TOP SECRET

REPORT OF THE FIVE POWER MILITARY CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, JUNE, 1954.

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ENCLOSURE A - Listed conclusions to each detailed study.

Annex 1 - Military Courses of Action in Indo-China.
Annex 3 - Defence of South East Asia in the event of Overt Chinese Communist Aggression.
Annex 4 - Military Problems that would arise in the event of a ceasefire in Indo-China being agreed.

(NOTE: The detailed military studies have not been reproduced.)

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REPORT OF CONFERENCE

1. The Military Representatives of Australia, France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States met in the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., from 3rd to 11th June 1954 to discuss the situation in South East Asia.

2. It was understood that the conclusions of the Conference did not in any way imply a commitment of the Governments of the respective delegations.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

3. They were instructed in their terms of reference to undertake planning studies in order to recommend possible courses of action to enable an effective line of resistance to further Communist aggression or infiltration in South East Asia to be established. They would examine all possible courses of action in the light of the current situation and of the known capabilities of the anti-Communist countries concerned in South East Asia and the Western Pacific.

4. It was understood that the phrase above dealing with examination of "all possible courses of action in light of the current situation" was without limitation, and in particular was not restricted by the prior sentence dealing with "an effective line of resistance".

BACKGROUND

5. The discussions were conducted against the background of an Intelligence survey of the military situation in the South East Asia area and a French exposition of the current position in Indo-China. The Intelligence survey, prepared by delegates to the Conference, covered the present situation in Indo-China, the internal security problems of Thailand, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, Philippines and Nationalist China and the effect on them of a major Communist success in Indo-China. It also covered the possible Communist reaction to overt military intervention by the West in the Indo-China war and the Chinese military capabilities in South East Asia (Enclosure B).

6. The French exposition reviewed the situation that had faced France in the conduct of the war in Indo-China in recent years, particularly the problem of controlling the Delta with its population of five million while at the same time seeking to destroy an enemy who was increasingly well armed and supported. The attention of the Conference was focussed on the urgency of the existing
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situation, the poverty of French Vietnamese resources, the deteriorating morale as a result of the fall of Dien Bien Phu and consequent exaltation of the Viet Minh and finally the great importance of Tonkin to the front line of the defense of the free world against Communism (Enclosure C).

7. The Principal Military Representatives of this Conference took cognizance of the excellent accomplishments of the Five Power Military Planners whose studies and conclusions were of great value to this Conference. It was agreed that further useful work could be accomplished by this group.

ORGANIZATION OF DISCUSSION

8. The organization of the Conference provided for studies to be prepared under four major headings, with the stipulation in each case that the examination would be made in the light of world wide implications and the current situation in the area, and on the assumption that necessary political arrangements had been made:

(a) The defense of Indo-China against the Viet Minh in the various situations which might arise;
(b) Measures to provide internal security in selected areas of South East Asia;
(c) The defense of South East Asia (including Indo-China) in the event of overt Chinese Communist aggression, including consideration of the use of nuclear weapons;
(d) The military problems in South East Asia in the event of a cease-fire in Indo-China being agreed.

9. The studies themselves were prepared as a basis for discussion only. They were not textually agreed throughout and are attached at Enclosure D, E, F and G, only for information. The agreed conclusions arising out of the discussions have been listed under each heading at Enclosure A, Annex 1, 2, 3 and 4 and summarized below.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The Present Situation

10. The retention of the Tonkin Delta is of the greatest importance to the defense of South East Asia as a whole. At the present time, the military situation in the Delta is critical. The Viet Minh are in a position to launch a strong offensive at any time from mid-June and by September will be able to undertake a fully co-
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Correlated offensive. Between now and September they will undoubtedly exert heavy pressure and, if by that time reinforcements have been received a severe Franco-Vietnamese reverse is probable. This may well lead to a serious defection of Vietnamese troops.

Forces Required to Stabilize the Situation in the Delta

1. The stabilization of the situation and establishment of a secure base in the Delta would require outside assistance of the order of three well trained and equipped divisions and about three hundred aircraft. Owing to the limited capacity of the airfields in Indo-China these aircraft would have to be provided initially by a carrier task force supported by appropriate naval units and from air forces based outside Indo-China. Minesweepers may also be required.

2. The movement and concentration of these forces will take time and a decision to reinforce the Delta must be made immediately if adequate forces are to be ready to meet the large scale Viet Minh offensive expected in September, 1954.

3. The Delta will remain vulnerable until the whole of Tonkin has been secured and the Viet Minh Regular Army in Indo-China has been destroyed. There can be, therefore, no guarantee that further reinforcements will not be required later. The size will depend on a number of factors including the extent of the recovery of morale throughout Indo-China, the growth in size and effectiveness of the Vietnamese forces; the extent to which French Union Forces, now necessarily dispersed on police duties throughout the country, can be concentrated; and the reaction of Communist China.

4. The arrival of reinforcements from the Free Nations, other than France, would be an important factor in the restoration of Vietnamese confidence. In the opinion of the French General Staff the psychological impact of those reinforcements would be enhanced if they were drawn from the Western Powers.

Situation Should the Delta be Lost

5. Should the Delta fall to the Viet Minh, consideration must be given to the holding of a line of recovery further south. Due to the nature of the terrain and the forces which might be available to hold it such a position is not readily to be found. The line Thakhak-Dong Hoi offers the best possibilities although it is subject to a number of limitations. It would require a force of the order of four divisions with supporting air forces to hold it; together with the forces necessary to secure complete control of southern Indo-China. Provision too, would have to be made for ensuring the security of the
Flank resting on the Thai border. The maintenance of this force would require development of the existing logistic facilities.

16. Under present conditions the French Union forces in Southern Indo-China are fully occupied with internal security duties and could make no contribution to the holding of this position. Therefore, unless adequate forces were extricated from the Delta, the success of this operation would depend on the timely arrival of the necessary reinforcements from outside Indo-China.

War With China.

17. The danger of Chinese Communist intervention will increase with the approach of Allied forces, other than Vietnamese forces, to the Chinese border. From the start provision must be made to meet such intervention.

18. Should war with China be precipitated by Chinese Communist aggression in South East Asia, air attack should be launched immediately aimed at military targets. In the selection of these targets political considerations cannot be ignored. To achieve a maximum and lasting effect nuclear as well as conventional weapons should be used from the outset. A blockade against China should also be established.

19. It is unlikely that the land forces immediately available would be sufficient to hold the Chinese advance but a recovery line in Indo-China and defensive positions in Thailand and in Burma should be considered as a means of inflicting the maximum delay on the enemy and winning the support of those peoples. The lack of natural defensive positions and the inadequacy of forces likely to be available would limit what could be achieved.

20. The final stop-line should be a defensive position on the Kra Isthmus, the essential communications being controlled by air and naval forces based on the Philippines, Malaya and Ceylon. Intermediate operations should not be allowed to prejudice the ability to hold this final position.

Global War.

21. Any war with China involves some risk of war with Russia although no agreement was reached at this Conference as to whether the risk was probable or merely problematical. This is an important factor to be considered when deciding to commit forces to a war with China since such a committal must not be allowed to destroy the balance necessary for the implementation of allied global strategy.
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22. In the event of Global War, the overall strategy of the Allies should be generally defensive in South East Asia utilizing the offensive capabilities of naval and air forces as practicable. Elsewhere in the Far East the possibilities for offensive action should be exploited.

Measures to Improve Internal Security in South East Asia.

23. The maintenance of internal security in South East Asia depends largely on our ability to enlist the determined support of the leaders and people of the free South East Asian countries in the fight against Communism. This is a political problem but if it can be solved there are certain military measures which can be taken to increase their stability and develop their strength.

24. From the military viewpoint, a vital factor in the maintenance of internal security is the existence of strong, reliable, well trained and well equipped forces including police. Therefore, the Allies should be prepared to aid in developing these forces and their ability to operate. Such action would contribute not only to internal security but also to the general defense of South East Asia. These measures should not be considered in isolation but with political and economic factors, which, applied together, will contribute greatly to welfare and stability.

Military Problems of a Cessar Fire in Indo China.

25. Both the local situation in Indo-China and previous experience of truce or armistice between free and communist nations was taken into account. The conditions which would be the soundest and which would prevent a ceasefire in Indo China developing quickly into a more serious situation were set down only from the military point of view.

26. Any ceasefire agreement should provide for the retention by the French Union Forces of the Hanoi-Haiphong area, the communications between these two places and at least the area south of the line Thakhek-Dong Ha.

27. There must be a guarantee by nations other than those directly involved that they will intervene if the agreement is broken and neutral observers with freedom of movement must be provided to detect and establish violations where they occur.
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28. Throughout the studies the Principal Military Representatives have been much impressed by the fact that the military measures required to enable resistance to further Communist aggression or infiltration in South East Asia to be effective call for firm solidarity between the Five Powers represented at this Conference. The Principal Military Representatives would also call special attention to the critical nature of the present situation in Tonkin and the urgency of decisions on the immediate problems that it presents.
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