~~TOP SECRET~~

ITEMS SPECIFIED IN THE SPECIAL APPENDIX
FILED ON JUNE 21, 1971 WITH THE
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE SECOND CIRCUIT

II. Portions of Exhibits 7 and 7A the disclosure of which would slow the U.S. program of shifting military responsibility in Vietnam to South Vietnamese forces

5. Sec. IV, C.7(b). Vol. II, at pages 161-62

No argumentation provided
in source document
"Special Appendix"

Section II, Item 5

UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

1945 - 1967

IV. C. 7.(b)

Volume II

THE AIR WAR IN NORTH VIETNAM

Probably more influential than these State Department Views on international communist reactions was a cable from Ambassador Thompson in Moscow offering his personal assessment of the Soviet mood and what we might expect from various US decisions. The cable was addressed to Under Secretary Katzenbach, but there is little doubt it made its way to the White House in view of Thompson's prestige and the importance of his post. For these reasons it is included here in its entirety.

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RECD: March 1, 1968

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7620

MOSCOW 2983

NODIS

LITERALLY EYES ONLY FOR UNDER SECRETARY
FROM AMBASSADOR

1. Before addressing specific action alternatives I submit following general observations applicable to all. Much would depend upon general setting in which given action took place. If any of them come-out of the blue or in situation which appeared to reflect U.S. decision to achieve clear military victory, Soviet reaction would be far stronger than if it appeared to be effort to offset military reverses. Important also would be current weight of opinion in Politburo between hawks and doves of which we know little. However, Soviet frustrations at Budapest conference, probable effect on Soviet leadership of their own propaganda which has been increasing in stridency recently and which has tended to strengthen Soviet commitment not only to NVN but also to NLF, and effect on leadership of other problems such as Middle East and Korea, all, it seems to me, have operated to make Soviet reactions more likely to be vigorous than was the case a year ago.
2. It should also be noted that Soviet reactions would not necessarily be confined to Vietnam. They could increase tension in Germany, particularly in Berlin, in Korea and Middle East. They could revert to all-out cold war and in any event would step up diplomatic and propaganda activity.
3. In all of alternatives mentioned I would expect increased Soviet military aid which in some cases might go as far as use of volunteers if North Vietnam would accept them, although most likely in antiaircraft and other defensive roles. In some cases they might ask for use of Chinese airfields. I should think supply of medium range rockets or other sophisticated equipment a real possibility.
4. Following are comments on specific cases although I must admit my crystal ball is very cloudy:
A. Mining of Haiphong harbor would certainly provoke strong Soviet reaction. As a minimum I would expect them to provide minesweepers, possibly with Soviet naval crews. Because of increased dependence of NVN on China for supplies as a result such action, Soviets would read into this wider implications related to the Sino–Soviet quarrel.

B. Intensified bombing of Hanoi Haiphong area might cause Soviets to arm their merchant ships or possibly even escort them if one were sunk. If heavy civilian casualties resulted they might persuade NVN to agree to bring matter to the UN and would at least organize worldwide propaganda campaign and possibly push for international boycott.
C. An Inchon-type landing would probably cause extremely grave reaction. Nature Soviet action would be affected by what Chinese communists did. Soviets would not wish to be in position of doing less. They would probably consider landing as prelude to full scale invasion and destruction NVN government regardless of how we described the operation.
D. I doubt that our activity in northern portion of DMZ would be regarded as very serious but raids beyond that would cause stronger reaction depending somewhat upon how it was reported in world press. They would be concerned that we might be launching trial balloon and that their failure to react strongly might invite actual invasion.
E. I am inclined to believe they would take US/GVN ground action in Laos less seriously than similar action in Cambodia, particularly if this followed further successful PATEREY LAO VNV offensives.
F. I think there would be very little Soviet reaction to increased U.S. deployments in SVN although there would probably be some increase in quantity and quality of military equipment supplied by Soviets. The same would be true of request for massive budget increase.
5. In sum, any serious escalation except in South Vietnam would trigger strong Soviet response although I believe they will endeavor to avoid direct confrontation with us in that area. A prior bombing pause would mitigate their reaction to alternatives discussed even though we might have to resume after short period because of increased infiltration or clearly unacceptable demands put forward by NVN at start of negotiations. Anything we can do that would diminish picture Soviets have built up in their own minds of U.S. pursuit of worldwide offensive policy, as for example progress toward Middle East settlement, would probably make them more tolerant of our actions in Vietnam.

THOMPSON

General Maxwell Taylor, like Bundy, sought to place the alternatives available to the U.S. into some sort of framework and to package the specific actions and responses to the situation the U.S. might take so as to create several viable options for consideration by the group. The memo he drafted on alternatives was more important finally than the one done by Bundy since Taylor sent a copy of it directly to the President in his capacity as Special Military Advisor, as well as giving it to the Clifford Group. With his background as a military man, past Chairman of the JCS, and former Ambassador to Saigon Taylor's views carry special weight in any deliberation. His memo was sent to the White House even before the DPM the Clifford Group was working on and is therefore included in part here. Taylor wisely began by reconsidering the objectives of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, both past and potential. They were, as he saw it, four:

Alternative Objectives of U.S. Policy in South Viet-Nam

1. The overall policy alternatives open to the U.S. have always been and continue to be four in number. The first is the continued pursuit of our present objective which has been defined in slightly different terms but

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2. The overall policy alternatives open to the U.S. have always been and continue to be four in number. The first is the continued pursuit of our present objective which has been defined in slightly different terms but always in essentially the same sense by our political leaders. For the purpose of this paper, I am taking the statement of President Johnson in his speech at Johns Hopkins University in April, 1965: "Our objective is the independence of South Viet-Nam and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves, only that the people of South Viet-Nam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way."

3. We have sometimes confused the situation by suggesting that this is not really our objective, that we have other things in mind such as the defeat of the "War of Liberation" technique, the containment of Red China, and a further application of the Truman Doctrine to the resistance of aggression. However, it is entirely possible to have one or more of these collateral objectives at the same time since they will be side effects of the attainment of the basic objective cited above.

4. Of the other three possible objectives, one is above and two are below the norm established by the present one. We can increase our present objective to total military victory, unconditional surrender, and the destruction of the Communist Government in North Viet-Nam. Alternatively, we can lower our objective to a compromise resulting in something less than an independent Viet-Nam free from attack or we can drop back further and content ourselves with punishing the aggressor to the point that we can withdraw, feeling that the "War of Liberation" technique has at least been somewhat discredited as a cheap method of Communist expansion.