German forces.

² *Italicized section in pencil on original document.*

(2) The Operation Triangle (Laos).³

In connection with the first item, the President indicated that he wanted the Chiefs to give further consideration to the desirability of the President spending half a day in the National Emergency Command Post in the USS *Wright*⁴ off Annapolis in September. He said that there might be some undesirable publicity resulting from this action which would affect the President's place in the Democratic Campaign. The President said he felt it might be better not to take part this time in the Exercise, or else to participate in November following the election.

The President then turned to the situation in SVN and wanted to know what the Chiefs views were regarding this problem. General Wheeler opened the discussion by a very general review of what was being done in SVN, indicating that the Chiefs believed this to be desirable. He then stated that in the long run, however, the Chiefs did not believe this action would be enough in itself, but it would have to be expanded. Wheeler was talking about expansion beyond the borders in SVN in cross-border and air operations against the Viet Minh and Viet Cong activities in Laos, and air attacks against selected targets in NVN. What he said was based on views which had been expressed in the last position paper of the Joint Chiefs in this matter. He wound up by saying that Taylor was certainly faced with a tough problem. The President then turned to me and said, "What do you Marines think of this problem?" Before I could reply, he commenced to comment upon the high esteem in which he held the Marine Corps—the high quality of effort which always typified the Marines and the outstanding Marine Corps personnel in the White House. In fact, he said he had a Marine "courting" at his home (First Lieutenant David A. Lefevre). The President then paused for my reply. I spoke as follows:

"The problem in SVN is a tough one. The present situation there is bad. Under our present actions and programs, I believe that the situation could be maintained without further serious deterioration for some time; however during this period there is always the risk that Khanh might be overthrown by another coup, in which case the country would be plunged into a most undesirable and danger-

³ Name for a Laotian counteroffensive against Pathet Lao forces on the Plaine des Jarres. The operation was supported by U.S. Air Force and CIA personnel.

⁴ From 1963 to 1970, USS *Wright* (CC 2), a converted *Saipan*-class light aircraft carrier, served as a National Emergency Command Post Afloat (along with the converted cruiser USS *Northampton* [CC 1]).

ous position.” I told the President that I felt the resolution of this problem would ultimately rest in the extension of military operations beyond the border of SVN—there would have to be further increase in U.S. effort, particularly in the way of air operations. My opinion was based on the present continuing violation of a fundamental military principle; i.e., letting the enemy dictate the ground on which battle would be joined.⁵

The President, without comment, then turned to the CNO who stated that he was more concerned with the problem of political stability in SVN than he was with the military problem (I had the feeling that Admiral McDonald was saying what he thought the President would like to hear).

It was then General Johnson’s turn and Johnson emphasized the fact that in his opinion morale was good—that contrary to newspaper and other reports, morale within the South Vietnamese forces and *among*⁶ U.S. advisors was good.

It was then General LeMay’s turn and in his typical blunt way he spoke out saying the U.S. was not making much headway in SVN and that he felt that much more could be done. The U.S. cannot win this war by confining its military operations within the borders of SVN. The U.S. is going to have to go north to stop the support which the Viet Cong are getting from Ho Chi Minh. We must make it too expensive to the communists to continue their support to the Viet Cong. This could be done primarily through air attacks against selected targets in NVN. We could commence destroying these targets piecemeal; i.e., by increasing pressures. This would stop resources from flowing to the Viet Cong. The South Vietnamese forces, under General Khanh, need successes to show that there is going to be an end to the thing (war). General LeMay said he remembered that during the first year and a half of World War II, we couldn’t see the end of that conflict—that it was necessary to show some light, some hope that we could win. This same necessity now applied to the situation in SVN; therefore we must go north and take the pressure off. (When LeMay had concluded, I felt that he had bluntly laid his views on the line—and *that*⁷ his views were mine.)

⁵ Here Greene reiterates the basic arguments he laid out in February and March of 1964 (See Memorandum from the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 24 February 1964 [Document 2] and Memorandum from the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 14 March 1964 [Document 8]).

⁶ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

⁷ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

The President replied that he thought that in time following “sufficient effort,” we (the interested countries) could sit down and guarantee independence for Vietnam; however the President didn’t think this could be done under present conditions—there was too much political instability. In many ways their problem (SVN) was much like our own—that of recovering from the assassination (Diem and Kennedy). Furthermore things were moving so rapidly and changes taking place so quickly that it was “not possible to sleep in the same bed on two nights.”⁸ Harkins had been faced with problems with respect to Lodge and so had Westmoreland. Many changes had also taken place in personnel (e.g., new CIA chief⁹ and reorganization of the military headquarters); therefore, in the President’s position, it was a “hell of a poor time in which to carry on an adventure—to strike back.” The President had selected General Taylor to go out to SVN in order to take over the situation there. The President felt that Taylor had the best combination of experience and qualities of any man he could think of to give this job to, to tighten up and straighten up the operations in SVN—to stabilize things out there so that you could “stay in the same bed for two nights.” Taylor’s first report was due at the end of the month (General Wheeler said this report would be delayed until 15 August). The President was waiting to see whether or not this report would indicate an improvement in the operations, or, if there were no improvements, whether or not we were failing.

The President then talked about the participation by other countries in the operation in SVN—of using Australians and Germans as examples, and said that if he could get 30, 40, or 50 missions from other countries out to Vietnam, the governments concerned would commence getting down-to-earth reports regarding what was going on in SVN, and that they would then better understand the problem. It was going to be necessary to go slowly in this situation because if we were to move tomorrow—to retaliate—Khanh might be forced out and someone else would come in who would tell us to “go home.” The President then closed the subject by again saying that he wanted to take a good look at Taylor’s report.

The President then discussed briefings for Goldwater. He said that there had been many rumors that Goldwater was being secretly briefed, or was receiving in-

⁸ Quotation marks in pen on original document.

⁹ Peer de Silva became the CIA’s chief of station in Saigon in 1963.

formation which was not being given to the President; this, of course, was not true. He wanted Goldwater to be briefed and if Goldwater asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff or anyone else in the government for a briefing, he wanted this done. The President thought that it would be good for the Country to know that Goldwater had been thoroughly briefed. General LeMay stated that although he knew Goldwater “as well as he knew the President,” that he had not talked with Goldwater for a long time. He knew that rumors had said that Goldwater, being a Major General in the Air Force Reserve, was being provided with information by the Air Force, but that this was not true and that he (LeMay) had not spoken with Goldwater for a long time. The President replied that he felt that LeMay should talk with Goldwater or anyone else as he desired so long as it was done in an honorable way. He (the President) certainly wanted LeMay to give Goldwater a briefing if he asked for it. If this were to be done, he then wanted a public release made giving the date and hour on which Goldwater was briefed and a statement that “the following subjects had been discussed.”¹⁰

The President emphasized that regardless of the Presidential political campaign, he wanted to do whatever the Country might need; whatever was in the national interest must be done now, if necessary, and regardless of the consequences there should be no waiting until November. (It is interesting to compare this statement with one made at a previous meeting.)¹¹

As the President rose to leave the meeting, he again spoke to me about the Marine Corps and shook my hand very warmly. He also said that he was going to tell his daughter (Lynda) that I had said that we were going to transfer her Marine to Okinawa (apparently this was his idea of a joke!).

¹⁰ Quotation marks in pen on original document.

¹¹ Document 4.

VII. AUGUST 1964

45. Summary of Portions of Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting with the Secretary of Defense (McNamara)

Washington, 2:30 p.m., 3 August 1964

The usual Monday DIA briefing regarding the current situation in SVN was presented to the SecDef and the Joint Chiefs. The picture was a discouraging one and at the conclusion the Secretary stated, "If this report is correct, we have reached a military stalemate which is actually a political victory for the Viet Cong. We are losing the war. We should send out the 6,000 men to SVN as soon as possible." (McNamara was referring to the additional units and advisors which had been requested by COMUSMACV—this request was an item on the JCS addendum for the day and was later discussed by the Chiefs.) "We are taking a defeat. We can't afford to take this and we won't."

The DIA criteria for the analysis which was presented was based on the following four factors:

- a. The Viet Cong are retaining the initiative.
- b. The Viet Cong are avoiding the defensive.
- c. The Viet Cong are committing minimum forces.
- d. The Viet Cong are holding the regular forces (ARVN) to a "stand off."

In order to overcome these disabilities the ARVN must:

- a. Effect a tactical improvement in the fields of counterintelligence, intelligence, and tactical security.
- b. Provide protection to the rural population.

46. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Special Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Operational Deputies at 3:00 p.m. on 4 August 1964

Washington, 1972

[Editor's Note: On 2 August 1964, North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the USS *Maddox* (DD 731), a U.S. destroyer conducting operations in support of intelligence gathering missions code-named "Desoto." *Maddox* was also participating in surveillance operations supporting MACV's Op Plan 34A raids against North Vietnam conducted by South Vietnamese commandos. It was in retaliation to both the Op Plan 34A and Desoto missions that the North Vietnamese attacked the Navy vessel. Two days later, at 6:15 p.m. (local time in Vietnam) on 4 August 1964, *Maddox* and another destroyer USS *Turner Joy* (DD 951) received signals intelligence warning them of a second North Vietnamese attack. Over the course of the next several hours, the two destroyers engaged in a firefight with what they believed was a North Vietnamese attack].¹

This item covers a special meeting, the second one of the day, held by the JCS and operational deputies, at 1500 on 4 August 64, in room 2E924 of the Pentagon.² This, like the earlier meeting of the morning, was a very important one because it was in these meetings that the decisions were made regarding actions that could be taken as a result of the reported attacks against our ships in the Tonkin Gulf. Well, the Chiefs and their operational deputies met at 1500, and it was stated that there was no word of increased alert in the Pacific Command.

¹ Recent scholarship has confirmed what many suspected at the time: that no North Vietnamese attack occurred on 4 August and that a mixture of misinterpreted communications and misidentified radar signals had led the crews of both ships to draw the erroneous conclusion that they were under attack. For accounts of the incident, see Edwin E. Moise, *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); and Robert J. Hanyok, *Spartans in Darkness: American SIGINT and the Indochina War, 1945–1975* (Washington, DC: National Security Agency Center for Cryptologic History, 2002), in particular chapter 5: "Skunks, Bogies, Silent Hounds, and the Flying Fish: The Gulf of Tonkin Mystery, 2–4 August 1964," 175–229, hereafter Hanyok, *Spartans in Darkness*.

² The first meeting that day took place at 11:20 a.m.

The point was made that the president had approved the secretary of defense's Recommendation Number 12, of 17 March 64.³ I don't have this recommendation right at hand; it can be researched, possibly in previous notes, comments that we made on these tapes, or it can be found in public papers. But anyway, this notation apparently had to do with previously recommended action in the event of an emergency such as was now before the Chiefs in the case of the Tonkin Gulf engagement.

Well, as I said, the Chiefs and Op Deps met at 1500, and 7 minutes later the secretary of defense and his deputy Mr. Vance entered the meeting room. The secretary of defense said: "Let's talk about North Vietnamese targets. Time is pressing us and I want nothing given to the press, until the operation is over. We'll strike at 1900 tonight local, and then inform the press. I want six targets struck, commencing at 0700 (which was Washington time), or soon thereafter as weather permits. The targets are Phuc Loy . . . the targets there would be boats. At the same time, oil supplies should be struck at Vinh. The next targets are the boats located at Quang Khe. The next targets are the armed reconnaissance boats located at Lach Chao. We should also strike the boats at Port Wallut, and the boats at Hon Gay. I want to destroy these boats and the oil dumps. If any of the boats are found on the small islands, it's OK to destroy them. I think that the aircraft from the carriers should do this job. Patrol boats at sea beyond the three-mile limit should be destroyed. Reconnaissance should be conducted over the area outside of the three-mile limit over Hanoi and points north but no closer than 50 miles from the Chinese border. Continue the Desoto patrol and defer the execution of Op Plan 34A until 1500 on 5 August."⁴

At 1522 during this meeting, Plan 37 was briefed and three categories of actions were outlined. Category 1: cross the border into Laos. Category 2 involved air mining, commando raids, attack targets as outlined in Plan 23A, and the armed reconnaissance of 16 routes. The Air Force, in discussing this category of action, sug-

³ In his 16 March 1964 memorandum to President Johnson (approved by the president in National Security Action Memorandum 288 on 17 March 1964), McNamara had recommended that the United States "prepare immediately to be in a position on 72 hours' notice to initiate the full range of Laotian and Cambodian 'Border Control' actions . . . and the 'Retaliatory Actions' against North Vietnam, and to be in a position on 30 days' notice to initiate the program of 'Graduated Overt Military Pressure' against North Vietnam." See Document 6.

⁴ Greene is paraphrasing the secretary of defense here as his recording of McNamara's comments are in brief note format.

gested that 94 air targets as previously listed be substituted for the targets in 23A.⁵ And the Air Force also stated that they had eight or nine pilots checked out in the use of air mines and that they had actually already gone beyond the Laotian border.

Under Category 3, a discussion was made as to the advisability of shifting additional targets to Category 2. The Air Force recommended that all Air Force units be moved as indicated under the Category 3 of this plan. The Air Force also recommended that a brigade of Marines be loaded out as a special landing force. The Air Force also recommended the implementation of the following portions of Op Plan 37-64: Farm Gate and the U.S. Air Force portion.

At 1635, a representative of the Defense Intelligence Agency gave the assembly an estimate of the aircraft possessed by Communist China because there was a considerable question in the minds of the conferees at this time as to what the reaction of Red China would be in the event that vigorous action was taken by U.S. forces and in response to the Tonkin Gulf attack. The DIA's estimate listed the following aircraft as available to Communist China: 200 jet fighters; 20 Il-28s; 5 Il-10s; 29 MiGs, models 15 and 17; and 36 MiGs, model 17.⁶

In reply to a question by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the question being: "Can targets be attacked by our aircraft successfully without being shot down?" The Air Force representatives replied, "Yes," and furthermore that they believed there would be no reaction from the Chinese Communists.

Several dispatches were then read by the director of Joint Staff and these indicated that at least 11 torpedoes had been fired during the engagement.

The secretary of defense said, "Are you sure [of] that, of the attack as being made on our vessels?" You see, even at this point, Mr. McNamara had some doubt

⁵ A Joint Chiefs of Staff working group produced a list of 94 locations to be targeted in the event of a U.S. bombing campaign against North Vietnam. These sites included airfields, military installations, reconnaissance routes, oil facilities, power plants, and lines of communications nodes. The list was formally presented as appendix A of JCSM-729-64 Target Study—North Vietnam, 24 August 1964. See Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Response to JCSM-729-64: Target Study—North Vietnam (S), 29 August 1964, in *Pentagon Papers* (Gravel Edition), vol. 3, 555. See as well Charles Tustin Kamps, "The JCS 94-Target List: A Vietnam Myth That Still Distorts Military Thought," *Aerospace Power Journal* 15 (Spring 2001): 67–80, hereafter Kamps, "JCS 94-Target List."

⁶ The Ilyushin Il-28, NATO reporting name "Beagle," was a Soviet-designed medium jet bomber. The World War II-vintage Ilyushin Il-10, NATO reporting name "Beast," was a Soviet piston-engine attack aircraft. The Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-15 and its more advanced version, the MiG-17, were both Soviet-designed jet fighters.

at least in his mind as to whether there'd actually been an attack or not and this was a very important point to note. "Well," the director replied, "CNO is awaiting positive confirmation."⁷

Well, at any rate, right after this question, at 1650, the secretary of defense departed very abruptly. The chairman then left shortly thereafter to give the secretary and to get his approval on a patrol ship dispatched. Shortly thereafter, the secretary of defense and Mr. Vance reentered the Tank and said that the message that had been presented to them previously by the director was OK except for weather provisions and the effect on the press by an announcement of an attack. They stated also, the secretaries, that inquiries had already started to come in from the press, and at 1712, [the] secretary of defense, who had been in and out of the Tank, reentered and stated that the story had broken on the AP and UP⁸ press system and he said then, "Let's look at the evidence of the attack." And, at this point, I make the note that the secretary of defense finally appeared convinced that an attack did actually take place. And this was at 1712 on the 4th of August.⁹

⁷ In the margin of his notes summarizing this exchange, Greene wrote: "?!#," though he did not provide any explanation. At this point, Greene paused in summarizing his notes to discuss the issue of who fired the torpedoes with interviewer Benis Frank: "Now, in reply to your question as to who fired the torpedoes, I don't have in my notes an indication as to who did fire these torpedoes, whether they were fired by the attacking vessels or whether they were fired by the U.S. ships. At any rate, during this engagement, according to these dispatches, at least seven torpedoes had been fired." In response to this, Frank asked if this was an indication that McNamara was suspicious that the crisis was a "whole put-up job, but with no indication of who had put the job up." Greene's response was, "No, oh, I don't think he thought it was a put-up job, but he knew that visibility was nighttime, and visibility was very poor, and I'm sure that in his mind he was wondering whether there'd been a mistake or not, and I think this is a very important point, and even at this point, in this meeting, the second one of the day, the Chiefs apparently weren't prepared to assure him that there had been an attack, they sort of bucked the question to the CNO, stating he was awaiting positive confirmation." Greene Oral History, 18 January 1972.

⁸ The Associated Press and United Press/United Press International news agencies.

⁹ Greene paused in summarizing his notes here following a question from the interviewer to recount the timeline of the events in light of McNamara's continued uncertainty about the attacks. Greene noted, "Well, remember, the first meeting of the day was at 1130, as previously taped, and at this meeting with the Chiefs, the dispatch, the first dispatch regarding the attack against the Desoto patrol, was a dispatch with the time of 0741 on and then the second dispatch, as I read from my notes was timed at 0946, and in which they stated that three surface and three aircraft of the enemy had been detected and that the Desoto patrol was under attack and one destroyer had already dodged 5 torpedoes, and I would say that this then answers our previous question as to who fired 11 torpedoes. Apparently they were fired, according to the report, by the enemy. And then, of course, we recorded at 0926 a total of eight aircraft and then a dispatch from the [USS] *Ticonderoga* [CVA 14] as a CAP to the Desoto patrol two F-8s, two A-3s [Douglas A-3 Skywarriors], and four A1-Hs. Apparently the attack, according to these previous notes, was timed at about somewhere between 0741 and 0946. The Chiefs met at 1130, the second meeting took place at 1500, and of course the secretary of defense and his deputy were involved in both of these meetings." Greene Oral History, 18 January 1972.

At any rate, this was a very important day; these meetings were very important meetings because finally late in the afternoon we see that the secretary of defense appeared to be convinced that the attack in Tonkin Gulf had actually taken place, and based on this feeling, the decisions to go ahead in retaliation were approved and the action was actually taken. We also see that at this time, just about the time that the secretary of defense was making this decision, the story had already been broken on two of the major press systems, and this of course exerted pressure on him to make up his mind as to whether he believed that the attack had been made and as to whether or not action should be taken.

Well, after this 1712 entry, the question of reinforcements for retaliatory action was discussed, and then the Air Force came in and said that they weren't sure at this time that their planes had taken off by 0700 and there should be no press release regarding their flight until they were actually over the target. And we should wait for confirmation, as they put it, confirmation of the targets. Then the secretary of defense came back to the question of reinforcements and recommendations the Chiefs might want to make regarding reinforcements, and then the chairman read from the draft dispatch, which he had previously shown outside of the conference room to the secretary of defense and, presumably, to Mr. Vance, the deputy.

At 1730, I have a notation here that the director read a message to the conferees, which was actually a radio intercept of North Vietnamese traffic showing that the North Vietnamese had lost two boats. And, of course, this is the type of message which would work to strengthen the secretary of defense's view that an attack had actually taken place.

At 1733, the CNO read an ONI message from the NSA showing that a Chinese Communist air regiment was moving into North Vietnam. And so here again we see as these events were unfolding the continued worry that the Chiefs and the secretary had regarding the possible intervention by the Red Chinese.

At 1735, the secretary of defense directed that the Joint Staff and ISA prepare a map for briefing the press and accompany it with a scenario of events. This was something that the secretary apparently was going to use himself in briefing the press later on. Then the secretary of defense raised some questions. He said, "Can we, if necessary, hit the airfields in North Vietnam which may be occupied

by the Red Chinese air division previously reported moving down to North Vietnam?” The answer to this coming from the Chiefs and primarily the chief of staff of the Air Force was, “Yes.” And secondly, the secretary of defense asked, “What about protection for the carriers?” And apparently, although I have no notation here, there was no problem with connection to that. And then, the secretary of defense ordered that the message regarding the movement of forces be held until cleared with the president. I think this an important note, too. I mean the fact they were finally convinced that the Tonkin Gulf attack actually had taken place, secondly that retaliation should be taken by the United States, and thirdly that the action should be cleared with the president. I think these are important things that took place during the meetings on this day.

47. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Special Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Operational Deputies at 10:00 a.m. on 5 August 1964

Washington, 1972

This next item has to do with a special JCS meeting with the Chiefs and the deputies. It was held in the National Military Command Center in the Pentagon, at 1000 on 5 August 1964. Now, at the beginning of this meeting, three sets of documents were distributed. The first was a document covering the results of the previously directed strike mission. Secondly, a document covering the proposed force deployments, and thirdly, a message to CinCPac regarding the 94-target list and the times on target. This 94-target list actually listed 94 different targets that were recommended for strikes, and this was a very important document and during these days of August, this target list was often discussed and consulted.

These 94 targets did not incorporate the prime targets that had been previously recommended by me. I'm talking about targets such as Hanoi and Haiphong, the hardware at Haiphong and the petroleum storages, which at that time had not been dispersed, and of course the principal industrial targets, such as the iron works northwest and the steel plant northwest of Hanoi. No, these were not in these targets.

The chairman briefed the Chiefs regarding a meeting which had been attended by Secretary of State Rusk, his deputy Mr. Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Mr. Vance,

Mr. Rowan, Mr. Kline of CIA, and Mr. McCone and Mr. Dillon.¹ At this meeting the secretary of defense had briefed these individuals regarding the 4 August attack on two U.S. destroyers. Mr. Rusk then said that the security council of the United Nations should be informed as well as the SEATO and NATO organizations. I have an entry here to the effect that Rusk also said that it was the basic policy of the U.S. that an unprovoked attack would be what I interpret here to say would be “reassessed.” I’m not sure of the word “reassessed.”

Anyway, after Mr. Rusk’s comments, Mr. McCone spoke and said he was talking about the reaction from our attacks on the part of the North Vietnamese. He said that there would be a tracked North Vietnamese reaction but not overt war with the United States and that Il-28s and MiG-17s would be moved into North Vietnam and would engage us, our air forces that might move over North Vietnam. McCone also stated that, in his opinion, Chinese Communist forces would continue to move into North Vietnam, that there would be terror attacks in South Vietnam, that there would be air aggression against Saigon, and that the maximum reaction in his opinion would be for the USSR to join but with no tangible declaration of war.

Then there followed among these conferees, said the chairman, a lengthy discussion, but there was no disagreement regarding the actions and movements as approved by the president and as proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Now I think this is an important thing to know, that the decision was made by the secretary of defense to conduct retaliatory attacks, that this was approved by the president, and that there was no disagreement among these representatives of principal governmental departments about these actions and movements being taken. Then the chairman said that that evening of the 4th (the previous day) at either 1945 or 2045, that the Congressional leaders had been called in and the president, secretary of defense, Mr. Vance, Mr. Rusk, and the chairman had remained on to brief the congressional leaders. At this secondary meeting the night before, Mr. Vance still had been there, among others, Mr. Albert, Saltonstall, Halleck, Dirkson, Mr.

¹ C. Douglas Dillon, secretary of the treasury, 1961–65.

McCormack.² There ensued a long talk and the president discussed the situation with them, and talked about what was going to be released in the way of information, public information. . . .

. . . The president then discussed the situation specifically at this meeting with the secretary of defense, secretary of state, and Mr. McCone, and as the president also talked to the chairman at this meeting to make sure that he had the views of the Joint Chiefs. There again followed a discussion of actions that were necessary, military actions, and also a discussion of the psychological effect worldwide, of this retaliatory action by the United States. At this time, and I think it's very important to note, the chairman reported in his briefing to the Joint Chiefs that at this meeting the night before with the representatives from Congress the desirability of a resolution by Congress was discussed and also at the end of the meeting of the night before, all unanimously supported the president and the action that had been taken. Of course, I didn't hear this directly myself, and I'm sure that this was correct, correctly reported to the Chiefs by the chairman at this time. . . .

. . . Meeting of the Chiefs continued, and I have a note here to the effect that a Major Hendrix or a Lieutenant Colonel Shepherd, then probably from the joint staff who were present, stated that the *Maddox*, the *Turner Joy*, and three PT boats were involved in the Tonkin incident and that the *Turner Joy* reported one sunk and one damaged with no casualties or damage to the *Turner Joy*. Here we see information quickly going in to confirm that an actual attack had taken place during the Tonkin Gulf incident. Now there's also a comment made by these officers to the effect that the *Constellation* [and] *Ticonderoga* were on station; apparently there were some 64 planes available on the *Constellation*.³ Pierce Arrow was a code name given to the attack on the targets as proposed and approved, proposed by the Joint Chiefs and approved by the secretary and the president the day before.

² Leverett A. Saltonstall was a Republican senator from Massachusetts (1945–67). Charles A. Halleck was a representative from Indiana (1935–69) and was serving as House minority leader in August 1964. C. Everett Dirksen, senator from Illinois (1951–69), was the Senate minority leader from 1959 to 1969. John W. McCormack, representative from Massachusetts (1928–71), was the Speaker of the House of Representatives from 1962 to 1971.

³ Greene wrote the number "64" after the word "Constellation" in his notes. While he deduces he wrote this to indicate the carrier had 64 aircraft aboard, another explanation is that it was simply referring to the USS *Constellation's* hull number: CVA 64.

Now the brief continued at this meeting for the Chiefs, and there were situation strike reports and positive reports of pilots and photos of the Ben Thuy.⁴ This strike report at Vihn, that the fuel targets were burning fiercely, that the six PTs in the harbor had been attacked and one destroyed, that the attacking U.S. planes had run into heavy fire and one F-8 had been hit but had been able to land at Da Nang. At the Ben Thuy, the fuel oil targets had been struck and were burning, and a big photo of this was shown to the Chiefs, and the destruction was estimated at Ben Thuy looked to be 90 percent. A statement at this time was also made to the effect that 14 aircraft from the *Constellation* had been recycled during these attacks. At Hon Gay, the flight meters in the U.S. attacks reported that five PT boats had been destroyed. U.S. losses consisted of one A-4,⁵ and as the plane went down, no bailout had been observed. At Quang Khe, five patrol boats of the enemy had been severely damaged. In the Lau Chau estuary, the pilots reported that six PT boats had been observed in groups of three. Of these, four PT boats had been severely damaged, one PT lightly damaged, and one PT moderately damaged, that the attacking U.S. planes had received 20 minutes of fire from these boats and U.S. losses consisted of one A-1 shot down in the vicinity of Lau Chau estuary and no survivors were reported.

The Chiefs then engaged in a discussion regarding the attack, and LeMay stated that we should have waited longer, 24 hours, but the chairman replied that the psychological factors were most important, that this be done as soon as possible, and the chairman also said that the State Department was trying to block the use of B-57 squadrons as being provocative action if they were used. LeMay then said that he was concerned about the air defense in North Vietnam that had been uncovered during these attacks and that he had two squadrons of F-104s⁶ and that he was looking at the situation to see if he should send these out. The chairman agreed that he should do this. . . .

CNO came in at this time and said that it was a mistake for the U.S. to attack PT boats in territorial waters. The chairman said, "Well, they didn't. The North

⁴ North Vietnamese naval base at the mouth of the Lam River.

⁵ The pilot of this Douglas A-4 Skyhawk bailed out and survived. Lt (jg) Everett Alvarez Jr. was subsequently captured by the North Vietnamese and remained a prisoner of war for eight years. The pilot of the A-1H Skyraider, Lt (jg) Richard C. Sather, did not survive.

⁶ Lockheed F-104 Starfighter.

Vietnamese didn't expect us to go in, because we found the PT boats to be sitting ducks. They weren't even fanned out, they were in nests." And then General LeMay came back in and said, "Well, in any event, their attack against our ships was a deliberate affair, and they certainly couldn't expect the U.S. not to do anything." The photo coverage was reported as completed, and [it was also reported] that armed reconnaissance was scheduled outside of the three-mile limit and that U.S. planes ran into heavy flak and that the damage to our attacking planes was one A-1 down, one A-4 at Hon Gay, and one F-8 damaged and able to reach Da Nang. There was now a review of movement orders as planned by the JCS during the meeting of the previous day, and the chairman discussed the desirability of getting political authority to deploy South Vietnamese and Thai forces quickly.

I have notes which indicate that it was agreed that Task Unit 173 should be held in strategic reserve on Okinawa, that our forces on Hawaii should be alerted, and that two additional C-130 squadrons should be moved forward from ConUS. At this time a report was also made regarding Typhoon Ida, which was located 400 nautical miles east of Manila and at 0800 local had been moving at the rate of 120 knots over the mainland, and this would possibly hamper operations from Clark Air Force Base.⁷

Then the status of covert action under Op Plan 34A was discussed, and now this Op Plan 34A was of course one of the key preliminary plans covering increased action against North Vietnam and it included details of covert actions to be taken, and this plan is certainly one that should be referred to and researched when examining these notes. Of course, I don't have a copy of that plan attached [inaudible] ...

... Now the chairman, at this time, in discussing 34A, recommended asking CinCPac regarding its implementation because he didn't want to get the reactions from the North Vietnamese, so the chairman said himself, mixed up by different actions. In other words, a retaliatory action against the Tonkin attack and then a possible reaction against covert attacks, so he wanted to consult with CinCPac before they went forward with covert actions.

Then the problem of reconnaissance was brought up and the director of the Joint Staff said that he was not sure yet that all the reconnaissance information

⁷ Clark Air Base in the Philippines.

had been received as the time factor was the key to this reception. Then, in regard to the Desoto patrol, the information was given that the *Turner Joy* and the *Mad-dox* had withdrawn for replenishment and that they were prepared to resume their patrol tomorrow. And the question was, “Should we resume the patrol or not?” At this point, the Chief of Naval Operations came in and recommended that the patrol be suspended for the next two or three days.

A situation report has gone out to all unified commands. It went out last night and this morning that Defense Condition 3 has been established for U.S. forces in Korea, and CinCPac has been asked to try to get the Koreans to establish a similar readiness condition. And then a discussion was made by the Army about the available Hawk battalions.⁸ Then, the chairman came into the discussion by saying Mansfield and Dirkson had notified him that they wanted to know [what was] on the tickers—what they meant was they wanted to get the press reports, and then they said they wanted these before they went to the White House. Dirkson had told the chairman that two newspaper men had called him with data received from the Pentagon, and the secretary of defense had said that he knew where this leak had occurred. . . . The meeting then closed with emphasis placed on the danger of leaks and the care that should be exercised in discussing a classified matter over the telephone, and the point was made that the secretary of defense himself and Admiral Sharp, [the] CinCPac, often discussed classified matters over open circuits.

48. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:00 p.m. on 5 August 1964

Washington, 1972

The following summary consists of notes made during the regular JCS meeting of 5 August between the hours of 1400 and 1700. At this meeting, we started off in Room 2E924 with a special briefing regarding Southeast Asia, and it was stated that to start with and in general, the Asian Communists had condemned the Tonkin retaliatory action, Western allies thought it was justified, and the Soviets and the Soviet bloc had little comment. Then they announced, the briefers did, that North

⁸ Raytheon MIM-23 Hawk surface-to-air missile.

Vietnam, according to Radio Hanoi, acknowledged that the *Maddox* had sunk two boats, but that the attacks against North Vietnam were sheer aggression, provocation, and so forth. The radio referred to U.S. strafing of the village and shelling of the islands and stated that the *Maddox* had infringed on North Vietnamese sovereignty, and therefore the U.S. must bear full responsibility and that it was a new scheme to cover up, as they said, the flags of North Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

Now the Chinese Communists were silent except for a news release today in which they called the U.S. retaliation provocative actions, and the Soviet Union didn't have much to say except that the air strikes by the U.S. represented a defeat for U.S. forces, that the two pirate raids had been made by the U.S. against North Vietnam, against shipping, and that the U.S. had had to revert to air attacks.

Cuba had commented to the effect that this action had been taken without a declaration of war or the approval of the U.S. Congress. In the free world, the British called it legitimate self-defense; the French, inevitable because of the danger of losing face; the Netherlands praised the action; Australia said it was completely justified; Thailand called it "not an act of aggression but self-defense"; the Japanese approved it but hoped that a settlement could be reached; and India was deeply distressed that it destroyed the peace of Southeast Asia, which they hoped could be restored.

A quote from the Chinese news agency: there was a report that two Soviet fighters had crossed China and landed at Hanoi; however, the reader said there was no real foundation to support this report. There had been no change in position of Soviet bloc forces or Chinese Communist forces or Viet Cong in South Vietnam.

A further report presented, on the North Vietnamese reaction, the Army comment on 5 of August that U.S. planes had strafed several areas and targets and air defense units of North Vietnam and had fought them off. They claimed, the Communists did, they had shot down five U.S. planes and captured one U.S. pilot alive. They called the U.S. action an extremely brazen act without provocation, and they were ready and determined to defeat all further U.S. attacks. The North Vietnamese protested that this attack by the U.S. high command was a serious crime, and the shelling and strafing of a peaceful people, and that the South Vietnamese were nothing but U.S. lackeys. The North Vietnamese Navy was taking self-defense mea-

tures, [claiming] that they had downed one U.S. plane, and the reason for the U.S. to carry out such an attack was because their war on South Vietnam was failing. The North Vietnamese High Command swears that the U.S. must be responsible for all the consequences coming from such provocations.

Then there follows a preliminary assessment given to the meeting of the damage done by the U.S. retaliatory attacks. Twenty-seven types of targets were observed; 11 were possibly destroyed and 14 damaged. And this report was confirmed later by photographs and then by [a] bomb damage report involving assessments of the raids. As far as reactions in South Vietnam are concerned, there were no reports regarding VC reaction. General Westmoreland and General Khanh had expected retaliation by the U.S.¹ and that vital targets were of course airfields, communication routes by the VC, and that Westmoreland and Khanh intended to provide maximum security and to maintain alerts and to guard against mass sabotage and assassination. And the comment was also made that in the event Khanh should be killed, then Khiem would be his probable successor. CinCPac had notified the Joint Staff that 30–60 aircraft were required for armed reconnaissance over North Vietnamese targets, but the JCS upon learning of this message from CinCPac did not agree and said “no” to him.

The CinCPac had also requested permission to renew the Desoto patrol, and the chairman recommended that after he saw the secretary of defense that he would recommend and request approval in two days’ time, and revised rules of engagement for U.S. forces will be in, as recommended, from CinCPac, by Friday.

At this time, as the meeting was about to break up, the problem arising in the Congo,² based on the dispatch from the U.S. ambassador in Leopoldville, was noted by the Joint Chiefs. Of course, the thing is, the action, which was so sharp in Vietnam, far outweighed in the days that were to follow, the problem, which actually in normal times would have been a very serious one, that was developing in the Congo and involved a U.S. airlift in action.

¹ Greene likely meant retaliation “against” the United States rather than “by” the U.S. here.

² On 5 August 1964, Simba rebels seized the Congolese city of Stanleyville and took Western hostages. The hostages were freed in November of that year by a joint U.S.-Belgian airborne operation.

49. Memorandum from the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force (LeMay) to the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Washington, 19 August 1964¹

The draft enclosure² is an effort to suggest a way of obtaining continued improvement in coordinated national planning. I would appreciate your reviewing this, with a view to informal JCS discussion in the near future to include your reactions and any suggestions you may have.

Curtis E. LeMay³

Copy to:
Adm McDonald
Gen Wheeler
Gen Johnson

Memorandum by the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force for the Joint Chiefs of Staff
on Reactivation of the Machinery of the National Security Council

CSAFM Draft

1. The President has clearly expressed his desire that he be provided with the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in all policy-making areas in which they have a proper concern. Thorough study has convinced me that the machinery⁴ of the National Security Council must be wholly or partially reactivated if the professional recommendations of the nation's military leadership are to reach the President in a systematic manner.
2. I proposed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff request the Secretary of Defense to ad-

¹ At the bottom are handwritten instructions from Gen Greene: "19 August 1964: CMC to Dep C/S (P&P): 1) Review, as necessary, CMCM study memo re: establishment of US General (Federal) Staff and prepare covering memo for CMC sig. for distribution to Jt Chiefs to supplement this memo."
² The enclosure to this memorandum actually entails three draft memoranda: the first is a draft memo for the Joint Chiefs; the second, a memo from the Joint Chiefs to the secretary of defense; and the third, a draft memo from the secretary of defense to the president.
³ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.
⁴ Underlining is in ink on original document.

wise the President that the considered opinion of his military advisers is that the machinery of the National Security Council should be rejuvenated.

3. I understand that there currently is a group meeting once each week, held under the sponsorship of Mr. Walt W. Rostow, Counselor and Chairman of Policy Planning Staff, of the Department of State, which sometimes addresses major issues of national policy. I understand further that the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is regularly represented at these meetings. There is no associated administrative machinery, however, which insures that viewpoints are solicited from all of the agencies concerned with a particular issue. Currently informal arrangements do not, in my judgment, provide the basis for bringing well-rounded military views to bear on National Security issues and cannot be fairly considered to be an adequate substitute for the Planning Board and formal machinery of the NSC of prior years. Nonetheless, in the prevailing situation and until more basic corrections are achieved, the Joint Chiefs of Staff are obligated to use this vehicle as a means for voicing their corporate views on policy issues, to the degree that the full range of those views can be adequately represented by the Office of the Chairman.

4. Re-institution of the formal machinery of the National Security Council would be a major departure from current practice. A recommendation of such magnitude from the Joint Chiefs should be made without reservation—with the clear understanding that it enjoys their unanimous approval.

5. It is recommended that:

- a. The enclosed Memorandum be forwarded to the Secretary of Defense.
- b. The Director, Joint Staff, prepare for JCS consideration proposals as to means for reflecting JCS corporate views in the discussions of the group referred to in paragraph 3 above.
- c. This paper NOT be distributed to commanders of unified or specified commands.
- d. Copies of this paper NOT be forwarded to U.S. officers in NATO activities.
- e. Copies of this paper NOT be forwarded to the Chairman, U.S. Delegation, United States Military Staff Committee.

Draft Enclosure

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Re-Activation of the Machinery of the National Security Council

1. The President has clearly expressed his desire that he be provided with the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in all policy-making areas in which they have a proper concern. Thorough study has convinced me that the machinery of the National Security Council must be wholly or partially reactivated if the professional recommendations of the nation's military leadership are to reach the President in a systematic manner.
 2. Prior to 1961, the Joint Chiefs of Staff participated formally in the decision-making process, as advisers to the National Security Council. The corporate and/or separate views of the Joint Chiefs were included at all levels of the NSC machinery, especially during the preparation and circulation of papers by the Planning Board. The Joint Chiefs assigned a high-ranking officer to the duty of providing proper military representation to assist in the development of national policy. The Chairman of the JCS regularly attended NCS meetings, and individual Service Chiefs and Secretaries attended when appropriate.
 3. The de-activation of such subsidiary NSC agencies as the Planning Board has had a far-reaching effect upon the manner in which professional military advice reaches the President and other members of the NSC. Although means and authorities exist whereby such advice may be conveyed even to the highest level, the rendering of this advice is not facilitated by current arrangements. The principal requirement, in our judgment, is that when national security policy is at issue, particularly with regard to profound questions of professional military concern, the professional advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff seems indispensable at the several stages of the sound and logical governmental decision-making process.
 4. The Joint Chiefs of Staff request that you advise the President that the considered opinion of his military advisers is that the machinery of the National Security Council should be rejuvenated to the extent required to insure that the objectives outlined above are realized.
 5. It is recommended that the enclosed Memorandum be forwarded to the President.
-

Draft Enclosure
Memorandum for the President

Subject: Re-Activation of the Machinery of the National Security Council

1. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have requested me to advise you of their considered judgment that increased use should be made of the National Security Council and that the NSC Planning Board should be re-established on a basis that will provide for effective participation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Upon reflection I have concluded that this is a salutary recommendation, and I join the Chiefs in commending it to your attention.
2. Since the de-activation of the NSC machinery in 1961, we have not had an administrative arrangement which guarantees that all of the information necessary to the NSC decision-making process will be brought to bear in a systematic fashion. While I agree that NSC machinery may have been too formalized prior to 1961, I agree with the Joint Chiefs that we may have gone too far in dismantling their machinery.
3. The Department of State currently sponsors a meeting each week, at the Assistant Secretary level, at which major policy issues are sometimes addressed. These meetings are quite productive and they provide a useful vehicle for an exchange of departmental views, but I do not believe they are a completely effective substitute for systematic arrangements which should facilitate and improve governmental decision-making.
4. As an initial step in this direction, I believe it would be of benefit to you and to other members of the National Security Council if the NSC Planning Board, or a suitable equivalent, were re-activated in such a manner as to achieve the objectives I have outlined above.

**50. Memorandum for the Record by the Commandant
of the Marine Corps**

Washington, 3:00 p.m., 20 August 1964

Subj: Extract from a discussion [of] Joint Chiefs with Mr. McCone (Director, CIA),
19 1500 Aug 64

1. To my knowledge this was the first meeting of the Joint Chiefs during which Mr. McCone, as Director of CIA, has been present to brief or discuss mutual problems

with the Joint Chiefs. His predecessor, Allen Dulles, had customarily done this on a regular basis (monthly or quarterly?).

2. This first meeting with Mr. McCone had been brought about by Mr. McCone's request that he be permitted to meet on a regular basis with the Joint Chiefs. Having been delayed by a conference and luncheon at the White House, Mr. McCone did not arrive at the Pentagon until about 1530. He remained until 1610, and it was evident that although he was glad to have the opportunity to be present, he was nevertheless pushed for time and by 1600 appeared to be trying to extricate himself from the meeting.

3. This first meeting was rather general in nature—a mutual probing being made by both sides to determine issues of major and common interest. In discussing covert operations in North Vietnam, Mr. McCone made an interesting admission. He stated that the CIA had been charged with this operation for a long time—some two years (CAS¹). “We have been derelict in not carrying on in the past few years,” he said. He then gave what to me was the lone and lame excuse that adequate boats (“Nasty”-type craft²) had not been available and he intimated that this was the reason why the CAS effort in Vietnam had not been more intensive. Earlier entries in this journal do not substantiate this statement by Mr. McCone.

Wallace M. Greene, Jr.
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

51. Memorandum for the Record from the Army Assistant to the Military Aide to the President (Lieutenant Colonel James M. Connell) Recording Proceedings of Presidential Briefing¹

Washington, 6:15 p.m., 21 August 1964

The president met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Cabinet Room of the White House at approximately 6:15pm, August 20, 1964. The meeting consisted

¹ Controlled American Source (CIA Station, Saigon).

² Norwegian-built patrol torpedo fast (PTF) boats used by the U.S. Navy.

¹ The only record Gen Greene left in his papers was a page with the typed words: “JCS w/President at White House on Highly Classified Subject 20 Aug 64” (Greene Collection). This memorandum for the record was written by LtCol James M. Connell, USA, of the Office of the Military Aide to the President. The original can be found in the LBJ Library, Box 2, Papers of C.V. Clifton.

of a fifteen-minute presentation on the Single Integrated Operations Plan (SIOP) followed by a short discussion period.

The following attended:

The President

General Earle G. Wheeler, USA, Chairman, JCS

General Curtis E. LeMay, Chief of Staff, USAF

General David L. McDonald, USN, Chief of Naval Operations

General Harold K. Johnson, USA, Chief of Staff, USA

General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., Commandant, USMC

Major General J. B. McPherson, USAF, Vice Director, J-3 (briefer)

Captain C. B. Anderson, USN, J-3 Directorate

Lieutenant Colonel James M. Connell, USA, Office of the Military Aide to the President

Commander John V. Josephson, USN, Office of the Military Aide to the President

The briefing covered the following three major points:

1. The five decisions which the President must make
2. JCS implementation following Presidential decision
3. Consequences of SIOP execution

In response to a question from the President, General Wheeler discussed the basis of the casualties estimate resulting from SIOP execution.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff urged the President to participate in a SIOP practice exercise in the near future (after election). General Wheeler stated that the President could participate in a practice exercise from a relocation site, the command post afloat, an airborne command post, or from the White House itself. General Wheeler stated that he would request the President to devote approximately half a day to exercise participation at a location other than Washington, D.C.

General Wheeler discussed briefly communications from the Presidential aircraft to the Department of Defense. He reminded the President that a set of SIOP reference documents were always readily available to the President.

The meeting ended at approximately 7:00pm.

James M. Connell
LtCol, Inf
Army Assistant to the
Military Aide to the President

52. Memorandum from the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force (LeMay)

27 August 1964

Subj: Re-Activation of the Machinery of the National Security Council

Ref: (a) Memo of 19Aug64 from Gen LeMay to Gen Greene, enclosing Draft CSAFM, subj as above.

Encl: (1) Summary of Study, "Organization of a National Staff"

I wholeheartedly concur in the need expressed in your draft CSAFM for a rejuvenation of our national security machinery in a manner that will ensure consideration of the professional recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, together with the viewpoints of all agencies concerned with issues affecting the national security. My own thinking on this subject has convinced me that extensive action is necessary to make our national security machinery and procedures equal to the demands of the time. The enclosed summary paper, which is based on a staff study of the measures which should be taken to improve the national capability to deal with security problems in a fully integrated manner and on a continuing basis, is indicative of my concern with the deficiencies in existing arrangements and procedures.

I believe that both your draft CSAFM and the enclosed summary paper should be informally discussed by the JCS at an early opportunity with the objective of formulating an unequivocal corporate recommendation to the Secretary of Defense and the President as to actions in this area which are considered to be necessary. I am of the opinion that steps to rejuvenate and improve our national security ma-

chinery have a good opportunity of adoption coincident with the beginning of a new Administration next January.

Wallace M. Green, Jr.
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

Copy to: Gen Wheeler

Adm McDonald
Gen Johnson

Organization Of A National Staff

1. The Requirement

The position of the U.S. in the world requires a permanent staff which:

- a. Is formally organized at the national level;
- b. Is composed of representatives of all departments and agencies of the Government concerned with the formulation and implementation of security problems—domestic, foreign, and military;
- c. Provides a central agency both to assess, appraise, and make recommendations as to national security policy and to coordinate and supervise the execution of approved policy; and,
- d. Embodies a National Command Center organized for round-the-clock operations.

2. Deficiencies in Present Organization

- a. The National Security Council (NSC) is charged by law with advising the President as to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security; however, the NSC has two major shortcomings:
 - (1) Its small, permanent staff has neither the mission nor the capability to maintain a continuing appraisal over all events and happenings which have impact on security policies.

(2) It has no operating function and, therefore, no mechanism to coordinate the execution of approved policies, to monitor progress, and to recommend changes in policies.

b. Apart from ad hoc arrangements which may be adopted to meet specific needs, there is no formal, standing body subordinate to the NSC with the mission and capability to integrate politico-military views, and/or to attempt the resolution of divergencies. The Planning Board (PB), when it was active, did not wholly meet the requirement for such a body because its members, being themselves Under/Assistant Secretaries of Departments, were committed to Departmental positions.

c. Since 1961, when the Operations Coordinating Board was disestablished by Executive Order, there has been no agency within the Government with responsibility and authority to dovetail the programs of the departments and agencies responsible for carrying out approved national security policies. Each department or agency with a function to perform under an approved policy must prepare its own program to carry out its responsibility, and—except for ad hoc procedures which may be adopted in particular cases—there is no body below the level of the NSC to coordinate such functions. This is not a proper function of the NSC which has the specific mission to advise, to appraise, and to make recommendations, but which has no operational role.

d. The Cabinet—which has neither Constitutional nor statutory sanction—is not the proper body to coordinate the implementation of security policy. The Cabinet is neither organized nor staffed with a function and by customary practice, restricts its interest to areas of domestic activity.

e. The Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is not capable of functioning as a National Staff as its membership is restricted to officers of the military services, and the role of the Joint Chiefs, with respect to the NSC and the President, is an advisory one only.

f. The existing organization for national security provides no integrated (civilian-military), continuously manned Command Center to receive reports on world-wide events and happenings and to initiate action, as required, to provide for the prompt and coordinated consideration of what U.S. action, if any, is

required. The National Military Command Center (NMCC) can provide a military input to such a Center, which would be an element of the National Staff, but as an agency of the JCS within the DoD could not function for the entire Executive branch of Government.

3. Action Required

In order to overcome deficiencies noted in the existing organization and provide a national staff capability commensurate with the requirements of the Government, the President should, by Executive Order, direct the following actions to augment the supporting organization of the NSC:

- a. Constitute the Planning Board (PB) of the NSC as a fulltime agency with a Chairman and members, appointed by the President, who would have no other duties in the Government. The PB would be responsible to manage the National Staff (much as the JCS manage the Joint Staff); would be the principal advisory body to the NSC and the President in the field of national security policy; and, subject to the authority and direction of the President and the NSC, would coordinate and direct the implementation by all Executive departments and agencies of approved policies and programs.



Official portrait of General Wallace M. Greene Jr. in his service uniform at Headquarters Marine Corps.

Defense Department (Marine Corps) A411927



General Greene observes maneuvers of the 3d Marine Division alongside its commander, Major General James M. Masters Sr. (background), on Okinawa, 9 January 1964.

Marine Corps History Division Reference Branch photo files



General David M. Shoup (left) passes the Marine Corps battle color to his successor as Commandant of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant General Wallace Greene, on 31 December 1963 at the Marine Barracks, Washington, DC.

Marine Corps History Division Reference Branch photo files



General Greene congratulates Lieutenant General Henry W. Buse Jr., the deputy chief of staff (plans and programs), on his promotion to lieutenant general on 30 December 1964.

Defense Department (Marine Corps) A411910



General Greene celebrates his first Marine Corps Birthday as Commandant on 10 November 1964. Secretary of the Navy Paul H. Nitze looks on.

Marine Corps History Division Reference Branch photo files



General Greene takes notes as General Harold K. Johnson, the Army chief of staff, makes a point during a meeting with President Lyndon B. Johnson in the White House cabinet room on 22 July 1964.

Photo by Yoichi Okamoto. LBJ Library/White House Photo Office



General Greene speaks to the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, at Camp Pendleton, California, on 31 August 1964.

Defense Department (Marine Corps) A368681



General Greene reviews an evening parade at the Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, alongside the surviving Commandants on 9 July 1964. From left: General Greene, General Thomas Holcomb (Ret), General Alexander A. Vandegrift (Ret), General Clifton B. Cates (Ret), General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. (Ret), and General David Shoup (Ret).
Defense Department (Marine Corps)



President Lyndon B. Johnson meets with the Joint Chiefs of Staff at LBJ Ranch on 22 December 1964. Clockwise from President Johnson: Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Major General Chester V. Clifton Jr., USA; General Curtis E. LeMay, USAF; General Earle G. Wheeler, USA; Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus R. Vance; General Harold Johnson, USA; Admiral David L. McDonald, USN; and General Wallace Greene.

Photo by Yoichi Okamoto. LBJ Library W522-13a



Congressman Carl Vinson, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, signs the guest book at the Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, on 6 July 1964. General Greene looks on.

Marine Corps History Division Reference Branch photo files



General Greene (second from left); Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, commanding general of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific; and Vice Admiral Lawson P. Ramage, commander of the First Fleet, speak with reporters during Exercise Silver Lance on 5 March 1965.

Defense Department (Marine Corps)



General Greene visits the headquarters of South Vietnam's Marine Brigade on 27 April 1965. He is accompanied by the unit's commander, Brigadier General Le Nguyen Khang.

Defense Department (Marine Corps) A184014



General Greene and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral David McDonald review an evening parade at the Marine Barracks in Washington, DC, on 25 September 1964. The barracks commanding officer, Colonel Robert J. Carney Jr., stands behind them.

Marine Corps History Division Reference Branch photo files



General Greene speaks to members of the Marine Security Guard on 16 October 1964.

Marine Corps History Division Reference Branch photo files



The Joint Chiefs of Staff in February 1965. From left, front row: Chief of Naval Operations Admiral David McDonald; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle Wheeler, USA; and Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army General Harold Johnson. From left, back row: Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force General John P. McConnell and Commandant of the Marine Corps General Wallace Greene.

Photo by Frank Hall. Department of the Army

VIII. SEPTEMBER 1964

53. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Special Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam (Taylor), 8 September 1964

1972

The chairman, General Taylor,¹ opened the meeting by telling the Chiefs that on the previous day he had met with Taylor, Sharp, Vance, and McNaughton at lunch for some two and a half hours, and that this morning there had been another meeting for an hour and a half which had included Secretary Rusk, the two Bundys, General Taylor, Mr. McNaughton, General Wheeler, and Mr. McCone of the CIA.

The item discussed at this meeting was the formation of a national council in Saigon, and the relation of this council or the impact upon it of the various religious sects in South Vietnam and other groups of persons, and the functions of the council.

Taylor said that South Vietnamese jurists were working on a new plan of government and that the so-called Khanh plan had been prepared by three jurists, two of whom had been in office under President Diem.

The function of this national council would be to approve some form of government for South Vietnam and to select a head of government. One of the problems was how to get the necessary legislation. General Taylor then said that the main question was whether South Vietnam can get a government which will remain vertical, that is in office, for a satisfactory period of time, even for a few months.

¹ This is incorrect. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time was Gen Wheeler.

He then discussed the status of national and military morale and said that the national morale—or rather said that the military situation in South Vietnam had not been affected by events in Saigon and Hue, and that the administration in Saigon was improving continuously, but the question was how long it could last and if it fell there would be bad and good consequences. As far as General Khanh, the premier, is concerned, Taylor felt that he had lost face both home and abroad and that recent events had given the VC a shot in the arm. Khanh has a very substantial problem with the Buddhist Tri Quang,² who has a powerful grasp on events as a Buddhist leader and who had refused to become a member of the government, preferring to remain a man of cloth. However, said Taylor, he felt that the Buddhists would name someone to the government.

Taylor then continued by saying that he believed that there were more elements in the country behind Khanh than ever before, and that there existed a deep sense of shame and frustration among the participants of last month's events.³ Khanh had said that he had “permitted events to go deliberately” based on the memory of the Diem affair. Once the paratroopers and police had moved in, there was no problem.

As for yesterday's meeting, he wasn't going to go into any long detail, said Taylor, he simply wanted to note that the Bundy opus, a plan which they had considered at this meeting, was too long; the first part was overdrawn, and the second part was out of place. A third draft had been prepared last night and would now be distributed by Taylor to the Joint Chiefs. There had been a meeting this morning at which the third draft had been read and a look had been taken at details. A consensus had been reached at the morning meeting to the effect that the Desoto patrol in the Bay of Tonkin and off the North Vietnamese coast would be two or three days after Taylor had returned from Saigon.

The first operation of the Desoto patrol would not be provocative as it would remain on the high seas outside of the three-mile limit. Several days after this op-

² Thich Tri Quang (born 1924) is a Vietnamese Buddhist leader best known for leading the demonstrations against Ngo Dinh Diem's regime in 1963. He would continue to maintain significant influence in South Vietnam following the coup.

³ Gen Khanh declared a state of emergency on 7 August 1964 and attempted to codify a significant expansion of his authority with a new constitution. His actions were denounced by South Vietnam's Buddhist leaders and prodemocratic liberals, who feared Khanh was too sympathetic to former Diemists. Fearful of losing popular support, Khanh announced that he would accede to demands to ease military rule, which in turn caused a backlash from prominent Catholic supporters. By the end of August, Khanh had managed to stabilize the situation somewhat, bringing paratrooper units into Saigon to restore order, but at a significant cost to his standing in South Vietnam.

eration a counterinsurgency operation, MarOps as it was termed, would be mounted. There was a question of how to legitimize the MarOps.

Then, after a close call in August, there was a tie between the Desoto patrol and the MarOps operation, and the administration had been accused of mounting a cover operation to deliberately strike North Vietnam so that the president could get a resolution from Congress. There was an accusation that the American people were being entrapped rather than North Vietnam.

However, there is a legitimate reason for attack, attacking sources of infiltration, and Wheeler had told the conference that we should be able to carry this out and to bombard and to stop the infiltration of saboteurs.

At some point in time in these operations, we might want to provide air and sea cover. However, the Desoto and MarOps should be separated in time and space. We would legitimize the operations only in response to questions from the press.

“There is a collateral matter,” said Taylor. He wanted to bring up the U-2 flight over North Vietnam which had recently taken place, and Taylor himself had talked with the pilot. The pilot had seen missiles and would like to go to take another look. This might be done but would back off if the flight was illuminated. The secretary of state wanted to handle this matter separately.

In regard to a proposal from Westmoreland to conduct a reconnaissance and bombing in the war zone, they go nowhere with this proposal in the conference because no one wanted to see U.S. aircraft used in bombing operations except against clearly identified targets. Taylor said that he felt that cross-border operations of a limited type certainly were in the cards for a presidential OK, and that these operations would be both air and ground. General Taylor said that at the conference Secretary Rusk had spoken regarding the situation as it really was, saying that it was 95 percent of [the] war in South Vietnam and Rusk had downgraded the influence of the North Vietnamese on the war. Taylor, however, felt that the direction of the war [was] coming from Hanoi and that people and materials were being provided by the North Vietnamese. Taylor said that at some point of time we must do more than we are doing now outside of South Vietnam and that he had made that point very plain to the conference. “Let’s go along for two or three months,” said Tay-

lor, “but at the same time we should be prepared to seize any opportunity to strike. If the government in South Vietnam starts to slip, then we should take action.”

There is a possibility that we might get kicked out of Southeast Asia and we need a program. In this third version of the Bundy plan, it is not a program, but Taylor thought it was good enough to present to the boss, meaning the president, in an effort to establish a position. General LeMay then spoke up and said that he thought that this plan, or this program, was a sorry piece of paper indeed, and if we waited for two or three months for something, what can happen but a weaker South Vietnam? Action is needed now to bolster South Vietnam. To wait is to invite disaster. At 1428, Deputy Secretary Vance and Mr. John McNaughton, assistant secretary of defense, ended the meeting, and the chairman announced that he’d just finished giving a summary of their previous conferences to the Chiefs.

At 1430, General Taylor commenced speaking again, saying that the situation in South Vietnam at the present time was not a military crisis but a governmental one, a political problem. Taylor said Minh had the attributes of a chief of staff, but the triumvirate in South Vietnam which exists at the present time must elect a council of national unity with representatives from the principal elements that make up the country—religious, political, and labor. The selection ostensibly would be made by Minh, but actually by Khanh, the premier. A committee of jurists should recommend the structure of the government—legislative, judicial, and presidential. It should be approved by the council which would set up ground rules, and this should be done within two months. The result would be a provisional government. He had doubt as to whether this could be done, and that perhaps in two or three months the best that would come of it would be some kind of lame-duck government.

As far as Khiem is concerned, he plays both sides of the street. He has no real friends and appears to be aligned with the Dai Viet.⁴ The chairman then read a dispatch, apparently a draft, in which the Supreme National Council was described as having 10 to 20 members and Minh would be the titular chief of state.

⁴ Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang, or Nationalist Party of Greater Vietnam, was a nationalist and anti-Communist political party in South Vietnam.

At 1440 during this meeting, the DIA representative had an intelligence report and said that the VC had infiltrated the student and Buddhist groups, but that there was no clear evidence of this. Taylor remarked there was no clear evidence of this. Taylor remarked there was such a strong indication that this had taken place that we could safely assume it to be true.

The DIA also stated that there had been six incidents of border violation in the Koh ROKAR area on 5–6 September. There had also been a MiG-15 intercept seven miles inside the border and 57mm and 81mm fire had been observed, presumably from VC and Cambodia.

The chairman then made a remark to the effect that if Khanh gave in again to the Buddhists, he would be done.

At 1455 during this meeting, the SACSA gave a MarOps briefing. This is the special session on counterinsurgency which was in existence in the Joint Staff area and reported to the secretary of defense.

The chairman also said that while he was in Saigon he saw no reason to surface the 34 area covert operations in North Vietnam.

General Taylor then said that he felt that we were headed for air operations against Laos and North Vietnam. There had been a difference of opinion between CinCPac and Taylor regarding command and control planning for Southeast Asia. This difference and this problem were to continue for many months and years afterward because Taylor was really advocating command control in Southeast Asia for the Army, while the Navy wanted this to be left under the overall control of CinCPac.

54. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:00 p.m. on 9 September 1964¹

1972

The first thing that came up at this meeting was the fact that the next High Heels exercise would be held aboard the USS *Wright*, a specially fitted command

¹ Document 54 was attached to these notes.

ship, on 24 September, and the SOPs afloat and ashore would be exercised. Now this High Heels exercise was really an exercise in which the president himself was supposed to participate. It was an exercise to train the various government agencies in what to do in the event of a nuclear attack by the Russians.

Well at any rate this meeting got under way at, finally, about 1400 as far as scheduled business was concerned and the chairman, General Wheeler, debriefed the Chiefs and members of the Joint Staff on another version of the Bundy memorandum which was supposed to go to the president for approval. There were no substantial changes in the copy that had been previously distributed and discussed by the Chiefs.

The meeting, said the chairman, was held at 1100 in the Cabinet Room and present were the president; McGeorge Bundy; Secretary Rusk; Bill Bundy; the secretary of defense; General Taylor; and the chairman, General Wheeler.

The latest version of the Bundy memorandum was handed to the president, and the president said that he didn't like the timing, that is the part that referred to six to eight weeks. The president was told that there was no intent to distribute the Bundy memorandum, but that paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4 would be incorporated into a National Security Council action memorandum. The president said OK to this.

There followed a detailed discussion of the situation, including what might be achieved under the proposals contained in the memorandum. The president said that essentially it was a holding operation, and everyone present agreed. Then, General Taylor added that the word or term "holding" did not mean a static action because progress could continue in the provinces. The president turned to the secretary of defense and to Chairman Wheeler and asked the question regarding timing, saying that he thought that the Desoto operation should wait until after the ambassador [Taylor] had returned to Saigon. The answer to this was the operation [is] presently scheduled for 12–14 September and Taylor plans it for the twelfth. The president then said, "What are the views of the Chiefs?" Chairman Wheeler in reply read paragraphs 6, 7, and 8 of the memorandum, and this triggered an hour and quarter of substantive discussion.

The president then said to McCone, "What merits our taking action against North Vietnam?" And McCone, that's the CIA, replied that in his opinion a sus-

tained air attack against North Vietnam was now dangerous and might create a reaction from the Chinese Communists and cause the downfall of the Laotian and South Vietnamese governments. Action outside the country, that is outside of Vietnam now, might prove to be disastrous. Secretary of State Rusk then came into the discussion and said, "Well, we can make a decision on this at any time. We should permit time for things to work out." There is going to be a Communist conclave on 10 December which may have far-reaching impact and could possibly fragment Peking and Moscow and influence the Chinese Communists in North Vietnam. "That is," said Chairman Wheeler, "it might dampen the situation because there will be no help forthcoming from the Soviets."

The president then turned to General Wheeler, the chairman, and said, "Why does the chief of staff of the Air Force and the Commandant of the Marine Corps feel it's necessary to go north now?" The chairman said because things look bad now and we shouldn't wait. The president then turned to Taylor and said, "No, there definitely is a hope of things getting better. Today there is no government in South Vietnam, and Khanh says that there can be no government for two months. Taylor says this is so at least and probably not then."

The president to everybody present then asked the question, "Is what we're doing in South Vietnam worth the price?" Taylor replied categorically, "Yes." The chairman said to the president, "We can't afford to lose in South Vietnam; it would be disastrous to our position in the Western Pacific." Secretary Rusk said the JCS are absolutely correct; not only would it be disastrous to our position in Asia not to take action, but it would be disastrous to our position worldwide. "Well," said the president, "what are we going to do if there is another bust-up over there?" Then Taylor immediately responded by saying, "Above all we must keep the South Vietnamese armed forces with us. With them, we can always organize a government." The president said, "Who would be the possible leader?" General Taylor, in part, said, "Well, General Khiem is the foremost military leader after Premier Khanh, General Khanh. The ambassador to London is another possibility, but he is not in Vietnam at present and Khanh has told him by cable to get back."

"Well," said the president, "is the situation worse or better today in Vietnam?" Taylor said, "The political situation is worse than it was 60 days ago. In my opinion, eventually we must go north because we cannot afford to lose this war." This

is what Taylor said to the president. The chairman, Wheeler, agreed to this statement and read paragraph six of the JCS memorandum.

The president: “Well, is there anybody here with observations regarding what is the correct course of action?” There was no reply. Then the president said, “The next question is when we should go north and what are all the pros and cons?” Secretary of Defense McNamara then came in and said the price to pay to strengthen the South Vietnamese government is not high. General Taylor, Ambassador Taylor, agreed to this and said that we must get a government, and Khanh said that he can’t get a government [in] under another two months. Then, there followed a discussion on how to improve the situation. It was finally agreed near the end of the meeting that we must get a government in South Vietnam that can maintain law and order. We must get better people in the government. Military support will improve in the future. The land report, a special report on South Vietnam, should be noted for what it has to say about pay, police, housing, and what we must do to strengthen the South Vietnamese governmental position in outlying areas.

The president finally said, “Is everything there in South Vietnam negative?” Taylor replied yes. He said Khanh is indispensable to the government, and he has broader backing now from the Buddhists and other elements in the country.

The president then turned to Chairman Wheeler and said, “I wish you would tell your colleagues, that is the other Joint Chiefs, that if things don’t get better we should go north now. I have a feeling that we must have a semblance of a government. We must have law and order. We must have law and order before we can think of an external war. Now is like asking an invalid who is 10 days out of bed to fight 10 rounds in the ring.”

My comment in my notes at this point was that the principals in this meeting apparently were gambling on things getting better. And then as far as the comment regarding the invalid was concerned, my feeling was that the invalid—that is, South Vietnam—had better fight with what strength the invalid had left in defense of his life rather than waiting until the enemy deliberately kills him.

This statement by the president was then followed by a long discussion regarding money, the land projects, and the fact that the [Johnson] administration

has never restricted money for Vietnam and can get it as required. The president concluded by saying that he would approve the four points contained in the paper.

Taylor then left to talk with the press. He was holding a press conference.

The chairman, calling this debriefing, then said, “Last night I discussed the situation with the secretary of defense and gave him the memoranda.” The chairman said that he would give his own summary of that conversation.

First, the Desoto operation would come off essentially as in the Bundy paper and our own paper. It would be separate from MarOps, the covert operations which would follow.

Admiral Sharp, CinCPac, already has a plan for this. The MarOps—this was point number two—the MarOps, the covert operations in North Vietnam, would come to the surface in response to questions as appropriate and probably originating from the press.

Point three, Laos—air and ground operations would be contained in the National Security Council action memorandum. We would have to get hold of Souvanna in connection with this to make sure that the armed reconnaissance by aircraft upsets no one. Will it be ground operations? And the chairman replied, “Not large ones, and the JCS must look at them before they start.”

Point five, the term “tit for tat,” a term used by Bill Bundy in early planning papers to designate retaliatory action. “This term has fallen out,” said the chairman, “and a new term, ‘retaliatory action,’ has been substituted in this paper.”

Point six, the rules of engagement as drawn up by the Joint Chiefs received no objection either from Bill Bundy or McGeorge Bundy.

The chairman then added the statement that after he, the chairman, had read paragraph eight that General Taylor had spoken up and said, “I hope this doesn’t mean we should seize upon and exploit any opportunity, such as the *Maddox*, if it is in our interest at that time.”

The chairman was then finished with his debriefing. And the Air Force chief of staff, General LeMay, spoke up and said, “There is one significant omission in

your report, and that is there is a blanket assumption that the government will get better, but I have no degree of confidence in this taking place. What is missing is what will we do then, go north?" The chairman a little nonplussed replied, "What do we do? Well there must be some semblance of government." The Army chief of staff, this was General Johnson, then said, "What I infer from all this [is] that there may be a military dictatorship in South Vietnam with or without a civil government under Quon," the ambassador to Great Britain, who was being called home by General Khanh.

55. Point Paper by the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Washington, 9 September 1964

Subj: Retaliatory Air Strike Against the DRV

1. CMC Position:

Linked with a significant Viet Cong incident commence retaliatory GVN/U.S. air-strikes against targets in North Vietnam in accordance with the 94 targets plan.¹

An example of a significant incident is a battalion size attack by the Viet Cong.

2. The efficacy of immediate retaliatory actions against the DRV proved itself in the U.S. air attacks conducted on 5 August as reprisals for the DRV operations against U.S. destroyers. Those U.S. attacks were generally lauded by friends abroad and the U.S. populace as a whole as necessarily responsive to the situation. They were respected by the enemy. They clearly demonstrated to everyone U.S. resolve in Southeast Asia and additionally established a precedent of military pressure that could be exerted against the DRV. Such pressure must be maintained whenever the opportunity presents itself in order to continue to forcibly emphasize U.S. intentions in that area. Anything less than the demonstrated continuation of such pressures would in effect constitute a "backing-down" or visible weakening of U.S. resolve.

3. Prior to the *Maddox* affair there were numerous incidents which could have triggered a U.S. and/or GVN air attack on North Vietnam. Some of these were:

¹ Document 46, footnote 5.

a. The 31 July Viet Cong two-company attack in Gia Dinh province, approximately 3 miles from Saigon.

b. The 1 August terrorist attack against Americans in Saigon when seven U.S. military personnel were injured by an explosive device.

c. The June Pathet Lao attacks in the Muong Soui area of the Plaine des Jarres.

d. The 21 August Viet Cong ambush of a relatively large RVN relief force in Kien Hoa province.

4. It is anticipated that similar significant incidents to those described above, or incidents or operations of a greater magnitude, will occur again in the near future. To allow these to pass without positive and immediate retaliatory action on our part could well be accepted by friend and enemy as evidence of “backing-down” by the U.S. On the other hand prompt and effective response to such types of Viet Cong/Pathet Lao actions with GVN and/or U.S. air attacks against the appropriate DRV targets would continue to demonstrate our firm intention to succeed in Southeast Asia. Also, it would appropriately maintain military pressures against the DRV by utilizing the best available military capability. Such retaliatory air attacks would not necessarily seek out DRV targets of a similar nature to the action in South Vietnam or Laos which provoked the response, but rather would be aimed at DRV targets selected from the Target Study for North Vietnam (94 Target List) which would tend to reduce the will and capability of the DRV to support the insurgencies in Laos and South Vietnam.

5. Such positively demonstrated reaffirmation of U.S. intent to halt DRV aggression in South Vietnam and Laos would bolster the Khanh regime, enhance the morale of the RVNAF² and tend to unify the majority of political factions in South Vietnam. More importantly, it could force the DRV to a conference of our own choice under conditions established by us and thereby provide a basis for achieving a solution to the Southeast Asia problem favorable to the United States.

Purpose of above action is

() To take major steps to win

or () To establish a base for negotiating.³

² Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) Armed Forces.

³ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

**56. Memorandum for the Commandant of the Marine Corps
from the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2)
(Berkeley), via the Commandant's Chief of Staff (Chapman)**

Washington, 11 September 1964

Subject: South Vietnam negotiations

1. The article from the *Evening Star*¹ of 10 September which was mentioned in this morning's intelligence Briefing is attached.
2. While it is couched in the phrases "is reported to" and "in the foreseeable future" it appears most clearly that it is a part of the campaign to prepare American public opinion for negotiations at some time in the future, probably subsequent to November.
3. It is of interest to note that the newspaper references to negotiations, starting with the release in late August of a study purportedly prepared by the Board of National Estimates, are increasing. It is [*undoubtedly*] being read by the communist Chinese and North Vietnamese as a preparation of the American people for bad news.

Very respectfully,
Randolph C. Berkeley, Jr.

**57. Memorandum for the Record by the Commandant
of the Marine Corps**

Washington, 12 September 1964

Ambassador Taylor has come and gone. Last night, at 2230 during a conversation with LtGen Krulak by telephone from my quarters, he told me that he was scheduled to see General Taylor, who had just arrived in Honolulu with Mrs. Taylor, en route back to Saigon. I told General Krulak to sound out General Taylor as to what the views of the JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF HAD BEEN REGARDING ACTION WHICH SHOULD BE TAKEN IN THE SVN SITUATION. I told him that divergent views existed and that it might be useful to Krulak if he could obtain these facts in some way from General Taylor.

¹ Crosby S. Noyes, "Viet Nam Peace Talks Predicted by Taylor," *Washington Evening Star*, 10 September 1964.

TODAY FOR THE FIRST TIME, to my knowledge, reports appeared in the papers indicating that the United States would consider the possibility of negotiation. At the JCS Meeting at 1400 on Friday, 11 September, I read extracts from the *New York Times*. No one at the table, including the Chairman, gave any evidence of prior knowledge that the President, or members of his Administration, were thinking of this course of action. If, however, this has been a deliberate leak to the newspapers—a trial balloon—I have received no prior knowledge, either during the JCS conference with General Taylor last Tuesday (8 September),¹ from the Chairman who has attended the series of high-level meetings which have taken place in the White House and with the National Security Council, or from any other source within the Administration, that the United States would like to negotiate themselves out of the ugly and dangerous situation which they presently find themselves in, in SVN.

In addition, there is a newspaper report from Saigon indicating increased activity in that city and the possibility of another coup the coming weekend, with action possibly centered on Sunday. I am convinced that the President is engaged in a gigantic gamble, betting that the status quo can be maintained until after the elections. See my penciled work notes in this file reporting the reaction of the President to General LeMay's and my recommendation to initiate action as soon as possible against NVN (Notes of 9Sep64²—prior reference to Presidential reaction in Item 36 of 31July64³ and Item 7 of 24Feb64⁴ in Volume I).⁵ In essence he said (as reported by the Chairman): "If the roof falls in I will have been proved wrong, but I am going to take the chance that it won't."

It is interesting to note that for the first time, and General LeMay joins me in this thought, the Chairman has seen fit to provide each of the Chiefs with a memorandum of what he has said to the President in presenting the views of the Chiefs regarding action to be taken in SVN. This was never done by General Taylor. He always reported what he had said or done orally to the Chiefs. I feel that Gener-

¹ Document 53.

² Document 54.

³ Document 44.

⁴ There is a discrepancy here as Gen Greene and the Joint Chiefs met with President Johnson on 4 March 1964, not 24 February 1964. See Document 4.

⁵ "Item 36," "Item 7," and "Volume I" are references to Greene's own organizational system for his Vietnam papers.

al Wheeler has initiated this method of reporting back to the Chiefs as a result of the inquiry (and challenge?) which I made in one of the JCS Meetings of the last week (see briefing notes of 8Sep64, attached to this page) in which I asked Wheeler whether or not the Chiefs' views which had been forwarded to the SecDef were being given to the President. Wheeler at the time immediately reacted by saying that they were and that, of course, I could see the President myself if I so desired to insure that my views were being adequately presented to him.

It is also amusing to note that the *New York Times* refers to Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor either as Ambassador or Mr. Taylor, and does not use the term "General."

During a JCS briefing at our Headquarters at 1000 on Wednesday, 9 September, I discussed the possible analysis on 1 January 1965 which would compare the number of Viet Cong estimated to be in SVN on that date and the number of U.S. military and civilians on the same date with corresponding numbers on 1 January 1964. In conjunction with this, a comparison of the number of killed, wounded, and missing U.S. and South Vietnamese would be tabulated vs. the number of Viet Cong estimated as killed/wounded/captured during the same period. If these comparisons showed that the Viet Cong effort remained at the same, or greater, level as it existed on 1 January 1964 and the cost of a year's effort to the U.S. and SVN were calculated, it would perhaps emphasize the need for some new action—action outside SVN against Cambodia, Laos, or NVN, designed to bring us out of the mire in which we presently find ourselves. "*Lost Effectiveness!*"⁶

58. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:00 p.m. on 14 September 1964

1972

The first note indicates that the chairman briefed the Chiefs regarding a meeting held at the State Department at 1200 this date. A cable was prepared and sent to Ambassador Taylor in Saigon stating that he should tell the governmental leaders in South Vietnam as guidance that the U.S. deplored the current situation, that

⁶ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

it is tired of coups, that it supported Khanh, and that it is our belief that Van Duc could not form a government.¹

Then followed a discussion regarding whether or not service dependents should be removed from the Saigon area. In a sense, dependents could serve as a pawn in the event there was another coup and [the] South Vietnamese were to attack Americans. Chief of staff of the Air Force, General LeMay, then said that he felt that we should keep the dependents in Saigon that were already there, but he recommended that we not send any more [to] the country because it was too dangerous and too expensive. The chief of staff of the Army, General Johnson, then said the number of dependents in South Vietnam was not high so far as the military were concerned. The chairman then stated there were about 749 military dependents in-country. The Chief of Naval Operations quoted the number 963 and then said that if we were to pull these dependents out that the act might be misinterpreted. The question being, how would the Vietnamese interpret the removal of dependents? Therefore, the CNO recommended that we not send in any more into the country. Any more dependents would mean additional support, such as commissary and hospital and other fringe services. The chairman said, "Well, there is a difference in withdrawal of dependents as compared with discontinuing sending more in, and what would we give as a reason for doing either one of these actions?" The Chief of Naval Operations then said, "We could say that we were doing it in order to cut support." The chief of staff of the Air Force said that the withdrawal of dependents would require more rotation since the service tour unaccompanied would be shortened. The chairman said, "We should as the Joint Staff examine the pros and cons and the rationale for any action," and the Chiefs agree to this. Then I came in and said that as long as the dependents remained in South Vietnam, the first priority of U.S. Marine Corps troops if they [were] brought into action would be to evacuate Americans, and this shouldn't be the first mission for combat units in this particular situation.

There was also during this meeting considerable [discussion] regarding the Desoto patrol which would operate north of the 17th parallel, and the consensus

¹ On 13 September 1964, South Vietnamese generals Lam Van Phat and Duong Van Duc launched an attempted coup against Gen Nguyen Khanh. The coup ultimately failed, largely due to support for Khanh from Air Marshal (Gen) Nguyen Cao Ky, head of South Vietnam's air force, and Gen Nguyen Chanh Thi. Moyer, *Triumph Forsaken*, 326–27; and Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution: The U.S. in Vietnam, 1946–1966* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 286–90.

among the Chiefs was that we should go ahead but the matter should be referred to the president. The chairman then said, "Marine operations, meaning the covert operations against North Vietnam, are also tied to this patrol." He also said that U.S. Marine Corps troops which were embarked and off the coast of South Vietnam had been shifted to a position opposite Cape St. Jacques, which is on the coast near Saigon, and this had been done so that it would place the Marine troops in a position where they [could] enter Saigon quickly if it became necessary to do this. The chairman then said that following the State Department meeting that the principals had gone to the White House and spent a half to three quarters of an hour giving the president a rundown of the situation. There was a discussion by the president of the patrol's cable to Taylor. The president [*said*] that the recommendation of the principals present was that dependents should not be removed from Saigon at this time and that the Desoto patrol should be placed on a hold basis. The chairman said that the State Department and secretary of defense were in favor of conducting a Desoto patrol, that there should be positive control of this patrol, and that a decision would be secured from the president regarding execution of the patrol. They would see the president this afternoon and get a decision from him.

In a discussion [between] the chairman and the secretary of defense regarding Marine forces, the decision was to hold any commitment for a couple of days and then the JCS could look at the situation again.

At 1433, the secretary of defense, Assistant Secretary John McNaughton, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Vance entered the meeting room. The secretary of defense [*announced*], "Go ahead with the Desoto patrol, the president has agreed that this should be done."

There then followed a briefing conducted by the Defense Intelligence Agency in which it was brought out that the attempted coup in Saigon had been a failure and that this might actually strengthen Khanh's position.

Supporters of Khanh had been General Ky of the Vietnamese Air Force, General Khiem of the First Division, and the commanding general of the I Corps.² Troops engaged in the coup consisted of some 3,500 men from the South Viet-

² Gen Nguyen Chanh Thi.

namese IV Corps, including the 52d Ranger Battalion;³ the 1st Airborne Battalion; one troop from the 5th Air Mobile Division; the 43d Ranger Battalion; 1/10/7, 2/10/7, 1/11/7, 3/11/7;⁴ [and the] 6th Armored Group.⁵ Then there was a discussion as to whether the Americans had known about this coup, whether the [South Vietnamese] government had known, and regarding the removal of troops. There had been little reaction in South Vietnam on the part of the students or the troops concerning this coup. As far as Thi was concerned, he would probably push for what it might mean to the Buddhists. The VC had not exploited the coup. In fact, there had been a slight decrease in VC action.

So far in September, there had been three really large attacks consisting of two battalion attacks and one company attack on the part of the enemy. VC political action had been normal during the month and, no, there was no significant change in the pacification campaign results.

There was then some discussion regarding a meeting that Ambassador Unger had attended last Friday in Saigon—a discussion of 34A operations, SACSA's reporting responsibility, the fact that there had been a new high in small unit Viet Cong operations, and that the VC national liberation radio had renewed its advocacy of violence in South Vietnam. It was also noted that the 7th Division in IV Corps staffs had been fragmented, probably by the coup. And then the secretary of defense and his colleagues took over and discussed the Desoto patrol.

At 1458, the chairman read a dispatch from CinCPac regarding the Desoto patrol, and the secretary of defense okayed it along with and up to a 24-hour delay in its execution.

At 1659, the secretary of defense and his staff departed, and the Chiefs then turned their attention to the agenda. Among other things, the chief of staff of the Air Force made a comment that one way of getting JCS Chiefs to the president [was] to comment on any State Department paper that was submitted to the Chiefs for consideration. This was the end of this meeting.

³ Greene's notes, upon which this summary is based, indicate the 52d Ranger Battalion was a reduced battalion ("52d Ranger Bn [-]").

⁴ Four battalions from the 7th Division: 1st Battalion, 10th Regiment, 7th Division; 2d Battalion, 10th Regiment, 7th Division; 1st Battalion, 11th Regiment, 7th Division; and 3d Battalion, 11th Regiment, 7th Division.

⁵ Greene's notes indicate that the 6th Armored Group was a reduced formation ("6th Armored Gp [-]").

59. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during Two Special Meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 10:30 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. on 18 September 1964

1972

There were two meetings this date: one at 1030 and the other at 1245, special meetings that were in response to the report of the Tonkin Bay attack. The report was that four craft had attacked; one had been torpedoed, and they were firing all guns.¹ The chairman said that an emergency meeting had been held 40 minutes ago following the [news] flash. The flash had said that four PTs² had attacked.

Mr. McNaughton was present and said if the intelligence regarding the attack is correct that our action requires substantial response, and in his opinion there were three levels of effort: first, a sharp attack on PT boats and associated targets; secondly, sharp attack on other targets—for example, POL supplies in the Haiphong area; and thirdly, continuing pressure and air attacks, mining, so forth.

Chairman added that we must take into account the possibility of the Chinese aircraft. He also said that air attacks could be mounted from Da Nang against North Vietnamese airfields, and the secretary of defense agreed.

LeMay then made the recommendation that we should give all day tomorrow to getting ready and then following that we should go all out to our maximum, attacking aircraft and oil supplies with all-weather planes and early morning attacks. We could attack the airfields at night and attack the oil supplies at first light. Chief of Naval Operations then came in and recommended that we not wait for 24 hours, and the J-3 of the Joint Staff said that the Navy can be ready to attack in 9 hours. However, LeMay insisted on a 24-hour preparatory period. CNO came right back and said that he couldn't agree to let a whole day go by without action. This argument between the Navy and Air Force as to the time to start the attack

¹ On 10 September 1964, the Joint Chiefs authorized the resumption of the Desoto patrols. On 18 September, two U.S. destroyers, USS *Morton* (DD 948) and USS *Richard S. Edwards* (DD 950), detected radar signals indicating an impending attack from small patrol boats. In a replay of the second day of the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the destroyers expended multiple rounds against a target they were ultimately unable to locate. Carrier aircraft were also launched to support the destroyer patrol. Cosmas, *Joint Chiefs and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, vol. 2, 133–34; Hanyok, *Spartans in Darkness*, 219–20.

² PT boats.

then continued with the Navy saying that carrier forces could commence the attack 9 hours after receipt of order. However, LeMay felt that one night should intervene and at first light on the following day the attack should be made by both the Air Force and carrier force.

Chief of staff [of the] Army then said, “Should we assume that the president will only approve attacks against PTs and related targets?” LeMay spoke up and said as far as our recommendation to the president is concerned we should first execute maximum effort with all other aircraft and this to be followed by maximum effort with other aircraft. Priority targets should be air supplies.

The chairman left at 1106 to send a message to CinCPac. Then I came in and said this situation should be played as an open-ended war game. We should anticipate enemy reactions and what our counterreactions would be, and the messages that would go back and forth between our forces and Washington.

At 1109, the chairman returned and read an incoming dispatch to the Chiefs saying that destroyer *Morton* had secured one direct hit. The destroyer *Edwards* had secured two direct hits, and control of the CAP and illumination of sidewinders was by the *Edwards*. The firing by the *Morton* and *Edwards* had each broken up a target.³

A discussion now followed on the pros and cons of a night attack versus a daylight attack against possible ChiCom fighters.

The chairman left at 1119 to see the secretary of defense, and the meeting then broke up.

The 1245 meeting was held in the chairman’s office. Present were the chairman; vice CNO, Admiral Rivero; General LeMay; General Greene; General Johnson; Admiral Mustin, the J-3 of the Joint Staff; Burchinal, the director of the Joint Staff; and General Palmer, the OpDep of the Army.⁴

³ Greene wrote in his notes: “DD Morton—65—1 direct hit. DD Edwards 35—3”—2 by Edwards.” The number “65” appears next to “DD Morton,” and “35” appears next to “DD Edwards”; these likely refer to the number or rounds expended (3” likely refers to one of the *Edwards*’s 3”/50-caliber guns).

⁴ LtGen Bruce Palmer Jr., USA, assistant deputy chief of staff for plans and operations, 1963–64, and deputy chief of staff for military operations, 1964–65.

[The chairman]⁵ opened the meeting by saying that it was midnight Washington time,⁶ [with a] 2,000-foot ceiling in the target area, and to issue orders for action by noon would be a very tight schedule and evening orders were already released.

The plan, said the chairman, was that the fields, airfields, would be attacked first followed by attacks against the fuel oil supplies. In attacks against Haiphong, Hanoi, and the airfield, maximum low down would be difficult, fire suppression would be necessary, and also a high CAP. We should use what we have without tie assets or bringing planes in from Clark. PacAF will run this operation, and it has a good capability with the 2d Air Division.⁷ The *Ranger*⁸ has been ordered to the area but will not have arrived in time for this attack. Actions then are: one, fire suppression; two, strike; and three, maintenance of a high CAP.

The chairman then reported on a discussion that he had held with the secretary of defense in regard to time of attack as discussed with Admiral Sharp, CinCPac. First course of action would be attack within 12 hours; secondly, a split attack first initiated 24 hours from now and then followed by an all-out daylight attack; and thirdly, an attack in South Vietnam by day and then night attacks against the airfields followed by attacks against the POL. Sharp had said that night attacks were less desirable than day. PacAF agreed with this. Sharp prefers action number one. In other words, an attack within 12 hours. It was recognized the impact of the pressure of time insofar as operations were concerned and also the impact of the weather.

There would be a meeting, said the chairman, with the president later on today. Sharp was going ahead and lay on the attack. . . .⁹ The chairman had told Admiral Sharp that he believed the course of action number one would be ordered, that is, an attack within 12 hours against the airfields in North Vietnam and POL supplies in the vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong. The chairman then turned to the

⁵ The transcript leaves this blank, though the context makes it likely that Gen Wheeler opened the meeting.

⁶ This is what Greene wrote in his notes. It is uncertain what he meant, although if the meeting was indeed being held at 12:45 p.m. and this was the local time for Gen Wheeler's office in Washington, DC, then it would have been 15 minutes to midnight in Vietnam. It is likely that Greene misread his notes as he read them and meant to state that it was midnight in Vietnam.

⁷ U.S. Air Force unit based at Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon.

⁸ USS *Ranger* (CV 61), a *Forrestal*-class aircraft carrier.

⁹ Break here as Gen Greene changed cassette tapes.

director of the Joint Staff, General Burchinal, Air Force, and told him to prepare a simple dispatch ordering the attack and have it ready for release by the chairman.

General LeMay at this time came in and recommended the use of Farm Gate aircraft. Now this Farm Gate aircraft is actually aircraft provided [to] the South Vietnamese Air Force by the U.S. In SVN, they were flown by South Vietnamese pilots with an American pilot in the rear seat. However, I had learned from LeMay previously that during the Farm Gate operations most of the planes were actually flown by the American pilots with the Vietnamese sitting in the rear seat. The chairman said we should authorize the use of the Farm Gate aircraft but not direct their use. LeMay said, “Why shouldn’t we use the F-105s¹⁰ stationed in Thailand?” The chairman replied, “Well, if we did that we would have to get an okay from the Thais; this would alert the enemy.” The chairman said that “I certainly hope that we can keep this operation off the TV until after the strikes have been made.” The chairman said it is now 1255, and no announcement has been made yet by the media of an attack. The chairman then said, “Peking might announce that we had made the attack.” The chairman continued and said specific targets selected for these attacks were [Phuc Yen], 6;¹¹ POL Haiphong, 48; POL Hanoi, 29 targets; and the 51 other targets at Thach Loi.¹²

The chairman asked the Chiefs if any one of them had expected that an attack would be made by the North Vietnamese against the Desoto patrol, and the Chiefs indicated that none had expected such an attack. The director of the Joint Staff then made the statement that we had been caught without a plan in the event of such an attack. And he further said that was possible that the PTs might be Chinese Communists. The chief of staff of the Army then said, “Was there really anything there in the way of enemy boats? Were they spoof targets? What we need is a positive action report. We have not received any message to the effect, ‘We’ve been fired on.’” The Chief of Naval Operations then said that an enemy attack had

¹⁰ Republic F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bomber.

¹¹ There is a gap here in the transcription of Greene’s oral history. Greene’s notes indicate the target is Phuc Yen.

¹² In another example where the passage of time leads Greene to likely misread notes taken eight years earlier, he states that the numbers next to each location are an indication of the number of possible targets at that location. However, a look at the Joint Chiefs’ 94-target list indicates that these numbers are more likely the number given to each target on that list. Number 6 on the list was Phuc Yen airfield; number 48 was Haiphong POL storage site; number 29 was the Quang Soi barracks (near Hanoi); and number 51 was Nguyen Khe POL storage at Thach Loi. A copy of the list is included in Kamps, “JCS 94-Target List,” 73–76.

been made against U.S. forces. The meeting was then adjourned in the Joint Chiefs meeting room, and all repaired to the secretary of defense dining room for another special meeting attended by Deputy Assistant Secretary Vance, by L. Thompson,¹³ McGeorge Bundy, John McNaughton, the J-3 of the Joint Staff, and the director of the Joint Staff.

The chairman first reviewed the situation as per previous notes in the chairman's office which he had used to brief the Chiefs. He said that we could launch an attack by noon Vietnamese time. The aircraft carrier, *Ranger*, was on the way and was presently somewhere between the Philippines and the area, proceeding at a maximum speed of 27 knots. Mr. Vance was chairing the meeting, and at this point he said that the secretary of defense was not present because he was talking by phone with Admiral Sharp. The chairman then said that the Chiefs agreed that an attack should be made by noon tomorrow; [the attack would be] against the oil field at Suchien and the POL in the vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong, and also the POL at the airfields.

Now, said the chairman, let's look at the targets on the map. At 1815–1820 local, there had been illumination of three flares of the combat area, but nothing had been sighted. The Desoto was now returning to the combat area for that evidence. Mr. Vance then said that Sharp had been talking with Moore regarding the battle, and had told the secretary [of defense] that they didn't have enough information to really say that there had been an attack. Sharp had sent questions out two hours previously: Had there been an attack? What was the intention? Did the targets fire? How were they maneuvered? There was no answer yet. The logs were being examined, and Sharp was still uncertain. So the secretary of defense recommended that the situation was "uncertain." There had been four to five boats close enough to justify warning shots—that is, 10,000 yards—and the PT boats continued to move on, and the American destroyers had continued to fire at two or three targets and no more information was available.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Vance then outlined the Chiefs recommendation as to the action to be taken. The secretary of defense then asked the question,

¹³ Likely Llewellyn E. Thompson, U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1957 to 1962 and again from 1967 to 1969.

“Why not make night attacks?” The chairman said, “Because we can see better how to do it during the daytime.” In addition, the factor [of] weather was discussed.

The secretary of defense then made the interesting comment that he assumed that the objective was to hit targets in the southern part of North Vietnam; hit them directly. Shall they be hit first, or will the airfields be hit first and then the targets in the south? LeMay said that if targets only in the south were hit, there will be no great losses of attacking aircraft. If attacks are continued after the targets in the south are attacked, then the losses may be worse. McGeorge Bundy then came in and said they know—that is, the North Vietnamese—and know that we know about this attack. Now how much good does more notice do? Mr. Vance then spoke up and said, “If we attack targets in the south, what about the radar picking up our planes, and will MiGs interfere?” General LeMay replied, “There will be no effective reaction on the part [of the] North Vietnamese if targets in the south are attacked.” McGeorge Bundy then said the JCS recommendations are not necessarily the first step required, but proper punishment is required. LeMay then said we should go for the airfields first, and this will reduce enemy attacks in subsequent attacks by our aircraft. Then, I made a notation that judging from this conversation it looks like the civilians want attacks to be made by U.S. aircraft on targets in the southern part of North Vietnam.

The secretary of defense then said, “We should pull out the holding statement. We should lay out alternatives, and we should discuss with the president the action to be taken based on assumptions and the assumptions should be first checked. Then we should alert Sharp with a holding order and be prepared to discuss any additional information that becomes available with the president as it arrives.”

In my notes, I have a notation which says that McNamara was present at this time with his shirt off.¹⁴

Alternatives were discussed, and the first item was that if we are to take out the POL supplies, we should first take out the airfields. In the case of mining, Haiphong would be the primary area for mining, but here again we should be prepared to take the airfields first. Then Bundy asked, are there any naval gunfire targets? The J-3 replied, “The offshore islands.”

¹⁴ The note reads: “N w shirt off.”

Mr. Vance then commenced an examination of the target lists discussing the proposed targets. He also wanted to know, saying that Mr. Rusk had asked about collateral damage if air strikes are made on the Hanoi airfield. The J-3 of the Joint Staff replied, "Some collateral damage is possible, but it should be minimum to moderate." He did not expand on this statement. The chairman then came in and said that it had been estimated that 177 attack sorties would be required to take out the airfields and POLs. Mr. Vance said, "What will the collateral damage be if attacks are made on the POL?" LeMay replied, "Practically none."

The chief of staff of the Army then said, "What about the registry of ships tied up at the piers in Haiphong?" McGeorge Bundy spoke up, wondering whether there would be any ChiCom air interference. The chairman replied, "Admiral Sharp plans a high CAP." There was some discussion regarding petrol targets. The secretary of defense then came in and said to the chairman, "Let's go brief the president while the other Chiefs pick out targets in the southern part of North Vietnam."

The chairman said that he was uncertain regarding the value of attacking targets in the south. The secretary of defense replied: "It depends on the degree of pressure involved, pressure that we would apply." Then the chairman and LeMay discussed types of ordnance versus type of targets. McGeorge Bundy said that a cumulative estimate of damages should be run.

The chairman then said that three dispatches should be prepared: the first one would be a directive—and it was being prepared as he spoke—to carry out the attack on the targets in the southern part of North Vietnam; secondly, a dispatch directing the Air Force to attack POL supplies; and the third one to change the Desoto patrol. The chairman also added that there should be a paragraph added on air reconnaissance.

At 1555, the chairman departed; at 1557, the Chiefs got back to item number four on the agenda, which concerned armed helicopters in South Vietnam.

At 1605 the chairman returned and said the secretary of defense has approved; wants the reference to number the sorties to specify no mining; [wants] to strike out the term "including Farm Gate." The Chiefs' views on the POL—that is, if they were the most important targets, the POL supplies, [and this] had been conveyed to the president and he understood. The chairman said that the President

was “brooding” as to whether any strikes are necessary. The chief of staff [of the] Army agreed to this view of the president’s, saying that the Army was not sure that an attack actually had been made.¹⁵ He also reported that the president was angry regarding news leaks.

60. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:30 p.m. on 25 September 1964

1972

The chairman reported regarding the 1100 [meeting] which had been held that morning at that time with Secretary Rusk, Deputy Secretary Ball, Mr. Forrestal from the White House, McGeorge Bundy, Mr. Vance, John McNaughton, and the chairman (General Wheeler) being among those present.

Secretary Rusk had discussed the CAS, that is CIA in Vietnam (a CAS cable in which it was stated that President Macapagal¹ of the Philippines had conferred with the CIA chief in the Philippines regarding the situation in South Vietnam). The chairman read from a copy of this dispatch in which it was stated that the Vietnamese were desperate: that there was no chance for a rally, and they were trying to stimulate cooperation on the part of the Filipinos. The message continued that all westerners were white men as far as the Vietnamese were concerned, and they considered white people no different from the French. The message went on to say that 16,000 U.S. troops in South Vietnam should be replaced by 16,000 Filipinos and Thais. The chairman added that a copy of the details on this matter would be distributed to the Chiefs later. Macapagal gets here in October, and State wants strength in the statement regarding peace in Southeast Asia. A cable can be sent

¹⁵ Hanyok provides evidence that an attack did not in fact occur. The next day, U.S. Navy search teams investigated the area and found no evidence of an attack, and the strikes were ultimately cancelled on 20 September. This point also marked the effective end of the Desoto patrols. As on 4 August 1964, the destroyer crews involved in this incident likely misinterpreted radar readings as incoming PT boats and torpedoes. It seems, according to Gen Greene’s account of these meetings, that Gen Johnson was the only member of the Joint Chiefs to express doubt as to whether an attack actually occurred. See *Spartans in Darkness*, 219–20.

¹ Disdado Macapagal, president of the Philippines, 1961–65.

on this matter via the CAS unit. Instead of patting Macapagal on the head, why shouldn't we express ourselves vociferously regarding what needs to be done?

The question of military aid will come up and how much should be given to the Philippine armed forces. The secretary of defense will give Macapagal a hard time on this matter. Chairman Wheeler then turned to the director of the Joint Staff and told him to have the Joint Staff look at what the Thais and Filipinos could contribute in addition to the current ComUSMACV effort. General LeMay came in and said that we should get some help from these people in some fashion.

The chairman then said that following this item the conference in the morning had conducted a long talk regarding the political situation. It was stated that Drew Pearson's article in this morning's paper, *The [Washington] Post*, had drawn the corks, including one-armed McGeorge Bundy.² The article was absolutely false, and we had to get to Pearson and steer him down the course. Again here is the stiletto which Pearson has unsheathed for Max, Ambassador Taylor, for the second time. The statement in the article regarding the president stating that his advisors had urged the bombing of North Vietnam was not so, said the chairman.

The discussion then went on, said the chairman, regarding what the U.S. would do if General Khanh were to fall. Perhaps the U.S. would have to get the Vietnamese ambassador from London to return to Saigon. Ambassador Bruce,³ our ambassador in London, would work on this possibility. The Vietnamese ambassador to London is supposed to be highly respected, [and he was] independent during the Diem reign. This subject was finalized with the statement that there was only conjecture possible regarding Khiem's willingness to work with the Vietnamese ambassador.

The next item discussed at the morning meeting was the question of resumption of the maritime operations, MarOps. Secretary Rusk said that he had cleared with President Johnson in Texas the execution of the first two scheduled maritime

² Wheeler seems to have conflated two columns by Drew Pearson. His column written on 24 September 1964 reported that President Johnson had given the order to bomb any Communist troops and supplies along South Vietnam's border. The 25 September 1964 column was a scathing indictment of Maxwell Taylor that blamed the former general for failing to combat the corruption afflicting the South Vietnamese military. See "Drew Pearson on the Washington Merry-Go-Round," *Bell-McClure Syndicate*, 24 September 1964; and "Drew Pearson on the Washington Merry-Go-Round," *Bell-McClure Syndicate*, 25 September 1964.

³ David K. E. Bruce, U.S. ambassador to France, 1949–52; to West Germany, 1957–59; and to the United Kingdom, 1961–69.

operations, numbers L and L+2, which were two probes to the north. Perhaps these could start on Sunday. The chairman had sent alerts to ComUSMACV and CinCPac regarding these two operations and this decision.

Then, the question arose in the morning meeting as to whether these MarOps, these maritime operations, should be placed under the 303 Committee. This was a committee put together by the White House to handle highly classified operations in Vietnam. This is a subject which, of course, is worth examining for historical purposes because, although the National Security Council was available for this type of work, President Johnson—as his predecessor, President Kennedy, had done—chose to operate by small select committees in studying these problems connected primarily with Vietnam. The chairman objected, he said, to putting these operations under the 303 Committee. He objected to Deputy Secretary Vance, and Vance had agreed and told him that the JCS should lay out an October schedule of MarOps to start about 1 October, and that the Chiefs should look at each item before and after launching the operation. Vance said that he would coordinate the program with the State Department and the White House, and that the State Department would set up an opposite number to General Anthis. He was the man, as noted before, who was responsible for counterinsurgency operations within the Joint Staff.

[The] secretary of state, Mr. Rusk, had also brought up the question of what to do if the boats involved in the MarOps against North Vietnam were to be pursued by the North Vietnamese into South Vietnam in “hot pursuit.” And the message should be sent out to ComUSMACV info Ambassador Taylor regarding this possibility.

The morning committee then had discussed the Desoto patrols, and Under Secretary Ball of the State Department said that this was a matter that should be discussed on a very broad basis and that there was going to be a meeting on 5 October regarding the Desoto patrols. And McNaughton was preparing a paper giving political and military reasons why the Desoto patrols should be run.

The next item discussed was that of cross-border operations, the question of whether air strikes should be made against 22 targets. These targets being located in Laos, the strikes should be made, it was agreed, by Laotian or other third-country aircraft and should be made early if Souvanna agrees. A cable should be sent to Ambassador Unger in Laos as soon as possible regarding Yankee Team strikes⁴ against targets in Laos.

⁴ Yankee Team was the code name for low-level reconnaissance flights over Laos.

In regard to cross-border ground operations, MACV had said that the American advisors should be with the South Vietnamese troops in their cross-border operations. Rusk had said that with limited cross-border operations, he felt that it was all right for the American advisors to accompany the South Vietnamese troops and to do it with air support.

61. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during Sessions between the Chairman for the Management of U.S. Policies and Operations in South Vietnam (Sullivan) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff during a Regular Meeting of the Joint Chiefs, 30 September 1964¹

1972

The chairman started out by saying, what is the solution to our problem in South Vietnam, [and] that we have just received a dispatch from Ambassador Taylor and he's not very optimistic. Ambassador Sullivan was referring to the senior U.S. aviator in MACV. Stillwell, General Stillwell, of the Army is doing excellent work.² He works like a dog. And, said Sullivan, I can give you positive assurance that there is no backbiting between the U.S. military and U.S. civilians in South Vietnam. Ambassador Taylor is satisfied in this matter.

Sullivan in commending his talk had said that he wanted to put a pat on the military back. Sullivan continued by saying that the military was continually being accused of undue optimism. The fact is the VC are stalemated in the countryside. The VC do show their ability to take over military objectives as specified. VC units not larger than a battalion are able to assemble, and these units are vulnerable. There has been an increase in activity, said Sullivan, but these have been terroristic operations rather than take and hold.

¹ Among the attendees of this meeting between William H. Sullivan and the Joint Chiefs was the personal advisor to Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton, Daniel Ellsberg.

² Gen Greene is unclear in his oral account about what Sullivan was saying at this point as it sounds like Greene is stating that MajGen Richard G. Stillwell, USA, was the senior aviator in South Vietnam. Stillwell was actually the chief of staff to Gen Westmoreland. MajGen Joseph H. Moore, USAF, at the time commander of the 2d Air Division, was the "senior U.S. aviator in MACV" that Greene was referring to here.

[Editor's Note: The tape cuts off at this section. Based on his notes, Sullivan spoke at this point of the emergence of generational change in South Vietnam as the urbanized Vietnamese had begun to westernize the countryside.]

In 1945 France was chopped off, and now the Communists are fomenting and agitating political activity. And yet the political activity itself is hard to define. Maybe it is well inspired. And this activity is by groups which are mostly not Communists but which have been infiltrated and possibly exploited by the Communist groups, [people] such as the university professors or students or Buddhists.

Another group of "Young Turk" officers of the military forces is a dominant group. The chief of staff, Khiem; chief of staff of the Air Force;³ the CNO of the Navy;⁴ and I and II Corps had been pretty much taken over by this Young Turk group. The IV Corps commander is an old timer from the old group. The Young Turks constitute a political symptom. They provide a dampening effect against the pendulum swing politically to the left in South Vietnam. Khanh is riding along with the Young Turks. This is not his first choice of action. What he really wants is to have authority centralized under his own control. How long he can ride in this fashion with the Young Turks is unknown. So now, said Sullivan, a new group is taking over the armed forces. Actions by the old group—other generals of the old Khiem group—have subsided, and there should be no worry about this group. The younger group is U.S. trained, and they control their own organizations.

Sullivan continued by saying that the political situation in South Vietnam is hard to describe at the present time. The Khanh government is not effective now and never was. From February to August, they never accomplished very much. What was done was self-serving for representative ministers. There was no challenge in the streets until Khanh let the Buddhists demonstrate for two days. Khanh said to the revolutionary committee, "Do you want to go on and fire on your own children?"

The question now is, said Sullivan, how to get our transition process going. What government will result is hard to say. I suspect, said Sullivan, that there is very much disappointment among the South Vietnamese concerning U.S. attitude. The present idea in South Vietnam is that the U.S. will hold until 3 Novem-

³ Air Marshal (Gen) Nguyen Cao Ky.

⁴ Commodore (RAdm) Chung Tan Cang.

ber and then bug out. “Think of yourself in their shoes,” said Sullivan. “You can see why we threw this away.”

[Khanh]⁵ feels that the U.S. was involved in the 13 August business—I don’t know what he refers to by using that word “business”—and with the Montagnards. Khanh is presently in a suspicious stage. His rationale is that the U.S. is making a mess inside Vietnam so that they will have a basis for pulling out of Vietnam on 4 November. If the government, South Vietnamese, is to form an umbrella on 4–5 November to permit such a liquidation, then the South Vietnamese government will have to induct more men into their armed forces. The question is what do we do and how, and we must show the answers to these questions between now and the end of the month (September). We must have to take certain risks, said Sullivan, and the attitude of the United States should be clear. Well, said Sullivan, at this point I’d better try to answer questions now.

The chairman referring to a dispatch from Taylor which he held, said, “What would the new government be like?” Sullivan said it’s too early to tell. They have a very hastily formed council. . . .⁶ Khanh and Minh show only “grunts” between each other. The council will have to decide what to do with whatever U.S. can feed in. It certainly will be a long time before much significant effort on the direct military situation will be shown.

General LeMay, chief of staff of the Air Force, then came in and said, “What would constitute a convincing statement on our part? Would a statement that we are going north do it?” Sullivan replied [that] the simple answer is yes. Tangible proofs of our intentions would be provision of more equipment, [and] more advisors at the battalion and district levels, because it is here that they believed the bug-out rumors which are going around. They felt that after Tonkin the U.S. would take on North Vietnam, and they at that time were willing to do quite a bit. As far as Souvanna Phouma is concerned in Laos, we might be willing to let us do cross-border operations into Laos, but he will always ask, “If we are willing to do this in Laos, why aren’t we willing to do it in North Vietnam?” But, of course, the whole ques-

⁵ The original transcript leaves this blank, though Greene’s written notes indicate Khanh is the one who felt this way.

⁶ This marks a moment where Greene’s memory fails him, and he cannot recall what his notes (taken eight years earlier) were meant to describe. He states outright, “I don’t know what this refers to.” The notes read: “inside compound—chaos—fire—very nervous—slapped together what should do 1 1/2 hr.”

tion is, will they be impressed by what we say or do enough to buckle down and do for themselves? The chairman then said, "They don't have any George Washington then." CNO: "Are there any good people in the government, any available around whom the South Vietnamese could rally?" Sullivan replied, "The question is not a George Washington, but hard-working officials impervious to graft or political pressure—patriots." CNO then broke in and said, "They've never done that in their history." And Sullivan agreed, saying, "Yes, they haven't done that, yes."

[On] a reverse side of one of my note sheets there is a list of questions which I either asked or wanted to ask of Sullivan. I'm going to read those at the end of the record. The first question was, does the situation in South Vietnam principally constitute a military problem? Should we openly back the Young Turks, encourage them to declare martial law? Shall we become committed against the Communists between now and November, or should we wait? Next question was, you said, Ambassador Sullivan, that the U.S. might have to take certain risks—what are these risks? You also mentioned the attitude of the United States—what do you think this attitude should be? Next question, it seems to me that the VC are definitely growing in strength—they're shooting down more helicopters and aircraft; they're killing as many or more local officials; and they're operating inside the cities—are we then losing the war? Next question, what is the possibility of another coup? The answer here was, not before a new government has been formed. The next question, what do you recommend regarding U.S. dependents in Saigon? The answer was to keep them there. The next question, in connection with the project of bombing the targets in North Vietnam, right now it seems there can be no improvement until we bomb targets in both Laos and North Vietnam.

At this point, the chairman entered the conversation, and with assistance from him, Sullivan said that this matter was a gray area and was in no sense black or white. At this point, some individual unknown to me brought up the matter that General Duc had demanded from Khanh that he remove the press officer. The reason being that the press officer had captured Duc when Duc was a Viet Minh.

The chief of staff of the Army then entered the conversation by saying the current level of VC activities can be looked at in two different ways: one, from the viewpoint of the Buddhists demonstrations and strikes; and secondly, the fact that since 1961, 66,000 VC had been killed. Mr. Sullivan replied [that] the fact that

66,000 VC had been killed since 1961 is hurting their cause. The party congress last December and their talk indicated they were running out of people from South Vietnam to join VC cadres, and they must use *force power and superior weaponry*.⁷ The VC are actually increasing in number, and the reason is that the way they recruit in South Vietnam. They start with boys 15 to 16 years old who do not like to pull rice, and by 19 they recruit boys in the VC, and the government doesn't look at these men until the age 20. This is a very serious deficiency. Westmoreland's recruiting report will show a tremendous shortfall in South Vietnamese recruiting numbers. Their strength is still overall 537,000. Sullivan continued, the VC now operate in cities. They didn't do this before. They're becoming bolder in the cities and being mauled in the country.

The chief of staff of Army then asked a question of Sullivan: "What about Tri Quang?" This was the Buddhist priest leader. Is he Communist inspired? Sullivan replied, that's totally possible. He certainly had political savvy and refuses to take responsibility. He deals with the second section, I believe that's the Intelligence Section in the embassy, but he will not see the ambassador. He refused to be held responsible. He is thoroughly arrogant, and he probably is not a Communist. In jest, the [chairman]⁸ then said, "What's needed is a Hitler Youth corps." Sullivan said, "You'd better keep that in this room." This joke was followed by laughter.

Chief of staff [of the] Army then came back and said the military people, their leaders—and I will name four—are unimpressive. Then he named four leaders⁹ and followed this with a question: what are the Young Turks oriented towards? Sullivan replied, "The young Turks are committed against the Communists."

Forrestal then said to Sullivan that he wanted to make a point regarding the Cai Lai and Viet Dai¹⁰—these are religious sects—that he, Forrestal, thought the Young Turks could take them over. Sullivan then replied [that] political moves would require an assist from "old amis" [old friends] based on Khiem. Khiem's leaving may actually be symbolic. The Young Turks, however, may move in and with a military

⁷ Italicized section based on Greene's handwritten notes as he leaves the section blank in his oral history.

⁸ The handwritten notes indicate the joke was made by Gen Wheeler.

⁹ Greene does not note in either his oral history or his handwritten notes who the four leaders named by Gen Johnson were.

¹⁰ Greene is likely referring to the nationalist, anti-Communist Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang party.

counterstroke find themselves immediately in conflict with Tri Quang, the Buddhist leader, and Quoy. I [*suspect*] this last name is that of another Buddhist leader.

The ambassador and the Army had discussed a 27 October deadline apparently for recommendations to come from the Chiefs and noted that this deadline was short of the final 3 November deadline, and therefore would there be an extension. And Sullivan said yes to November 4th. Forrestal then came in and said the problem was hard for him to see what to do between now and then. Sullivan replied one way to do was to get down an honest good plan for issues outside the borders. I gathered he meant outside the borders of Laos and inside South Vietnam.

I then raised a question, saying to Sullivan those that I had previously listed. Sullivan also at this time said that Khanh had been practicing counterinsurgency in II Corps, and he thought that it could be done on a countrywide basis. He realized there was no central government or efficient one. Sullivan then discussed parallel examples of counterinsurgency employed in Italy and Greece. And then he wound up by saying there's no reason why we, the U.S., should get out now. We should not be ready yet to toss in our chips. The chairman piped up and said, "Well, we're trying to figure out here in the Joint Chiefs when and what pots into which to throw the chips." Sullivan said, "Don't worry, as long as we have a window to toss the pot out of."

IX. OCTOBER 1964

62. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting Attended by the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) and the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Vance) at 2:35 p.m. on 5 October 1964

1972

The first thing on the agenda was a briefing on Southeast Asia, and it was brought out that the intensity of the fighting was up principally in the area of terrorism—sabotage was high on the railroads. The road net to various capitols had been washed out, and the lines of the country—topographic lines—hindered movement. The conclusion was that it had been another good month for the VC. There had been 1,900 acts of terrorism; 900 RVN, Republic of Vietnam, forces had been killed; and 1,100 VC had been killed. The weapons loss was three to one in favor of the VC, that is, 1,300 to 500.

The following South Vietnamese leaders were then discussed: General Ky of the Vietnamese Air Force, General Dong,¹ General Khang, Tri, Xung, Thi, Sang, Loc, and Quang. And presently the U.S. supports Khanh.

ComUSMACV reports on the morale effect. There has been some adverse drop at senior levels. The unit leadership and combat effectiveness was little affected. There had been a slight decline in morale in areas under RVN control. Fifty-seven percent of 13,000,000 rural persons were under normal GVN control. The last report on this matter had shown 79 percent.

The next item discussed in the briefing was the VC political structure. This showed Hanoi at the top and then a central office in South Vietnam which had been activated in 1961. In this so-called office there were 1,200 persons on the

¹ BGen Pham Van Dong, ARVN, commander of the Capital Military District, 1964–65.

staff. There were 4,000 other people, in showing the security of this office, including two regiments among the 4,000 military [personnel]. Under the central office in South Vietnam, there were five regional headquarters, and it was interesting to note that Hanoi could communicate directly with all of these regional headquarters.

This central office consisted of a series of thatched huts spread out in villages of 200 to 300 people. Concealment was good due to the forest. Communication was principally by radio. The central office dealt with political, military, and [the] National Liberation Front.

The secretary was a Lieutenant General named Hai Hai. His deputy was Major General Bay Quan. The chief of the political office was a man named Hai Van. The chief of the military office was Major General Ban Quan. Two VC generals were Brigadier General Van Nghe and Brigadier General Y'Blo.

The briefer also said that more than 50 percent of the people in South Vietnam pay taxes to the VC. In 1963, this was estimated to be equal to 4,500,000 U.S. dollars. The government tax collection amounted to 87 percent in the Saigon area and 13 percent in the provinces.

There was continued VC penetration. The briefer stated that they were dissatisfied with the political situation.

SACSA representative in charge then spoke up and said that the Da Lat generals had not been relieved. And he said, though on 30 September he had been given 48 hours, Khiem had still not left the country and was at Da Lat working with Minh. SACSA also stated that there had been 17,000 small unit operations in South Vietnam all last week, and large unit operations had numbered 81.

The following items were then discussed: first, river control. It was agreed that new measures should be taken to control traffic on the Mekong River. Maritime operations were clandestine CIA operations against North Vietnam. The chairman stated that he has to get an okay by 5:30 tonight, that is, 5:30 South Vietnamese time, 5:30 in the morning.

The 94-target plan—this was a very important plan that was in existence for months thereafter—is now Annex R to a CinCPac plan.

Attention is also invited to National Intelligence Estimate SNIE-52-2-64, which is Secret and has a limited distribution. The theme of this estimate was “the situation in South Vietnam has continued to deteriorate.”

The chairman then summarized the 94-target plan briefly, saying that if the U.S. responds and executes this plan it should first take out the POL—that is, fuel supplies and airfields in North Vietnam—either as a reaction to the North Vietnamese attack on the Desoto patrol² or as a general air campaign. The secretary of defense agreed to this statement by the chairman and said that there are only two alternatives: the one that the chairman had just described and that of striking seven targets. It was an indication as to what was going on in the secretary’s mind. In other words, he wasn’t too enthusiastic about striking targets in North Vietnam. So, he said, why not load for the heavier mission—that is, the one in North Vietnam—and then be able to strike either group of targets. The chairman added that CinCPac could provide additional air strikes if the 94-target plan was executed. The secretary of defense agreed and also said that another carrier could be made available when the next Desoto patrol gets under way.

Then, at 1533, a brief was given regarding a proposed attack against a bridge on Route 7, that is in North Vietnam leading into a town called Ban Ban. It is impossible to bypass this bridge, said the briefer, and the DIA believes that the bridge can be taken out in three days by rocket fire. There is all manner of aircraft in the vicinity: five sites, thirteen 57mm guns and possibly some radar, and twelve two- and four-barrel automatic weapons. An attack against this target can be made under one of two options: option one by carrier-based aircraft, option two by land-based aircraft. *The Chiefs*³ recommended that this attack be made. I do not know now, some eight years later, whether the attack was actually made or not. The Chiefs’ recommendation certainly indicates attitude in 1964 concerning air attacks or favoring air attacks against targets in North Vietnam.

At the end of this memorandum, I added some thoughts regarding action in South Vietnam. I said, based on the National Intelligence Estimate SNIE-53-2-64, dated 1 October 1964, titled “The Situation in South Vietnam,” and I had pre-

² Such as the reported attacks of 4 August and 18 September 1964.

³ The italicized section is left blank in the oral history transcript. However, Greene’s handwritten notes indicate: “chiefs reco—”

viously recorded what the theme was of this study. My conclusions were that we should tell Khanh and his generals that we would back Khanh 100 percent, provided he declares martial law throughout the country, suspends constitutional government, suppresses all riots and demonstrations, and warns Sihanouk that he either “subside” or that we would execute “hot pursuit and attack,” and would eventually divide his country—that is, Cambodia—between Thailand and South Vietnam. Khanh would also, with U.S. air support, attack Laos, concentrating on the VC logistics network in that country, and with U.S. air support would attack North Vietnam for the purpose of either forcing the North Vietnam to cease support of the Viet Cong or establishing a base for bargaining and withdrawal of U.S. forces.

These so-called thoughts of mine, and I labeled them “thots” in my notes, pretty much reflect the thinking of the bulk of the military who were familiar as we were and the Chiefs of the situation in South Vietnam.⁴

63. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes on an Extract Concerning Vice Chiefs’ Visit to Vietnam Taken from a Regular Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting Held at 2:00 p.m. on 7 October 1964

1972

The proposal for the Chiefs at this time was that the members of the Joint Chiefs’ organization, the Joint Chiefs themselves, their senior representatives of the Joint Chiefs should visit South Vietnam and Southeast Asia regularly for the purpose of reporting on the situation and also for their own personal orientation. There will be an eventual accounting for the action taken in South Vietnam, and therefore the Joint Chiefs and the vice chiefs or the operational deputies should visit the area regularly. LeMay spoke up at this meeting and said our heads are against a stone wall; our

⁴ Reflecting on this meeting, Greene stated: “I again say that if bold action had been taken by the United States at this time that the war in South Vietnam would have soon been over, with the North Vietnamese coming to the conference table. The hesitation by the secretary of defense in openly concurring in the attack against the 94 targets in North Vietnam was also an indication, small though it may be, of the attitudes of politicians in the civilian hierarchy, and that was hesitation, fear of military commitments which they were already inevitably on the road to doing. A commitment piecemeal in nature which eventually resulted in some 547,000 American troops being committed to Southeast Asia. And due to the nature of the commitment, that is, piecemeal action, no resolution of the problem was to be forthcoming.”

influence is practically zero in Vietnam; we have three new vice chiefs; try to solve problems at the JCS table; therefore we should go, although the party may be too big we can cut it down if necessary. LeMay said that he felt that we should say that the vice chiefs can't go. I gather by that that he meant that the Chiefs themselves should go. The chairman said, "Well, the State—that is, the State Department—can block this visit." I spoke up as Commandant and said, "The State can't block a Chief or a vice chief from making the trip." The Chairman said, "Perhaps not, but the State can block it on the basis of the size of the party." Then I replied that I agreed, but not on the basis of the party being made up of Chiefs or vice chiefs.¹

64. Memorandum with Enclosures from the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs) (Buse) to the Commandant of the Marine Corps¹

27 October 1964

Memorandum

From: Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs)

To: Commandant of the Marine Corps

Subj: Balance Sheet of Military Operations in Vietnam

Enc1:

- (1) Comparative figures US, RVN and DRV forces
- (2) AC/S, G-1 Memo A01A(d)-mdm of 2Oct64
- (3) AC/S, G-2 Memo A02C-JRW-p1s ser 002A27564 of 1Oct64
- (4) AC/S, G-4 Memo A04J-ga/2 ser 004E27364 of 30Oct64

¹ Greene reflected on this matter as he read through his notes: "I think this is a very interesting notation. This view of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs that the State Department, for some reason not specifically given, would attempt or succeed in blocking a visit to the war zone by the top-ranking military or the representatives to the theater of war. It was interesting to speculate as to the reasons."

¹ The following large document is actually five documents grouped together by Gen Buse in response to a verbal request from Gen Greene for collected data on U.S. operations in South Vietnam over the previous year. The first document (Document 64) is the memorandum from Gen Buse to Gen Greene dated 27 October 1964 that serves as the cover sheet for the subsequent documents. Attached to Gen Buse's memo are four enclosures. Attached to Document 64, enclosure 4 (the memorandum from BGen Henderson dated 3 October 1964), are a further six enclosures.

1. The Commandant has verbally directed that a “balance sheet” of the military operations in South Vietnam be prepared in order to evaluate the trends and progress of the war in that country. A compilation of significant comparative figures is listed in enclosure (1). Enclosures (2), (3), and (4) contain detailed personnel and estimated cost data for the period 1 January to 1 October 1964.
2. The rising intensity of operations and the increased U.S. commitment to the war effort is indicated by the increased U.S. military and civilian personnel assignments and the rise in the U.S. casualty rate. While claimed Viet Cong losses are high the total Viet Cong strength has increased this year. The general trend, measured only by these figures, is a rising U.S. commitment at a cost of about one half billion dollars a year that is not matched by any apparent progress in the counterinsurgency war.

H. W. Buse

Enclosure 1
Comparative figures U.S., RVN and DRV forces
Comparative Strengths

Date	U.S. Military	RVN Regular	RVN Regional	RVN Popular	Viet Cong Main Force	Viet Cong Local Guerrillas
1 Jan 1964	15, 989	215,231	86,434	102,059	20–23,000	60–80,000
1 Oct 1964	18,419	225,095	89,751	148,217	28–34,000	60–80,000

Comparative Casualties

Type	U.S. Cumulative 1 Jan 64	U.S. Cumulative 28 Sep 64	RVN All 1963	RVN 1 Jan–26 Sep 64	Viet Cong 1963	Viet Cong 1 Jan–26 Sep 64
KIA	93	195	5,825	5,087	20,600	11,401
WIA	505	1,160	11,950	11,883		
Captured			3,265			

Deserted			31,396			
MIA				3,705		
Capt/Defec					7,050	2,490

Enclosure 2

Assistant Chief of Staff for Manpower and Personnel (G-1) Memorandum A01A(d)

2 October 1964

For: Director, Joint Planning Group

From: Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1

Subject: “Balance Sheet” of Military Operations (U)

Ref: (a) Dir, JPG, Memo ATA13-jrg of 15 Sep 1964

Encl: (1) U.S. Military and Non-Military Strengths in Vietnam on 1 January 1964 and 1 October 1964

(2) KIA, WIA, MIA-Vietnam-1 January 1964 and 28 September 1964

(3) KIA (Hostile Causes Only) Sanitized from Previously Submitted as MIA or WIA

1. Information requested by reference (a) from G-1 is provided at enclosures (1), (2) and (3).

2. Source of information is J-1, The Joint Staff, Personnel Branch, Colonel H. J. Porter, USAF.

3. The strength figures are projected figures since actual figures as of 1 October 1964 would not be available until 18–25 October 1964. The KIA, WIA, and MIA are actually reported figures as of 1 January and 28 September 1964.

4. Enclosure (3) is the sanitized KIA (Hostile Causes) figures which are caused by WIA and MIA turning into KIA at a later date.

Ormond R. Simpson²

² BGen Ormond R. Simpson, assistant chief of staff manpower and personnel (G-1), Headquarters Marine Corps, 1963–65.

AO1A(d)-mdm

October 2 1964

U.S. Military and Non-Military Strengths in Vietnam on 1 January 1964 and 1 October 1964

Army	1 Jan 1964	(Projected) 1 Oct 1964
Officers	2,482	2,926
Enlisted	7,637	8,733
TOTAL	10,119	11,659
Navy	1 Jan 1964	(Projected) 1 Oct 1964
Officers	194	286
Enlisted	563	940
TOTAL	757	1,226
Marine Corps	1 Jan 1964	(Projected) 1 Oct 1964
Officers	102	131
Enlisted	381	489
TOTAL	483	620
Air Force	1 Jan 1964	(Projected) 1 Oct 1964
Officers	922	907
Enlisted	3,708	4,007
TOTAL	4,630	4,914
	1 Jan 1964	(Projected) 1 Oct 1964
Department of Defense Civilian	336	299
	1 Jan 1964	(Projected) 1 Oct 1964
Total Military	15,989	18,419
Total Department of Defense	16,325	18,718

Other U.S. Government (United States Information Service; Agency for International Development; Public Health, etc.)		
Employees	695	725
Dependents	770	826
Other American Nationals	1 Jan 1964	(Projected) 1 Oct 1964
U.S. Residents	674	728
U.S. Tourists	25	25

KIA, WIA, MIA—Vietnam—1 January 1964 and 28 September 1964

1 January 1964	<u>USA</u>	<u>USN</u>	<u>USMC</u>	<u>USAF</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA—Hostile	51	3	9	5	68
Fatalities—Non-Hostile	40	4	6	21	71
WIA—Hostile	469	1	13	22	505
MIA—Hostile	8	—	—	—	8
Missing—Non-Hostile	—	—	—	5	5
28 September 1964	<u>USA</u>	<u>USN</u>	<u>USMC</u>	<u>USAF</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA—Hostile	136	4	11	44	195
Fatalities—Non-Hostile	58	7	6	18	89
WIA—Hostile	1,059	11	34	56	1,160
MIA—Hostile	11	1	2	2	16
Missing—Non-Hostile	—	—	—	2	2

KIA (Hostile Causes Only) Sanitized from Previously Submitted as MIA or WIA

1 JANUARY 1964	<u>USA</u>	<u>USN</u>	<u>USMC</u>	<u>USAF</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA (HOSTILE)	59	3	9	22	93
28 SEPTEMBER 1964	<u>USA</u>	<u>USN</u>	<u>USMC</u>	<u>USAF</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA (HOSTILE)	136	4	11	44	195

Enclosure 3

Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2) Memo A02C-JRW-p1s ser 002A27564

1 October 1964

Memorandum

To: Director, Joint Planning Group

From: Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2

Subject: Vietnam “Balance Sheet” Information

Ref: (a) Director, JPG Memo of 15Sep64

1. In answer to the request contained in the reference, the following information on Vietnam is submitted.

2. Strength Figures

	<u>1Jan64</u>	<u>1Oct64</u> ³
<u>Viet Cong</u>		
“Main Force”	20–23,000	28–34,000 ⁴
“Local Guerrillas”	60–80,000	60–80,000
<u>RVN Govt. Forces</u>		
RVNAF	215,231	225,095 ⁵
Regional Forces	86,434	89,751
Popular Forces	102,059	148,217

3. Casualty Figures

	1963	1Jan64–26Sep64
<u>Viet Cong</u>		
Killed	20,600	11,401
Captured/Defected	7,050	2,490
<u>RVN Govt. Forces</u>		
KIA	5,825	5,087
WIA	11,950	11,883

³ Document footnote: “Figures as of 26Sep64.”

⁴ Document footnote: “A good portion of the increase in VC Main Force strength was due to different methodology used in computations.”

⁵ Document footnote: “As of 1Sep64.”

Captured 1963	3,265	
Deserted 1963	31,396	
MIA 1964		3,705

Very respectfully,
Randolph C. Berkeley, Jr.

Enclosure 4
Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics (G-4) Memo A04J-ga/2 ser 004E27364
3 October 1964

Memorandum

From: Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4
To: Director, Joint Planning Group
Subj: Vietnam, “Balance Sheet”
Ref: (a) Your memorandum ATA13-jrg of 15Sep64
Encl: (1) List of Individuals Contacted to Obtain Information
(2) Summary of Costs Relating to Vietnam Used by SecDef
(3) Recap of MAP Assistance for Vietnam
(4) Recap of Economic Assistance to Vietnam
(5) Recap of DoD Expenses Attributable to Stationing Forces in Vietnam
(6) GVN Budget for 1964

1. The following data is provided in response to paragraph of reference (a). Enclosure (1) is a list of individuals within the Departments of Defense and State who were contacted during the compilation of this data. Enclosures (2) through (6) contain back-up information from which figures set forth in paragraph 3 were derived.
2. It should be noted that all figures are “estimates” because actual cost figures are not available. Enclosure (2) is a copy of a document used by SecDef in an appearance before the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, House Appropriations Committee in May 1964. Note 2 of enclosure (2) states that DoD accounting records are not maintained in a manner which permits an extraction of cost by country.
3. The estimate of all costs that can be related to U.S. support of Vietnam for the period 1 January to 30 September 1964 is as follows. Figures are in millions of dollars.

Military Assistance	138.6 ⁶
Jan–Jun 1964 Deliveries	82.3
Army	53.1
Navy	6.9
Air Force	22.3
Jul–Sep 1964 Estimate	56.3
Economic Assistance ⁷	192
Supporting Assistance	137.1
Development Grants	6.7
Food for Peace (P.L. 480)	48.2
DoD Support Costs	127.1 ⁸
Army	80.8
Mil Pers	51.3
O&M ⁹	29.5
Navy	5.8
Mil Pers	4.1
O&M	1.7
Air Force	40.5
Mil Pers	7.5
O&M	13.3
Procurement	19.7
Total Estimate of U.S. Costs	457.7

4. In view of the fact that “estimates” have been provided by the sources, a check has been made to determine accuracy of figures obtained from the various sources. This check is made against the figures contained in SecDef’s back-up book prepared for the above mentioned hearings. (See enclosure 2).

⁶ Document footnote: “Based on 50% of dollar value of deliveries made in FY 1964 plus estimate for three months of FY 1965 program. An additional \$181.9 million approves prior to FY 1965 remains to be delivered (See Enclosure (3)).”

⁷ Document footnote: “See Enclosure (4).”

⁸ Document footnote: “Based on figures from SecDef back-up book prepared for May 1964 Congressional Committee hearings. SecDef did not use figures from book for DoD costs but gave an estimate of about \$250 million for FY 1964 (See Enclosure (2)). Further back-up material in enclosure (5).”

⁹ Operations and maintenance funds.

FY64 (6 months)	\$298.4
FY65 (3 months)	\$151.9
Total	\$450.3
Total Estimate in this Report	\$457.7

Melvin D. Henderson¹⁰

Copy to:
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Enclosure 4(1)
List of Individuals Contacted to Obtain Information

Lt McDaniel	Office Comptroller of the USN	4E774 ¹¹
Mr. Johnson	Office Comptroller of the USN	5B731
Mr. Brazier	Spec Asst to Dep ASD (Ctrlr) (Mr. Hoover)	3E843
Col Fred Haynes	Spec Asst to Dep ASD (IDA) (Mr. Solbert)	4E813
Mr. Hovey	OASD (ISA)	4C761
LtCol Miller	Office Director Military Assistance	4D777
Mr. G. D. Wise	Office Director Military Assistance	4B714
Mr. Peter Cody	Agency for International Development (AID) Dept of State	
Miss Barbara Goetz	Agency for International Development (AID) Dept of State	
Col J. H. McGlothlin, USMC	J-4 Directorate, Joint Staff	2D840
Capt J. A. Harkins, USN	J-4 Directorate, Joint Staff	2D840
LtCol E. S. Goepper, USA	J-4 Directorate, Joint Staff	2D840
LtCdr Moss, USN	OP414 (Foreign Military Assistance Materiel)	4B517
LtCol Muir, USA	DCSLDG (Military Assistance)	3B548
LtCol Behnke, USAF	DCS, S&L (Mutual Security)	5A332

¹⁰ BGen Melvin D. Henderson, assistant chief of staff for logistics (G-4), Headquarters Marine Corps, 1964–65.

¹¹ The right-hand column indicates office numbers.

Enclosure 4(2)

Summary of Estimated Costs Relating to Vietnam

(Used by SecDef in appearance before Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, House Appropriations Committee, May 1964)

		FY 1964	FY 1965	
			Original Estimate	Revised Budget Estimate
Military Assistance (Grant Aid)	216.4	150.8	205.8	
Economic Assistance ¹²	197.0	190.5	260.5	
DoD Support Costs ¹³	183.3	141.2	141.2 ¹⁴	
	596.7	482.5	607.5	

SOURCE: Mr. Brazier, Special Assistant to Deputy ASD (Comptroller)

Enclosure 4(3)

Recap of Map Assistance to Vietnam (In Thousands of Dollars)

	Army	Air Force	Navy	Total
1964 programs plus undelivered balance of previous approved programs	209,740	81,905	54,835	346,480
Delivered in FY 1964 ¹⁵	<u>106,140</u>	<u>44,605</u>	<u>13,835</u>	<u>164,580</u>
Remainder of previously approved programs to be delivered	103,600	37,300	41,000	181,900

¹² Document footnote: "Includes PL 480 Program."

¹³ Document footnote: "DoD Accounting records are not maintained in a manner which permits an extraction of exact cost by country. This is an estimate consisting of pay, allowances, transportation expenses, operation and maintenance costs and identifiable procurement and construction costs."

¹⁴ Document footnote: "During House Foreign Affairs Committee hearings on VN, SecDef estimated these costs at about \$250 million per year."

¹⁵ Document footnote: "Figures not available to indicate month deliveries actually made. 50% of this figure is an estimate of deliveries made during the six month period of 1 Jan–30 Jun 1964. These figures are: Army 53,070; Air Force 22,303; Navy 6,918; total 82,290. Present accounting methods cannot provide information of deliveries made until after end of fiscal year. Steps being taken by ASD(ISA) to obtain this data on a quarterly basis. Installation of machine records system in near future will facilitate availability of information."

Programmed for FY 1964				<u>225,200</u>
Total of 1965 program plus undelivered balance of previous years programs remaining to be delivered				407,100

SOURCE: OASD (ISA); USN; USAF; USN; MAP Sections

Enclosure 4(4)
Economic Assistance to Vietnam (In Millions of Dollars)

	1964	1965 (Estimate)	1965 (July–August) Obligations
AID (New Obligational Authority)	165.7	263.4	
Supporting Assistance	<u>159.8</u>	<u>242.2</u>	<u>36.6</u>
Commercial Import Program	113	135	22.3
Standby Cash Grant		30	
Counter-Insurgency	46.8	72.2 ¹⁶	14.3
Project	(8.7)	(14.0)	(2.2)
Non-Project	(38.1)	(63.2)	(12.1)
Development Grants	<u>5.9</u>	<u>21.2</u> ¹⁷	<u>1.7</u>
Development Loans ¹⁸	—	—	—
Food for Peace (PL 480)	<u>75.3</u>	<u>75.8</u>	
Title I Sales Agreements (Export Market Value)	<u>39.1</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>3.65</u>
Country Use	(35.2)	(37.8)	(3.28)
Title II (CCC Cost)	33.6	30.0	

¹⁶ Document footnote: “Mission estimate August.”
¹⁷ Document footnote: “Includes \$13.1 million for Northern Toll System which, if approved, may be funded from other than Development Grants.”
¹⁸ Document footnote: “Total DL Est=\$39.9 million (authorization).”

Title III (CCC Cost)	2.6	3.8	3.8
Total Economic Assistance	241	339.2	

Enclosure 4(5)

28 April 1964

Memorandum for the Director of Military Assistance, OASD (ISA)

Subject: DoD Expenses Attributable to Stationing of U.S. Forces Overseas

Reference is made to your memoranda dated April 14 and April 16, 1964¹⁹ respectively, subject as above, which requested information pertaining to a Congressional inquiry of Mr. Passman, Chairman, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, House Appropriations Committee.

The attached data was supplied by the military departments. The Department of the Army indicated no items of equipment were specifically procured to meet requirements of U.S. personnel in Korea or Taiwan, and that information was not readily available from Headquarters as to the equipment procured for U.S. personnel in Vietnam. The Department of the Navy indicated no equipment was specifically procured to meet requirements of U.S. personnel in Vietnam, Korea, or Taiwan. With respect to the Air Force, we have been advised that the items of equipment and construction were specifically identifiable procurements to support U.S. personnel in the subject countries.

All services indicated that the attached data were statistical estimates and were not obtainable from accountable records except for the Air Force equipment and construction amounts. The official accounting records are not maintained in a manner which would reflect details pertaining to costs incurred within foreign countries or areas.

J. S. Hoover
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

¹⁹ In writing, the memorandum for 14 April is indicated as I 5643/64, and the memorandum for 16 April is indicated as I 580/64.

\$ Millions

	<u>Vietnam</u>			<u>Korea</u>			<u>Taiwan</u>		
	1963	1964	1965	1963	1964	1965	1963	1964	1965
<u>Army</u>									
Mil Pers	47.2	70.4	64.4	260.5	273.6	275.6	6.9	6.6	6.0
O&M	30.1	40.6	36.7	206.9	201.7	208.2	4.5	4.4	3.9
Total Army	77.3	111	101.1	467.4	475.3	483.8	11.4	11.0	9.9
<u>Navy</u>									
Mil Pers	4.7	5.4	5.7	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.4	2.6	2.7
O&M	2.1	2.2	2.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	1.1	0.9	0.9
Total Navy	6.8	7.6	8.0	1.4	1.5	1.5	3.5	3.5	3.6
<u>Air Force</u>									
Mil Pers	6.8	9.7	10.3	16.6	17.9	18.3	5.3	4.9	5.0
O&M	22.4	17.9	17	8.8	8.3	9.5	1.4	1.4	1.3
Sub Total—Air Force	29.2	27.6	27.3	25.4	26.2	27.8	6.7	6.3	6.3
Aircraft Procurement	5.8	30.3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other Procurement	1.1	6.7	4.8	—	0.2	—	—	0.1	—
Mil Construction	1.9	0.1	—	1.4	0.2	2.8	0.6	—	0.3
Total Air Force	38	64.7	32.1	26.8	26.6	30.6	7.3	6.4	6.6
<u>Total DoD Appropriations</u>									
Army	77.3	111.0	101.1	467.4	475.3	483.8	11.4	11.0	9.9
Navy	6.8	7.6	8.0	1.4	1.5	1.5	3.5	3.5	3.6

	<u>Vietnam</u>			<u>Korea</u>			<u>Taiwan</u>		
	1963	1964	1965	1963	1964	1965	1963	1964	1965
Air Force	38	64.7	32.1	26.8	26.6	30.6	7.3	6.4	6.6
Total	122.1	183.3	141.2	495.6	503.4	515.9	22.2	20.9	20.1

Enclosure 4(6)
GVN Budget Data
(No. Billions of Piasters)

	Planned GVN 64 Budget (Million Dollar Equiv)	New Estimate Cash Budget CY64
<u>Expenditures</u>		
Defense	19.4 (263.9)	NA
Counter-Insurgency	3.8 (51.7)	NA
Civil	11.7 (159.2)	NA
Investments (Develop)	2.22 (29.9)	NA
Export (Subsidies)	—	—
Total	37.1 (504.7)	31
<u>Revenues</u>		
Internal Taxes	5.3 (72.1)	NA
Trade (Inc U.S. Aid)	6.9 (93.9)	NA
Non Tax	1.4 (19.9)	NA
5/7 Tax	2.3 (31.3)	NA
Total	15.9 (216.3)	15.4

	Planned GVN 64 Budget (Million Dollar Equiv)	New Estimate Cash Budget CY64
Deficit		
Before U.S. Aid	21.2 (288.4)	15.6
GVN Piasters Receipts from U.S. AID	9.5 (129.2) ²⁰	10.6
Uncovered Deficit	11.7 (159.9)	5.0

SOURCE: TOAID 1984, TOAID A-1803, TOAID A-1683, TOAID A-2017, SEC State 8328, TOAID 3215, TOAID 1254

65. Memorandum for the Record of Conversation between the Commandant of the Marine Corps and Senator Russell

Washington, 31 October 1964

Subj: Resume of conversation between CMC and Senator Russell (Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee) on D-Day (Monday, 26Oct64), Steel Pike¹ exercise, Huelva, Spain

During a conversation with Senator Russell concerning the situation in South Vietnam, Senator Russell said that he had talked with Mr. McCone (Director of CIA) and had told McCone that he thought that an effort should be covertly made to bring a man to the top of the government in South Vietnam who would demand that the U.S. withdraw its forces from that country. This action would give the U.S. the necessary face-saving basis for a withdrawal.

Wallace M. Greene, Jr.

²⁰ Document footnote: "Actual dollar input may vary in view of different rates of deposit."

¹ Steel Pike was a large-scale amphibious landing exercise conducted in October and November 1964 in which II Marine Expeditionary Force transited the Atlantic Ocean and landed at Huelva, Spain. The operation, which involved 21,642 Marines, was conducted in cooperation with the Spanish government. See LtCol James B. Soper, "Observations: Steel Pike and Silver Lance," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 91, no. 11 (1965): 48–58.

X. 31 OCTOBER–2 NOVEMBER 1964: THE BIEN HOA ATTACK

66. Memorandum by the Commandant of the Marine Corps Concerning Actions That Took Place in South Vietnam following the Viet Cong Attack on Bien Hoa Airfield

31 October–1 November 1964

Memorandum for the Record

Subj: Summary of actions which took place on Saturday 31Oct and Sunday 1Nov64, re the situation in South Vietnam

Late Saturday afternoon I was notified by the Marine Corps Command Center that an attack had been made by the Viet Cong against the Bien Hoa airfield, 14 miles northeast of Saigon.¹ This attack had caused considerable damage and a number of deaths. In reply to my question as to whether the Chairman had notified that he was going to call a meeting of the Joint Chiefs, the duty officer responded that the National Command Center had said that he wouldn't. Messages had been sent out to the area asking both the military and the Ambassador to provide additional information and recommendations.

Sunday morning, 1 Nov, at 0815 I called the Marine Corps Command Center for additional information. I was told that replies to the Chairman's and State's dispatches had been received, however no meeting of the Joint Chiefs was scheduled. A meeting, however, with the President and Secretary of State at which the Chairman would be present had been reportedly set up. I immediately called Gen-

¹ Bien Hoa Air Base, just north of Saigon, was being used at the time as a base for U.S. Farm Gate aircraft. The National Liberation Front attacked the installation using a mortar bombardment and commando raid. Over the course of 39 minutes, Viet Cong forces expended 60 rounds. The assault killed 4 Americans and wounded 72 others. Five B-57 bombers were destroyed, and another 13 were damaged. See Cosmas, *Joint Chiefs and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, vol. 2, 143–62; and Prados, *Vietnam*, 105.

eral Buse (Deputy Chief of Staff, P&P) and reviewed the situation with him. He was about to depart for Headquarters Marine Corps to read the latest incoming message traffic.

I then called the Director of the Joint Staff and the Chairman, but was unable to reach either individual. I then called the National Military Command Center and in reply to my queries was told by the officer on watch (a Rear Admiral) that no meeting had been scheduled by the Chairman for the Joint Chiefs, but that the Chairman was expected to go to a meeting convened by the President at the White House at which the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense would be present. This would take place at 1115. The Chairman would be in his office at the Pentagon at 0900. I told the staff duty officer that I wanted him to notify the Chairman that I desired to talk with him regarding this situation prior to his departure to the meeting with the President. The question in my mind was—why was the Chairman not calling a meeting of the Joint Chiefs on this important matter before he went to the White House meeting? Was it because he or someone else did not desire recommendations from the Joint Chiefs?

I then called General LeMay at his quarters and outlined the above situation to him. LeMay told me that he had talked with the Chairman on Saturday and asked him why no immediate action was being taken to reply to this Viet Cong attack when immediate action had been taken following the North Vietnamese attack against the destroyer in the Tonkin Gulf. He had told the Chairman that he could not understand why apparently there was no intent to take action on this occasion where a major U.S. base had been successfully attacked by the Viet Cong.

I told LeMay that the Chairman apparently was going to meet with the President at 1115. I asked LeMay why the Joint Chiefs were not holding a meeting. Were the Joint Chiefs on the shelf, I asked.

LeMay replied that he agreed that there should be a meeting of the Joint Chiefs prior to the conference with the President, and that he, LeMay, would immediately depart from his quarters and go to the Pentagon in order to see the Chairman in his office when he arrived at 0900. He asked me to meet him there. It was then 20 minutes to 0900 and I agreed to proceed to the Pentagon as soon as I could arrange transportation.

I did not arrive at the Pentagon until 0920. I went immediately to the Marine Corps Liaison Office, where General Buse and Colonels Ryan² and Codisposi were waiting to brief me on the latest dispatch traffic. We reviewed the messages and I rapidly outlined the Marine Corps position (see my notes in Special File).³ In reading over the dispatches, my impression was that the reply from CinCPac was a weasel reply. I also noted that Ambassador Taylor had recommended action initially in the Panhandle⁴ and then against selected targets in North Vietnam on a “tit-for-tat” basis.

Prior to getting well into reading the dispatches, I called General LeMay in his office and was told that a meeting of the Joint Chiefs would be held at LeMay’s request at 1000. Therefore I did not contact the Chairman, but went on with the preparation of a Marine Corps position. (For an outline of what took place during the Special JCS Meeting held at 1000 see my work notes in Special Files.)

*Following JCS meeting Gen LeMay spoke to me outside JCS Conference Room stating that the Chairman had not had any intention of calling a JCS meeting until LeMay had demanded that he do so—and that he was glad that I had “fired him up” about the matter.*⁵

Following the meeting I went to my quarters and stood by for further call later on in the day. There was none, and the Marine Corps Command Center reported to me that in mid-afternoon some messages had been dispatched by the Chairman, one of which called on CINCPAC to alter FMFPAC for the possible movement of a LAAM⁶ battalion to DaNang. The Military Command Center also reported that they had been informed that no further action would be taken in this matter until another meeting was held by the President on Monday. The immediate question which came to my mind was—Why this delay? Was it because of the election, or because the people concerned desired to “sleep on” the problem? *(During this waiting period I alerted CGFMFPAC⁷ by telcon).*

² LtCol Michael P. Ryan, assistant director, joint planning group, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans and Programs), 1964–66.

³ Document 68.

⁴ Common term used for southern Laos. The Ho Chi Minh Trail ran through this area as it made its way to Cambodia and into South Vietnam.

⁵ Italicized section is handwritten on the original document.

⁶ Light antiaircraft missile battalion. The unit was armed with the Raytheon MIM-23 Hawk surface-to-air missile.

⁷ The commanding general of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific: LtGen Victor Krulak. Italicized section is handwritten in pen on the original document.

On Sunday night and Monday morning the radio, in its reports regarding the South Vietnam attack, said that an administration spokesman had indicated that no action would be mounted against North Vietnam in retaliation for the Bien Hoa attack. Why was this statement made? Did the originator actually mean this, or was it a cover for an attack which might come later?

In the morning newspapers of Monday this statement was also repeated, that there would be no action taken against North Vietnam.

During Monday morning I was also notified by General Buse that the JCS paper which had been forwarded to the Secretary of Defense covering recommended courses of action in Southeast Asia had been referred by the Secretary of Defense to Ambassador Taylor for recommendation. Why was this done prior to discussions with the President? This particular paper was one which was finished about a week ago and which advocated stepped-up actions against North Vietnam.

At 0915 on Monday morning I received word that the Chairman had called a Special Meeting of the Chiefs at 1030 to follow the regular weekly SecDef staff meeting.

The result was that on Monday morning the Secretary of Defense held the weekly staff meeting at 0930, during which nothing was said about South Vietnam (rather Project VELA, nuclear explosion detection, was the subject). This hour long meeting was followed by a short meeting of the Joint Chiefs in the Secretary's office, as outlined above. Immediately afterward the Joint Chiefs repaired to their Conference Room, where the Chairman reported on his actions of Sunday, and the situation was discussed further as outlined above (Also see CMC Work Notes in Special File).

Wallace M. Greene, Jr.

67. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Preliminary Notes Written Prior to Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Held at 10:30 a.m. on 1 November 1964

1972

I started this off by saying that I held the assumption that the United States would stay in South Vietnam until objectives therein are accomplished. As far as

courses of action were concerned, I referred to JCSA plan 2343-462/2, which called for overt U.S. retaliation. This plan, which apparently I was looking over at that time, I believed that in view of the circumstances as of this date that paragraphs 69 and 72 should be deleted from Option 1A and that paragraphs 3 and 8 Option 2A should be substituted, and that the South Vietnamese Air Force should execute Option 1 B.

I felt that the dependents of U.S. [personnel] in Saigon should be withdrawn, commencing immediately.

Thirdly, I felt that security at Da Nang should be insured by landing the Special Landing Force. Now, this is the first indication of the solidification of this proposal, and here it was occurring on 1 November 1964. Finally I felt that CNO should contact Sharp and recommend that the three LPHs¹ which were available in PacFIt should be moved forward.

68. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 10:30 a.m. on 1 November 1964

1972

The chairman first stated that CinCPac wanted 48 hours in order to get ready to move against targets in the Panhandle or North Vietnam under Options 1A and 2A. The chairman said he opposed the tit-for-tat policy because an equivalency policy, as he termed it, was a dangerous one; it ties our hands and gives the VC the initiative to determine the level of war.

I think that that was a well-taken point. The chairman said that he felt that within 24 to 36 hours we could use U.S. Air Force aircraft against targets in the panhandle of Laos and for armed reconnaissance against Route 7 in Laos. The chairman said that it takes 60 to 72 hours to commence movement of augmentation forces. He felt that we should execute Options 1A and 2A, modified by substituting airfields for ports. He felt that targets in the south should be selected for at-

¹ Landing platform helicopter. In 1964, the Pacific Fleet's three helicopter carriers were the USS *Princeton* (LPH 5), USS *Valley Forge* (LPH 8), and USS *Iwo Jima* (LPH 2).

tacks by the South Vietnamese Air Force, and therefore there should be a deliberate and methodically executed strike against North Vietnam using the 94-target list.

The chairman also said that he had problems to consider regarding dependents, the use of B-52s,¹ [and] low-level reconnaissance of targets just across the border in North Vietnam, and that he felt that the Vietnamese Air Force, South Vietnamese, should only be briefed on the targets that they are to strike; that we should insure the air defense of South Vietnam and Thailand, and that the Hanoi radio station should be struck. The chairman also said that the sticking points in the problem were whether or not to strike north or limit our attacks to South Vietnam, and whether this should be a one-shot blow in retaliation or the beginning of a campaign.

General LeMay then spoke up and said we should start the air attack against North Vietnam and keep it going until the North Vietnamese stop their support of the VC in South Vietnam; that we should get to CinCPac what he needs to do the job.

I spoke up then and gave my assumption as to what the U.S. position was and asked is this correct, is this the last turn in the road? Well, apparently, I didn't get any answer because none is recorded.

However, CNO spoke up and said that he felt that the administration was waiting and hoping to get over the election. In any event, we couldn't execute an attack before Tuesday night, and there should be a massive B-52 attack against North Vietnamese airfields and launched as a night attack. It would take 48 hours to get ready to attack targets in the panhandle of Laos and 60 to 72 hours for attacks against North Vietnam. The chairman then said that he had taped the conversation, presumably at CinCPac, in which it had been indicated that 48 hours were required before attacks could be launched.

All the Chiefs finally agreed on the following: that within 24–36 hours a strike should be made against the bridge in the Panhandle and thereafter attacks made against Route 7 in North Vietnam. Secrecy was emphasized and that we should alert and move our forces.

¹ Boeing B-52 Stratofortress.

The first battle of the campaign, and here we find this word appearing, should be an attack against the targets on the 94-target list. We should use B-52s now on Guam in the night attack prior to any follow-on attacks. There were 30 B-52s which could be employed, giving them 36- to 48-hours' notice without any degradation of the SIOP. Now the SIOP is the plan which kept the Air Force units on the ready for any nuclear attack against the United States. In order to establish proper security, we should land the Special Landing Force, that was the Marine BLT, at Da Nang. Concurrently, we should commence removal of dependents, and the number of U.S. dependents was given as 1,882, with a cost of removal of half a million dollars. We should get an okay to operate from Thailand bases. The South Vietnamese Air Force should attack selected Plan 1D targets. There should be no tit for tat—no declarations of our policy regarding equivalency—and the South Vietnamese Air Force should not be told about U.S. targets, and, of course, this was indicative of the infiltration of VC into the South Vietnamese military. A low-level reconnaissance should be executed over South Vietnamese targets. Finally, secrecy and security of the plan was emphasized once more.

There followed a discussion as to what to do with the U.S. dependents in Saigon, and the chief of staff [of the] Army said: if the U.S. dependents are to go, where should they go? There was [a] direct answer to this question. It was pretty obvious they should go back to the United States or to other friendly countries, such as Thailand and the Philippines. The chairman says, "Well, if they aren't pulled out, they could be held as hostages, as was the case in the Congo with other internationals." I spoke up at this time and said, "I concur with the Air Force, General LeMay, that we should commence withdrawal of dependents concurrent with other actions."

The JCS meeting was then over at 0945, and the chairman said he was going to the secretary of defense's office because he is due to meet with Mr. McNamara and Mr. Vance at 1015, and then later with the president, possibly at 1115.

After this meeting was over and outside the JCS conference room at 0948, I talked with General LeMay. He said to me, "When I got in here at 0900 this morning as a result of your telephone conversation with me, I found that the chairman

had no intention of calling a JCS meeting. Thanks for getting me fired up.” My question was, why did the chairman not plan to call a JCS meeting?²

At 0950, I held a short meeting with members of my staff—Buse, Codispoti, and Ryan—again in the Marine officers liaison office in the Pentagon and briefed them on the meeting. I point out that there was a question apparently of why an attack should be launched by us, since politically it was not desirable from the administration’s viewpoint because it was coming just before the election. However, it looked to me as if the U.S. wouldn’t really do anything, and the result would be that we would lose face. I also said that I believed at the next meeting of the JCS we’d discuss action against Cambodia.

69. Memorandum for the Record of Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting with the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) following Regular Secretary of Defense Staff Meeting

Washington, 10:55 a.m., 2 November 1964

Memorandum for the Record

Subj: Summary of meeting of Joint Chiefs with Secretary of Defense following regular SecDef Staff meeting 02 0930 Nov64, re situation in South Vietnam

1. The SecDef spoke as follows:

The situation today in South Vietnam is damned serious. It is critical. It may affect our dependents there, our schools, as well as our military bases—also the fabric of the entire South Vietnam Government and people. I want the Chiefs to reexamine the forces which would be required to support a major effort in South Vietnam and the logistics to back up these forces. I am sure that before anything is done the President will want to alert and move our forces prior to applying pressure against North Vietnam.

The New York Times this morning, in a feature article,¹ points out the deterioration which has taken place in South Vietnam during the past year. It shows that

² Document 66.

¹ Peter Grose, “Vietnam Outlook Bleaker a Year after Diem’s Fall,” *New York Times*, 2 November 1964.

we are a hell of a lot weaker there than we were a year ago. If we continue in our present course of action, the government will continue to get weaker, more pro-Communists will have to be admitted to the government, and we will wind up with a popular front government which will be willing to accede to ChiCom demands.

However, I feel that a strike against North Vietnam, as recommended by you Chiefs, will not bring any major change in the attitude of the dissident “Viet Cong” in South Vietnam.

What worries me is the long term picture of the capabilities of the 700 million people within the boundaries of China. We can’t make the people in South-east Asia any happier in the next 20 years than we are doing now. This means that we have a terrible problem facing us. The President, being born in Texas, is inclined to take some action. He wants to move, but he wants to be Goddamned sure of himself before he does so.

I want each Service to examine their logistic support capability necessary to back up a large effort in South Vietnam. I know that this logistic support is basically a concern of CINCPAC, but I want the services to be sure that it can be provided.

After we have attacked the 94 targets in North Vietnam, I don’t believe that we will be able to stop there. I would recommend that when that point is reached, we should strike against the Communist nuclear facilities. This nuclear capability of the ChiComs is a greater threat over a long time period. Therefore we shouldn’t just look at the 94 targets system if we propose to attack.²

2. The Chairman then spoke twice about the importance of weighing the possibility that a major effort in South Vietnam might result in a war with Communist China.

3. The Secretary of Defense then discussed the thought which some people had of using nuclear weapons against the Chinese Communists if they entered such a war. He said that we shouldn’t get the idea that we are going to commence using nuclear weapons just because the first few U.S. divisions might be forced back.

Wallace M. Greene, Jr.

²The People’s Republic of China detonated its first nuclear weapon weeks earlier on 16 October 1964. For more information on the reaction of the Department of Defense to China’s detonation of a nuclear weapon, see William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’: The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960–1964,” *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000–2001): 54–99.

70. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Special Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 10:55 a.m. on 2 November 1964

1972

This meeting started off with the chairman debriefing regarding his visit to McNamara yesterday, Sunday, following the JCS meeting.¹ He said that he went at 1115 to the secretary of defense's home. With Vance and McNaughton, the chairman went over the JCS recommendations. McNamara made copious notes and said that he had no firm date with the president. At 1150, he went to see the secretary of state and said that he would call the chairman if a useful meeting could be set up.

At 1445, he had talked with the president. The president was quite upset by the whole affair—I guess that 1445 was the day previously. He wanted to take action, but he was concerned as to what [the] counteractions should be and what we might trigger, whether we should execute air attacks or ground attacks, and the question of course of ensuring the security of dependents.

The chairman then went to the National Military Command Center, and he got out a cable, in other words [he] sent it, expressing the views of the president regarding security and asking for comments. And I presume that went to ComUSMACV.

The secretary of defense also said that there would be another meeting today before the president left for Texas.² However, he was not certain about it. The chairman asked some questions: one regarding the formal recommendations of the Chiefs as made yesterday, and secondly that the Joint Staff should assemble possible reactions of the Chinese Communists for this period, and that movements should be limited to units in Phase II of Plan 32-64. He feels, the chairman does, that there will be no policy discussions at the meeting today.

The news reports state that a spokesman of the State Department was playing down the situation. However, the chairman said he felt the JCS should “pull up their socks” militarily. The chairman continued saying that time and space factors were involved. It was a question of transportation, [and] the adequacy of POL

¹ Document 68.

² For the 3 November 1964 presidential election.

storage and ammunition. We should consider these so that we can take early action to collect, and all these things will require considerable service participation. We should reduce our aircraft concentration in South Vietnam by using Thai air bases.

I then raised the issue of, “Do we withdraw from South Vietnam? Do we engage in a major effort, that is, war in South Vietnam?” And finally I predicted that if we executed a major effort—that is, war—that it would not be a popular war with the people of the U.S.³

71. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 3:20 p.m. on 2 November 1964

1972

The chairman said, “First, no basic decisions were made this morning. The discussion was broad regarding courses of action. The discussion concerned basic decisions facing us in a very broad way.” And the chairman said he intended to get State and Defense to working together; that is, Admiral Mustin will represent and report for the JCS. Then, this opening statement by the chairman was followed by a DIA briefing on Communist activity in South Vietnam, a discussion of VC mortar attacks—130 and 180mm with 20 rounds per mortar; supply level was limited. And this briefing was followed by a political scenario—as it was termed—in which first, the threat was listed; secondly, the fact that the North Vietnamese and ChiCom might reply; and thirdly, what ways would we use to response. In other words, what would our preparatory moves be, our logistical supply, and the 94-target list? An analysis [is] to be made of this to see whether we would use all the targets or a lesser number.

³ Reflecting on these notes, Greene said: “My comment at this point is that we see a very crucial period in U.S. history and involvement in South Vietnam, and we see the president wanting to take some action in retaliation for this major attack against the Bien Hoa Air Base and the destruction of American aircraft, but at the same time he was plagued with the problem of the upcoming, immediate election. And being a politician, and his own future at stake, he was apparently plagued with the question of whether he should take any action or not at this time. We also see the State Department trying to play down the seriousness of the situation, apparently sensitive to the home-front political problem. We see the military, the Joint Chiefs, recommending strong action to be taken against the North Vietnamese in retaliation for the Bien Hoa attack, and we also see that the secretary of defense favors a powerful retaliation and, in fact, even goes beyond that and envisages possible attacks against Communist China and the nuclear facilities in that country. However, as we know, the political views eventually prevailed. Any active attack was pretty well hamstrung and with the result that no victory was to come out of this major commitment which eventually took place with the U.S. forces.”

The president wants an examination made of the possibility of escalation and possible losses to the U.S. The North Vietnamese apparently have considered and are prepared to take a U.S. attack. We can't assume that a few air attacks will end Viet Cong efforts in South Vietnam. The probability is that we will escalate our military efforts; the Chinese Communists will escalate; and therefore the question is, what will develop in this situation and how do we respond? We can't continue in the present situation. The president feels that an adequate and proper appropriate reply is in order, but wants all considerations to be made. The question then is whether a committee was to make this study or not and what would the composition of the committee be, and the chairman said it was going to be an ad hoc committee consisting of Bundy, McNaughton, and Mustin. And they would construct a political part, a military part, and orchestrate the above two parts with objective negotiations.

Here again, we see the administration's tendency as it also occurred during the Kennedy administration: to study problems by means of ad hoc committees instead of using the National Security Council machinery, which I think was a very serious error in organizational operation.

Well, at any rate the chairman then debriefed regarding the meeting today which was held with the president, the secretary of defense, Mr. Vance, Mr. McNaughton, and the chairman. Also present were Secretary Rusk, Deputy Secretary Ball, [William] Bundy, McGeorge Bundy, [and] Bromley Smith, an NSC official. There was no CIA representative present at this meeting.

The chairman said that the first thing he reviewed were the JCS views; [he] used notes that he had taken at yesterday's meeting and that [he] also had discussed preparatory measures. He had read Taylor's reply to the State cable. The president had then said . . . that we need to make retaliatory attacks, but we must be absolutely ready for anything. . . . So, we have the problem of dependents, security for our airfields, and the positioning of forces. The president said, "Tell the Chiefs that we must anticipate various contingencies and how we will counter them."

At this point, I made a note that it looks as if the president was really thinking of an estimate of the situation, which, of course, is something I always felt was never adequately done within the Joint Chiefs organization. And, of course, this

was something that I repeatedly took up with the Joint Chiefs in an effort to make this sort of action an SOP within the Joint Chiefs organization.

Without an estimate of the situation carefully made in writing, we find ourselves here trying to think of the various possibilities on the part of the enemy and what our actions would be, and yet a first-class job which certainly we were capable of making in the Joint Staff was never laid out. We had to do it primarily by talking . . .

The chairman continued: the president was apparently needling us because he said we couldn't stop the shelling of the air base. And the chairman told him that they could still shell the air bases because there was no guarantee of 100 percent security. And the chairman said that the president was still using "the old needle," and the president will ask the other Chiefs for their views. The president stated that he was concerned regarding the security of dependents in Saigon, and he had heard the morale argument to the effect that they should stay there, but that the president didn't agree with this, and I certainly didn't. The president felt that we should get the women and kids out before we do anything, and the chairman said that would be a signal to North Vietnam. The president asked the chairman, "Do you think that [an] attack without anything in return is a signal?" The chairman replied that it could or could not be; at any rate, this removal of dependents is a preparatory step. The president wants appropriate posture established first before any action is taken.

The chairman said that he had started out with the remark that the JCS had agreed that we were at a fork in the road, at a point of decision, that the situation demanded strong response, and anything less [would be] interpreted as being less both by our friends and our foes—for example, our friends in South Vietnam and the other friendly nations in Southeast Asia.

It was very apparent to the chairman that no decision would be made so long as one American woman or child remained in Saigon. The chairman said he was dictating a memorandum to the staff [regarding] the form the report should take. The chairman added that Secretary Rusk of State had not agreed with him or the JCS that this was a fork in the road. He discussed other courses of action.

The chairman then said that the president had left the room, and following his departure the secretary of defense had said in regard to this action which we

are contemplating, taking in South Vietnam, that is far less important than the basic decision facing the government, and that is whether we should stay in our present policy or move up the scale: adopt the JCS recommendations or get out, that is, if we stay with our present policy. The chairman then said that Secretary Rusk had “rung all chimes” regarding the weakness of the present government in South Vietnam; therefore, the secretary of defense is correct regarding the necessity for the basic decision to be made of whether or not we would stay in South Vietnam. The chairman turned to me and said and that is why the ad hoc committee is established to construct the “political scenario” and Mr. McNaughton would be speaking regarding that. The chairman continued, “The president has left for Texas. He has two [*speaking*] engagements tonight and will stay for the election period.” He may want to stay until the recount, and the chairman may have to go down. I then spoke up and said, “The longer we wait to take action, the less important it becomes to do anything.” The chairman said, no, he didn’t agree. The chairman then read a dispatch to CinCPac to the effect that a response, that is, an attack against the North Vietnamese, was in order but not now. The chief of staff of the Air Force said we should move dependents immediately. The chairman replied, the president accepts Taylor’s view—unless we launch an attack against North Vietnam, we should not move dependents. Then I said, “Well, then there is to be no attack against North Vietnam.” The chairman wouldn’t say. He thought that the response would be “yes,” but no bets on when. It might well be a single action against South Vietnamese targets.

General LeMay of the Air Force then made the comment, “The doves sure are flying,” and invited the Chiefs’ attention to the fact that the *Daily News* had called this situation a “little Pearl Harbor.”¹ The chairman added that the boss, that is President Johnson, was mad because he learned that General Khanh had gone to Da Lat for the weekend, looking as if he didn’t consider the attack, the situation, serious.

The chairman then discussed the proposed dispatch to CinCPac, and CinCPac had told the chairman over the telephone that he is ready on 15 minutes’ notice to commence any action or preparation for any action that might be directed. This marked the end of the meeting.

¹ Several newspapers—the *Rocky Mount (NC) Evening Telegram* on 4 November 1964 and the *Milwaukee Sentinel* on 2 November 1964—used the phrase, citing Gen Westmoreland as their source.

XI. NOVEMBER 1964

72. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Friday Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at 2:00 p.m. on 13 November 1964

1972

The chairman announced first that Ambassador Taylor, General Taylor, had been directed to return to Washington for a consultation. However, said the chairman, this order is revocable in the event that circumstances change and it becomes necessary for Taylor to remain in Saigon. He is due to arrive on the twenty-first of November, said the chairman, which is a Saturday, and will be available for discussions on Saturday and Sunday. Then he will meet with the president on Tuesday and Wednesday, and Forrestal, the assistant to President Johnson, is going out to Saigon with conference papers so that Taylor will be prepared to enter into discussions upon his arrival. General Taylor will also bring a small party of staff members with him. He continued by saying that it was anticipated that the president will return to Washington for questions on the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth of November. These discussions would be within the government regarding the adoption of a tougher line, either now or on 1 January. The indicators are, said the chairman, that the president is inclined (according to the secretary of defense) to take a somewhat tougher line, a slowly graduated harder line of action and pressure against North Vietnam. Of course, and this is my comment, here you see again the application of gradual military pressure, which is in essence is a piecemeal action and which is unsuccessful in South Vietnam just as it has been for hundreds of years throughout past history. It seems that nothing has been learned from the lessons of history on the proper application of military power. I then continued, saying that a dispatch had been received from Ambassador Taylor¹ and that no distri-

¹ Telegram No. 1445 from the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State, 1:00 p.m., 10 November 1964, in *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 1, 899-900.

bution had been made on it, and that the dispatch uttered that at least a minimum of government was desirable in Saigon, and that if the government did fail, that the U.S. should go north anyway, that we were in a position where we needed to use a pulmotor for a patient in extremis. Taylor said that he needed to know what the administration intended to do, and the initiation of attacks against the North would force breaks. He said that in his opinion there would probably be a decision forthcoming in this matter on next Monday or Tuesday, and probably there would be no agreement as to what the decision should be.

The question then arose as to whether the Marine Corps antiaircraft LAAM missile battalion should be moved now in view of what the chairman had just previously said. The chairman answered that he would get a decision from the secretary of defense sometime tomorrow, Saturday morning, and involved in that decision would be the question as to whether the battalion would move by water or not.

73. Editor's Summary: Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Working Group and Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara)

Washington, November 21 and 23, 1964

Toward the end of 21 November 1964, a working group led by William Bundy, assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, submitted a summary of proposed courses of action for Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Bundy stated that South Vietnam's government was unstable, that the Viet Cong would continue to hold the initiative as long as North Vietnam continued to provide them support, and that South Vietnam's collapse would bring about the spread of Communist regimes throughout Asia. According to Bundy, "It cannot be concluded that the loss of South Vietnam would soon have the totally crippling effect in Southeast Asia and Asia generally that the loss of Berlin would have in Europe; but it could be that bad, driving us to the progressive loss of other areas or to taking a stand at some point where there would almost certainly be major conflict and perhaps the risk of nuclear war."¹

¹ Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Working Group, 21 November 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 1, 919.

Bundy laid out three possible options, designated A, B, and C. Option A proposed continuing the current approach: providing “maximum assistance” to South Vietnam, South Vietnamese covert actions against the North, and individual reprisal actions against North Vietnam similar to those carried out after the Tonkin Gulf incident, should they be warranted. Option B proposed adding military actions against the North “with increasing pressure actions to be continued at a fairly rapid pace and without interruption until we achieve our present stated objectives.” Option B did not anticipate a rigorous diplomatic campaign and also did not implement any major limitations on military activities. Option C recommended diplomatic overtures to Hanoi and China coupled with “additional graduated military moves against infiltration targets, first in Laos and then in the DRV, and then against other targets in North Vietnam.”² In closing, Bundy recommended the United States continue to pursue Option A for a few more months while also making the decision to move to Option C in early 1965 should events warrant such a shift in approach.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were critical of Bundy’s recommendations and submitted their own memorandum on 23 November 1964 to the secretary of defense. They laid out five courses of action, using Bundy’s own three proposals as a foundation. The first, designated Course A’, called for the termination of all commitments to South Vietnam and Laos. Course B’ was the same as Bundy’s Option B. However, the Chiefs argued that Bundy’s proposed strategy of graduated pressure as detailed in Course C would be “undertaken without a clear determination to see things through in full.” The Joint Chiefs’ Course C’ thus added that graduated pressure should be applied “if necessary, to the full limits of what military actions can contribute toward US national objectives.”³ However, the Chiefs believed that neither Course C nor Course C’ were as promising as their own Course B (as opposed to Bundy’s Option B), which recommended “a controlled program of intense military pressures against the DRV, swiftly yet deliberately applied, designed to have a major military and psychological impact from the outset, and accompanied by appropriate political pressures.” They also stated that this approach should be taken “on the basis that it would be carried through, if necessary, to the full limits

² Ibid., 920.

³ Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (McNamara), 23 November 1964, *ibid.*, 933.

of what military actions can contribute toward US national objectives.”⁴ This option, the Chiefs contended, afforded the United States the best chance of achieving their goals with the least risk.

Bundy’s paper can be found in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, volume 1, *Vietnam, 1964*, on pages 916–29. The Joint Chiefs’ response can be found in the same volume on pages 932–35.

74. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:00 p.m. on 27 November 1964

1972

First debrief regarding a meeting which had been held in the morning regarding course of actions in South Vietnam, and the chairman said present at this meeting were the president, Secretary Rusk, Director of CIA McCone, Under Secretary of State Ball, the secretary of defense, General Taylor, and the chairman of the JCS. The chairman said that the meeting had been a rambling one and that Secretary Rusk had led the meeting and had asked questions of General Taylor on how the government looked in Saigon. [Taylor] said that it looks as if we should take [a] tougher stand, and that he, Taylor, would like authority to talk tough to the minority groups because this was going to be a tough issue ultimately, and high national council needs urging to support Prime Minister Huong.¹ Then Taylor turned to Secretary Rusk and discussed the desirability of kicking out some of the minority leaders, saying, however, that perhaps it might be better to live with “devils we know,” specifically two Buddhist leaders. Secretary Rusk said that in his opinion the Saigon government is becoming weaker. If the present government starts to collapse, we’ll have to go to another military government. The government would operate so long as the U.S. supported it. However, if the U.S. walked out they would go neutral. Rusk replied that an on-the-line government—that is, a neutralized government in South Vietnam—would result in a neutralized country, that an on-the-line government was perfectly “congenial” to the U.S. [Taylor] replied that it

⁴ Ibid., 933–34.

¹ Tran Van Huong, prime minister of South Vietnam, 1964–65.

was a very difficult thing to define exactly what a neutral government under Communism meant in Southeast Asia.² No one, he said, at the present time in Saigon would admit to being neutrals. [He then continued:] “I’d say that a neutral government was one which would accommodate to the DRV, that is North Vietnam, and to the VC, and depend on something to protect them in the future.” The consensus, however, of the group seemed to be that there was no freedom of action; that they could never really produce a truly neutral government in Saigon, and that we had to deal with the problems as it was on the basis that we can’t get a neutral government. And Secretary Rusk was among those who agreed with this thought.

A consensus also was that a truly neutral government in South Vietnam, if there were to be one, eventually requires first the defeat of the VC. General Taylor then again repeated the thought that if the U.S. embassy in Saigon, and he, the ambassador (Taylor), took on any course of action, it was one which would result in calling in all the minority groups and getting less for them and telling them that the U.S. was completely fed up with their attitudes, that these attitudes were childish and were backed by scheming politicians who sought only to advance their own interests. Taylor quoted talks with the Buddhists in which he had asked them what was their objection to what problems, and he said he only got indefinite and vague replies.

If the U.S. took a tough, rough attitude, the Diem “technicians” might clamp down on the Buddhists and tell how at the present time they’re willing to give up their personal ambitions for the good of their country, and that attitude was completely despicable, said Taylor.

Taylor (in reply to a question by Secretary of Rusk: “The Viet Cong, are they capable of handling in Saigon a major war with the VC?”): “The present government has the capability of becoming a good one. There are many ministers with capabilities, but the government is so busy putting out fires from day to day. Huong is

² There is a confusing discrepancy here between Greene’s notes and his oral account based on those notes. The transcript of his oral history states, “I replied that it was a very difficult thing to define exactly what a neutral government under Communism meant in Southeast Asia.” It is possible that Greene brought up this point as Gen Wheeler was debriefing the Joint Chiefs on this meeting chaired by Rusk (recalling that Greene was not present during this particular session). However, in his notes (which were taken during Wheeler’s debrief), this comment is attributed to Taylor. The subsequent oral history also indicates that this was a comment made by Gen Taylor to Rusk. Consequently, this passage has been edited to reflect Greene’s original notes.

strong, able to make decisions. The minister of the interior is able. General Khanh is talented. The new chairman of the HN [*Council*], (I don't know what HN stands for) was a lawyer named Thu who was also a good man."³

HNC, Taylor said, he thought would expand, although there were some legal difficulties incident to that.

Thieu said to Taylor that rather than expand the HNC, it might be better to set up a subordinate committee or committees that would work on the problem (for example, on how to establish a national government).

As far as elections are concerned, they should not take place for at least six months, said Taylor. He said that he didn't know just how it could be set into operation probably only in the centers of population. There should be a determination of weight that should be given to urban versus country areas. Khanh is working hard and was at Da Lat for the weekend.

General Westmoreland had a distinct feeling that the objectives for the armed forces in South Vietnam would be reached by 1 February. Westmoreland felt that the lineup of commanders was good and that they would not have to force Khanh to make any more chances. Westmoreland was more optimistic than either Taylor or Johnson regarding a solid government base as being practical. Taylor and Johnson were not as optimistic as Westmoreland that this could be achieved. In some ways, said Taylor, Westmoreland's feeling was that the government of South Vietnam can and will become stronger and that Taylor and Johnson felt that this was dubious, and there would be no fast increase in their capability.

Should there be this difference, said Taylor, Westmoreland is dealing with the Vietnamese military, which is more solid. . . . The chairman then entered the discussion and said, "Well, the gut issue is really how much to bargain with the government of South Vietnam." Then, he went back to Taylor's paper which had been presented to the Chiefs, and we must tell the government of South Vietnam that they have to convincingly talk with the people, and that at least the government should maintain law and order; they should at least maintain the armed forces, and they should accede to U.S. recommendations regarding any armed actions which

³ "HN" refers to the High National Council, a small legislative council assembled in October 1964 only to be dissolved in December 1964. The "Thu" that Greene is referring to is likely Le Van Thu.

they might plan outside of Vietnam. As for the United States, we would have to provide economic aid to the government and support the armed forces. We should tell them that the U.S. will stay to help them if they cooperate with us, and we should imply that we will not stay if they don't cooperate. The chairman said, "Well, that latter idea of staying if they cooperate had been kicked around here in Washington, but there was no consensus on it." One thing which had bothered him in the Bundy opus and the JCS papers and the secretary of defense papers is this should continue to be a South Vietnamese and Laotian war, and we can't permit it to become a U.S. war. At the present, the South Vietnamese couldn't direct more than one squad to "out-country" role.

Furthermore, said Taylor, Ambassador Unger had told him that Laos would not stand for a South Vietnamese operation in Laos. LeMay said, "Well, that means that as far as North Vietnam is concerned, both U.S. and South Vietnamese aircraft can be used in attacks, but in Laos only U.S. aircraft can be used in attacks." LeMay then came in and said, "Well, we can't take away from the minimum required for close air support; we can't fly all the missions."

The chairman turned to the director of the Joint Staff [Lieutenant General Burchinal] and said, "Have the Joint Staff determined the maximum number of South Vietnamese Air Force sorties now and after four squadrons have jelled to out-country activities and the residual for in-country?" He [Burchinal] said Westmoreland is going to recommend one squadron of jets. General Taylor then said he thought the JCS minimum length of time would be 20 days for recommending action, and he asked the chairman if he thought this was correct. The chairman said yes. However, in the secretary of defense planning papers, there [it] calls for 32 weeks. The secretary of defense, however, said that he would revise the paper to bring it to three months. Taylor said, two to three months is enough. Taylor asked, "Do you mean from a standing start or for some preliminary actions?" The chairman said, "Well, by preliminary actions such as talking with the Thais. We'll meet tomorrow at 1100, and General Taylor, Ambassador Taylor, will see the JCS at 1330 on Monday and the president on Tuesday."

The chairman said the Joint Chiefs of Staff should address the Westmoreland cable they just received and the second cable from Sharp which had been received two days ago, and also study Taylor's paper. Then [the chairman] said that the field

commander, Westmoreland, had the action be confined to South Vietnam; that the unified commander, Sharp, course of action C to C-prime. The Chiefs had more or less concurred in action B, while the ambassador with his military and political background had recommended A-plus or C over B, that is action in South Vietnam and one strike north of the DMZ. The secretary of defense's paper, however, recommended course of action C-plus. At this time, I can't determine what that paper or course of actions were specifically.⁴ However, there is enough in this translation of the notes to indicate somewhat the attitudes of the different individuals involved. He continued by saying that he felt the group there, the JCS, were about with Taylor for C and below and not for C and above. The chairman then said that Taylor had told him that when the decision was finally made to strike in the north that the first wave of aircraft must be South Vietnamese. He also said that Taylor had told him that he was doubtful as to whether the Huong government could survive or not. At this point, the chairman asked the Joint Chiefs, "Shall we endure the course of action B or go to course of action C?"

At this point, I made an entry in my notes as to some thoughts that had arisen as a result of this discussion and also in a discussion that I had with the chairman before the Chiefs had met. First, that whatever was decided there in the way of action should be viewed from the U.S. world position, and what our stakes are in Southeast Asia, and shall the U.S. make a stand against Communism in South Vietnam, and if so, this would result in a U.S. war and course of action B. And we had two problems to consider: U.S. public opinion and an unstable Vietnamese government.

Chief of staff of the Army, General Johnson, then spoke up and asked the chairman, "What do you think we should do now?" Said the chairman, "I have three points I want to make: the first one is that the JCS recommendations haven't any chance of being accepted, absolutely none, not even one tenth of one percent; the second point I want to make, and a more weighty one, is that we have recommendations from the two military commanders, and they are contrary views to those of the JCS; and the third point is that the ambassador, General Taylor, is against the JCS recourse and also says that this is a Laotian and South Vietnamese war and not a U.S. war." Chief of the staff of the Army replied to these views by saying as

⁴ See Document 73.

long as the objectives in South Vietnam remain as they are, the course of actions recommended by us should also stand.

The chairman then closed the meeting by advising the Chiefs not to debrief on the discussion of this afternoon. This, of course, was the occasional attempt to maintain special security.

75. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Special Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 11:00 a.m. on 30 November 1964

1972

One of the Joint Chiefs, General Wheeler of the Army, opened the meeting by saying that the word which we had previously received regarding a meeting to be held with the resident at 1100 this date had been changed to 1330; that calling a meeting which would be attended by General Wheeler as representative of the Joint Chiefs, Ambassador/General Taylor would return with the chairman after the meeting to discuss the results of the meeting with the Chiefs.

The chairman then went on to debrief the Chiefs regarding the happenings of the previous Saturday. At 1100 on Saturday, said Wheeler, a two-hour meeting had taken place. Bundy had presented an outline of proposed action. Rusk had led the meeting and posed a good many questions for Ambassador Taylor. Taylor said that he needed to talk to Huong, Dien, and Khanh. Bundy said, "Well, you could tell them that if they would do A, we would do B."¹ It is a question of timing."

Taylor then told the meeting that by December the South Vietnamese Air Force, the VNAF, would have four full squadrons, and by 1 February all forces will meet their allocated strengths. Recruiting and drafting was going like a house afire in South Vietnam, said Taylor.

¹ Document 73.

A cable had been received that morning from Ambassador [U. Alexis] Johnson saying that the Huong government was holding firm and that there had been no additional martyrs, that is, no self-immolations.²

[Ambassador Johnson stated]³ that the recruiting program for the armed forces was continuing to be effective . . .⁴

. . . The chairman then said that Bundy had brought up the matter of information for Congress, saying that he felt that the infiltration report with which the Chiefs were familiar would shortly surface in Congress, and that this was okay and should be done. He also said that he felt that the 34A⁵ covert operation plan and actions would also surface in Congress, and that there would be a debate in Congress regarding this. The chairman also insisted that the JCS views must be presented to the president. The chairman also talked, saying that there should be other “flags” in South Vietnam; that at present there were no Koreans and no Chinese Nationalist forces in the country, and there should be air contributions from other countries [*or*] help from the Philippines. The chairman had said that if a block was established near the demilitarized zone, the DMZ, that a SEATO flavor in the armed forces occupying South Vietnam would be desirable.

He then raised a question of whether it was going to be necessary to change a couple of ministers in Saigon. Taylor implied that the opposition groups in Saigon had wanted to change 10 ministers, and he said if 2 were to be changed it would simply result in more noise. And then Secretary Rusk came back in and stated that the president must make the decisions in these matters and that the U.S. must keep loose.

The secretary of defense, Mr. McNamara, then entered the conversation by saying that the U.S. government must make the necessary policy decisions and what sort of a bundle should these be, or what actions should the government of

² In one of the more dramatic events of the Buddhist crisis of 1963, several monks set themselves on fire in the streets of Saigon to protest Diem's anti-Buddhist policies. U. Alexis Johnson, a veteran diplomat of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, served as deputy ambassador to South Vietnam in 1964–65.

³ It is unclear from the transcript exactly who said this, though Greene's notes place this within the section discussing Ambassador Johnson's cable.

⁴ At this point, Greene digressed to note that he was unaware of the actual command relationship between Ambassador Taylor and Ambassador Johnson.

⁵ Op Plan 34A.

South Vietnam undertake? What should the actions for the first month be, and what should we say to the heads of government? McNamara then continued by saying that, in his opinion, immediate action for the first 30 days should consist of first implementing the first four actions of his paper which were (a) implement the 34a covert maritime operations; (b) combine U.S. and Laos operations, and he said that the government of South Vietnam could not strike into Laos; (c) conduct armed reconnaissance; and (d) make higher altitude reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam.

Ambassador Taylor came in at this point and said that the first nine steps in his paper would be appropriate for implementation during the first 30 days. Now, my comment is that I don't know whether this was a separate paper by Taylor or whether he was speaking to the secretary of defense's paper. At any rate, it's evident that he felt more than the four actions outlined by McNamara could be done.

At this Joint Chiefs meeting, the Commandant of the Marine Corps raised the question, "Do State and the White House know that it is planned to land one antiaircraft LAAM battalion with two batteries and necessary control in Saigon?" The answer was that Taylor and the secretary of defense know, but it wasn't known whether State and the president had been informed, but this would be discussed this afternoon.

The next subject brought up at this JCS meeting was the evacuation of dependents from Saigon. And it was said that if this were to be done quickly that it would alarm the VC. And then it was agreed that this problem wouldn't be brought up again until the courses of action on the part of the U.S. had been selected.

The next item discussed was the matter of the resumption of the Desoto patrol and whether the route of this patrol should be in the middle of the gulf⁶ or close ashore. This matter was left in abeyance, too, with no decision at this meeting. If the Desoto patrol did get jumped by MiGs, there should be hot pursuit of enemy aircraft into Hanoi.

The next matter was the statement of policy in regard to South Vietnam by the president. It was agreed that the president should make such a statement in

⁶ The Gulf of Tonkin.

one to two weeks. It also had been [decided] at the morning meeting that Taylor, if necessary, could be sent back to Saigon.

The problem of an infiltration study had arisen at the 1100 meeting, and Secretary Rusk apparently was nervous about this. The study made a year ago doesn't show exactly what the extent of infiltration is. This would be brought out if a new study were to be made. It was also stated that Chet Cooper of the CIA was the single manager of the infiltration problem.

The chairman tabled a proposed dispatch to CinCPac requesting recommendations from CinCPac re: reprisal targets to be assigned to the South Vietnamese Air Force, the VNAF. The targets were "contemplated." The chairman then discussed the 29 November memorandum for Southeast Asia principals. Author was W. P. Bundy.

And the November 29 memorandum to various addressees by John McNaughton, the assistant secretary of defense, regarding the "U.S./GVN Reprisals to VC Provocations" said that Ambassador Taylor believes that South Vietnam will not [let] the government go down the drain, will step in so long as they think that the U.S. is backing them; otherwise they will "deal" with the Communists.

The Chiefs, as a last action, then examined the paper JCS 2243/498-1 and finally adjourned at 1216.

76. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Special Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 4:15 p.m. on 30 November 1964

1972

The chairman entered the meeting accompanied by Ambassador Taylor at 1625, and business by the Joint Chiefs got under way.

Taylor told the Chiefs that the situation in South Vietnam was better than it had been last month, that Huong was a man of principle. He had organized his cabinet as he had seen fit to do in spite of tremendous pressures put on him by various groups. The short-lived government, said Taylor, [had] an ungrateful task

to be performed with competent, honest members willing to use force. Possibly it will be able to stop the demonstrations in Saigon. However, there is a lack of experience in the major administrative jobs. There is no reason, however, why this government couldn't go on indefinitely.¹

The next hurdle is the formation of a national assembly. The High National Council of South Vietnam is now working on the details of how to do this. For example, will it be accomplished through general elections or through an appointment system or a combination of both? A danger, said Taylor, is of the Communists winning seats in the assembly, and he hoped, said Taylor, that the American government would continue supporting Huong. Acceptable factors in this situation, said Taylor, were first, that the officials in the government could speak for their government and be spoken to; secondly, that law and order must be maintained in the principal cities; thirdly, that American forces must be maintained and directed in South Vietnam; and finally, the government of South Vietnam must cooperate loyally with the U.S. government. The chairman then came in and said that he'd received a good report on the situation from Westmoreland.

Taylor said that the daily armed forces had been increased; there had been improvement in promotions, the 20 to 25 age group was now required to register or to reregister, and draft dodgers were being picked up.

The chairman said the Joint Chiefs have advocated a "sharp blow," and there were obvious advantages pro and con to this. Taylor said that Course B has certain advantages: that it constituted a shock treatment, and that it would stop the VC from obliterating the government.² The advantages of Course B, said Taylor, were that it would show the serious purpose of the U.S., would take out the MiGs at the outset, and would require very little time and therefore would not interfere with negotiations. The disabilities of this Course B, however, were [that] it was risky; it might influence action on the part of the ChiComs; it might coalesce the Communist world; it might accrue condemnation of the U.S.; [and] it closes the door to Hanoi and prevents the maximum preparation of military and public opinion carefully and over a period of time. Course B calls almost exclusively for

¹ The Huong government would last only two more months. On 27 January 1965, Gen Khanh and the military removed it from power.

² See Document 73.

[a] U.S. attack, and it should be actually a South Vietnamese effort supported by the U.S. And, of course, finally there was a minimal chance that it would be approved by the government.

In [Option] C, the advantages were that it presented only a limited risk; that it was an escape hatch; [that] it limited preparatory actions, and the VNAF played an important role. Also, it was flexible, and the course of action could be shifted from C to B and given a chance for the international press to build up. And it was, in fact, the only course of action that Taylor felt had a chance of being approved. Westmoreland indicated that this was the only course of action and that the minimum acceptable criteria for it had already been met.

Questions were also raised. The first one was, Can you visualize any situation developing as a result of which the U.S. would pull out? Secondly, is there any situation under which we would negotiate a settlement involving the neutralization of South Vietnam?

The chairman then came in and discussed a previous meeting held with the ex-committee earlier.³ “Pragmatism is rampant,” said the chairman, “in this committee, and that means that Course B has no chance of being adopted.”

The committee had reviewed the Bundy paper. McGeorge Bundy had said that the draft of the White House and State paper, the Bill Bundy paper, has too much talk regarding what we are going to do, and it would be better, said Bundy, to let actions speak for themselves. For example, an executive committee should be established, and infiltration via the Gulf of Tonkin, etc., should be changed from the term “infiltration” to the term “support.”

The executive committee felt that Taylor should consult urgently with the government of South Vietnam to improve the situation in all aspects. The White House statement, a draft which had been discussed, would therefore be rewritten.

The executive committee then went over Taylor’s memorandum—the improved use of manpower; the political and military situation, and the competent office holders; police power as an asset, [that] it was a power of the province chiefs.

³ Executive committee.

Hop Tac, such as I recall, was a program for bringing cities and areas in the country under South Vietnamese governmental control.⁴

Hamlet progress was discussed and also the sanitary cleanup of Saigon, vis-à-vis garbage and other dirt and filth.

The committee then made a decision to draft a letter for presidential signature addressed to Taylor, telling the prime minister the following: that this was a written mandate to Taylor seeking improvement of port facilities, the telephone, a stronger Saigon radio, the construction of a circumferential road.

The chairman then said, don't use the term "ex. committee" to refer to it because it is also obnoxious to the administration.

The chairman added that there was a strong desire on the part of the high administrative officials to keep escape hatches built into the paper. This all amounts to the adoption of course of action A, plus a little bit more. The secretary of defense was the principal architect of this paper; [he was the one] calling the shots. The chairman forecasted that, at the meeting scheduled for tomorrow, the president would recommend course C or less. The chairman said he believed the president was aware of the Joint Chiefs' position, that he was apprehensive of being pushed in the newspapers and wants to retain some freedom of action.

The secretary of defense brought up the problem of Mr. Joseph Alsop,⁵ and the secretary said that he assumed that once a decision had been made by the president, all would carry it out.

The president also counseled or was concerned about the necessity for "no talk." The chairman said, "Yes, and as far as Congress was concerned, we have an understanding of what can and cannot be said and what is meant by 'executive privilege.' There definitely is a minimum need to know."

⁴ Specifically, the Hop Tac plan aimed to clear the areas immediately around Saigon of Viet Cong control.

⁵ Syndicated newspaper columnist and the author of the column Matter of Fact. Greene does not elaborate on what this "problem" was.

XII. DECEMBER 1964

77. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:00 p.m. on 2 December 1964

1972

The meeting began debriefing those present on the meeting held at the White House at 1140 on 1 December 1964. The chairman said [those] present were President Johnson, the two Bundys, McCone of CIA, General Wheeler, John McNaughton, and the vice president with Mr. Reedy¹ at the end of the table so that he would know how to handle the press.

Wheeler used a memorandum as a talking paper. He briefed the president on the situation in Southeast Asia. The meeting was very serious. The president and other principals at the meeting had clearly studied their lesson, and they didn't leave anything to chance. The meeting used this revised Bundy paper, and there would be a revised copy of this paper later available to the Chiefs.²

There would be a wrap-up at 0930 tomorrow in Mr. Rusk's conference room to tie up the loose ends before Taylor returned tomorrow.

[*President Johnson*]³ entered the meeting room with McGeorge Bundy, Rusk, [and] McNamara, and it was apparent that there had been a prior conference with these individuals, probably for an hour. The president turned to Taylor and told him to talk first.

¹ George E. Reedy, White House press secretary, 1964–65.

² Document 73.

³ For some reason, the transcript reads, "We entered the meeting room . . ." This does not make any sense, however, since Greene was summarizing a meeting that he was being briefed on and did not attend himself. Furthermore, Greene wrote in his notes taken during this Joint Chiefs meeting: "Pres w McG Bundy—McNam—Rusk—entered. Appeared prior conf probably 1 hr."

Taylor discussed the situation in Saigon, the government's instability, [and] the North Vietnamese support to the insurgency movement in South Vietnam. The U.S. was playing a losing game; however, there would be no sudden collapse but a continued debilitation. The weakness of the government of South Vietnam gives the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong encouragement to continue and therefore to further weaken the South Vietnamese government. The French should go to the government of South Vietnam and thereby weaken the DRV and the VC, [thus applying] a quid pro quo approach towards the government of South Vietnam.

The French, Taylor told the president, were not of much trouble in Saigon and were not of much help either. They are interested in their own personal stake in South Vietnam.

The High National Council was "fractionated." There were three working members, really, and the rest were vacillating. The power groups had been formed.

The president then said that we must shore up the South Vietnamese leadership. Someone must be built to lead in that country. What can we do to help Taylor to get divergent groups to work together? Taylor said, "I've tried to do this. The politicians know that they have us to some extent over the barrel. They want an okay from the president for the Huong government. The other groups also know that they cannot get aid from the U.S. government."

The president then conducted a discussion on the social, economic, labor, and military pressures in South Vietnam. Taylor said that we could expect no trouble from the South Vietnamese cabinets. The president then said, "Can't we get help from the pope by pressuring the bishop? Director McCone of CIA has been directed to do this [request assistance from the Pope]. "What about the Buddhists?" said the president. Taylor responded, there is no head of the Buddhists. There is a small group of high-ranking Buddhists looking [out] for their own private political ends.

Taylor continued if the Huong government falls or becomes helpless, there are three or four courses of action open to us: for example, pull out, the formation of a new government around the deputy prime minister who is Khanh's uncle or around a military government. The military will move him anyway. Khanh let things go down the drain. The president then asked, "What will the cost of this be?" And

Taylor said, “\$175,000,000 overall.” However, the secretary of defense said it would cost \$1,191,000,000 of over military aid program for the next year.

The president then continued, saying that a stronger government was needed prior to any military action, that he had asked different countries to assist in South Vietnam but had been deeply disappointed. He gave Rusk and company hell over this, using the list in Bundy’s order, and saying there had been a microscopic number of men offered by Australia. He was going to see Wilson next week, said the president, and talk with him about what to do in South Vietnam and as an aside he said the U.S. has helped finance the Bank of England. He wanted the U.K. and the Federal Republic of Germany pushed to help. He wanted Taylor to prepare a list of noncombatants that can be used, and at this point the chairman turned to the J-3, Admiral Mustin, and told him to put together a list of combat types that could be used to help the U.S. in South Vietnam—for example, those that would be needed at the DMZ [that] could stop attacks there and to counterattack. The president continued [*talking*] regarding security of information, using as an example the presidential decision regarding the bombing of North Vietnam, and then conjecture of what he was being faced with. He was tired of being pushed around, said the president, and tired of the lack of security, the disloyalty regarding military plans and operations. Then the president said, “Anyone who talks either here or in Saigon should be fired. If you don’t have the heart to do this, give me the names and I’ll do it. I will not tolerate this lack of security, and I’ve told the secretary of defense, the secretary of state about this.”

The purpose of this meeting, continued the president, is to pull a stable South Vietnamese government together, and our aid is to be used to do it. “However,” said the president, “I am afraid regarding the starting of military action; I’m worried concerning Congress’ impossible reaction and also the deterioration of the South Vietnamese government.” The president continued, “I am worried concerning our dependents in South Vietnam, and I expect to take action on this at the proper time.”

Wheeler then spoke to the Chiefs at this point in the debriefing for what he called “for the record.” He told the Chiefs that he felt that a decision had already been made by the president in his close circle of advisors, and the president had told Wheeler to cover the whole position. He said that the president had agreed with paragraphs 3a and 3b of the chairman’s talking paper and did not disagree

with this paper except for the courses of action. Wheeler said that he had talked with the president this morning regarding the positioning of Hawk battalion in Da Nang and the president had told him that he was trying to get conditions under which military action can best be taken, and that he was now talking to “chunks” of paper. He said that air cover over the covert maritime operations had been deferred for 30 days or more while Secretary Rusk was up to something. At 1330, the president had withdrawn from the meeting, but the discussion continued among those remaining.

The meeting then adjourned at 1400.

After the meeting was over, the chairman, General Wheeler, spoke to his staff and told them to step up the covert maritime operations to include night attacks as a contingency.

He then discussed the *Swatow*⁴ problem. That was the type of boat the North Vietnamese were using.

One of the actions contemplated was that action would be as outlined in the revised Bundy paper. The military position would be execution of Option C of the military portion of the Bundy paper. Implementation of this plan would be started when Taylor returns and Sullivan takes over and there has been a discussion with Souvannah Phouma. The chairman then continued talking in a philosophic tone, saying that the president was deeply concerned and anxious to do something about the problem, and that he was worried regarding the weak Huong government in South Vietnam and what to do in the event that this government disappeared during the military action. He was also concerned about the American Congress and public opinion. The president had said that Chairman Russell was basically against action on the part of the United States and South Vietnam—that he wants to get out, but he doesn’t know how to do it and had said [that] you fellows will have to tell him how to do that.

General Johnson, chief of staff of the Army, then entered the conversation and stated that he felt that a public information program should get under way immediately. Then I entered the discussion by discussing the TV film, the Chet Huntley film⁵ that I had seen the previous night and said that I felt that it had a bad public

⁴The Chinese-built *Shantou*-class gunboat, the primary North Vietnamese torpedo boat.

⁵“Vietnam: It’s a Mad War,” *NBC News*, NBC Universal, 1 December 1964.

information impact, and that the U.S. public in my opinion was not oriented toward any increase in taxes, toward mobilization and casualties which would follow on military action on the part of the United States and South Vietnam, and that all of these things were and would be increasingly improper with the American people.

The chairman said that General Taylor was going to meet with four senators: Fulbright, Saltonstall, and two others not named. He said that the factors in the equation were unknown and that if these could be determined, then it would be possible to solve the equation. The president also said he was worried regarding the dependents in Saigon, and he also said that the State Department felt that they couldn't recruit people to go to Saigon unless the dependents of the State Department personnel could go along with their principals. As an aside, the statement really astounded me.

He continued that we had supported various governments in South Vietnam with blood and treasure, but they hadn't helped the United States a goddamned bit. The president said he anticipated that the United States would have to go far down the road on [*Option*] C of the plan before any solution would be found acceptable to us.

The chairman then stated that the government—and I presume he meant the U.S. government—will undertake reprisals if any action comes against us or the South Vietnamese from the North. I then raised the question which I had previously tried to get some information about, and that was the deployment and protection of the Marine LAAM antiaircraft battalion which was scheduled to go into South Vietnam. He replied that he would discuss this matter tomorrow at a wrap-up meeting, the question being whether the LAAM battalion should be held at Okinawa or landed (and that he would get a decision for me by noon tomorrow).

78. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at 2:00 p.m. on 4 December 1964

1972

[The meeting] started off with a debriefing by the chairman, General Wheeler, on a White House meeting which had been held on 3 December, the day before

this JCS meeting. Ambassador Taylor had been at this White House meeting, and it had taken place at 0930 on 3 December 1964. Among those present were McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Ambassador Sullivan, Secretary Forrestal, Bill Bundy, and of course Chairman Wheeler.

The chairman said that he had used enclosure A of JCS Paper 2343/499, dated 3 December 1964, as a talking paper. Taken up was the Marine Corps antiaircraft battalion, the LAAM Battalion made up of Hawk missiles and launchers. The chairman said that the decision had been made to divert the Hawk battalion to Okinawa and not to send it in at this time into Da Nang. Of course, as a comment from me, this Hawk battalion later on actually did go into Da Nang and took up initial position on Monkey Mountain.¹

However, the decision made at the time at the White House meeting of 3 December 1964 was that the Hawk battalion would go into Okinawa and that an infantry company of reinforced Marines would go into Da Nang. This was a very important decision because it was one of the first of the faltering steps which eventually got us involved to a very high degree in South Vietnam.

The secretary of defense had asserted, “let’s go,” and the president had supported him by saying, “let’s go,” adding, “let’s not tie this to the Hawk battalion.” Ambassador Taylor had then mentioned that it would [cost] a million dollars to set up construction on Monkey Mountain. The mountain, which is near the entrance to the harbor at Da Nang, would cost a million dollars, and he raised the question, is this additional capacity, or capability, is this additional capability worth the money? The next question was whether or not the movement and destination of the Hawk battalion had been cleared by dispatch. The chairman handled this by saying that he would send a dispatch to CinCPac with copies to State.

The next item discussed at this meeting was the question of air cover for the covert maritime operations against North Vietnam, and this was deferred for the present.

The summary of instructions given to Ambassador Taylor at this time was to return to Saigon, discuss the situation with the government of South Vietnam,

¹ See Shulimson and Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965*, 4–5.

beef up internal actions—for example, the strength of the Army forces—and discuss two military phases with the South Vietnamese and get the South Vietnamese to approve or request the U.S. to help them execute these military operations. Then Taylor was to come back to State and to the president with a report by dispatch prior to any action actually being taken.

79. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at 2:00 p.m. on 21 December 1964

1972

This was an important meeting because General Westmoreland was present. He had come in from Saigon to confer with the Joint Chiefs, and also present at this meeting were deputy secretary of defense, Mr. Vance, and assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, ISA, John McNaughton.

The meeting opened with a discussion by Westmoreland concerning the security of airfields and central installations. Westmoreland said that the Vietnamese should be responsible for external security and that we should be accountable for close-in internal security. Many of the airfields and central installations were close to “heavily forested areas,” which made the problem of security more difficult.

After the Tonkin Gulf incident, said Westmoreland, Bien Hoa became number one on the list of improvements. Two [U.S.] Army officer advisors had been assigned to each major base. Quite a lot of friction, said Westmoreland, existed between the [South] Vietnamese Air Force and [South Vietnamese] Army after the 13 September aborted coup. In this case, a U.S. officer had been challenged. (My comment: no details were given about this incident.) The provincial chief in charge was not a good one. He had excellent intelligence of Bien Hoa, said Westmoreland. Most brought in by sappers and by secret overland exploitation of gaps in security.¹ Westmoreland noted the 60mm mortar had returned to use.

¹ At several points in his oral recollection of this meeting, Greene was stricken by a lapse in memory and simply read the notes as he had written them. Consequently, there are moments such as this sentence where he does not specify what was being brought in. Based on the context, it was likely Viet Cong supplies.

Major General Adams, the J-5 of the Joint Staff,² then made the comment that the Vietnamese high command had also established a separate board to investigate the attack and apparent lack of security at Bien Hoa. Adams recommended that the Vietnamese be responsible for security of airstrips, that the province chiefs be responsible for area security, and that General Khanh be responsible for the outside area perimeters. Westmoreland said that it can be repeated; risks have been reduced, but we must remember the nature of the terrain and the civil war characteristics of the fighting. He asked for countermortar police. This term “police” was the one used, exactly what the connotation is in connection with countermortar, I cannot say. Westmoreland also asked for air police at Tan Son Nhut airfield, a reinforced company of Marines for Da Nang, and Army MPs. I think it is interesting to see here on 21 December 1964, Westmoreland is saying to the Chiefs that he wants a reinforced company of Marines to go in at Da Nang.³ Westmoreland continued, saying that if U.S. forces were to be used, U.S. divisions would, in his opinion, not enhance or help the situation, but the Vietnamese efforts would deteriorate and we would find ourselves fighting our own war. Our job, said Westmoreland, should be to secure our own bases. Westmoreland said that the VC were doing methodical, detailed planning and that they would not fight unless odds were in their favor.

The chairman then brought up the subject of the last incident. (My comment here is that I don’t know what that incident was; a point certainly in my notes, so I’ll continue.)⁴

Westmoreland then read the cables concerning this affair, and he said the Vietnamese armed forces were divided, that Khanh was devious, and that one faction fought against another. Active factions were the so-called Young Turks, the young

² It is unclear who Greene was referring to here. While he says Gen Adams was a member of the “Joint Staff,” Greene only indicates Adams was the J-5 in his notes. Consequently, it is likely he is referring to MajGen Milton B. Adams of the U.S. Air Force, who was serving as the J-5 of USMACV, not the Joint Staff, at the time. See Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962–1967* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2006).

³ A full expeditionary brigade of Marines would deploy to Da Nang on 8 March 1965.

⁴ The notes simply state: “Chair—last incident.” The closest significant event in the Vietnam War to this meeting was yet another change in the South Vietnamese government. A coalition of the Young Turks, Khanh, and the Military Revolutionary Council abolished the civilian High National Council on 20 December. The plotters subsequently replaced the military council with the Armed Forces Council to ensure greater representation for the Young Turks. Considering the amount of time spent discussing the stability of the regime and Khanh’s move to purge a number of generals from service, it is likely that this is what Gen Wheeler was referring to. See Kahin, *Intervention*, 256.

military officers, many of whom were turning against Khanh, and the corps commanders were no longer independent. In spite of these things, two weeks ago at Da Lat, Khanh had decided to remain. He had set up an Armed Forces Policy Council.⁵ Westmoreland said that he had told him that this violated all principles of military planning because it was impossible to run a war by committee. To attempt to do so would make him [Khanh] look ridiculous in the eyes of all other military men in the world. Westmoreland had given Khanh a copy of a directive regarding the Advisory Council. The Turks, said Westmoreland, want to get rid of the so-called Da Lat generals, because they considered these generals to be pro-French. Some asked Westmoreland whether Khanh was going to set up a 25-year retirement policy or one convenient to the government to get [rid] of the Da Lat generals?⁶

Westmoreland then discussed the Vietnamese NCO academy which had been established at Dong-La. Then he talked about the appointment of some of the members of the High National Council and also the fact that some had been arrested. And he ended by saying, where do we go from here?

The chairman then entered the conversation by saying that Secretary Vance had stated that there was a cable which said that Taylor wanted Khanh to remain. Westmoreland reentered the conversation by saying that he had recommended to Suu,⁷ who had been appointed a member of the High National Council, that he tell Huong not to act too hastily. Officers retiring from the military should be used in the government as civilians in order to save face all around, said Westmoreland. Taylor had apparently pressed this on Suu. He continued by saying that Huong should call the Senate together and that if he, Huong, makes a decision he believes that the armed forces would back a successor for Khanh. Likely candidates, said Westmoreland, to relieve Khanh are Dong, chief of staff; the commander of IV Corps;⁸ and the Air Force commander, General Ky. Ky, said Westmoreland, was a good Air Force commander, but he was also a politician and the Air Force could

⁵ Greene probably meant the Armed Forces Council here. The Armed Forces Policy Council was a part of the National Security Council that convened during the Eisenhower administration.

⁶ These were three senior generals who had served on the junta deposed by Khanh on 30 January 1964 and who were then placed under house arrest in Da Lat: Tran Van Don, Ton That Dinh, and Le Van Kim.

⁷ Pham Khac Suu, ceremonial chief of state of South Vietnam following the September coup attempt against Gen Khanh.

⁸ Greene's notes indicate this is "Thieu," a reference to Nguyen Van Thieu, the commanding general of IV Corps and the future president of South Vietnam.

deteriorate rapidly. The chairman then came into the conversation by saying that he did not look on the coming session of Congress with any enthusiasm with the prospects of airing the situation. There is not, said the chairman, a sufficient number in Congress concerned with the situation or else they were opposed to the U.S. being there in Vietnam; or else they had an ax to grind as far as some particular U.S. Service was concerned and many problems were caused, and the fact that the Vietnamese people could not get together was a most difficult problem and hard to sell this fact to the U.S. public. And you, Westmoreland, said the chairman, may wonder what is going on back here. Well, we have many proponents of a “do nothing” policy ready to accept “accommodations.” He [Westmoreland] replied that he understood this, that the basic problem was that the Vietnamese were trying to build a nation at the same time they were trying to fight a war against highly trained enemies. The chief of staff of the Air Force broke in and said, “Why is it that the North Vietnamese appear to be so well disciplined, and the South Vietnamese appear to be an undisciplined rabble? I really don’t believe he said that there is a difference in characteristics between these two sides.” Westmoreland replied the National Liberation Front has a very strong leadership. The rank and file are blindly loyal. Westmoreland had listened to scientists from the Rand Corporation about a study of the internal aspects of the VC picture. They had concluded that the VC were highly disciplined, dedicated, with a very high esprit de corps, and that they believed they were going to win because we would give up first.

The target was the South Vietnamese government. The ability to ambush and destroy showed that the South Vietnamese government could not give security to the people, and the Buddhists were following the VC line. The chairman then asked the question regarding the Buddhists: “Westy, Tri Quang, is he a Communist or not?” Westmoreland replied, “The intelligence people have not been able to find any ties between the bonzes—they are the Buddhist priests—and the Communists.” For circumstantial evidence of such a connection, some disturbances in which members had been arrested, Buddhism might take an exception to this con-

flict in Vietnam. However, the Buddhists themselves in-country are fragmented, and Westmoreland said he did not think they would prove to be a threat.⁹

The chairman then asked another question: what about the Montagnards (they were the mountain people in Vietnam)? Westmoreland replied, the Montagnards are antagonistic to the rest of the people in South Vietnam and they are being led by the Rade tribe, and they want their own national government, their own nation supported by the U.S. The highlands where the Montagnards live recently would have exploded if it hadn't been for U.S. advisors within. The situation looks, possibly, explosive in the near future. Westmoreland had talked with the ambassador regarding a Montagnard committee.

The meeting had convened at 1430,¹⁰ but it was not until 1431 that Secretary Vance and Secretary McNaughton entered the Chiefs' conference room. A very regular situational briefing was now given by a Marine officer, Colonel Briefer.¹¹ He pointed out that the recent military coup had the first vestiges of a democratic government. The Huong government now was a facade. Their cabinet would dissolve or else face a showdown with Khanh. Huong was hesitant to take action because he felt that Khanh was backed by the Young Turks. It was uncertain as to whether the Young Turks would back a military dictatorship, although it was certain that they would back the forcing out of the senior generals. The ambassador had said that U.S. support for Huong eventually will force a showdown.

Tri Quang, the Buddhist, says that the situation, the matter, the problems are not settled, and that he has no intention [of being] used by Khanh. He opposes any activity and personally dislikes Khanh. Three "pulls" exist today in Vietnam: one is the military, two is the Huong cabinet backed by the U.S., and three are the Buddhists.

⁹ Tri Quang's ties to the Communists are a point of controversy dating back to the Buddhists' demonstrations against the Diem regime in 1963. Some, such as the journalist Marguerite Higgins and the historian Mark Moyar, argue that he was either a Communist himself or deeply sympathetic to the Communist goal of disrupting the South Vietnamese state. Most contemporary reports were in line with Westmoreland's conclusions here, however: Tri Quang was certainly an influential individual capable of destabilizing the government in Saigon, but there was no evidence of ties to Communist forces. See James McAllister, "Throwing Down the Gauntlet: *Triumph Forsaken* and the Revisionist Challenge," in *Triumph Revisited: Historians Battle for the Vietnam War*, ed. Andrew Wiest and Michael J. Doidge (New York: Routledge, 2010), 187–94; Marguerite Higgins, *Our Vietnam Nightmare* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); and Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 317.

¹⁰ Greene misspeaks here. The meeting began at 1400 (2:00 p.m.) according to his own records.

¹¹ This name does not appear in Greene's original notes. Greene likely forgot the name and was simply referring to the colonel who was delivering the briefing.

The subject of dependents was discussed, and the general conclusion was that most of the civilians should be left in Saigon.

The next subject discussed was the communication net originating in Hanoi. This net was being expanded with new stations, and a high level of communication by radio existed. This reflects in turn a probable buildup of forces. There were five new stations in Military Region 5. There were 50 radios in Military Region 5, and that constituted 50 percent of all radio sets in South Vietnam. This radio network was needed for close VC control.¹²

The next subject discussed at this meeting was that of the role of the Marines in Da Nang, with the mission of security of the airfields, security of the Marine helicopter squadron at Da Nang, the Hawk battalion—all these under Major General Youngdale, U.S. Marine Corps.¹³

The next item discussed was the increasing military pressures in Laos and North Vietnam with the consequent impact on South Vietnamese morale. A military dictatorship under Khanh was discussed briefly, with the idea that he would fall in under such an arrangement.

The briefing continued with a statement that during the past two weeks there had been 1,116 VC incidents which constituted the principal increase, with most of the attacks and ambushes taking place south of Saigon. Major General Youngdale in Da Nang, he wanted to bring in two batteries and not three of [the] Hawks, with the third battery remaining in Okinawa. To continue, the transportation between Saigon and Hue could not move at night. Passenger traffic in 1957 was four million people per year. In 1963, there were 6,367,000 people. The movement of the railroad trains between Saigon and Hue was evidence to the villagers of the ability of the government to maintain order.¹⁴

¹² Military Region 5 was a North Vietnamese Army designation for its area of operations in northern South Vietnam. See Intelligence Study Prepared by Headquarters, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam: Infiltration Study, Viet Cong Forces, Republic of Vietnam, 31 October 1964, in *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 1, 864–72.

¹³ This is not entirely accurate. *Brigadier* General Carl A. Youngdale was the senior Marine at USMACV, serving as the command's assistant chief of staff for intelligence (J-2). The Hawk battalion had also not yet deployed.

¹⁴ Greene's notes on these particular issues are terse and unorganized, thus accounting for the somewhat fragmentary nature of his comments here.

The briefer then said that there were 53 MiGs at the Phuc Yen airfield in North Vietnam. Thirty-six of these had moved from China to North Vietnam. To handle this situation in South Vietnam is going to take patience on our part. We must expect a long pull and realize that the target of the Viet Cong is the government of South Vietnam. The province officials don't have authority and instructions to search and arrest VC agents.

Mr. Vance then commenced talking, and he said to Westmoreland, "What is your evaluation of the weekend events concerning the High National Council?" Westmoreland replied that there was evidence of faction—that Khanh and the middle-aged generals were in one party, the Young Turks in the other, and officers below the Young Turks in the third element.

In January, the senior generals might be placed under house arrest in Da Lat.¹⁵ This was distasteful to Big Minh, and he was trying to rig a deal with Khanh for their release and for jobs for them. The Young Turks, however, resented the idea of bringing them back, said Westmoreland. Khanh has played both ends against the middle, and this action has not been acceptable to the Da Lat generals, or to the Young Turks, or to the young officers below the Young Turks.

The prime minister was planning to set up a forced retirement of the senior generals on a 25-year basis. He [Westmoreland] had recently recommended to the prime minister that a surprise, mandatory retirement be made on the 31st of the month. Westmoreland apparently had made this recommendation. However, Huong and Suu would not support this, and Suu had told Huong that he wouldn't support it. And Westmoreland was afraid that the Young Turks were going to take the matter in their own hands. The ambassador wants Khanh to go, and it could possibly be done on the basis that Khanh needed a physical checkup and therefore had to leave office. Secretary Vance then said, "Well, if Khanh goes, who will replace him?" And Westmoreland said, "Well, it might be Dong, commander of

¹⁵ Greene seems to have misread his notes here. He wrote at the time "30 Jan—generals house arrest Da Lat." The Da Lat generals were the senior generals who had served on the junta deposed by Khanh and who were placed under house arrest in Da Lat. Since the Khanh coup took place on 30 January 1964, it is likely that Westmoreland was pointing out what Khanh had already done, not what he planned to do. The Da Lat generals were in fact released from house arrest following the 13 September coup against Khanh. Tran Van Don became deputy chief of staff, and Ton That Dinh was named his assistant.

the Capital Military District; [the] CO [commanding officer] of IV Corps;¹⁶ Ky, the Air Force commander who has just divorced his French wife and married an airline hostess; or [the] CO of II Corps.” Westmoreland said, however, that he felt that if we wanted to, we could hang on to Huong, and Huong is a Buddhist. Westmoreland said there is Thi, who is commander in I Corps, and he might run for office and he is a tiger, very aggressive. His headquarters is at Da Nang. All of these people have a most exaggerated idea of their individual capabilities. Johnson, chief of staff of the Army, said, “Well, Thi is vindictive.” Previously Thi was forced out of the country and 13 months after he had fled to Cambodia his wife died, and for this he has a vindictive attitude now that he in command in I Corps and is stationed in Da Nang.

Mr. Vance then said, “If Khanh goes with the Young Turks, is it going to be okay to do away with the High National Council?”¹⁷ Westmoreland replied that he didn’t know. He believed that Khanh would stick with the committee. If Khanh leaves, then there will be a vote as to who will take his place, and Huong should make a decision. Mr. Vance then said, “What will the effect in the field be if Khanh goes?” Westmoreland replied that, in his opinion, there would be no particular effect in the field if there were only few changes made in the field itself. Commanders in the corps and divisions were the best team of horses. The Chief of Naval Operations then asked the question, “Well, what will happen to the Da Lat generals if Khanh goes?” Westmoreland replied, “Some of them will go, some will be retained, and some will get jobs outside of the armed forces. The Young Turks don’t like them.” McNaughton then asked the question as to whether this matter was one of Army politics. Westmoreland replied several things were involved, First, Khanh had told the Young Turks that the Da Lat generals were pro-French and neutralists. There was a personal interest in that Khanh did not want the senior officers imposed upon. However, he did feel that some generals were pro-French and therefore dangerous.

Finally there was the matter of the 25-year retirement decree.

¹⁶ Future South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu was commanding general of IV Corps in December 1964. Thus, “CO” likely refers to “commanding officer” and not a name.

¹⁷ The transcript states “National Committee,” but in the notes Greene wrote “Hi Nat Cou.” Since the main legislative organ was called the High National Committee, this is likely what Secretary Vance asked about here.

Vance asked the question, “How do the Young Turks feel about Big Minh?” Westmoreland replied, “They are against him. He is popular with the young officers, but he is lazy and not very intelligent. If he retired, he might become a senior statesman.”

Vance asked the question, “Is Tri Quang, the Buddhist, Communist?” Westmoreland replied, “That we have no proof of, but we suspect that he does have ties with the Communists.”¹⁸ Huong is outspoken and strong and will not be pushed [around] by the Buddhists. Khanh, on the other hand, is too devious and clever for his own good. “When I faced him in his quarters,” said Westmoreland, “Khanh said he had three courses of action: one, to unify the armed forces, and he was not optimistic about this; two, to shoot the opposition and get rid of them; three, he said that if he cannot enjoy the confidence of his commanders, then he, Khanh, cannot command and therefore would have to resign.” Westmoreland said he thinks that this third course of action is already at hand, and there may be a fight but there is no chance of support of Khanh by the armed forces. Westmoreland continued by saying that Khanh could assemble his generals, ask for their support, [and] sign an agreement in blood, but that would all mean nothing. McNaughton then asked, “What leverage do we have over the Young Turks?” Westmoreland replied, “Well, over Ky, we have leverage of not giving him B-56s.”¹⁹ However, Ky can be reasoned with, Ky can be dealt with, and [the] Young Turks are really not a bad lot, except Thi who agrees with everything.” The chairman interrupted by saying, “Do they want to win the war?” Westmoreland replied, “There’s no evidence to the contrary.” The chairman said, “Without the support of the U.S., they can’t win.” Westmoreland replied, “They understand that.” McNaughton said, “They know that we are interested in winning too.” Westmoreland replied, “We must make these guys do what they should do.” McNaughton said, “How can we make the Buddhists know what our position is?” Westmoreland said, “Well, that is a problem.” Westmoreland said he had asked Ky, who is a North Vietnamese by birth and who is a national leader in the armed forces, the Air Force commander, and he [Ky] had replied that [the] CO [of] IV Corps, a Catholic, was fully reliable and [*seemed*] to think that Dong

¹⁸ This would seem to contradict Westmoreland’s earlier statement made before Vance and McNaughton entered the room.

¹⁹ Either Westmoreland misspoke or Greene wrote down the wrong information here as the “B-56” was actually a bomber prototype designed by Boeing and ultimately cancelled in 1952. The reference is likely to B-57 Canberra bombers.

was also, but when he had tried out this idea on him he had met with some resistance. And then there was General Khanh of the Vietnamese Marines, [who was] also originally from North Vietnam. “Well,” said McNaughton, “do they have any leverage over the Buddhists?” Westmoreland replied, “They are interested in their collective prestige. If they are going to look foolish in the eyes of the world, they might back off and become factionalized.”

Huong developed a real hatred [*toward*] the Buddhists. He told Khanh to fire two Buddhists chaplains, and Khanh kept one—a lieutenant colonel, a judo expert—but had fired the other. And the only way to handle these people is to apply appropriate force. Possibly self-immolation will be coming along soon, but there is no logical case for it, and Westmoreland said he just didn’t “see any other tangible development.” MacNaughton said, “Would they be happy if the U.S. got out?” Westmoreland said he didn’t know, but “there were some anti-U.S. feelings.” Vance then asked how the Hop Tac effort was going. The Hop Tac, as I recall, was a classification technique that was being used at this time. Westmoreland replied [that] it was going pretty well and that he was encouraging the slogan of “Slowly but surely.” His effort was picking up, and there was improved machinery within the MACV staff to handle the Hop Tac effort. The targets are hard to find. Two months ago, authority was granted to use, but he had not found a target. However, progress was being made, although it was slow and not spectacular. Vance asked “What effect has the strikes against the panhandle at Laos had?” Westmoreland replied, “Some effect and had telegraphed a message to them.” Vance then said, “What about in South Vietnam?” Westmoreland said that he doubted if any impact had been made at all; that there had been a clandestine infiltration and that the infiltrators had been concealed by jungle and caves and there had not been much impact on them. The VC had plenty of good weapons, said Westmoreland, and the weapons are coming to them by water and via Cambodia. They have the 7.62[mm],²⁰ a light machine gun, a rifle, a carbine copied from the Russians and made in China. The South Vietnamese Air Force should be used in the DRV with the U.S. CAP.

Vance then asked the question, “What is your evaluation of the 34A Operations?” Westmoreland replied, “Good progress, but we want it to be more flexi-

²⁰ This refers to 7.62x39mm, a standard Soviet rifle cartridge used in the SKS Simonov carbine, AK47 Kalashnikov assault rifle, RPK light machine gun, and RPD light machine gun.

ble and to have more authority on the ground to take care of the weather, and we want some flexibility in the execution of the Barrel Roll operation in Laos.²¹ We should be given block targets and authorized to launch attacks when the weather and intelligence are suitable.” Then, the chairman said that Westmoreland was being given blocks of targets. The chairman then asked Westmoreland what the status of the plan for the South Vietnam part against North Vietnam was. Westmoreland replied that he had talked with Khanh; there had been no trouble since the South Vietnamese had target files which had been put in the hands of the pilots.

The chairman said that we wanted a joint effort. Westmoreland replied, “Well, it is controlled completely by General Moore of 2d Air Division.” South Vietnamese pilots are good, and he would like to use an unmarked A-1H as part of 34A. The recommendation [is] for two in part I and one in part II. The chairman then discussed again the problems on the need of a stable government in Saigon. Westmoreland replied that it was pretty tough to face up to the risk in Saigon because bombing the North would not solidify the government. The psychology is bad if we take the fighting on our own shoulders, and he was not prepared to make recommendations at this time. The chairman and Westmoreland said if they have the manpower and skills, they should do this. Westmoreland said it was an unwise move from a psychological point to relieve them from the defense of their own air bases. General Westmoreland continued by saying the units are half volunteers, half conscription, and he thought that by the end of the year the units would be up to full strength. Less than six months ago, the South Vietnamese had 200-man units in the field fighting VC units made of 500 to 600 men. Westmoreland said he gives Khanh a list every week of incompetent units, and the best stable of horses among the general officers, also the province chiefs, and we have improved the administration of the armed forces. J-1 has helped; for example, combat commanders have been spot promoted, and incompetent commanders have been relieved. Intelligence is improving and fighters, bombers, and helicopters are each other’s best friend. Targets must be found and fixed, and this is done by the observation aircraft or helicopters and the HU-1E²² was the best craft to fix and mark

²¹ Operation Barrel Roll was a covert U.S. Air Force and Navy interdiction and close air support campaign conducted in Laos from December 1964 to March 1973.

²² Greene is referring to the Bell UH-1E Iroquois utility helicopter. Before 1962, the helicopter was designated HU-1, hence its better-known nickname “Huey.”

targets. Westmoreland then continued by reading a dispatch to the U.S. advisors in which he said the Special Forces program was being revised and strengthened, and civilians and military were being integrated. The Vietnamese need more men in their armed forces: 100,000 more under arms; 30,000 to go to the regular forces, 35,000 to other units, and the remainder to reserves, and this number can be raised.

The chairman then came in and said that Buck Anthis—this is the brigadier general on the Joint Staff who was in charge of counterinsurgency operations—has raised the question of whether there should be continued participation by the CIA and operational planning activities. The CIA is trying to withdraw from operations. He [Westmoreland] replied that he had had no complaint in this matter from his own staff and that Russell and Johnson were the number one and two men of the special operations section in Vietnam, the SOG²³ as it was called.

The CIA (CAS) advises the Vietnamese police regarding special services.

Tacked on to the end of these notes of mine covering this meeting were comments made by General Buse in which he says, “If we add up everything Westy has said so far, it amounts to one, MACV is doing a fine job; two, he is not optimistic, but on the other hand not pessimistic; three, he has little to recommend; and four, he is a smug, young politician but not as smart as he thinks.”

80. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at 2:00 p.m. on 23 December 1964

1972

The chairman opened the meeting by stating that he had just received a telephone call from Admiral Sharp. Sharp stated that he was worried about what should be done in Vietnam. He had discussed the situation with Westmoreland yesterday regarding General Khanh, who apparently has very little influence over the other South Vietnamese generals. As Sharp put it, Khanh had no capital in the bank on which to draw, and Sharp doubted that Khanh would be able to keep this military

²³ The Military Assistance Command, Vietnam Studies and Observations Group (MACSOG). Col Clyde R. Russell, USA, was the group's first commander from 1964 to 1965.

group of generals in a cohesive state. He then entered the discussion by saying the Young Turk group in South Vietnam was the strongest group in that country. It had exhibited more strength than any other element. The Young Turks, and not General Khanh, were standing up to the United States. Khanh first wanted to get out, but someone, probably the Young Turks, had put some backbone into the situation. The chairman replied that he didn't see how we could accept dictation from them, the Young Turks. "Well," said LeMay, "I have sympathy for them." The chairman replied, "With the murder of Diem, the last strong government went out of existence." LeMay replied, "We can try to get a stable civilian government, but I think that will be impossible to do. The only way is to use the military."

The chairman replied that he doubted that the generals are not able to control anything right now. The chief of staff of the Army then offered his opinion that Khanh had stated that he had granted powers to the civilians. The State Department, however, looks at the South Vietnamese government in the image of the United States, with elections coming up in March. They did the same thing in the Congo with elections in February. Well, what we need in South Vietnam is resolve, a dictatorship if necessary, with a strong direction to succeed. The Commandant of the Marine Corps then said that he felt the strongest element in South Vietnam at the present time is the military and he felt we should back them. The chairman then said, we don't necessarily have to back any government already in the saddle. What about Huong?

General LeMay entered the conversation again and said that we should run this situation in South Vietnam like a military operation. There is no chance for a government except through the military. If not through Khanh, then through someone else, perhaps from the rear rank. The chairman said, "Khanh in my opinion is not the guy. I have no trust for him."

CNO then said, "Well, South Vietnam is going to settle this problem, not the U.S."

The chairman replied, "I have no faith left in Khanh. Khanh will dictate terms, but there won't be any deal. As far as the Young Turks are concerned, the issue is Khanh versus the United States. The chairman felt that we couldn't retain South Vietnam with Khanh. The CNO offered the thought that Khanh and Taylor were

mad at each other, and the question was, what would we do if the Young Turks were to initiate action? The Commandant of the Marine Corps again repeated his thought that the strongest element in South Vietnam is the military and the problem is which generals are in control. The chief of staff of the Army felt that this could be determined through the U.S. advisor structure. The CNO said that he felt that we should support the Young Turks, that they were in fact in control. The chairman said that he had no objection to doing that if they were actually in control. The chief of staff of the Army then said, "We can't support them unless they step forth and actually exercise open control." The chairman reiterated that we couldn't support Khanh. [The] CNO said, "If the Young Turks nominate him, then we should support Khanh." The chairman finished the conversation by saying that we certainly are not going to stay in South Vietnam on any or all conditions set by the South Vietnamese and so the talk ended at 1450.¹

81. Message from the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak) to the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Honolulu, 7:29 p.m., 23 December 1964

From: Commanding General Fleet Marine Force Pacific

To: Commandant of the Marine Corps

Personal for Gen Greene from LtGen Krulak

1. Westy was here today, which gave rise to two meetings.
2. The first included only Westy, Sharp, Waters, Harris, Moorier, and me. It was a frank exchange on where we stand in SVN now. After reading all of the state, Saigon and MACV cables, there was much discussion, of which the following points may interest you:
 - A. Sharp is convinced that we have a genuine crisis—a direct confrontation between Khanh and the U.S.A.—a situation which could present us with a worse problem than we have yet seen.

¹ The meeting continued with a discussion of arrangements and invitations to the forthcoming inauguration of President Johnson.

B. Westy believes that the Khanh-U.S. confrontation will not materialize; that Khanh does not have the aces; that the prime minister does not trust him; that the Young Turks will not play ball with him and the other military leaders have no faith in him because of his prior vacillations. Westy clearly dislikes Khanh, and I fear that, in some degree, his wishes are father to his thoughts. I suggested that Khanh might well deal with the Turks.

C. Westy made a long philosophical talk about the impressive quality of VC motivation, and gave numerous examples of its superiority over the motivation of the GVN. He dwelt upon the thesis that the liberation front is wholly intra-SVN, getting little direction from Hanoi, and the same time, when pinned down, he said that attacks on the DRV would be helpful to the SVN cause.

D. Westy detailed an array of unfavorable war indices and then, just when I was getting the idea that he was licked, he recited some favorable ones too—better military performance, better recruiting, more ground fire power, more aircraft, third country help and progress in the oil blot idea. When he finished though, I could not help but conclude that his private ledger shows mostly red ink.

3. The other meeting was a larger session, devoted to a presentation of MACV's plan for the introduction and employment of a U.S. army logistical command in SVN. Including an engineer group, it aggregates 4,400 people. I procured a working copy of a paper, which is in the mail to you. At this meeting Westy made three other points:

A. He is against third country combatant forces in SVN for anything other than local security.

B. He believes that if we were to try and provide area security for our air bases, the net result would be a worse situation than at present.

C. And, finally, he believes that the Vietnamese—at least in Saigon—are coming more and more to feel that they can count on the U.S.A. to worry about the commies, while they put their own efforts into jockeying for political power. In other words, as I said before, I think he's something

less than optimistic. There is a lot of dialogue going on between MACV, CinCPac and DirPacDocks¹ on costs of construction for USMC Hawks at Da Nang. The costs they talk about are very high and, if I were given to suspicion, I would say that somebody may want to price us out of the ball park. COMUSMACV 22-21-40Z GENSER, which I am readdressing to you, will give the picture. Meanwhile we are taking the position that we can go in and do a good job with no construction at all, if need be and, in any case, do not require plush permanent facilities. Am certain that we will have full support from CINCPAC and CINCPACFLT. Will keep you advised.

4. Best personal regards. Merry Christmas to all.

82. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at 2:00 p.m. on 28 December 1964

1972

The chairman opened the meeting by debriefing, saying that at a meeting which he had attended, present were Rusk, McGeorge Bundy, Vance, Forrestal, two State Department press representatives, the chairman, and some others not named.

The subject of the meeting had been three cables: one from Taylor, one from Sullivan, and one from Sharp. And Rusk had said that in regard to instructions to Taylor in response to this situation in Saigon, the matter of government stability was involved and there was no solution to this yet, but it looked better. The Buddhists said they were going to renew pressure on the government, and this disturbed Rusk, and the *New York Times* report regarding the reduction of aid to South Vietnam had no foundation.¹ There had been no request from the government of South Vietnam to retaliate.

Then the problem of dependents was involved again. The president was not in town to discuss this matter with the political leadership. Security measures in Saigon evidently were lax in the club vicinity. As far as a strike was concerned, he would not be troubled so much if it were done by the South Vietnamese Air Force.

¹ Director, Pacific Division, Bureau of Yards and Docks.

¹ Tad Szulc, "Aid Rise to Saigon May Be Withheld," *New York Times*, 28 December 1964.

Vance had then said that he had talked twice with his boss, the secretary of defense, and that he would vote “no” to any retaliatory strike. It was too late to make one, but he supported the concept of a retaliatory strike and that he felt we should be prepared to act in six hours if we had another attack.² Vance had said that he understood that the Chiefs didn’t agree on this matter of a retaliatory strike, then told the conferees that he felt if we didn’t take action in a retaliatory fashion we would be doing nothing but asking for further attacks of this kind. He had said that he couldn’t understand, the chairman couldn’t, some of Mr. Rusk’s fears. If we attacked North Vietnam, they would know why. They would not need any prior [provocation].³ The chairman said he was more alarmed by the idea of using the South Vietnamese Air Force or the coded Air Force Farm Gate since they could only make 10 to 12 sorties and they would need U.S. pilots. He said he felt there was no need to tie in this matter with the governmental disarray in Saigon; that the reprisal would be in return for the mass murder of U.S. citizens by the Viet Cong. If this had happened in an off-loading, we would have attacked.

McGeorge Bundy had supported the chairman in his views. Our policy in South Vietnam was certainly with no intention to get out unless we were kicked out. On a discussion held on Christmas Day, no one at the meeting had that the U.S. should use the “disarray” of the South Vietnamese government to “bug out.” We should get a decision, and the North Vietnamese and Chinese should leave their neighbors alone. The attack or reprisal would give us some face. The report of Congress was already sufficient, and there was no need for the president to talk with the government. Probably there would be no reactions from the other side anyway, that is, escalatory moves on the part of North Vietnamese. If there is, he assumed that we are in shape to take care of it.

McGeorge Bundy said that all of the “neighbors” and leading generals of South Vietnam knew of our reprisal policy. Harriman, who was present, had made favorable comments regarding the proposed action. “Decision of the committee,” said the chairman, “had been that U.S. carrier air would conduct the reprisal at-

² A terrorist bombing destroyed the Brink Hotel on 24 December 1964. At the time, the hotel was being used as an American bachelor officers’ quarters (BOQ). Two Americans died in the explosion, and 63 Americans, 43 Vietnamese, and an Australian were injured. Although there was no direct proof that the attack had been carried out by the National Liberation Front, Viet Cong radio claimed credit for the attack shortly afterward. See Cosmas, *Joint Chiefs and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, vol. 2, 195–97; Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 347–48; and Karnow, *Vietnam*, 423–24. Figures used are from Cosmas.

³ The transcription records Greene stating, “They would not need any prior _____.” Looking at the original notes, the word is actually “provocation.”

tacks against North Vietnam and that the committee representatives would talk with the president by telephone this afternoon, and Rusk and McGeorge Bundy would fly to the [LB] ranch tomorrow and get a decision tomorrow afternoon.” The chairman said that he had already told Sharp that no decision would be made until tomorrow and that he, the chairman, would send a back-channel message to Sharp and Westmoreland to give “a flavor of the meeting” which he had just briefed the Chiefs about.

The chairman then turned to the J-5 who was present at the meeting and told him to tell Sharp that no napalm would be used. There would be 40 strike aircraft and not 26 aircraft used in the action. Forty sorties and no napalm, said the chairman. The operation, Barrel Roll, was reinstituted. This had been suspended following the Brink BOQ bombing.

Barrel Roll, and this was my comment, was a code name for a continuing, on-going bombing operation against selected targets and is worth examining in detail in connection with this period and these notes. General LeMay then said, “Let’s run spares up to the border.” The chairman—again addressing the J-5—said, “Let’s break out the photographs we have and determine what risk there is from antiaircraft.” The J-5 said that he didn’t know of any in the area, although some had been sighted on the coast. The chairman said that State was working up “responses,” and a release to the press is required following any reprisal attack.

The chairman said that in regard to the Chiefs being present at the State of the Union message to be given by the president on Monday, 4 January, at 2100, the Chiefs were to report to the Speaker’s room in uniform at 2020. At 1928, Assistant Secretary of Defense Vance and an aide entered the conference room and attended the usual weekly brief by DIA representatives. This brief was again given by a Marine colonel and was a very excellent briefing.

The secretary of defense is on leave, attending the funeral of his mother on the West Coast and also visiting Aspen, Colorado.

XIII. JANUARY–FEBRUARY 1965

83. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting at 2:00 p.m. on 4 January 1965

1972

At the opening of the meeting, General LeMay spoke to me and said that he felt there should be a change in the current JCS procedure. He believed that there should be no planners permitted to attend the JCS meeting and furthermore that all JCS papers should go to the assistant secretary of defense before going to the secretary of defense.¹

[The meeting began] with a discussion regarding the inaugural ball and inauguration itself for President Johnson's reelection.² The JCS will certainly participate in the inaugural, and the details are being shaped by a joint congressional committee headed by Senator Jackson.³ Date regarding a box for the inaugural parade will be furnished by General Clifton, aide to President Johnson, later on. In regard to the inaugural ball, this is not a command performance; however, two boxes with a total of 16 seats were available. The chairman said that he intended to attend and he had also invited the Rowlands, Admiral and Mrs. Rowland of the Coast Guard,⁴ and either [the] CNO or vice-CNO will go. LeMay said that he wanted to go. The Army chief of staff said that he was not going. The chairman said that he would fill boxes, and he asked the vice chiefs if they wanted to go. I indicated that the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Assistant Commandant, and chief of staff and deputy chief of staff of plans and policies would all like to attend the ball. In re-

¹ Gen Greene made a brief digression here regarding arrangements for attending the upcoming inauguration ceremonies and ball.

² These were held on 20 January 1965.

³ Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson, senator from Washington, 1953–83.

⁴ Adm Edmund J. Rowland, commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, 1962–66.

gard to the inaugural ceremony itself, the chairman said this was for “members of the president’s family.” The chairman will check to see what members of the Joint Chiefs’ organization would be provided with seats.

The meeting had opened actually at 1408, although it was scheduled to begin at 1400. After this initial talk about the inaugural, at 1430 there followed a Defense Intelligence Agency briefing. The general situation was covered by a Marine colonel briefer, and an Air Force colonel discussed the maritime classified operations.

At 1520, the chairman initiated a discussion regarding the Desoto patrol. There follows a very important quotation, taken from my notes. The chairman said that there are some people who desired to trigger a situation to which we can respond on a “Remember the *Maine*” basis.⁵ LeMay then said the United States should be prepared to defend the principles of an “open sea.” The Commandant of the Marine Corps and the chief of staff of the Air Force took the position [that] if there were a necessity for information for intelligence from such a patrol, then a patrol should be conducted.

The chairman then spoke up referring to Rusk’s appearance on the TV yesterday and said, “The message going to North Vietnam is the wrong one, and maybe a Desoto patrol might correct this.”

The chief of staff of the Army then brought up the problem of providing congressional committees with the Chiefs’ views on South Vietnam. The chairman replied that this was a matter of executive privilege and was a very contentious area. The chairman had discussed this matter with the secretary of defense and Mr. Vance today. The problem was, to what degree can you provide these committees with such information, particularly when they don’t take your advice? As far as the personal views of the individual Chiefs are concerned, why, of course, this is a different matter. However, even these should be cleared ahead of time of their presentation to congressional committees. The so-called Kennedy rule was that each request for provision of this type of information should be handled on a case-by-case basis and approved or disapproved by the individual case. As an example, Gen-

⁵ The USS *Maine* exploded while docked in Havana Harbor in 1898 during the Cuban revolt against Spain. Its destruction was blamed on the Spanish, and “Remember the *Maine*!” became an American rallying cry against Spain during the subsequent Spanish-American War.

eral Omar Bradley⁶ had flatly refused to testify to a congressional committee as to what recommendations he had made to President Truman, and President Truman backed him up in this position.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps then asked the chairman a question: referring to Secretary Rusk's appearance on TV yesterday in which he said [that] "we are neither going to move north into North Vietnam nor are we going to pull out," is this U.S. policy at the present time? The chairman said, "Regarding South Vietnam as it is today, the answer is 'yes.'" Here is a good illustration of the sort of situation that the Chiefs and the Commandant of the Marine Corps were continually finding themselves involved in. There not being a national security policy document covering basic national security policy, it was not clear in my mind at this time exactly what our policy was in regard to movement north into North Vietnam into enemy territory. And here's a good illustration right here of the need then and the need at all times of a sound basic national security policy covering such situations, [one] kept up to date and available to decision-making executives in the government.

At 1555, the Joint Chiefs then turned their attention to three routine items on the agenda, and when these were handled, the meeting for that day came to an end.

84. Message from the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak) to the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Honolulu, 6 January 1965

From: Commanding General Fleet Marine Force Pacific

To: Commandant of the Marine Corps

Personal for Gen Green from LtGen Krulak

1. Have received the following information privately from Youngdale:

⁶ GenArmy Omar N. Bradley, USA, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1949–53.

“As a result of Capt Cook’s¹ capture and a press release stating he was an observer in SVN, the *Wall Street Journal* has asked for an interview to discuss Marine Corps observer program. I intend to handle interview myself, playing it in a low key, covering only our participation with the Vietnamese Marines. Plan to state that periodically we bring down some 3rd Marine Div officers and enlisted to observe VN Marine training and operations in this counter-insurgency background. The program is designed for captains, lieutenants and staff NCOs to broaden their professional knowledge. Expect to be queried on length of tour and numbers which I hope to keep in round figures and limited to the year 1964 only.

I recognize this was one of the subjects we were playing down; however, present situation requires some response or it may get blown out of proportion. MACV PIO has made request, cleared by chief of staff, for interview with me. Have agreed to do later this week.”

2. Have told Youngdale that I consider his planned actions to be in accord with your policy, and have asked him for a private readout on the affair if anything is significant eventuates. Realistically, I do not feel that the presence of any kind of U.S. participation in Vietnam can long be kept from newsmen. Their sources are far too diverse.

85. Message from the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command (Sharp) to the Commanding General, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Westmoreland) and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler)

Honolulu, 27 January 1965

From: Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, CINCPAC

To: General William C. Westmoreland, USMACV; General Earl G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

¹ Capt Donald G. Cook was an On-the-Job-Training observer from the 3d Marine Division attached to the 4th Vietnamese Marine Battalion. On 31 December 1964, during fighting around the village of Binh Gia in the Phuoc Thy Province, Capt Cook was captured by Communist forces and became the first Marine prisoner of war during the Vietnam War. He died in North Vietnamese captivity in 1967 and posthumously received the Medal of Honor in 1980. See Whitlow, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1954–1964*, 138; and Melson and Arnold, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1971–1973*, 231–32.

Agree that events last 24 hours make it desirable delay withdrawal dependents.

Vulnerability of U.S. personnel to attack by dissident elements will probably not change significantly under new regime. If the presence of dependents is a block to offensive action by U.S. forces we should proceed with removing them at an appropriate time.

86. Message from the Commanding General, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Westmoreland) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler)

Saigon, 28 January 1965

From: General William C. Westmoreland, COMUSMACV

To: General Earl G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Info: Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, CINCPAC

1. Have just received Ref C and although a reply is not necessarily expected, I do want to make known further my thoughts on subject.
2. In view of the complexity of events and possible future developments, I am convinced that dependents should be withdrawn from RVN. Needless to say the question of when and how must be approached with delicacy.
3. I do not believe the withdrawal of dependents should be precipitated by the recent "coup de force." If extant emotions in RVN are exacerbated by such U.S. action, I believe there is a high probability that our intentions will be misinterpreted with the prospect of lowered morale and possible defections. Further, the emotional climate could well be compounded during the approaching Tet¹ period at which time practically all work stops and several days are devoted to visiting families and friends. As a matter of fact, it is well known that VC are permitted during Tet to return to their families with impunity. Secondly, a caretaker government with little if any authority is now running the country and we are therefore in an awkward position to explain the reasons for our action to responsible leadership.

¹ Tet is the Vietnamese New Year celebration. It occurs during the first few days of the lunar calendar, usually in January or February.

4. To date there are no indications that dependents have been used or considered as hostages to bring pressure on us. Although the recent demonstrations in Hue and Da Nang were implicitly a threat to dependents, there was in fact no actions or demonstrations directed toward dependents, or for that matter Americans residing locally. On the other hand, a theme of the demonstrations was “Thank you, America.”

Although consideration has given to withdrawal of dependents and civilians from the Hue area, this was decided against.

5. My recommendation on this matter, which is well known to Ambassador Taylor, is that we should withdraw dependents following the formation of a new government unless events to come suggest an acceleration when a decision is made for withdrawal. It should be done in an orderly way over a period of several weeks. We should not give the impression that we are withdrawing under pressure or fear of the VC, Buddhists, or any other factions. We should not give the people of Vietnam the impression that we have lost patience or distrust their government’s ability to provide security. On the other hand, we should suggest by our action that we are clearing the decks so as to have a freer hand to act militarily.

87. Message from the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak) to the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Honolulu, 29 January 1965

From: Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, CGFMFPAC

To: General Wallace M. Greene, Commandant of the Marine Corps

Personal for General Greene from Lieutenant General Krulak

1. Spoke three hours with Forrestal, talking mostly about Southeast Asia, and Vietnam in particular.

2. As to Vietnam, here are the major points of his discussion:

A. He feels that we are taking a licking and that it is the result of three things:
1) our short sighted handling of relationships with the several governments which have come on the scene since Diem: 2) increased outside help for

the Viet Cong: 3) and our failure to impress the DRV, by our own military actions, that we are serious.

B. He is not sanguine about the prospects of great improvement in any of these three areas, although he expects some limited stiffening of our own military posture in the near future.

C. He believes that central to the issue of our own military actions, which he regards as less than adequately vigorous or coordinate, is inadequate guidance by the State Dept, which situation he feels will not improve greatly.

3. As to the rest of Southeast Asia:

A. He believes that we have to get back to talking to Indonesia: that this is possible: that we cannot afford the prospect of trouble in Vietnam and Indonesia together.

B. He is anxious to see more done in the Philippines.

In this regard, Admiral Sharp, who joined us later in the evening, gave him a strong pitch on going after the Philippines to permit us to develop military bases in the Mindanao and Palawan. And to take part with us in a broad counterinsurgency effort in Mindanao. Forrestal said he would talk to Macapagal on these subjects.

4. My overall reaction was that Forrestal, who is soon to go back to law practice in New York, is not entirely in tune with his present environment.

88. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Special Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:00 p.m. on 2 February 1965

1972

The date, 2 February 1965, was the first day that General McConnell acted as chief of staff of the Air Force.¹ This was the date of his appointment.

¹ Gen John P. McConnell replaced Gen LeMay as chief of staff of the Air Force on 1 February 1965.

The chairman opened the meeting by stating that there had been two previous meetings held at 1230 and 1830 on 1 February 1965 covering Vietnam and the sale of military equipment to Jordan.

At the first meeting, there had been present the president, Bill Bundy, Ambassador Unger, Under Secretary Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Deputy Secretary of Defense Vance, Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton, [and] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Wheeler and his assistant General Goodpaster.

[*The President*]² wanted Goodpaster to go Vietnam. The general tenure of the meeting had been “what the hell goes on, and where do we go from here?” Bundy had said that this was a most impossible mission and what did Taylor and Westmoreland think of the future and what should be done? The group will leave for Vietnam tonight.

The president wanted to know what the Viet Cong capabilities were compared to the government of Vietnam’s efforts and military capabilities, and what the size and shape of the U.S. military effort should be. [He also wondered about] the problem of stability of the South Vietnamese government and extension of the war beyond South Vietnam, and the matter of reprisal. In regard to the Desoto affair, it should be a shallow air penetration of DRV.

Other new courses of action should be refusal of support for the Khanh government, the matter of U.S. aid duality, the application directly to the pacification effort, and the effort to police.

Next was the problem of evacuation of dependents—the ways, the means, and the public reaction.

The next problem had to do with third-country programs.

Next, the shape of the U.S. negotiating position.

And finally, a contrary plan against disagreeable things: for example, neutrality, anarchy, and the Catholic coup.

² This is blank in the original transcript, but Greene’s notes make it fairly clear that it was the president who requested that Goodpaster accompany Bundy to South Vietnam.

The chairman said that the president talked a great deal about dependents and asked what the JCS views were, and the chairman replied, "Forthwith."

The president questioned that Taylor agreed with evacuation before action against the North. The chairman said no, Taylor would agree to [it]. There was no precedent for withdrawal because of retaliation for the Desoto affair. The subjects which the president held in discussion apparently had come in from Ambassador Taylor. Then, the level of military people was discussed, and the president said there were "chicken colonels"³ all over the streets in Saigon. The chairman explained that first, there were major installations in or near the city—for example, major air bases—and secondly, the principal means of communication was in Saigon. The chief of staff [of the] Army said that he had reconciled himself to live with such "evil" for [the] reasons that the chairman had enumerated. The chairman replied that headquarters U.S. forces should have been moved out of town. The chairman replied that the president was sensitive to this matter and that Taylor had suggested that a group make the visit to Vietnam. Goodpaster started to say, "Well, he was helped in." Then the chairman interrupted him, playing down Goodpaster and saying, "No decision on dependents will be made until the Bundy group returns." McGeorge Bundy felt that the suggestion for evacuation of dependents should come from Washington.

The chairman stated that the group going to Vietnam would discuss the Desoto patrol and instructions would be defined on the seventh. There would be an executive order out from the Joint Staff this morning, and that "Tet" would come on 2–6 February. "During last night's meeting," said the chairman, "there was a discussion regarding rules of engagement, and it was finally decided there would be no changes in the rules that had already been sent out. . . ."⁴

³ Slang for a full colonel, as opposed to a lieutenant colonel.

⁴ The Joint Chiefs digressed here to discuss the "Jordan problem." Unfortunately, Greene's summary left out significant details, and it is clear from his reading that his memory of this particular issue was hazy: "The Chairman continued, saying that the Jordan problem had been discussed in the evening. The Arab command was trying to force Hussein, King of Jordan, to buy Soviet equipment. [Blank] would put up the money. King Hussein did not want to buy Soviet equipment. Secretary Rusk had said this equipment will help both sides in spiraling the quarrel, and that West Germans were the provision of supply problem now. [Phillips] Talbot from State would fly to Amman to see the King on Saturday, and it had been decided that the U.S. would sell just to Jordan if necessary. Three reprisals were then discussed with Options 1, 2, and 3. The only entry I have here is opposite Option 2, and it says all five targets in the south." The discussion of arms sales to Jordan and concerns about sparking an arms race in the Middle East can be found in Summary Notes of the 544th Meeting of the National Security Council, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. 18, *Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1964–1967* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2000), 288–91, hereafter *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 18.

... Then we continued, and the chairman said that McCone today appeared before the House Armed Services Committee—Mr. McCone, director of the CIA—and that he had been very careful and fair in presenting the Soviet capabilities on the basis of the NIEs;⁵ [there was] no deviation from the chairman’s speech data. And there was a sharp interest evidenced in South Vietnam.

The chairman is due to appear tomorrow and present a posture statement before the House Armed Services Committee, which contains 13 new Democrats. Rivers had spoken of a new deal representing the whole committee and [said] they would examine closely what was needed today.

A question concerning the Air Force Academy had been submitted in writing, and Zuckert had asked and the chairman said that “there was a bubbling emotion” in DoD and to stand by for a backlash.

Mr. Hardy had tried to give McCone trouble on missiles because the Air Force data was the highest.

At 1442, a discussion commenced on CM-408-65, Proposed Policy Guidance and Appearance before Congressional Committees. Last Friday, the first discussion had taken place, and yesterday afternoon the chairman had discussed the matter with Vance. Vance was willing to sign the paper. The chairman thinks that it was wrong for the secretary of defense to issue such instructions. We all represent individual services, and we know what’s right and what’s wrong. A fact of the matter is any discussion with the president falls into a privileged category. We ought to know that. And then the chairman said flatly that he could not disclose any discussion with the president, [but he] will give his own personal opinion and other factors that might bear on a decision. For example, one, the lack of a stable government in South Vietnam; two, a real doubt whether military action against North Vietnam will reverse the current trend, which the chairman now considers to be unfavorable; and another factor might be escalations, more action to gain a bargaining factor. Arguments for (a) not winning, (b) what else to do would also be items that he would be willing to discuss. However, the chairman said he will respectfully decline to answer regarding any advice that he has given to the secretary of defense and the president.

⁵ National Intelligence Estimates.

The CNO then wound up the meeting with a discussion and questions regarding advice which might be given to the president, and what its status would be insofar as revealing it is concerned.

89. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Special Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 10:00 a.m. on 7 February 1965

1972

I raised questions on the following subjects:

(1) Dependents. Has a statement been released regarding the removal of dependents? The answer was yes.

(2) The use of napalm. Will napalm be used against targets 32,¹ 33,² 36,³ and 39?⁴ The Chiefs want to use napalm, but they said they were willing to forego its use if it means that there would be no air strike against targets in North Vietnam, a policy to be dictated by State.

(3) Message traffic of the State Department. Why is it that the Joint Chiefs are not getting copies of these messages? For example, a personal dialogue that we discovered had been going on between the president and Ambassador Taylor. There was no answer to this question, and, of course, this is one of the problems that continuously bothered me for months to come in that we were never sure of what messages had been exchanged between State and their representatives in South Vietnam, even when the contents of these messages had a military significance.

(4) The fourth question had to do with the movement of a Marine antiaircraft battery and headquarters to Da Nang. [*I was*]⁵ informed that the headquarters and one LAAM Marine Corps battery would be moved to Da Nang and that the schedule would be announced early tomorrow.

¹ Ha Dong barracks and supply depot.

² Dong Hoi barracks.

³ Vit Thu Lu barracks and storage area.

⁴ Chap Le barracks.

⁵ This is blank in the transcript.

McNaughton brought up the question of a stable government in Saigon. Among other remarks, the chairman said he thought it would be a good thing if Khanh were to be killed. [McNaughton]⁶ also brought up the problem of whether or not we were going to stay in or pull out. And a message originating with Assistant Secretary McNaughton was mentioned in which McNaughton advocated an attack against North Vietnamese targets. I also raised the question of military direction in the actions that were being taken in South Vietnam, whether this was to come from the Joint Chiefs or would continue to be siphoned through the State Department, and what was the position of the Chiefs in this matter, and would there be a decentralization of control of actions in South Vietnam? These were troublesome questions for the Chiefs to consider, and I did not get clear nor complete answers.

A briefing then took place. It was stated that, at 1300 EST,⁷ Pleiku had been attacked for 15 minutes, during which 7 had been killed and 63 wounded.⁸ [From] 9 to 11 UH-1Bs⁹ and 1 CV-2B¹⁰ had been damaged, and 5 UH-1Bs had been destroyed. A portion of the POL dump at Pleiku had been destroyed also. And CinCPac in a message to CinCPac Fleet had directed that Options I and II be readied for execution. At 2400 EST, the White House in the person of the president had approved the execution of Option I plus attacks on target 32. This would probably take place at 1100 local today. The attacks against the targets in North Vietnam, target 33, had suffered heavy damage, and the Dong Hoi barracks was in target 33 and had suffered heavy damage. We had one aircraft down and two others hit.

Intercept of enemy messages indicated that at 0153 local the Communists had reacted to our attack and indicated the killed and wounded resulting from it. At 0200, there was one alert and the use of VHF frequencies was directed. At 0228, a message regarding [name unclear] was intercepted, at 0300 a message regarding Vin Linh, at 0320 another enemy message regarding U.S. attacks was inter-

⁶ This is blank in the transcript. Greene's notes are somewhat unclear but seem to indicate that McNaughton brought up the issues of a stable government in South Vietnam, whether the United States was going to pull out, and the possibility of an attack against North Vietnam.

⁷ Eastern standard time.

⁸ The final casualty count would be higher: 8 killed and 108 wounded. See Cosmas, *Joint Chiefs and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, vol. 2, 213. See also Prados, *Vietnam*, 112–13; and Karnow, *Vietnam*, 427–30, for accounts of the attack and its impact on American policy making.

⁹ UH-1B Huey light helicopter.

¹⁰ De Havilland Canada CV-2B Caribou cargo plane.

cepted, [and] at 0327 an enemy message regarding the shooting down of two U.S. planes was intercepted.

Soviet newspaper *Tass* two days ago had discussed a convocation of interested parties regarding Laos. It was also known that Kosygin was in Hanoi to indicate Soviet support. The newspaper also stated that the withdrawal of U.S. forces was necessary.

A Soviet trawler had also been sighted off the coast of South Vietnam. Soc Trang had been attacked with 15 mortar rounds and small arms fire. The chairman then spoke, saying that on Friday afternoon and Saturday (this was Sunday) meetings had been held concerning dealing with the Jordanian arms problem. A cable had been sent to gain time to talk with the Israelis.¹¹ And there was a strong negotiating position for the United States to give arms to Israel. Probably the U.S. will furnish U.S. or European arms to King Hussein of Jordan. Probably arms will go to both the Israelis and Jordanians. The Israelis want a German tank deal.

The chairman then continued saying that while the above meeting was in progress that news arrived regarding the attack against South Vietnamese targets. There had been an NSC meeting held at 1945 yesterday, Saturday, at which both Mansfield and Speaker McCormack were present. The president had authorized strikes against four enemy targets. The president also wanted an NSC meeting to be held at 0800 on Sunday. The meeting was held, and the chairman continued discussing it, saying that present at the meeting were the president, Undersecretary Ball of the State Department, Bill Bundy, [LtGen] Carter, McCone, Congressman Ford, Dillon,¹² Moyers,¹³ Valenti,¹⁴ and others. McNamara had spoken to the group, explaining [the] South Vietnamese reprisal plan, the impact of the weather, that about three targets would be struck, and that a press release was planned.

A big point at issue in this meeting was action to be taken on a recommendation of Ambassador Taylor which had been received regarding the rescheduling of attacks on three targets still unstruck, and other North Vietnam targets.

¹¹ Wheeler is possibly referring to Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, 1 February 1965, *FRUS 1964-1968*, vol. 18, 291-93. See also Document 88, footnote 4.

¹² C. Douglas Dillon, secretary of the treasury, 1961-65.

¹³ Billy D. "Bill" Moyers, special assistant to the president, 1963-67.

¹⁴ Jack J. Valenti, special assistant to the president, 1963-66.

It was agreed or discussed that it appeared to be politically wrong to indicate [a] continuing campaign on the part of the U.S. against North Vietnam. There was apprehension among the conferees against the possibility of a wrong signal going to Kosygin and the Russians.

The chairman had also commented to the members of the National Security Council that he had told them that the JCS had considered the problem and had recommended that the U.S. must take more action against the DRV to reverse the unsatisfactory situation. The chairman had said to the conferees the strike tomorrow was not important but additional strikes were necessary. He stated that the Chiefs agreed with the recommendations from Ambassador Taylor and CinCPac: that the South Vietnamese should be encouraged to execute air attacks tomorrow with U.S. support, the U.S. planes [would provide] CAP search and rescue missions and would lead the flights into the flak. This action was approved, said the chairman, by the conferees, and a message went out to the effect that "further strikes by U.S. aircraft not desirable at this time." Targets 32, 39, or other similar targets are OK for attack as the weather improves using VNAF aircraft only. No napalm is to be used and Farm Gate [will] lead in the attackers. A bombing analysis, BDA as it was called, of the attack on Dong Hoi was approved for tomorrow (that is Sunday).

The evacuation of U.S. dependents from Saigon: the president stated that he wanted this action in a press statement today. Taylor had been told by a message from State, and the chairman had sent a message too. Evacuation was to [be] expeditious but orderly and to be done possibly by commercial means or by military air transport. Ambassador Taylor had recommended the evacuation be completed in 15 to 30 days. The chairman stated that this subject was like a lead balloon in the cabinet room. Vance was to talk with Taylor. The president had indicated that he wanted the evacuation completed in a three- to seven-day period and not to wait any longer. As the president said, it appeared that this action was being taken on a "goddamned" reluctant basis. The strike had been made because of the dependents, and [the president] was really concerned over this problem and felt that the press would [*alert*] the VC [to] the fact that the dependents were considered as a prime target.

It was also revealed that the Marine LAAM battalion consisting of two batteries would be moved into Da Nang within 48 hours. It was also said that 16

C-130s from Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines could be used for this movement. [This was suggested to the Joint Chiefs of Staff after] a secretary of defense press conference between 1100 and 1200 today. If no satisfactory reply was received from Taylor regarding the movement of dependents, the president would probably order this action because he was very wary. The Chiefs approved the proposal to move the rest of the LAAM battalion into Da Nang. (Note that originally only one battery and battalion headquarters was to be moved. Now we have two batteries and the LAAM headquarters moving into Da Nang). The Chiefs also OK'd the movement of an LPH from the Atlantic Fleet to [the] Pacific Fleet, and this will give two present in the Western Pacific.

The president stated that he wanted ample air available to CinCPac and MACV. The chairman stated that he had ordered 10 FB¹⁵ squadrons alerted and that one squadron of C-130s and one squadron of C-124s had been alerted to move out by Sharp. The chairman said that he anticipates that these aircraft will be needed and that a check with MATs had also indicated that they could move 5,000 people in two days; apparently, the chairman was talking again about dependents since he followed this up by stating that there were a total of 1,786 government U.S. dependents in South Vietnam, of which he estimated some 680 were military.

McGeorge Bundy, said the chairman, returns tonight and will debrief the president tomorrow. TV stations had wanted to put Bundy on their channels, but the president had said no.

The chairman said that the point at issue for the next few days was going to be the progress of retaliation against the DRV. The chairman stated that Kosygin would probably leave Hanoi on the tenth and return to Moscow so that he could consult with the presidium. The chairman said that he thought that better anti-aircraft and missiles could be provided by the Soviets to the North Vietnamese, but the squeeze was on, the pressure was on, and that, as the chairman said, North Vietnam had trapped Kosygin. The chief of staff of the Army spoke up at this time and said that Ambassador Taylor in a message (2418 7 February) had proposed a press release regarding U.S. action. The chairman replied that he didn't want to tie any specific U.S. action with a specific action by the VC. The chief of staff [of the]

¹⁵ Presumably Gen Wheeler meant fighter-bomber squadrons.

Army continued, saying what are the JCS views regarding the ground moves prior to extensive air attacks on the part of the South Vietnamese? Johnson said that three quarters of the strike hadn't been able to go in due to bad weather. Johnson said this indicates that the U.S. had better be ready for ground moves and that we should recognize that there was a "need to explore more reinforcements going into South Vietnam on the part of the U.S." The chairman said that he agreed with this statement, feeling that more U.S. forces should move into the northern part of South Vietnam and to Tann Nhut airfield. The chairman said that there were small groups in both houses of Congress who were against this action against North Vietnam. As far as probable newspaper reaction was concerned, this would probably be [the case] for this type of action, except in the case of the *New York Times* and the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. Mauldin,¹⁶ the military cartoonist, was in Pleiku, and McGeorge Bundy on his visit to South Vietnam had also gone to Pleiku, although he wasn't supposed to do this. The Air Force at this point said that the air action should be planned in response [to the Pleiku attacks].

The chief of staff of the Air Force also discussed the markings that should be removed or remain on aircraft from the Farm Gate operation that might be used against targets in North Vietnam. The chief of staff [of the] Air Force felt that if the Farm Gate aircraft were flown by South Vietnamese Air Force personnel, they should make the attacks without markings on the planes. If, however, the attacks were made by U.S. aircraft, then the markings should appear on the planes. The chairman then said that he had told the president that there was a possibility of an air effort from North Vietnam. They might stage a sneak attack against Da Nang, said the chairman.

Here's a comment by me about the possibility of such attacks. During one of my early visits to Da Nang, I made a detailed study of the possibility of North Vietnamese attacks against our positions, and I was thinking at that time of the LAAM battalion in Da Nang. After a close examination of terrain characteristics and North Vietnamese capabilities, I came to the conclusion that Da Nang was highly vulnerable to such an attack on the part of the North Vietnamese and that, using the hill masses, they would be able to approach Da Nang without de-

¹⁶ William H. "Bill" Mauldin was an editorial cartoonist best known for his characters Willie and Joe from World War II. He was also known for several cartoons critical of the Vietnam War, including one depicting a South Vietnamese individual propped up by an American rifle.

tection and execute a surprise attack against U.S. and South Vietnamese positions in the Da Nang area.

The chairman said that he wasn't going to predict such attacks against Da Nang. And, of course, up until now, 1972, no such attacks have ever been made. The chairman then continued, saying that Taylor had been adamant against U.S. markings appearing on Farm Gate aircraft. And, in a telephone conversation with Taylor, Taylor said he had no objections to U.S. markings appearing on these aircraft. The chairman said he told Sharp about this conversation, and the policy should be, said the chairman, that Farm Gate aircraft used in attacks against North Vietnam should bear U.S. markings. The chairman said that the president in his opinion was surely and progressively making up his mind regarding future actions. Yesterday, he had indicated that he had made up his mind to see the action in Vietnam through to the best of his ability, and his attitude from now on would be governed by that thought. The chairman said that as far as the Joint Chiefs were concerned, he recommended that the Joint Chiefs keep plugging along with a clear and steady pace in attacking this problem.

The Chief of Naval Operations then came in with a question: will the U.S. call the time? The chairman answered yes. The chairman continued, "I've expressed what I believe the president feels. The die is cast. The president hasn't said this directly, but his attitudes indicate it, his words and his attitudes. And his response to Mansfield indicated this during the last meeting. "The secretary of defense," continued the chairman, "was deeply concerned regarding the situation."

State indicates the dichotomy of feeling. The State Department knows that the situation is going down the drain. Bill Bundy knows this. Rusk knows it. Ball wants the situation to go away. Rusk, on the other hand, is inclined to be vigorous. The three groups concerned—the Joint Chiefs, DoD, and State—agree regarding U.S. objectives in South Vietnam, but do not agree regarding the amount of press release and where it should be made. The JCS want more information released, then comes the Secretary of Defense, and then State.

I then commenced a discussion regarding what appeared to me a growing animosity between two individuals, General Khanh and Ambassador Taylor, rather than a view governing actions based on what was good for South Vietnam and the

U.S. The chairman immediately rose to the defense of Ambassador Taylor saying that with all the assumptions that had been made regarding Khanh, that Khanh had proved by his own conduct his inability to lead and the chairman agreed that it was most unfortunate to have an animosity existing between two principals. And he wound up by saying that he believed that it was absolutely disastrous to have this happen. The chief of staff [of the] Army made the observation that Taylor had sent messages to the other generals in South Vietnam, Vietnamese generals. The meeting apparently was coming to an end at this point, and the principals were starting to leave when the chief of staff of [the] Army stopped the departure; said he wanted to discuss again the fact that Khanh couldn't run the country, that he was discredited by a previous step down and that Thi was an unstable guy whose wife had been killed by Diem because she hadn't stood for Diem. He didn't agree with [the] CNO, said chief of staff [of the] Army, that there are likely candidates for Khanh's position. The chairman spoke up and said that McGeorge Bundy had told the [Vietnamese] generals that he would support them. The chief of staff of the Army said that we were greasing the skids to get rid of Khanh but that we were not selecting another to take his place.

90. Editor's Summary: Memorandum for the President from the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (McGeorge Bundy)

*7 February 1965*¹

On 4 February 1965, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy visited South Vietnam to meet with Ambassador Maxwell Taylor. Three days later, the Viet Cong attacked the U.S. installation of Camp Holloway, located outside Pleiku. That same day Bundy drafted a memorandum to President Johnson recommending the United States commence retaliatory strikes against North Vietnam with the intent of using graduated pressure to force the Communists to cease their efforts to depose the government of South Vietnam.

¹ This document is also printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. 2, *Vietnam, January–June 1965* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 1995), 174–85, hereafter *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 2. It was submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff by Gen Wheeler on 9 February 1965.

Thinking that the situation in South Vietnam had reached a crisis point, Bundy argued that “we believe that the best available way of increasing our chance of success in Vietnam is the development and execution of a policy of *sustained reprisal* against North Vietnam—a policy in which air and naval action against the North is justified by and related to the whole Viet Cong campaign of violence and terror in the South.”² He proposed a sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam by which each American attack was linked to a specific action conducted by the North: “It should be possible, for example, to publish weekly lists of outrages in the South and to have it clearly understood that these outrages are the cause of such action against the North as may be occurring in the current period.”³

President Johnson decided to implement Bundy’s recommendations and ordered a series of air strikes code-named “Flaming Dart.” Johnson’s decision proved to be a watershed moment in the history of the United States’ involvement in the Vietnam War, as the Flaming Dart operations were subsequently followed by the commencement of Operation Rolling Thunder. The shift to a continuous bombing campaign necessitated the landing of American ground troops to secure installations throughout South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff spent the subsequent weeks debating and discussing the nature and scope of this deployment.

91. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:00 p.m. on 8 February 1965

1972

Someone commenced the meeting by telling the Chiefs that Deputy Secretary Vance had met with the House Armed Service Committee this morning and there were 30 members present. The secretary¹ had gone over with the expectation that he has to outline tactics to be used in South Vietnam tomorrow, said the chairman. The chairman will meet with the House Armed Services Committee. At this point, I entered the conversation by discussing air base security, stat-

² Memorandum from the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to President Johnson, 7 February 1965, *ibid.*, 181. Italics in original.

³ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹ Likely this refers to Secretary of Defense McNamara.

ing that the air bases that might be established, specifically the one already at Da Nang, require U.S. troops and some sufficient numbers of them to positively establish security for operations.

The chairman then switched to the subject of the House Armed Services Committee again, saying that Chairman Hebert² would also inquire regarding JCS participation in consultations [concerning the] Da Nang retaliatory decision. This is interesting because it's an indication that Hebert entertained the feeling that perhaps civilian secretaries and a secretariat hierarchy were making military decisions regarding action to be taken in Vietnam without properly consulting beforehand with the Joint Chiefs.

The chairman then discussed the subject "rules of engagement," saying that the House Armed Services Committee would ask about these and specifically what was meant by "hot pursuit," and the chief of staff [of the] Army said that Vance had agreed to discuss this subject with the committee. Chief of staff [of the] Army felt that the rules of engagement should only be outlined on a basis of "need to know."

My notes then show that the secretary of defense entered the meeting room, the Tank as it is called, at 1433, some 33 minutes after the Chiefs had assembled. With Mr. McNamara was Mr. McNaughton, the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, and the deputy assistant secretary, Vance.³ The secretary of defense and his assistants had taken their seats. A colonel, [the] briefer, gave a short briefing of the current situation. The secretary of defense then commenced a discussion on the basic hostility of the people. The lack of physical security, the fact that there was a real gap in Vietnamese and U.S. security, resulted in no area being secure. The people were afraid; they won't report enemy presence or their movements. The secretary saw this as a twofold problem: (1) security was not being provided, and (2) we were not destroying the will of the North Vietnamese. Physical security today was no better than it had been in the past, and we were not getting

² Greene misspeaks here. Representative Felix H. Hebert of Louisiana did not become chairman of the House Armed Services Committee until 1970. At the time of this meeting, Representative L. Mendel Rivers of South Carolina was chairman of the committee. Hebert was serving as chairman at the same time that Greene was recording these notes, in 1973–74, which likely accounts for the lapse. Greene's original written notes, taken down in 1965, indicate it was Hebert who was making these points.

³ McNamara, Vance, and McNaughton had been attending a meeting of the National Security Council earlier that day. See Memorandum for the Record prepared by Director of Central Intelligence John A. McCone, 8 February 1965, *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 2, 192–97.

the proper intelligence reports regarding the enemy. And as a specific example, he gave Binh Gia, saying that the enemy had been able to infiltrate into this community without our securing a prior intelligence. The secretary then continued, saying that more support was needed for units, that the police function was the responsibility of AID, and that the police force at the present time was completely inadequate. The country team, said the secretary, should get straightened out regarding this security problem, and it should be a military responsibility, he thought, charged to Westmoreland. Physical security for the people was worse than ever. It should have a program of graduated pressures destroying the power of outside power. The president had directed that Ambassador Taylor should be told that the president had decided that this government will pursue the present CI⁴ action, that is, retaliatory action against targets in North Vietnam south of the 19th parallel after Premier Kosygin leaves Hanoi, because Kosygin at this time was on a visit to Hanoi. And the president wanted the South Vietnamese leaders told about this also.

There was a question then of when will we take action. Will it be provocative action? “No” said the secretary, “but we should decide in advance when we are going to take action—for example, attack two days a week and two targets a day—and we should justify such action by citing VC provocative actions.” For example: the chopping off of heads of village chiefs. The secretary said that he wanted McNaughton to work with the Joint Staff regarding a list of VC provocative actions which would be used as a basis for our own retaliatory action. McNamara asked the Chiefs to lay out a two-month program working with ISA (McNaughton), and he added that he forecast North Vietnamese response to our actions would be major aircraft attacks that would eventually require our own attack on the North Vietnamese airfield. And he estimated that this would come about within three to six weeks and would escalate very rapidly. The secretary of defense then said that he had asked the chairman of the JCS to conduct a study of the Chinese target system, that is, targets within Communist China, similar to the 94 targets which had been previously set up by the Joint Chiefs from those in Laos, a list which had been so useful. “This action,” said the secretary of defense, “will result either in forcing the enemy into negotiation or will result in an escalation and then the entrance of China into the situation.” “What faces us,” said the secretary of defense, “is how are we going to respond to a massive Chinese and North Vietnamese ground ef-

⁴ Counterinsurgency or counterintelligence.

fort.” “Obviously,” said the secretary, “through massive U.S. air and naval air attacks.” The secretary then said that he felt strongly that we should move large numbers of U.S. aircraft into the area, loading up every base in the Pacific. Okinawa, the Philippines, and Guam should be jammed with our aircraft, and he thought we could put at least 400 or more planes [at] these bases and that the numbers should be increased as escalation took place. It was a very high risk. A Chinese and North Vietnamese massive air and massive ground attack would take place. “A one to three chance of a ground escalation,” said the secretary, and he felt that we could put a lot of men on the continent of Asia. He had estimated as many as eight divisions. We should call up the reserves and should execute mobilization. He had recommended these actions to the president and thinks that everyone present should hold this information very close.

At this point, I made the observation that it was very clear that additional troops would be required to furnish security and protection to major U.S. bases. Possibly 44 battalions and 100,000 men total being made available to guarantee 100 percent protection and no increase in casualties on these bases. The secretary of defense then said that he would readily OK 10,000 troops, but he left this important question up to the Chiefs to study and to make recommendations. The secretary added that the question was how to minimize U.S. casualties: should this be done by adding U.S. personnel or in-country, or by not sending more in but doing with the resources that we already have there? The Chinese Communist nuclear threat 20 to 30 years from now will be a serious threat for us if we don’t destroy these Chinese nuclear facilities now. The secretary of defense then went on to say that if we were to put more men in South Vietnam, there would be more casualties. The secretary of defense was applying this remark to a previous recommendation of the Joint Chiefs regarding the dispatch to South Vietnam of noncombat troops—for example, Army logistic command and also CMC’s recommendation regarding more U.S. troops for the defense of large bases.

The secretary complimented the Chiefs over the success of overall attack.⁵ In four hours, they had executed the plan and made an assessment, and the secretary, in turn, had been able to make a TV report. The secretary of defense indicated that

⁵ On 7 February 1965, Pacific Command launched a retaliatory strike against North Vietnam in response to the Pleiku attacks that took place earlier that day. The operation was code-named Flaming Dart. CinCPac also ordered a battery from the Marine Corps’ 1st LAAM Battalion deployed to Da Nang.

the replacement of planes and equipment in South Vietnam was no problem, but a prime requirement was the elimination or [*reduction*] of U.S. casualties in that country. The secretary of defense and his party then left the Tank at 1350.

The chairman then went on to debrief the Chiefs regarding the report of the team within the Joint Staff that plans action to be taken in South Vietnam. The chairman said that the recommendation was that we must go forward in military action; we must review military and political action, and we had no recourse except to support any government there. For example: Khanh. We all agreed that action was necessary—then what should we do? A sustained program of action should be taken against targets in the southern part of North Vietnam. The chairman said that he had discussed the military risks involved. For example: the Soviets giving sizable aid to North Vietnam, such as SA missiles,⁶ antiaircraft weapons, and/or MiGs. The enemy could move aircraft south and attack targets in South Vietnam, and this means that we would probably have to attack the airfield at Phuc Yen, for example, and get the aircraft stationed there. He then discussed political aspects and costs and talked about the necessity to tell Ambassador Taylor we were going to go ahead. The team had gone out to Vietnam to estimate the tonic effect on the South Vietnamese of our actions, and the chairman wondered if we should [*undertake*] any more military effort in the next 48 hours. He said that Ambassador Thompson⁷ had talked with Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador, and had told Dobrynin that Kosygin, in his visit to Hanoi, was “mousetrapped,” and therefore the U.S. had called off actions in that area. They did not wish to embarrass Kosygin or themselves. The Soviet ambassador had replied that he felt the U.S. had taken deliberate action to embarrass the Soviet Republic. However, he had seemed happy to hear that Thompson had said that he been instructed by the president to request Dobrynin to transmit this information to his government at once.

In connection with the evacuation of dependents, the U.S. dependents from South Vietnam, the chairman said it would take 7 to 10 days to get them out. The president had said to the chairman in connection with this problem that it had been hanging over his head for six months and that he was goddamned sick and tired of it. Bundy, said the chairman, had agreed to phase II of the December pro-

⁶ Surface-to-air missiles.

⁷ Llewellyn Thompson, U.S. ambassador-at-large.

gram that actions could not be weeks and months apart—that we must start off with reprisal actions, then retaliation, then regular military response. The president had approved the above approach, and we must go back now with our program to the president for approval. Joe Moore (Moore was the Air Force general in command of the Seventh Air Force at this time)⁸ and Westmoreland had picked out 23 or 24 or more targets south of the 19th parallel—for example, radar sites and bridge choke points—for attack. Senators Mansfield, Dirksen,⁹ and Congressmen Ford and McCormack had all been informed of this plan, and the president had told them what he had intended to do and the chairman will get a copy of a report of this meeting to us. The matter of reconnaissance had been discussed at lunch, at the White House. Chief of staff [of the Air Force] then entered the discussion and said that we ought to get the MiGs first. The chairman replied, saying that the chance of intervention was practically nil, but there was the difficulty of convincing the team, and by that he meant State and other members, of this fact. Blanchard, general, Air Force, and the OpDep to the chief of staff of the Air Force,¹⁰ then discussed the necessity for more men in South Vietnam if there is to be an air beef-up and that there was no use arguing this with the secretary of defense in front of a room full of lieutenant colonels. At this point, I made the observation that I had been alarmed over the way the secretary of defense had been sitting at the table talking with the Chiefs who made no comment or objection about his proposal for military action in Vietnam, both north and south, in his arbitrary fashion.

General Goodpaster then discussed his recent trip to South Vietnam, the so-called Bundy visit, and he had returned on Sunday night. The country team in South Vietnam felt that the operation should be expanded and made more effective against the North. Ambassador Taylor has held this view for some months, but it is a new position for Westmoreland, who had previously felt that the Hop Tac had been enough, but in the last two months he has shifted to action against North Vietnam, such participation in his mind being necessary or else the South would go down. Specifically, he felt that we should work up the roads in Laos and then to targets in North Vietnam connected with infiltration.

⁸ Greene is incorrect here. Moore became commanding general of Seventh Air Force in 1966. At the time, he was the commander of air operations for USMACV and commanding general of the 2d Air Division.

⁹ Everett M. Dirksen, senator from Illinois, 1951–69, and Senate minority leader, 1959–69.

¹⁰ LtGen William H. Blanchard, USAF, deputy chief of staff for plans and operations, 1964–65.

There had been a consensus that increased action in North Vietnam should come in the form of reprisals. Reprisals in return for specific instances of enemy action first, then increasing the scale. Not tied to item by item but tied to the whole program by North Vietnam, Viet Cong, in the south, until we judged their actions as stopped. Example was the attack which had occurred against Pleiku. Our reprisal was the way to get into the program previously agreed upon. Bundy had drafted a report on the trip which had been reworked several times. There should be follow-up actions, such as pacification actions, and more specific military actions. [Actions] against Pleiku had taken place at 0200, and on Sunday at 1030 they had got an OK from Washington and then had contacted the South Vietnamese generals. Khanh had agreed to retaliatory action; Westmoreland, Bundy, and Goodpaster had gone to Pleiku separately, and Khanh had been very impressive according to Goodpaster, impressive in that he appeared to be smart, quick, concise, very perceptive, and knew what he was doing. This is the man who was later overthrown.

Then Goodpaster went on to say that the attack against Pleiku had taken place at 0200 on Sunday morning. It was a coordinated attack against the Air Force and MAAG II Corps. It was made with extremely effective timing, in a perimeter of barbed wire, had mortar to barracks, and a demolition party had gone against the aircraft, and the attackers had withdrawn as soon as the chopper got into the air, within 10 minutes illuminating the enemy for the VN reaction force afterwards. The outer perimeter of four kilometers [was] patrolled by a guard—and the inner perimeter had also been patrolled by the South Vietnamese Army—and a two-man MP patrol at 0145 had heard movement or a noise but had not been able to identify it. Goodpaster then discussed the MAAG compound, saying that in regard to the inner perimeter the post had been 100 to 200 yards apart; there had been a U.S. sentry listening post, and the sentry had given the alarm but had also been killed in the attack. The men in the barracks had fired from their windows. The VC were dispersed. They couldn't use more satchel charges and mortars, and what was thought to be 57mm fire and rifle grenades were used by the enemy. The alarm which had been given by the sentry and the quick reaction by our personnel probably saved a large number of casualties. [Goodpaster] visited the hospital in Na Trong, and the hospital was doing a splendid job. The spirit was good; the soldiers were seasoned; the spirit, tone, and attitude in the field were fine—they were in “business,” very pro and very determined. Westmoreland was already conducting

an investigation, also the South Vietnamese, to establish the facts regarding this attack on Pleiku to determine responsibility and improvements that were feasible. The terrain was a high plateau with some scrub brush and rolling ground. There had been some concealed routes of approach available to the enemy, giving him a good chance to get in and out. Goodpaster stated that he had briefed the press. At this point I entered the discussion with the observation that if U.S. troops could be provided for external security, a better job would be done. The chances that the enemy could get inside the defenses would be much less. Followed then an opinion by Colonel McTaxis, apparently of the Army, regarding two South Vietnamese regiments. McTaxis had said that one was superb and highly trained; the second was lethargic. The CO was afraid to go out on operations, and the subcommanders and troops were showing the effect of this. Leadership responsibilities were being stretched to the maximum, and that is why such a situation could exist.

The CO of the second regiment had informed the division commander that he had cleared the area. The Air Force chief of staff and chief of staff of the Army then noted that three battalions were at half strength: two at headquarters and one at the MAAG. Was Khanh behind this? Goodpaster replied, "No." Military commanders have the most effect. Contrary to what Ambassador Taylor says, noted Goodpaster, Westmoreland states Khanh never deceived Westmoreland in military matters. The chairman broke in and, quoting from former Army advisors, said that the South Vietnamese troops were good, with drive.

Goodpaster went on to say that the relationship between Khanh and Ambassador Taylor was not good. They were tense in each other's presence, and there was not much communication between the two. My own comment, based on my recollection of this matter, was that . . . or rather is that from the very first Taylor apparently made up his mind that he didn't like Khanh and wasn't going to like him and made no effort. My own impression of Khanh had been that he was a smart and able soldier, possibly as good a politician.

To continue, the Chief of Naval Operations then raised the question as to what the position of Ambassador Johnson was, and I believe he was referring to the deputy ambassador in Saigon, Alexis Johnson. Goodpaster replied, "The ambassador had impressed him very strongly on the political side and that he, Johnson, entertained exactly the same view towards Khanh as did Taylor." He then

continued, answering the question now as to whether Khanh had the backing of his military and generals. Goodpaster said Khanh was so far ahead of the generals in ability that if he gets them together, he can convince them of his viewpoint. They can't outsmart him. Khanh had told Goodpaster that in connection with his (Khanh's) action against the Buddhists he (Khanh) had been confronted with a situation parallel to that which had faced Diem. A strong stand would have given grievance, and then repressive measures would have had to be taken and this would have created a mass support for the Buddhists. Khanh said that he had deliberately taken a weak and cowardly position so as not to have the Buddhists and [South Vietnamese] army go against each other and in order not to generate mass support for the Buddhists. As to actions among the various elements of the military, there must be some antagonism and bickering on occasions, and one can't win a war by military action alone.

Goodpaster continued by saying that Westmoreland and Killen¹¹ differed regarding the route to pacification. Both are dissatisfied with the present situation. There is a difference in vigor and proficiency between the military and civilians involved in pacification. This difference is quite marked, said Goodpaster, in drive and skill out in the provinces. The military have it, but they aren't out there in depth. South Vietnamese province and section chiefs are Vietnamese military men, and good advice does come down through the military chain, U.S., which these Vietnamese officials understand. And the USOM people resent this—they don't have the capabilities to balance this influence.

At this point (now at 1655), the chairman made some comments regarding the Congress. He said that he talked to Blanchard, not to reveal recommendations which had been made to the president and secretary of defense regarding the situation in South Vietnam . . . say, if a man had queried as to whether or not the Joint Chiefs of Staff had received any written instructions from the secretary of defense controlling actions in South Vietnam by U.S. forces, and the answer to that question had been that the only directive was an unclassified memorandum which had been received from Vance. [At the] House Armed Services Committee hearing, which the chairman had attended, there were some hot questions said the chairman regarding air defense and NORAD, and this was challenged as being a paper tiger.

¹¹ James S. Killen, head of the United States Operations Mission in South Vietnam.

They also discussed manned bombers, the fallout shelter program, ABMs,¹² IMI,¹³ I don't recall what the abbreviation IMI stood for—at any rate, it was discussed at this meeting. They also talked about the MNF, and I believe this is an abbreviation stemming from Multi National Force, in NATO, and the feeling had been that this force could be useful, particularly if it received the support of the NATO countries. It turned out to be a divisive force and the JCS didn't want it, the chairman had told the committee. Support forces in Europe had also been discussed, including the Seventh Army and the LOC.¹⁴ The Soviet fallout shelter program was also an item for discussion. The committee had brought up the problem of rules of engagement, and there had been Joint Staff representatives present at the meeting in addition to the chairman, prepared to answer questions. The chairman made the observation that the under secretary, Vance, was reluctant to discuss before the committee the rules of engagement, and he had evaded this in his testimony of yesterday. [A] Joint Staff representative present at the meeting then entered the conversation by stating that CinCPac had stated the inadequacy of the present rules of engagements, for instance, what action could be taken against fishing boats in international waters as compared with action taken against them in territorial waters. A question had been raised by Westmoreland to the effect, can surface targets in territorial waters be attacked? He had also asked another question: can surface targets in international waters be attacked? The Joint Chiefs of Staff have authorized use of U.S. aircraft in territorial waters to prevent a major victory by the VC or major loss of U.S. lives.

¹² Antiballistic missiles.

¹³ Improved Manned Interceptor program.

¹⁴ Lines of communication.

92. Memorandum from the Deputy Director of Operations of the National Military Command Center (Smith) for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler) Detailing Casualty Figures following 7 February 1965 Attack on Camp Holloway

9 February 1965

Subject: Casualty Figures

1. Please note that MACV has submitted two different sets of casualty figures.

	MACV Item 015 091016Z	MACV Item 007 0708052
a. Officers Compound		
KIA	1	1
WIA	24	23
b. Camp Holloway		
KIA	7	7
WIA	69	85
Total Pleiku		
KIA	8	8
WIA	93	108

2. MACV Deputy J-3, COL SCHULZ in telcon at 090720 EST, stated that the information provided in item 015, in response to your questions is the OFFICIAL J-1 data, confirmed by morning report entries to date. The information provided earlier in item 007 was UNOFFICIAL, based on aid station nose counts rather than name checks.

3. However, they are still getting in verified casualty reports and the total WIA may go up as high as 125 or more. But until the J-1 checks out the names against rosters, etc., MACV wants to stick to the 93 WIA figure as being the OFFICIAL, confirmed number as of 091016Z.

R. B. Smith
Brigadier General, USA
Deputy Director for Operations (NMCC)

Copy to DJS J-3

93. Telephone Conversation between the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak)

Washington, 9–10 February 1965

In a telephone conversation with LtGen Krulak this date [9 February 1965], I emphasized requirement for security of Marine unit at Da Nang and asked him to check.

LtGen Krulak returned this telcon [10 February 1965] and stated that after my conversation with him on 9 February that he had sent a message to Generals Collins¹ and Fontana² containing comments and questions regarding the security situation at Da Nang, making a particular point of the necessity for adequate security forces for the LAAM Battalion.³ Fontana reported that he had been in Da Nang on 9 February and that the internal security there was OK; however, Fontana stated that he entertained some reservations regarding local security for the Hawks if they were moved to their planned sites. Lieutenant General Krulak also said that in his message to Collins he had asked Collins to summarize in detail the numbers and types of persons assigned to security duties. Krulak stated that he had made a complete analysis of the security situation as he had seen it last Friday (5 February 1965) and that based on this analysis, he had made some good recommendations to CINCPACFLT in a message: CGFMFPAC to CINCPACFLT.

94. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Special Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding Joint Strategic Objectives Plan 1970-74 (JSOP-70), 11 February 1965

1972

The Chief of Naval Operations was the acting chairman for this meeting, and he started off with a debriefing regarding a meeting held on the Southeast Asia problem at the White House attended by the president; Senators Kurchal and Ful-

¹ MajGen William R. Collins, commanding general, 3d Marine Division.

² MajGen Paul J. Fontana, commanding general, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.

³ 1st LAAM Battalion, specifically Battery A.

bright; Mr. Rivers; Mr. McCone of CIA; the vice president; House Majority Leader Albert; Speaker McCormack; McGeorge Bundy; the secretary of defense; the Under Secretary of State, Mr. Ball; Senator Mansfield; Mr. Mayhien; Jack Valenti; and Mr. Watson.¹

McGeorge Bundy gave a background briefing to the group on the current situation in South Vietnam. The president also asked the secretary of defense, Under Secretary Ball, and Mr. McCone of CIA to give their views to the group. The president then talked for 10 minutes outlining his own problems in connection with this Southeast Asia emergency situation. The president addressed himself to the Chief of Naval Operations, who was attending this meeting as acting chairman, and he said, "What have the Chiefs agreed upon?" And the Chief of Naval Operations said that he replied that there had been a unanimous recommendation agreed upon, a recommendation to be made to the president, and [it] would be an agreed [upon] message on Southeast Asia. The ambassador, Khanh the prime minister, and Westmoreland were in agreement with this recommendation and the Department of Defense, including the JCS and the secretary of defense, had agreed that the U.S. should strike back as soon as possible with an adequate force in retaliatory action for the attacks on Pleiku and other points made by the North Vietnamese and VC in South Vietnam. It had also been agreed that this retaliatory action should be a joint effort involving U.S. and South Vietnamese forces.

Senator Kuchel² then asked McGeorge Bundy, "Do you believe that there's an element in South Vietnam at the present time that might take over the government and ask us to get out?" McGeorge Bundy replied, "That's possible but I don't foresee it." Mr. Fulbright had asked some questions, but they weren't very pointed ones. Speaker McCormack, who was a member of the group, stated his backing for the proposal. Mr. Rivers, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said that he wanted to engage in a little talk, that he was a military student and not a politician used to State Department language, and he wondered whether there was enough of the right kind of material at hand to conduct the retaliatory action which had been proposed. The Chief of Naval Operations said that he had replied to this question on the part of Rivers by saying, "Yes, we have enough to do what

¹ W. Marvin Watson, White House chief of staff, 1963–68.

² Thomas H. Kuchel, senator from California, 1953–69.

the plan calls for now, the U.S. has enough.” Rivers then said, “What about the old planes that we have given to the South Vietnamese armed forces?” The CNO replied, “Yes, they were old but we don’t expect any active opposition on the part of the enemy.” Then, the CNO turned to the Joint Chiefs and said that there hadn’t been anymore, as he termed it, appreciable questions.

The CNO then asked a question which, as I read it now in these notes, certainly is a surprising one. He said, “Do the Joint Chiefs agree to this? It’s a hard question to ask; for an example, it will require a change in targets, and what should be done and we can’t reconvene the Joint Chiefs.”

Chief of staff [of the] Air Force then replied that he could have agreed up to seven targets, and he could say that the Joint Chiefs preferred more but would accept this. The chief of staff [of the] Army said, “The Joint Chiefs had agreed to 94 targets in a target complex, had agreed to all targets, which of course required a selection and time to attack” and that he supported the strike but expressed concern regarding the size. In other words, it wasn’t big enough. And then I asked the question, “Who cut the number of targets?” And CNO and the director [McCone] both replied that Under Secretary of State Ball and a message from Taylor had eliminated one bridge from among the targets. And then [the] chief of staff [of the] Air Force came into the conversation and said, “Well, State doesn’t want to do any reprisals anyway.” And the Chief of Naval Operations added the comment that on Monday they had wanted to do it, but yesterday, that was Tuesday, they didn’t want to due to the fact that Kosygin had gone to Korea and then returned to North Vietnam. And my comment here would be that, as I recall it, they were afraid that any reprisal air attacks going against North Vietnam might jeopardize Kosygin, leading to further implications with the Russians. Deputy chief of staff [of the] Air Force said that Bill Bundy last night had said that the proposed reprisal attacks were like [the] water dropping on a rock method and that the chief of staff [of the] Air Force didn’t agree we should lose any more people and that we should take forceful action. The meeting then turned to a study of the JSOP, one of the master plans that yearly had to be bought up to date by the Joint Chiefs. This was a joint strategic operational plan, and they worked on this exclusively until 1130 when they adjourned.

95. Message from the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak) to the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Honolulu, 12 February 1965

1. May I offer a thought on one factor in the current Vietnam problem which may come up in your discussions?
2. We have a lot of ships around point Yankee¹ and off Da Nang. The reds know they are there. They have the capability of sneaking *Swatow* gunboats down the coast and, conceivably, getting in a telling attack. Nothing would do the commies morale more good than to get a torpedo in a carrier or to sink an APA,² with its thousand Marines.
3. The *Swatows* are about the only offensive military mechanism that the DRV can use against us under the present circumstances. They are tough, able boats, and not to be taken lightly. Accordingly, I suggest that the next retaliatory opportunity might be seized to go after the southern *Swatow* bases, along with concurrent armed recon along the coast to try and discover any concealed gunboats.

96. Message from the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak) to the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Honolulu, 13 February 1965

1. Responding to the great interest which exists in the matter of security at Da Nang, the following paragraphs provide details which may be useful to you in portraying the picture of how we stand, what we are doing, and what our vulnerabilities are. In this regard, the comments in paragraphs 4 and 5 of Reference A provide a valid backdrop.
2. During the past six weeks the following intensified internal security measures have been taken:
 - A. Security procedures have been reviewed, and a daily inspection of security measures is conducted, according to a published security checklist.

¹ Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin.

² Attack transport.

B. MUV¹ officers have increased the frequency of security checks on U.S. and ARVN sentries within the airfield perimeter.

C. All elements of MUV are prepared for both active and passive defense: i.e., trench systems, sandbag bunkers, protective shelters, and fighting holes have been constructed.

D. Sandbag security posts have been constructed around the perimeter. All security posts are challenging posts. These sentries are armed with loaded M-14 rifles and each carries a basic allowance of ammo.

E. Two ambush positions at the south end of the runway are manned tonight.

F. During the hours of darkness, all helos are guarded, and are dispersed, with fifty yards separation between planes.

G. Liaison has been established with adjacent security units (VN Special Forces, U.S. Air Force, and Special Sector, Da Nang).

H. MUV defense and security plans have been developed into an integrated, mutually supporting defense and security plan, using all of the USMC resources.

I. The LAAM Battery has been assigned a rifle platoon for its local security.

J. At the MUV administrative compound, all Vietnamese workers are carefully searched upon entering and leaving the area. A building-by-building search is conducted periodically by EOD and counter intelligence personnel. A sentry is assigned to the pilot's billets during the hours of darkness.

K. A rifleman rides shotgun on each vehicle leaving the compound at night, and night lighting has been installed around the perimeter of the compound.

L. The counter-mortar radar, protected by sandbags, is in position near the runway, and operates 24 hours a day.

¹ Marine Unit Vietnam, also known as Task Unit 79.3.5 or Shufly. This was the principal Marine Corps unit operating in Vietnam from 1962 until the deployment of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade to Da Nang in March 1965. Shulimson and Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965*, 16.

3. All of the above measures are progressive. My visit to the unit last week made clear the internal security situation has been improved since my previous visit. Additional sandbag protection has been provided for vital installations within the MUV administrative compound, such as the water well, the power generator area, and the communications facilities. Defensive installations, weapons emplacements, foxhole trenches, bunkers, and barbed wire entanglements have all been expanded and refined. However, the vulnerable situation comprised by Rabbit Warren Village adjoining the southern side of the MUV compound, previously described in paragraph A, still exists; there are no adequate means of protection against high angle weapons attack, including hand grenades from this area. Likewise, although the ARVN now have a special sector around the Da Nang airfield and are exerting more effort in patrolling the control measures, there is no surety that a mortar attack could not be mounted from positions further southwest or north of the field.

97. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during a Joint Strategic Objectives Plan Conference 1970-74 (JSOP-70) at 10:18 a.m. on 16 February 1965

1972

The subjects covered were security in South Vietnam, the movement of a Marine expeditionary brigade to Da Nang, ComUSMACV's dispatch recommendation to CinCPac, and the removal of a Marine brigade from Exercise Silver Lance, [a] Pacific Fleet exercise. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs ended the meeting in the Tank at 1020, two minutes after the Chiefs had convened and commenced the discussion with the debriefing of a meeting which had just been held with the secretary of defense. The first thing we discussed was the next scheduled strike, in which he said a J-3 Joint staff message would go out concerning this in which two options had been set up. One [was] for a strike, Option 1 in the southern part of North Vietnam, involving two U.S. units and one Vietnamese unit, both air, and the second option would be to strike further north involving the same composition of units.

The second item concerned the secretary's decision that the Marine brigade in Hawaii should be removed from [the] Silver Lance Pacific Fleet amphibious operation. The secretary of defense didn't want this brigade to go to the West Coast in

view of the current Southeast Asia emergency situation. In other words, he agreed with Admiral Sharp's CinCPac recommendation in the matter. The removal of this brigade would have a serious impact, especially an important publicity effect, and the chairman thereupon recommended that the director [of the Joint Staff] send a message removing the brigade from this exercise and also get a recommendation regarding a possible cancellation of the exercise itself.

The next item the chairman discussed was a proposed cable for General Westmoreland proposing the use of U.S. aircraft in South Vietnam against Phu Toc and the South Vietnamese aircraft against the Bien Gia area. The dispatch would also say that the strike should be concentrated against selected areas. Ambassador Taylor and the secretary of defense had concurred in sending such a cable, and the dispatch was OK'd at CinCPac and ComUSMACV. This was illustrative of a technique that the chairman often used of calling the Pacific commanders on secure telephone, discussing proposed dispatches and orders, getting their OK, and then telling the civilian hierarchy that the Pacific commanders had concurred and thus expediting their agreement to the dispatch. The next item the chairman took up was the strike in northwest Laos. It was agreed that the Joint Staff representative MacPherson would straighten out the details with State.

The next item discussed was the security in South Vietnam, especially as it related to areas being cleared. The Army to take over the area. A meeting would be held at State at 1600 today, and Mr. McNaughton, assistant secretary of defense, ISA (International Security Affairs), would attend this meeting. Also General Collins of the Army would attend. And the chairman said that Mr. Poats¹ of AID would also be consulted at 1415, apparently by the chairman, as I interpret my notes. The next item discussed was security for the Da Nang area, and I note there's a reference to a dispatch or plan labeled in caps MAC J-5 1964. (I don't know what this reference was, but at least it's worth putting down here at this point and maybe track [it] down.) The chairman then said that Westmoreland had recommended that a Marine expeditionary brigade be moved to Da Nang. I think this is a very important point to note because here we see this coming on 16 February 1965. The chairman had pointed out to the secretary of defense that the Joint Chiefs had felt that Westmoreland's recommendation was a reasonable one. Losses would hurt if the base at Da Nang was overrun, losses both in personnel and material. Westmo-

¹ Rutherford M. Poats, assistant administrator for the Far East, Agency for International Development.

reland hadn't said that the ambassador had agreed and the chairman felt that the Joint Chiefs should go to CinCPac and Westmoreland and cite the message from Westmoreland and ask for a recommendation regarding security in the country, with priority to be shown to the most vulnerable and tender spots.

At this point I entered the conversation by making the recommendation that the Joint Chiefs should consider as follow-up actions: first, the movement of a brigade to Okinawa to fill the hole left by the Marine expeditionary brigade move. Keep the Special Landing Force of the BLT afloat, and this was normally done off the coast of Southeast Asia, off the coast normally of South Vietnam. Thirdly, I said that the public info and propaganda effect would be good. Item number seven in this meeting: the Army tabled a proposed dispatch to CincPac regarding the security of the population with the thought that the military would assume responsibility for this.

98. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:00 p.m. on 17 February 1965

1972

This is a very important item in my opinion because it reports on a meeting held by President Johnson which was attended by President Eisenhower, who had apparently been called upon by President Johnson to give his views regarding the situation: what action should be taken in South Vietnam? Present at this White House meeting had been the secretary of defense, General Goodpaster, and the chairman. You notice that Goodpaster attended this meeting, and of course the reason he was there was because of his special relationship with former President Eisenhower. As near as I can determine, at this time Goodpaster held many conversations and had many contacts with his former boss.

The chairman conducted the briefing by opening the meeting and reporting on this White House conference. He said that President Johnson and President Eisenhower had met with their advisors this morning and that Eisenhower had spoken his views on Southeast Asia. Eisenhower had said that it was contrary to the U.S. interest that Southeast Asia should come under control of the Communists and that, in his opinion, the whole West agreed with this view. Therefore, we must con-

tinue to oppose the Communists in their attempt to take over the Southeast [Asia] area. If we lose South Vietnam, all Southeast Asia will fall to the Communists.

My comment here is that it is quite evident that President Eisenhower believed in the domino theory and that South Vietnam was the key piece in the play of the game. Eisenhower went on to say that we should conduct a sustained reprisal program, increasing pressures or whatever you want to call this action, we should make clear to the Communists that our intent is inflexible and we are willing to obtain our objectives by negotiation. However, we can't negotiate from weakness. If we are weak, then we can only beg or acquiesce and we are a long way, at the present time, from a negotiating position. Therefore, we must see this thing through. Our information program is miserable, continued President Eisenhower, and the importance of morale is even more than what Napoleon said, three to one. The morale of the Vietnamese people needs bucking up. As for security, he supported very strongly the administration's program which was now underway. And as far as the Chinese Communists were concerned, he felt that they were not likely to react, and if they do so, we should allow no sanctuary [in order] to make the other side want to negotiate at a time desired by us.

President Eisenhower also stated that he believed that De Gaulle would entertain a friendly approach in this . . . or would return a friendly approach in this matter. In other words, we would have no trouble with De Gaulle if we went on with this policy. The chairman then continued the discussion by saying that at the present time we had no policy as such regarding our actions in South Vietnam and that we have had a bad press in South Vietnam since 1961. The chairman said that he felt Eisenhower's point for Johnson was a necessity of an absolute statement of policy to our people and to foreign nations as to what we were going to do, and Goodpaster agreed with the chairman on this view of Eisenhower's position.

Admiral Rivero, who was attending this meeting as representative of the Navy, then made a statement to the effect that maybe there were some people in government, he suspected, who didn't want action in South Vietnam. The chairman replied that he agreed; not only did he suspect [this], but he knew that it was true. And he said that our vacillating attitude must confuse Ho Chi Minh, and therefore we certainly should be confused too. Eisenhower had indicated that he was for strong, slow, relentless pressure and the necessity to inform the people and for

us not to negotiate until we were strong. At that point, I raised the question as to whether or not the people [who] were [of] differing opinions on our action in South Vietnam might not be Communist sympathizers. The chairman had to reply cautiously, "Not necessarily." Rather, [the] chief of staff [of the] Air Force made the comment that "Senator Gore¹ gave me hell the other day because we were even in South Vietnam."

The points Eisenhower made for President Johnson were first, "Don't walk out of South Vietnam." And this point had a tremendous impression, obviously, on President Johnson. The second point President Eisenhower made was, "We can't negotiate with the Communists from our present position. They must be put in a state of mind where they want to negotiate." The third point had to do with security, the security of the people themselves. They must help our forces against the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong are like the Mosby boys during the Civil War,² said Eisenhower, they were farmers by day and raiders by night. The chairman continued, saying, "Twenty-five or so Congressmen had got together and agreed that the U.S. should negotiate." Eisenhower, however, said that he felt this should be overcome by the president. He read to the chairman extracts of a cable sent to Ambassador Bruce for delivery to Mr. Wilson of the British government, [and] read a statement made by U.S. Ambassador [Adlai Stevenson], ambassador to the United Nations, before the Security Council of the UN and also a statement by the Canadian ambassador to the Soviet Ambassador Zorin³ to the effect that was no connection between Hanoi and the Viet Cong. Eisenhower commented on this, saying that our people were certainly miserably informed. Mr. Eisenhower said that these ambassadors from Washington should be given the full treatment by the State Department, [that] is, we were pulling their chestnuts out of the fire. It was absolutely incomprehensible to him, said Eisenhower, that when things get rough we want to hold the conference and negotiate.

¹ Albert A. Gore Sr., senator from Tennessee, 1953–71.

² Battalion of Confederate cavalry led by John S. Mosby known for carrying out guerrilla attacks against Union soldiers occupying Confederate territory.

³ Valerian A. Zorin, a Soviet diplomat and statesman who represented the Soviet Union at the UN Security Council during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

99. Memorandum for the Record from the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (Hayes) for the Commandant of the Marine Corps

19 February 1965

Subject: SecDef Staff Meeting, Monday, 15 February 1965

Enclosure: (1) U/SecNav Memo for Record of 15Feb65

1. Principals present were: Mr. McNamara, Mr. Vance, Mr. Zuckert, Mr. Ailes,¹ Mr. BeLieu, General Wheeler, Admiral McDonald, General Johnson, Lieutenant General Hayes and Lieutenant General Blanchard.

2. Enclosure reflects accurately that portion of the meeting which dealt with logistic readiness for expanded operations in Southeast Asia.

3. The following additional points of discussion are worthy of note:

a. General Johnson invited attention to the Army reservation in JCSM-100-65 on the adequacy of ground forces.²

b. Mr. McNamara said that he agreed with General Johnson and indicated that he was thinking of a level of 6–8 divisions.

c. Mr. McNamara expressed the following options:

(1) We are not likely to execute the 32 or 39 plans for the next 3–4 weeks.

(2) Our chance of major involvement is about 1 in 3.

(3) If we get into this we should go in with more than enough—any error should be on the high side.

(4) There will probably be another NVN strike on Wednesday or Thursday this week.

(5) We have failed thus far in SVN since our efforts have not produced

¹ Stephen Ailes, secretary of the Army, 1964–65.

² Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara (JCSM-100-65), 11 February 1965, *FRUS 1964–1968*, vol. 2, 240–43.

the desired results. General Johnson has recognized this—presumably this referred to an unidentified public statement by General Johnson.

d. Mr. McNamara stated that a recent high-level leak has caused concern in the White House. JCS are not involved since they were not aware of the subject matter.

e. Mr. McNamara made observations critical of national policy, strategy, plans and operations in the Korean conflict. He further observed that our present objective is not to hold to a given budget level nor to get the best force possible from a given budget level. On the contrary, our objective is to get the force we need to support our foreign policy plus a little bit more. Our first task is to determine what that force is.

f. General Wheeler remarked that if the ChiComs come in this time we should not repeat the error made in Korea and permit them a sanctuary in their own territory.

g. Mr. McNamara asked General Wheeler to have the Joint Staff review the terms of the Soviet-ChiCom mutual defense treaty.

Charles H. Hayes
Lieutenant General, USMC

100. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Special Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 11:00 a.m. on 24 February 1965

1972

The chairman opened the meeting by inviting the Chiefs' attention to an article by White in [the] 15 February issue *Newsweek*.¹ The chairman then spoke regarding current congressional hearings in which Congressman Arends² had said, to the chairman, that he intended to question each Chief along the same line of questions. Congressmen [Porter] Hardy and Hebert obviously were opposing

¹ Thomas D. White, "AJCS Questionnaire," *Newsweek*, 15 February 1965, 22.

² Leslie C. Arends, representative from Illinois, 1935–74, and Republican whip, 1943–74.

McNamara, and they both said that they hated McNamara's guts. Hardy had had a real set-to with McNamara's Bureau of Budget Review, and finally McNamara said to the committee chairman (it was probably Mr. Rivers) that he recommended to the chairman that the hearings be terminated if the members of the committee did not believe him (McNamara). . . . [He] then spoke about a dispatch on Southeast Asia which had been sent by the State Department to Australia. This dispatch had never been referred to CincPac or to the Joint Chiefs. The cable had been dated February 18, and the chairman [said] that he was going to call Bundy, telling him that the JCS and Admiral Sharp of CinCPac had never received the message and that it concerned military policy and yet these persons had never been consulted or even informed about the contents of the cable. The chairman then briefed regarding this February 18 cable, saying or quoting from the cable that policy on Vietnam calls for the following actions: first, a joint program with South Vietnam, including a joint air action against selected military targets, jointly planned and agreed to and jointly carried out. Secondly, intensification of the pacification program, attacking VC concentrations in headquarters with all South Vietnamese and U.S. means. The third point: document the case against the Viet Cong to the world. [Fourth,] carefully state that the U.S. will continue its air attacks as long as there is aggression, but focus on the VC and not on South Vietnam and U.S. combined operations. Fifthly, the U.S. intends to keep governments informed . . . friendly governments informed regarding each operation. [The chairman] took up a warning order regarding Rolling Thunder Four, and this Rolling Thunder is a code name for air operations against North Vietnam. And the chairman said that Rolling Thunder Four can't get off on the twenty-fifth as originally planned, twenty-fifth Vietnam time, that this was discussed at a meeting this morning with the secretary of defense, and McNamara had said that he had gotten an OK from the president to execute Rolling Thunder Four and that patrol aircraft en route on this operation could strike any VC that they might see. Rolling Thunder Four would therefore be executed on the twenty-sixth of February in a dawn to dusk operation Vietnam time. The president, said the chairman, had also directed McNamara to make a presentation to the press on this operation on Friday morning. And, said the chairman, the State Department was against such a presentation. Finally, he discussed a letter that he had received from Admiral Sharp's CinCPac regarding certain buildings at Fort DeRussy which the state of Hawaii apparently were interested in and he directed the Air Force and Army to

look into the matter because Sharp had indicated that the directors of the Army and Air Force exchanges in Honolulu voted against the State of Hawaii plan to get into Fort DeRussy. The regular items on the agenda here were then taken up. The first one being European contingency.³

101. Message from the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (Krulak) to the Commandant of the Marine Corps

25 February 1965

Re: Defense at Da Nang

Personal for General Greene from Lieutenant General Krulak

1. A message from Fred Karch¹ this morning says: “My visit to Saigon and Da Nang gave me the opportunity to view a situation that is deteriorating so rapidly that unless action is taken immediately to counter same, the cost to recoup will spiral. The defenses of Da Nang are totally inadequate at the present time and it is unsafe for the engineers to move to Hill 237 without the protection of a BLT.”²
2. This is a solid observation by a conservative observer, it may be useful to you. Regards.

102. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:00 p.m. on 26 February 1965

1972

The first action at this meeting was a special briefing regarding arms caches in Vietnam by the J-2 of MACV.¹ The chairman then debriefed the Chiefs on

³ Greene’s notes do not indicate what this “European contingency” was. He simply wrote the phrase and underlined it.

¹ BGen Frederick J. Karch, assistant division commander and commanding general of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

² This sentence is circled in original document, with the following written in the margin: “Without attribution CMC read this to JCS at 261512Feb.”

¹ BGen Carl Youngdale.

a meeting which had been called by the secretary of defense at 1845 the previous day on what can be done about Vietnam. Vance, the deputy secretary of defense, had asked what could be done overall in South Vietnam to keep ourselves from being kicked out of there. Westmoreland's recommendations were first, continual air strikes against the Viet Cong; secondly, to land a Marine expeditionary brigade on a phased basis at Da Nang. The secretary of defense said the chairman had been on [*Capitol*] Hill and hadn't had a chance to get a clearance for this landing of a MEB from the president. The third of Westy's [*recommendations*] was that he should get assistance from the Navy in the form of decoys along the coast. The chairman then said that the secretary of defense had been bothered by the State Department grabbing on these as specifics for the disease.

The next recommendation Westy had sent in was that there should be helicopter patrols made in the infested areas. The secretary of defense had said that regarding air strikes that we must get along with the job because we haven't hurt them, the enemy, as yet. The chairman then had recommended to the secretary of defense that we go after the transport system, the road net, the bridges, the choke points. And the chairman said that he had talked to J-3 regarding these choke points to be included in the JCS target list. However, said the chairman, apparently quoting the secretary of defense, superiors were reluctant to go after some of these targets because they were too near to the 20th parallel and everybody was nervous because we might get into a fight with MiGs and then the military would demand attacks on enemy airfields further north. The chairman said that he was still pressing to get ahead on his recommendations regarding the bombing which he had proposed and that J-3 and J-5 of the Joint Staff had been working on a transportation package, a shopping list of bombing targets, and J-5 had reported to the chairman that he was all ready except for some final data that he was trying to get from CinCPac. And that he might recommend a flare mission, even if there was not much prospect for success.²

The chairman then turned to Admiral Rivero, who as vice chief of naval operations was representing his Chief at this JCS meeting. The chairman said to Rivero, "The new aircraft, A-6As,³ are due in May. Can you expedite them to FMFPac?

² An operation to use flares for illumination purposes.

³ Grumman A-6A Intruder all-weather bomber. This aircraft was used by the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

Their probable use is more and more interesting upstairs” (meaning [the] secretary of defense’s office). Rivero replied that the A-6A is a new weapon system; it needs integrating into ships’ carrier systems and he didn’t [think] that the program . . . the schedule could be accelerated. At that point, the deputy chief of staff of the Air Force chimed in and said, “B-52s could take out the targets perhaps. Their first bomb drop would be a thousand feet short and then a thousand over and then maybe right on.”

The chairman replied that he was afraid of a spatter from the B-52s. The chairman then asked for additional data on the A-6As from the Navy and from the U.S. Marine Corps. . . . At this point, I spoke to the chairman and said of the meeting tonight, which is scheduled with the president, “Will you be able to get a decision regarding the landing of a Marine expeditionary brigade at Da Nang and authority to move a brigade forward from Pearl?” The chairman replied that he hoped to get such a decision.

The chairman then continued talking to the Chiefs and said that it was obvious that the House Armed Services Committee was 100 percent behind doing something. As for the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Byrd⁴ was against more action, and Senator Ellender⁵ was sore because our allies were not paying for the action in South Vietnam. Senator Stennis⁶ was against the U.S. being defeated, and the bulk of the committee were worried or frustrated and that they couldn’t detect any real policy. Senator Brewster⁷ had said that the only term he could give to the policy was that of “muddling through,” and [the] chairman said that there was indeed no clear-cut policy at this point. The chairman also said that the secretary of defense had experienced trouble during the congressional hearings in the House with Congressman Hebert and Congressman Hardy and in the Senate with Senator Robertson⁸ of Virginia. The chairman then concluded his remarks by saying that the secretary of defense was becoming the brunt of these attacks.

⁴ Harry F. Byrd, senator from Virginia, 1933–65.

⁵ Allen J. Ellender, senator from Louisiana, 1937–72.

⁶ John C. Stennis, senator from Mississippi, 1947–89.

⁷ Daniel B. Brewster, senator from Maryland, 1963–69.

⁸ A. Willis Robertson, senator from Virginia, 1946–66.

XIV. 1–3 MARCH 1965: PREPARATIONS FOR THE LANDING AT DA NANG

103. Memorandum for the Record by the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (Hayes)

2 March 1965

Subj: Developments in South Vietnam

1. General Johnson, CSA and Acting Chairman JCS, called a special meeting of the JCS in the Chairman's office at 1135. OpDeps were not invited. The following were present initially:

General Johnson
General McConnell
Admiral Rivero
LtGeneral Hayes
LtGeneral Goodpaster
General Abrams¹
VAdmiral Mustin
MGeneral Reaves, USA²

2. General Johnson stated that the purpose of this session was to debrief on decisions taken at a White House breakfast meeting this morning. Among those present were Mr. McNamara, Mr. Rusk, General Johnson, and Mr. McNaughton.

3. General Johnson will head a team to conduct a survey of the situation in SVN. This had been discussed earlier with General Johnson by General Wheeler and Mr. McNamara was understood to agree. The President decided this morning to

¹ Gen Creighton W. Abrams Jr., U.S. Army vice chief of staff, 1964–67. He succeeded Gen Westmoreland as commanding general of USMACV in 1968.

² MajGen Kelsie L. Reaves, USA, deputy director, Joint Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1963–65.

send such a team. Mr. McNaughton is preparing for the team a list of possible actions to be taken in SVN.

4. General Johnson said the President was vehement in his determination to stop leaks on matters under consideration at high levels of the administration. Special mention was made of recent leaks concerning plans for landing Marine units at Da Nang and *New York Times* articles concerning positions taken by various elements within the government concerning Vietnam policy and plans. Opinion was expressed (source unstated) that stories datelined Saigon had actually leaked in Washington and had been given false datelines by press agencies. The FBI is checking the White House staff and will probably check other agencies. William Bundy (State) was mentioned as a possible leak source. All present were cautioned on the sensitivity of matters now under discussion.

5. General Johnson outlined the composition of his party as follows:

General Johnson and two Army Aides

Mr. Carl Rowan plus one

Mr. McNaughton

Navy representative (undetermined)

Air Force representative (LtGen Compton)³

Joint Staff representative (MGen McPherson, USA)⁴

Army Provost Marshal General

Army PIO

Assistant to CSA for Counter-Insurgency (MGen Peers)⁵

The party will leave at 2100 on 3 March. No representation from CINCPAC is intended.

6. I inquired as to why the party did not include Marine Corps representation and outlined Marine Corps interest in this area. General Johnson replied (after some hesitation) that the party was organized on a departmental basis because of the strong influence of logistics and since logistics were handled on a departmental basis. I reiterated my desire to have Marine Corps representation. General John-

³ LtGen Keith K. Compton, USAF, deputy chief of staff for plans and operations.

⁴ The Service is likely a misprint: MajGen John B. McPherson, USAF, vice director, operations, J-3, 1964–67.

⁵ MajGen William R. Peers, USA, assistant deputy chief of staff (operations) for special operations, 1962–66.

son agreed to review the list and try to make room. He asked that a Marine Corps representative attend a preliminary session in his office at 1400 today (BGen Quilter was later directed to attend).

7. Mr. McNaughton joined at this point.

8. The following additional data from the White House breakfast meeting was debriefed:

a. The 9th MEB will not land elements at Da Nang.⁶

b. Two battalions of 173rd Airborne Brigade plus command and control elements will be deployed from Okinawa in lieu of Marines.

c. Reason given was domestic political impact. Lower noise level is expected if additional Army personnel are introduced instead of Marine combat units. (It was implicit in the debrief and accompanying discussion that landing of Marines would be more “offensive” and a greater escalatory step than moving in more Army).

9. Mr. McNaughton read a draft State-Defense message addressed on a “no distribution” basis to Ambassador Taylor with info to Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland. This message advised of steps contemplated and inquired concerning possible political impact in Saigon. A caution on leaks was included. After brief discussion and minor amendment of language, Mr. McNaughton left to release the message and returned promptly.

10. In further discussion it developed that the total strength of the Airborne Brigade is 3,400 and that the elements deployed would total from 1,850 to 2,400. It was noted that this figure is far less than the total strength of the Marine Brigade (7,800) or of the elements included in steps A and B of the CINCPAC Plan (3,700).

⁶ The short-lived decision to deploy the 173d Airborne Brigade instead of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade to Da Nang apparently stemmed from Assistant Secretary of Defense James McNaughton. The decision was quickly reversed following Adm U. S. G. Sharp's protest that such a move would rob him of the only airborne force in his theater of operations (see Message from the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command [Sharp] to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 3 March 1965 [Document 105]). The commander of USMACV, Gen William Westmoreland, also argued that the Marine expeditionary brigade's organic logistics capabilities made it better suited to protecting Da Nang than the 173d Airborne Brigade. See Shulimson and Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965*, 9.

11. J-3 was directed to prepare a JCS message to alert the Airborne Brigade.

12. No announcement will be made by the White House until the Congressional leadership has been informed (probably today). No decision will be made until Saigon comments have been received and considered.

13. Mr. McNaughton will draft a message (presumably State-Defense) advising interested parties of General Johnson's trip.

14. General Johnson will have a blank check on matters concerning men, money, and material of DoD. Matters involving other agencies must be referred to Washington.

15. The President wants things to happen in SVN. He does not like the way things are going now—we must find a new way. He is determined to put U.S. action, prestige, and influence on a rising scale.

16. General Johnson would appreciate Service and JCS notes on points to be considered during his trip.

C. H. Hayes

Lieutenant General, U.S. Marine Corps
Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps

104. Message from the Commanding General, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Westmoreland) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler) and the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command (Sharp)

Saigon, 3 March 1965

Re: Deployment to Da Nang

A. Joint State/Def, Def 6166 Dtg 02719Z

B. MACV J00 Dtg 020455Z

1. In searching for a rationale, which Ref A fails to mention, can only assume unwarranted implications were read into Para 2 of Ref B, which I filed after meeting with Minh and Thieu yesterday. In this regard see Paragraph 3 below. In sum-

mary, the shift from Marines to Airborne has no repeat no evident military reason to recommend it.

2. Believe we are too far down the road in preparation for the entry of the tailored MEB to make change without introducing new and unnecessary problems. Concerted arrangements have been made at the national military and political levels; I conferred on the ground with Gen Thi yesterday; senior representatives of MACV and High Command are now in Da Nang working out the details which will insure smooth entry with local military authorities and with CG, 9th MEB. Gen Thi assured me that the entry of the BLTs, over beach and by air, as now planned, would not repeat not present an appreciable problem—political or otherwise—demonstrating to my satisfaction that Minh and Thieu, as is so often the case at Saigon level, overstressed the political/psychological implications.

3. Can only conjecture that the underlying reason behind the contemplated change was a preference for entry via overhead, feeling that this would have less direct impact on the local population. Do not feel this is a substantive issue. In any case would point out that the great bulk of the Marine contingent could fly in: it would be a simple matter for the theater to reprogram the timing of entry. The fact is, however, that the major portion of the Hawk Bn (-) came in over the beach without incident.

4. Aside from the foregoing, there are cogent military reasons why the substitution of the airborne for the Marines is undesirable, almost to the point of being unacceptable:

A. The positioning of the airborne in the Da Nang area is incompatible with contingency plans: the Marine deployment, by contrast, is completely in step with all such plans.

B. The positioning of the airborne in the Da Nang area, intermingled with Marine Hawk and security unit, complicates local command arrangements.

C. The MEB is logistically much more self sufficient than the 173d. The MEB also has more badly needed combat support units—such as engineers now in the Da Nang area assisting in the development of the Hawk positions. Actually, I am not now ready to say that I can logistically support the airborne brigade (-) without entry of log command elements not yet programmed.

D. It does not seem militarily prudent to tie a strategically mobile unit capable of rapid deployment inland to a static security role on the coast. Moreover, should the need arise to redeploy the 173d suddenly, the Da Nang area is a particularly poor place of marshalling. Thus, if the 173d (-) were deployed to Vietnam, it would be far preferable for it to be positioned in an area such as Nha Trang where it preserves its capability to marshal rapidly (A) for subsequent air assault operations in Southeast Asia; or (B) for strategic air movement to other Pacific operations.

E. Finally, deployed or not, the airborne must continue to maintain operational readiness: and this means all facilities for packing of chutes and for conduct of jumps. The Da Nang area will not support these requirements at this time.

5. I conclude with firm recommendation that, for compelling military reasons, the MEB (-) be deployed to the Da Nang area as now planned. Alternatively, if the final decision is to bring in Army units, I recommend they be drawn from the 25th [Infantry] Division rather than the 173d Airborne Brigade (per 4D above).

6. The Ambassador has seen this message and concurs with the military aspects thereof.

105. Message from the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command (Sharp) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff¹

Honolulu, 3 March 1965

Re: Marines in Da Nang

1. The action outline in Reference A, which would place the 173d Airborne Brigade, a two battalion brigade, at Da Nang, embodies several features which are undesirable. A light and flexible airborne force would be committed to a fixed task depriving CINCPAC of his air mobile reserve. It is the only airborne assault force in the theater. A comprehensive array of plans and logistic preparations which affect many of our forces, and the forces of other countries, would be undermined. The action would employ units which are less adequately constituted for the purpose.

¹ This message is printed in full in DoD, *Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force* (1969), IV.C.4, 7.

2. Since the origination of OpPlan 32 in 1959, the Marines have been scheduled for deployment to Da Nang. Seven CINCPAC and SEATO contingency plans and myriad of supporting plans at lower echelons reflect this same deployment. As a result, there has been extensive planning, reconnaissance and logistics preparation over the years. The CG, 9th MEB is presently in Da Nang finalizing the details of landing the MEB forces in such a way as to cause minimum impact on the civilian populace. The forces are present and ready to land, some now embarked, with plans for execution complete. The deployment has been thoroughly explored by Ambassador Taylor with Prime Minister Quat² and the method in which the Marines would be introduced was mutually agreed upon as pointed out in Reference B.

3. Another practical consideration is the fact that 1,300 Marines are already at Da Nang. The Marines have been there in varying numbers for more than two years and thus have long since established the logistics and administrative base for future Marine deployments. They have a long standing and effective local relationship with the populace and the RVNAF. Then, there is the matter of adaptability for the task. Da Nang is on the sea coast. Each Marine BLT has its own amphibian vehicles, which are adaptable to continuing seaborne supply. Each one has a trained shore party to insure the flow of material across the beach in an area where port facilities are marginal. They embody amphibious bulk fuel systems which serve as a cardinal stand-by in case of interruption of commercial fuel supply. Their communications equipment and procedures are compatible with the Hawks, helicopters, and other Marine formations now in Da Nang and their organic heavy engineer equipment will be effective in developing the defensive works needed to accomplish the task. The Marine MEB includes tanks and artillery. The airborne battalions, on the other hand, being designed for a different task, are deficient in each of these important particulars—in varying degrees—and are thus less desirable for the assignment.

4. The situation in Southeast Asia has now reached a point where the soundness of our contingency planning may be about to be tested. The tasking has been completed. Logistic arrangements and lines of communication are established and operating. Command arrangements have been made and agreed upon and plans for landing and disposition of forces ashore have been made and these forces are ready to exe-

² Phan Huy Quat was prime minister of South Vietnam from February to June 1965.

cute them. It therefore seems imprudent, at this time, to shift forces in a major sector and to force changes in contingency posture for other parts of Southeast Asia.

5. Whatever force is landed, its strength should be adequate for the job. The airborne force, if selected, would require substantial and diverse augmentation to achieve the desired combat capabilities.

6. If the final decision is to deploy an Army brigade instead of the MEB to Da Nang, then I would recommend a one brigade task force of the 25th Infantry Division. This would provide a ground combat capability reasonably similar to the ground elements of the MEB. The command and control elements and the initial light infantry elements of this task force could be airlifted to provide some early security at Da Nang. Achievement of a more adequate capability similar to the MEB would require air and sealift from Hawaii and ConUS augmentation of some support units for the task force. The DAFFD³ should not be used since it is an essential element of other contingency plans.

7. I recommend that the MEB be landed at Da Nang as previously planned.

106. Oral Summary by General Greene of His Notes Taken during a Regular Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at 2:00 p.m. on 3 March 1965

1972

The Chiefs then turned to the military business of the day, and the Chief of Naval Operations told the group present that he had just had a discussion with the chief of staff [of the] Air Force regarding the requirement for better air strikes against North Vietnam. The secretary of defense had told the chief of staff [of the] Air Force, that he, the secretary of defense, was not satisfied with the amount of bombings or the destruction of the various targets in Vietnam. He wanted bombings mounted primarily for destruction instead of being used for a political message, and he wanted the chief of staff [of the] Air Force and [the] Chief of Naval Operations, both of whom had planes executing these air strikes against North Vietnam, to insure that the proper amount of effort was being expended in these

³ Department of the Army forward floating depot.

operations, that the proper numbers of aircraft were being used, and that napalm should be used if necessary. Now this is a very important point to note because here we find that the CNO and chief of staff [of the] Air Force state that the secretary of defense wanted napalm used against targets in North Vietnam. The operation and tactical commanders on the ground had agreed with the viewpoint, and if the JCS will recommend accordingly, [*then*] the secretary of defense would be willing to go across the river into the White House to fight for approval of napalm. However, it is too early now to transfer such authority to the field without specific authority coming from the White House first. CNO then proposed that there be created within the Joint Staff a small group of perhaps three officers to “chop,” that is, approve the weight of armament to be put on planes and then [the] type of bombs to be used. . . .¹

To get back to this meeting that was underway at 1400 on 3 March 1965, the chairman then turned to Admiral Mustin, USN, who headed up one of the general staff divisions in the Joint Staff—I believe it was operations—and told him to schedule another Rolling Thunder, that was a bombing operation, and pick out suitable targets for the South Vietnamese Air Force and the U.S. Air Force to attack. And the chairman then told the secretary [McNamara] that he believed that napalm should be used for flak suppression against the antiaircraft sites of the enemy. Chairman Wheeler then added that Secretary State Rusk had received this recommendation over morning coffee and apparently wasn’t happy during the rest of his breakfast. The chairman said that CinCPac wanted to recycle—that is, repeat a schedule of attacks against previously selected targets—and the chairman said

¹ Greene commented on this issue in his oral history: “I am not certain that this was ever actually done, although it was brought up at this point by the CNO. Wheeler then reported on a conference which he had attended with the secretary of defense and the deputy secretary, Mr. Vance, in which secretaries had said that four to five days should pass before another air strike was launched by us. They were elated, said the chairman, over the destruction to the ammunition depot which took place during the previous strike. They had said that we can’t run in B-52s yet; use the B-52s first in South Vietnam, and then use them in North Vietnam as we did with B-57s. I think that this is of considerable interest not only because a concept on how to use B-52s was discussed, [*but*] of course the B-52s were not used over North Vietnam until 1972, some seven years after this discussion took place in the Tank. And I might say at this point that in various discussions on this problem of using B-52s, Air Force representatives were never enthusiastic or happy over their projected use because of heavy casualties which they felt would result if these planes were subjected to heavy flak over North Vietnamese targets. I think the other important thing which this message highlights is the tendency on the part of civilian secretaries and officials to dictate the type of weapons to be used. So now this gives us a clear insight into what McNamara’s views regarding the war at this time actually [*were*], that we’re dealing with a weak enemy, that we were superior in all respects, that we had no contrary objections at home among our own people and therefore we could use any weapon that we wanted to in our arsenal, except of course the nuclear weapon.”

that he recommended approval. The secretary of defense then asked the chairman if this wouldn't lead to increased losses, and the chairman said, "Not necessarily."

The discussion next turned to the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, and the chairman said to the secretary of defense that he felt that CinCPac's message² regarding the assignment of additional forces to Da Nang and recommending that the 9th MEB be used instead of the 25th [Infantry] Division, that this message was a fine one. This action had been also recommended by ComUSMACV as well as by CinCPac. And the chairman then argued against the use of Army airborne units and brought up the problem of logistics if they were used. He said, "We might use the airborne units in later stages of the problem, supported by ships." The secretary of defense accepted this concept, but he also said the president was worried regarding the domestic scene not being steady enough and he felt that this commitment of additional forces to Da Nang should be allowed to set for a little while longer. The chairman and Vance immediately replied to him that the delay should not be too long, that this was a security hazard as far as Da Nang was concerned. Then, the chairman later told the Chiefs that he thought that the secretary of defense would see the president after a hearing he was scheduled to attend this afternoon, that is, that the secretary of defense was scheduled to attend. And the chairman said that he was going to go with the secretary of defense when he visited the president, and if there was any change in the recommendation to use the 9th MEB and to substitute the units of the 25th Division instead, this would require securing supply units from the United States to support the 25th Division and this would cause more commotion within the country.

General Blanchard, the OpDep for the Air Force, then spoke up and said that the secretary of defense had wanted a committee composed of Air Force and USN representatives to visit South Vietnam to see if there were any actions being done in a wrong fashion, actions concerning air attacks against North Vietnam. As an example, tankers,³ traps were proceeding too far forward, too early, by as much as 25 minutes before our own attacking aircraft came in, and enemy radar would detect these tankers and this would tip them off to the fact that an attack was under way. The chairman then said that he had sent a message to CinCPac to run the weather

² Document 105.

³ In-air refueling aircraft.

reconnaissance when wanted. Blanchard then spoke up and asked whether a VNAF representative had to go with the U.S. Air Force representative every time that we had an air strike. The chairman replied that he thought that after a couple of more strikes that we could water this requirement down and that the attack could go on separately. Now, this is [a] rather important point because, at this date, the requirement put upon U.S. Air Force units in Vietnam was that they could not make an attack without having a representative of the South Vietnamese Air Force in the rear cockpit. Now in examining what I have transcribed, it is well to remember that the chairman had completed his report on his conference with Deputy Secretary Vance and the secretary of defense just before General Blanchard had spoken up. Now, the chairman said to the Chiefs, in a half-joking fashion, "The secretary of defense is sounding like General LeMay. All he needs is a cigar."

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