MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Emergency Reinforcement of COMUSMACV

1. Reference is made to your oral request of 9 February 1968 for three plans which would provide emergency reinforcement of COMUSMACV.

2. The three plans examined are:

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

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

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

The guidelines for development of the plans and description of the airlift force mix options and movement capability are contained in Annex A. Plan One is examined in detail in Annex B, Plan Two in Annex C, and Plan Three in Annex D. Plans One and Three would require appropriate tactical air units for support of Army forces. All three plans require other support forces consistent with the duration of the augmentation.

SANITIZED

Authority NCS 82-293

By [redacted], NARS, Date 1-5-83

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

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

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

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

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

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

g. Thus far, he has committed only 20 to 25 percent of his North Vietnamese forces. These were employed as gap fillers where VC strength was apparently not adequate to carry out his initial thrust on the cities and towns. Since November, he has increased his NVA battalions by about 25. The bulk of these and the bulk of the uncommitted NVA forces are in the I Corps area.

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

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

e. The ability of the weakened North to cope with additional sustained enemy offensive operations.

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

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

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

6. Measured against the foregoing, the only active combat-ready and readily deployable general purpose forces consist of the 82nd Airborne Division, one and one-third Marine division/wing teams, eight recalled Air National Guard tactical fighter squadrons, and nonforward-deployed Navy forces which constitute the rotation base for forward deployments. Thus, the residual CONUS-based active combat-ready ground forces that would result from the execution of each of the plans examined would be:

a. Plan One - 6/9 Marine Division/Wing Team.

b. Plan Two - One Airborne Division.

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

These Army and Marine Corps forces are at various levels of readiness, and a high percentage of personnel assigned are Vietnam returnees or personnel close to end of obligated active service.
In examining the possibility of a more rapid acceleration in the deployment of the four infantry battalions now scheduled to deploy to Southeast Asia in March-April as a part of Program 5 forces, it was concluded that, while these units are currently undergoing an accelerated training program, they have not yet completed company-level training and should not be deployed earlier, except under the most critical circumstances.

In addition to examining the criticality of deployments to South Vietnam, we must look to our capacity to meet the possibility of widespread civil disorder in the United States in the months ahead. It appears that, whether or not deployments under any of these plans are directed, sufficient forces are still available for civil disorder control. These include National Guard forces deployed under State or Federal control, composite units brought together in each CONUS Army area, and some of the troops from the 1st and 2nd Armored Divisions and 5th Infantry Division (Mech).

Against the possible increase in force requirements in Southeast Asia as well as those to respond to contingencies elsewhere in the world, our posture of readily available combat forces is seriously strained. Consequently, any decision to deploy emergency augmentation Active forces should be accompanied by the recall of at least an equivalent number from the Reserve components and an extension of terms of service for active duty personnel. In view of the time required to bring Reserve component forces to a combat-ready status and the limited number of Active combat forces available for deployment, it would be prudent to call to active duty certain additional Reserve component forces.

While there are variations in the problems of each of the Services, the rotation/training base of each is stretched and would be incapable of supporting, under existing criteria, substantially increased unit deployments. In addition, the capability of our uncommitted general purpose forces is further constrained by shortages of critical skilled specialists and shortages in mission-essential items of materiel and equipment, such as munitions, modern combat aircraft, helicopters, and communications/electronics and heavy engineer equipment.
a. A decision to deploy reinforcements to Vietnam be deferred at this time.

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

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

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

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

12. The Joint Chiefs of Staff observe that many additional problems pertaining to US military capabilities - although critical - are not treated in this paper. An updated assessment of US military posture worldwide and specific recommendations for required improvements will be reported to you in the near future.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

SIGNED

EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Attachments