Throughout 1966, COMUSMACV's military operations were hindered by the increased VC/NVA use of the sanctuaries afforded by the border areas of Cambodia, Laos, and the DMZ. In these havens, immune from US attack, the enemy recouped and resupplied his forces and massed for new drives in South Vietnam. North Vietnam had long taken advantage of the border areas for infiltration purposes, and with the intensified US operations in late 1965 and 1966, Hanoi stepped up its infiltration. During 1966, US military commanders repeatedly sought authority to strike the sanctuary areas, but in many instances political considerations overruled military requirements. In the latter part of the year, the United States began planning the construction of a defensive barrier just south of the DMZ to impede enemy infiltration across the DMZ into South Vietnam.

Cambodia

The problem of the Cambodian sanctuary was not new. In the Fall of 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had described the problem to higher authorities, and recommended a series of political and military actions to eliminate this threat, including authority for maneuver operations and immediate pursuit into Cambodia. The State Department opposed any actions that would violate Cambodian territorial integrity, and the only authority granted COMUSMACV was to take those counter-actions necessary for self-defense in emergency situations involving VC/PAVN attacks from Cambodia. Nonemergency maneuver operations or return of fire into Cambodia required prior Washington approval.1

In mid-March 1966, COMUSMACV launched Operation LINCOLN, a series of spoiling attacks in western Pleiku Province near the Cambodian border, designed to disrupt VC base areas and neutralize the enemy buildup in the high plateau. Because the border was "vague" in this area, and in order to gain tactical advantage and cut off enemy escape routes, General

1. See above, Ch. 24.
Westmoreland requested authority for maneuver operations into Cambodia. Ambassador Lodge supported the MACV request, and to call world attention to the VC violation of Cambodian territory, he suggested to Washington that the growing "definite evidence" of VC utilization of Cambodia be released to the world press.  

Again Washington disapproved any maneuver operations into Cambodia. The State and Defense Departments advised Saigon that it was not in the "over-all US interest" to go beyond existing authorizations for US commanders to attack across the Cambodian border in self-defense, and that the suggested release of information was not advisable. In explaining the Washington decision, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, told both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV that existing authority should suffice to deal with enemy units in Cambodia. The two commanders were directed to use this authority "boldly," and to advise the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the requirements and circumstances promptly.

In addition to the specific request for maneuver operations in Cambodia in connection with Operation LINCOLN, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on two occasions in the first half of 1966 sought general authority for immediate pursuit into Cambodian territory, but the Secretary of Defense denied these requests. He found the "existing special instructions" regarding operations in the vicinity of the Cambodian border adequate under current circumstances.

In another effort at eliminating the Cambodian sanctuary, COMUSMACV had, in early February, recommended the development

(TS-GP 4) Msg, Saigon 4120 to State/Defense, 21 Apr 66, JCS IN 35359.


4. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-8-66 to SecDef, 7 Jan 66 (derived from JCS 2339/171-3); (TS-GP 3) JCSM-295-66 to SecDef, 9 May 66 (derived from JCS 2339/171-5); (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 16 May 66, Encl to JCS 2339/171-5, 18 May 66; JMF 9150 (16 Feb 65).
of a force capability for either covert or overt cross-border operations into Cambodia to mitigate the possibility of surprise attack on US/GVN forces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff supported this recommendation, and in a memorandum of 9 May 1966 proposed to the Secretary of Defense the organization, training, and equipping of an indigenous force consisting initially of 30 clandestine intelligence agents, sixteen 20-man reconnaissance teams, four 150-man reaction companies, and one 150-man security unit. These forces would be deployed against targets on the RVN side of the Cambodian border. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also requested the necessary funding and deployment of 156 additional US Army Special Forces personnel to RVN to support the indigenous force.5

The State Department accepted the wisdom of planning for possible operations in Cambodia, but opposed the actual operations at that time. Deputy Assistant Secretary Unger told the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) on 7 June 1966 that there should be no designation of forces for possible use in Cambodia since it would inevitably become public knowledge, "with unfortunate repercussions"; nor should there be any recruitment of ethnic Cambodians (Khmers) in RVN for such purposes.6

Subsequently, the Secretary of Defense approved on 13 June the development and funding of a force capability for possible future cross-border operations. He emphasized that this did not constitute approval to commit the force into Cambodia and directed that the State Department views, including the prohibition against the recruitment of ethnic Cambodians, be taken into account in developing the capability. Several weeks later the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved the deployment of the requested Army Special Forces augmentation to support the Cambodian cross-border capability. The project was designated DANIEL BOONE.7

5. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and JCS, 1 Feb 66, JCS IN 78527; (TS-GP 1) JCSM-309-66 to SecDef, 9 May 66 (derived from JCS 2343/820); JMF 9155 (1 Feb 66).
6. (TS) Memo, DepAsstSecState for FE Affairs to Dir, Far East Region (ISA), 7 Jun 66, Att to Encl to JCS 2343/820-1, 15 Jun 66, same file.
7. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Jun 66, Encl to JCS 2343/820-1, 15 Jun 66, Encl to JCS 2343/820-1, 15 Jun 66, same file. (C-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 27 Jun 66, Encl to JCS 2343/760-70, JMF 9155.3 (24 Jan 66) sec 12.

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A different but concurrent effort to solve the Cambodian sanctuary problem had been instituted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in late 1965. This effort involved political pressure on the Royal Cambodian Government (RKG, for Royal Khmer Government) to prevent the VC/NVA forces from using its territory and psychological pressure on the NVA personnel in Cambodia.

In November 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had proposed political action to persuade the RKG to cease its tacit support of the VC--support that was manifested by the RKG's tolerance of the VC use of Cambodian territory. They had also suggested the enlistment of third country pressure on Prince Sihanouk to the same end. In January 1966 the Acting Secretary of State, although he recognized the importance of political and psychological pressure on the RKG, declined to initiate any specific actions for fear that Cambodia might be pushed into active belligerency against RVN.

In April 1966, COMUSMACV, Ambassador Lodge, and CINCPAC all requested permission to initiate a psychological operations campaign plan, involving night leaflet drops against NVN personnel in Cambodia. The request was supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but higher authorities approved only the wind-drift of leaflets into Cambodian territory opposite the Pleiku/Darlac Provinces. This was authorized on 26 May 1966, and the operation was extended on 6 June to include the Cambodian area opposite Kontum Province.

On 27 August 1966, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again advised the Secretary of Defense that there was a need for continuing political efforts to persuade the RKG to stop its support of, or collusion with, the NVA/VC forces, and they recommended the preparation of an interagency psychological operations plan. The purpose of such a plan would be to

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8. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-812-65 to SecDef, 12 Nov 65 (derived from JCS 2366/7-1); (TS-GP 3) Ltr, Actg SecState to SecDef, 17 Jan 66, Encl to JCS 2366/7-3, 20 Jan 66; JMF 9155.1 (14 Oct 65).
promote an understanding on the part of the RKG of US objectives, the Free World determination to achieve "ultimate victory" in RVN, and the advantages to Cambodia of supporting Free World aims.10

Shortly after their request for a psychological operations plan for Cambodia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at CINCPAC's behest, requested the Secretary of Defense to seek State Department reconsideration of the prohibition against the recruitment of ethnic Cambodians for possible cross-border operations into Cambodia. The Joint Chiefs of Staff explained the operational advantages of using personnel familiar with the area, language, and customs of the Cambodian people, and they pledged that all ethnic Cambodians would be closely screened and that careful security measures would be observed.11

The State Department once again objected to the JCS recommendations on both the psychological operations plan for Cambodia and the recruitment of ethnic Cambodians for possible cross-border operations. In appreciation of the many policy and operational considerations that had arisen, and promised to arise again, the Deputy Secretary of Defense requested the Under Secretary of State and the Director of Central Intelligence to form a joint State-Defense-CIA Study Group to consider problems associated with Cambodia. The Defense Department would have two representatives, one from OSD and one from OJCS. The State Department agreed, and the State-Defense-CIA Study Group on Cambodia was established on 21 December 1966. The Group did not complete its study until May 1967.12

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were not satisfied with the higher level decisions with regard to Cambodia. In a memorandum of 19 December 1966, they urged the Secretary of Defense to seek a review of national policy toward Cambodia.

12. (TS) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 3 Dec 66, Encl to JCS 2343/820-3, 7 Dec 66; (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 4 Jan 67, Encl to JCS 2343/820-5, 5 Jan 67; (TS-GP 1) Ltr, USEcState to DepSecDef, 9 May 67, Encl to JCS 2343/820-6, 24 May 67; JMF 9155 (1 Feb 66).
in the light of overall US objectives in Southeast Asia and the continuing use of the Cambodian sanctuary by the VC/NVA. They noted the proposal for a joint State-Defense-CIA Study Group, but pointed out that this approach would take time. In the interval, they recommended an expansion and intensification of the overall intelligence collection program in Cambodia, including authorization for ground reconnaissance operations such as DANIEL BOONE and U-2 photography on a regular basis. They also requested authority for medium- and low-level day/night photography, airborne radio detection (ARDF), and infrared (IR) and side-looking airborne radar (SLAR) operations on a continuing basis into Cambodia to a depth of 75 nm (excluded was a 25 nm area around Phnom Penh). Further, they sought authority for immediate pursuit of actively engaged VC/NVA forces that withdrew into Cambodia. They also requested a more extensive coordinated public affairs and information program and supporting psychological operations to focus attention on Cambodian support of the VC/NVA and to dissuade the RKG from continuing such support. No action was taken on these proposals by higher authorities; apparently, they were awaiting the recommendation of the State-Defense-CIA Study Group.

Laos

North Vietnam had long used the Laos Panhandle as a primary infiltration route to support the VC. With the commitment of US/Free World combat forces to the struggle in 1965, the enemy also began to rely on the Laotian border area as a safe haven for their troops. On 7 January 1966, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Secretary of Defense to approve new rules of engagement for Southeast Asia, including provision for immediate pursuit of hostile land forces into Laos. When by early April there had been no response to their request, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 6 April apprised the Secretary of Defense of the increasing attacks by enemy forces entering RVN from Laos. As an example, they cited the 9 March attack by VC/NVA forces on the A Shau Special Forces Camp, "one of many US/friendly installations located within close tactical distance of the Laos border." Pending authorization for immediate pursuit, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested authority for US/Free World forces operating in the RVN near the Laos border similar to that granted in December 1965 for

13. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-779-66 to SecDef, 19 Dec 66 (derived from JCS 2366/10-1), JMF 9155.3 (28 Jul 65).
forces personnel to RVN to advise the Nung force. The Secrecy purpose of securing SHINNING BRASS forward launch bases and 
east Asia that would include the blanket authority for 
216-66 to SecDef, 6 Apr 66 (derived from JCS 2339/223; 
battalions and the deployment of 127 additional US Army Special 
66, Encl to JCS 2339/171-6, 18 May 66; JMF 9150 (16 Feb 66).

In May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again asked the Secretary of Defense to approve new rules of engagement for Southeast Asia that would include the blanket authority for immediate pursuit into Laos, but the Secretary of Defense replied that existing authorities seemed adequate. He added that urgent consideration would be given this matter when the situation warranted it.\(^{15}\)

In a further effort to reduce enemy use of the Laos Panhandle sanctuary, the United States in 1966 expanded SHINNING BRASS operations. In early 1966, COMUSMACV requested approval to develop three battalions of Nung tribesmen for the immediate purpose of securing SHINNING BRASS forward launch bases and for operations against SHINNING BRASS targets on the RVN side of the Laos border. The Joint Chiefs of Staff supported this request and recommended to the Secretary of Defense the approval for recruitment and funding of three 540-man Nung battalions and the deployment of 127 additional US Army Special Forces personnel to RVN to advise the Nung force. The Secretary of Defense approved the JCS recommendation on 11 April, 11 April,

14. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-8-66 to SecDef, 7 Jan 66 (derived from JCS 2339/171-3), JMF 9150 (16 Feb 65). (TS-GP 4) JCSM-216-66 to SecDef, 6 Apr 66 (derived from JCS 2339/223); (TS-GP 1) Mag, JCS 4007 to CINCPAC, 9 Jun 66; JMF 9155 (23 Mar 66).

15. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-295-66 to SecDef, 9 May 66 (derived from JCS 2339/171-5); (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 16 May 66, Encl to JCS 2339/171-6, 18 May 66; JMF 9150 (16 Feb 66).
carefully stipulating that the Nung battalions would be employed only in RVN and that use made of them in cross-border operations would be a matter for future decision in light of political/military developments. Five days later, the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved the deployment of the 127 Special Forces advisors to support the Nung battalions.16

The commitment of the Nung battalions to actual cross-border operations in Laos hinged on the concurrence of the US Ambassador in Vientiane, and on 18 May 1966, Ambassador Sullivan concurred in a COMUSMACV proposal for their use in the Laos Panhandle. However, Ambassador Sullivan imposed certain operational restrictions with regard to the size, depth, and duration of the penetrations into Laos and requested advance notice of the intent to launch operations. Subsequently, CINCPAC recommended expansion of SHINING BRASS in accordance with the Sullivan-Westmoreland agreement.17

The Joint Chiefs of Staff passed this recommendation on to the Secretary of Defense, who approved it on 16 June 1966. Secretary McNamara directed that both he and the Secretary of State be informed simultaneously with Ambassador Sullivan of the intention to launch missions. This action constituted approval of Phase II of the SHINING BRASS concept approved in principle in September 1965.18

ARC LIGHT Operations in Laos and NVN

The first B-52 bombings outside of RVN had taken place on 10 December 1965 when B-52s, with the knowledge of Laotian Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, hit an enemy supply area

16. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 8 Jan 66, JCS IN 41106. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-191-66 to SecDef, 31 Mar 66 (derived from JCS 2343/601-7); (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 11 Apr 66, Encl to JCS 2343/601-8, 13 Apr 66; (S-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 16 Apr 66, Encl to JCS 2343/601-9, 18 Apr 66; JMF 9155 (27 Mar 65) sec 1.


18. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-378-66 to SecDef, 7 Jun 66 (derived from JCS 2343/601-10); (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 16 Jun 66, Encl to 1st N/H of JCS 2343/601-10, 20 Jun 66; JMF 9155 (27 Mar 65) sec 2.
astride the RVN-Lao border. Press reports of the bombing in Laos caused Souvanna Phouma to react adversely. Although bombings by B-52s continued in the border areas of Laos, to interdict the Ho Chi Minh trail, most of the strikes were not cleared with the Prime Minister. Each strike in Laos was made simultaneously with a "cover" strike in RVN to draw press attention away from the Lao target. 19

In March and April requests from COMUSMACV to use ARC LIGHT strikes to block the Mu Gia Pass leading from NVN into Laos were concurred in by CINCPAC and Ambassador Sullivan. The Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized, on 8 April, ARC LIGHT bombing of the NVN side of the Mu Gia Pass. The strike took place three days later. COMUSMACV's request for a second strike was not so readily agreed to by CINCPAC but he was eventually persuaded, and a second strike was authorized on 22 April. Although General Westmoreland asked for continuing ARC LIGHT bombing of the Mu Gia Pass, CINCPAC believed it would be a waste of bombs, already in short supply. The Joint Chiefs of Staff turned down COMUSMACV's request on 30 April. 20

General Westmoreland began in late April proposing ARC LIGHT bombing of specific enemy targets that had been detected in Laos. Because these targets were well inside Laos, the US Ambassador objected on the ground that the strikes would have to be approved by Souvanna Phouma. The Ambassador was reluctant to seek such approval. He also questioned the military necessity of ARC LIGHT bombings in Laos. Nevertheless as the enemy buildup in Laos became more and more visible, COMUSMACV continued to ask during May and June for ARC LIGHT bombings well inside the border of Laos. These requests were not

concurred in by the Ambassador and thus not approved. On 16 July General Westmoreland, calling attention to the rapid enemy buildup in Laos, and in the area just north of the DMZ, sought once again to have the restrictions lifted so that B-52s could strike enemy logistical and training areas in Laos. He also asked at this time for authority to strike identified enemy targets in the DMZ west of the populated areas. 21

General Westmoreland visited Ambassador Sullivan at Udorn on 19 July to discuss lifting restrictions. He asked that the Ambassador attempt to obtain Souvanna Phouma's approval even though there was a risk that the latter would turn down the request. COMUSMACV also recognized that the Prime Minister's refusal would make it even more difficult to continue the B-52 strikes being conducted along the frontier without the Prime Minister's knowledge. 22

One month later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that "the expected damage to be achieved by striking the proposed targets is worth the risk of possible disapproval of future B-52 strike requests in Laos." They supported COMUSMACV's request that Ambassador Sullivan be authorized to consult with Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma to conduct the ARC LIGHT strikes against Laotian targets. 23

On 13 September, a joint State-Defense cable directed Ambassador Sullivan to seek Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma's approval to conduct eight ARC LIGHT strikes in Laos. The Ambassador was instructed to make it clear to the Prime Minister that the United States, while not willing to deny completely communist charges of US air operation in Laos,

would meet such allegations with "no comment or confirmation." In addition, each B-52 strike would be accompanied by a cover strike in RVN.24

After meeting with Ambassador Sullivan on 15 September, the Prime Minister approved the eight ARC LIGHT strikes, but with two conditions: first, he insisted that the bombings be accurate and there be no mistakes; second, the United States would say nothing regarding the strikes. No mention would even be made to anyone in the RLG. Ambassador Sullivan interpreted the second stipulation as a test to see if the United States could control security leaks, and he expressed his belief that permission to conduct future ARC LIGHT operations would depend on the US ability to comply with the Prime Minister's requirements.25

Operations In and Near the DMZ

In 1965 US authorities had recognized the threat posed by enemy violation of the DMZ and had considered possible counteractions. In September 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had sought authority for attack of targets in both the northern and southern portions of the DMZ by "all appropriate military means," but the State Department had opposed such action and the matter had been shelved.26

In March 1966, COMUSMACV reported confirmed evidence of enemy use of infiltration routes in the western portion of the DMZ and requested authority for air strikes in this area. CINCPAC concurred with this request, stating that the enemy

24. (TS-GP 3) Jt State-Def Msg 45705 to Vientiane, 13 Sep 66, JCS IN 1063.
25. (TS) Msg, Vientiane 1581 to State, 16 Sep 66, JCS IN 15967.
26. (S-GP 4) Memo, Dir, Far East Region, OASD(ISA) to D/JS, 1 Sep 65, Encl to JCS 2343/676, 2 Sep 65; (S-GP 3) JCSM-702-65 to SecDef, 20 Sep 65 (derived from JCS 2343/676-1); (TS-GP 3) Ltr, DepAsstSecState for FE Affairs to ASD(ISA), 2 Dec 65, Encl to JCS 2343/676-3, 7 Jun 66, JMF 9155.3 (23 Jul 65).
had now a sanctuary in the DMZ that should be denied. Subsequently, the Director, Joint Staff, informed the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) of "the strong probability" that the extreme western portion of the DMZ was being used for infiltration into RVN. The Director requested action to resolve State-Defense differences over the conduct of air operations in the DMZ so that appropriate instructions could be dispatched to CINCPAC and Ambassador Lodge.27

Representatives of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) discussed the matter with State Department officials, who indicated that tactical air strikes against infiltration routes in the DMZ might be compatible with current US policy provided the following conditions could be established: 1) concrete evidence of NVN use of the DMZ for infiltration in order to assure that US strikes could "reasonably and justifiably" be described as counteractions in response to NVN violations of the DMZ; 2) an adequate record of GVN protests to the ICC regarding NVN violations of the DMZ; 3) preparation of appropriate public affairs guidance in advance of the execution of contemplated military actions. Consequently, the Director, Far East Region (ISA) suggested to the Director, Joint Staff, that, when "firm military intelligence" was available, specific strike proposals be submitted to the Secretary of Defense for State Department and White House clearance.28

Such evidence was quickly forthcoming. In June, intelligence sources reported the movement of a NVA division across the DMZ into Quang Tri Province. This movement was followed by the deployment of NVN division-sized units "to the area of the DMZ." COMUSMACV informed CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff of this buildup on 13 July 1966 and requested authority for tactical air strikes against targets in the DMZ "in its entirety." To counter the increased enemy threat, COMUSMACV planned operations in the immediate vicinity of the DMZ. Since his troops might be subjected to enemy fire emanating from the DMZ, COMUSMACV intended, unless instructed to the contrary, to authorize return fire and maneuver into the DMZ for the purpose of self-defense. CINCPAC supported General

27. (S-GP 3) DJSM-506-66 to OASD(ISA), 21 Apr 66, Encl to JCS 2343/676-2, 22 Apr 66, JMF 9155.3 (23 Jul 65).
(S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 17 Mar 66, JCS IN 64994.
(S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 19 Mar 66, JCS IN 69320.
28. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dir, Far East Region, OASD(ISA) to D/JS, 1 Jun 66, Encl to JCS 2343/676-3, 7 Jun 66, JMF 9155.3 (23 Jul 65).

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Westmoreland's assessment of the situation and recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff the authorization of air operations and artillery fire against identified military activity in the DMZ. The US Embassy in Saigon had already advised Washington that GVN protests to the ICC of alleged DMZ violations by NVN numbered in the hundreds. Thus the State Department conditions for military operations in the DMZ, with the exception of the preparation of public affairs guidance, had now been fulfilled.

On 20 July 1966, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the approval of the Secretary of Defense and with State Department concurrence, authorized CINCPAC to conduct "air strikes in the DMZ, and artillery fire (land and naval) into that portion of the DMZ south of the line of demarcation," against clearly defined military activity. Ten days later the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized US/Free World forces to maneuver into the DMZ south of the Demarcation Line when in contact with VC/NVA forces, or when engagement was imminent, if necessary for preservation of friendly forces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff specified that US/Free World forces would not advance north of the Demarcation Line, and would withdraw from the DMZ once contact with the enemy was broken. The authorization for operations in the DMZ also allowed for RVNAF participation in the southern part of the DMZ on the same basis as US/Free World forces, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed CINCPAC that US military personnel should make every effort to assure that RVNAF operations in or near the DMZ observed the limitations applied to US/Free World forces.

In a further attempt to counter the increased enemy infiltration through the DMZ and the buildup just north of the DMZ COMUSMACV began Operation TALLY HO on 20 July—a program of air strikes and reconnaissance in an extended battle area north of the DMZ, intended to disrupt and block the flow of men and supplies from NVN to the South.


During the latter part of July and early August, B-52s supported group operations (HASTINGS/PRAIRIE) in RVN near the DMZ. On 28 July, COMUSMACV requested approval of three strikes against infiltration routes located between 12 and 14 miles north of the DMZ in NVN.31

On 21 August, before COMUSMACV received authority for these three strikes, General Westmoreland requested approval of nine additional strikes against targets located near the southern edge of NVN and within the DMZ to "disrupt the enemy's attempts to mass and maintain supply areas for a possible offensive against Quang Tri Province."32

On 2 September, more than a month after COMUSMACV's request for B-52 strikes against infiltration routes in southern NVN, the Department of State objected to the proposal to strike the first three targets because "at this time such action would be regarded in many circles and the press as escalation and possibly even a misinterpretation as a softening up for more direct military action on the ground." The State Department explained that such operations would probably work against current GVN efforts to persuade the ICC to investigate NVN's use of the DMZ. However, the State Department would reconsider the matter if intelligence established positive lucrative targets beyond the capability of tactical aircraft.33

The Secretary of Defense informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 7 September that "in consideration of the views of the Secretary of State . . . I desire that no B-52 strikes be conducted against targets in North Vietnam or the DMZ north of the Demarcation Line." He said, however, that he would be willing to consider, on an urgent basis, any "specific strike proposals which might be warranted by military developments of a highly critical nature." He offered to...

31. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to AIG 7041, 28 Jul 66, JCS IN 19452; (S-GP 3) Memo, J-3 to JCS, "Employment of ARC LIGHT Force (U)," 17 Aug 66; JMF 9155.3 (28 Jul 66). See Ch.

32. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 29148 to AIG 7041, 21 Aug 66, JCS IN 60384, JMF 9155.3 (21 Aug 66).

arrange for General Wheeler to discuss the problem with the President if the Chairman felt it was necessary.\textsuperscript{34}

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC and COMUSMACV of this decision on 8 September. General Wheeler asked the two commanders to send to the Joint Chiefs of Staff any urgent and critical requirements for ARC LIGHT missions in NVN and the northern part of the DMZ as soon as possible. He said he would take the matter before the President as had been proposed by the Secretary of Defense if circumstances warranted.\textsuperscript{35}

On 13 September, General Westmoreland re-emphasized the growing threat presented by the NVN troop buildup in Quang Tri Province. In a cable to CINCPAC, he stated that the "enemy's buildup, disposition of forces, forward stockage of supplies, AA weapon systems being deployed southward and depth of patrol penetrations indicate, by all accepted standards that the enemy is developing an offensive as opposed to a defensive posture."

Intelligence sources had verified that the NVN was trucking supplies up to the Demarcation Line and then moving the goods south by porter, bicycle, and animals over a well-worn trail network. The point at which the material was transferred was well camouflaged by jungle canopy. Westmoreland asked that ARC LIGHT strikes against this transfer point be approved to allow the clearing of the canopy so that tactical aircraft could then attack specific targets within the cleared zone. He believed that the target could be described as a "highly critical" one and that it satisfied the Secretary of Defense's requirements.\textsuperscript{36} Late that evening the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the ARC LIGHT attack against the transfer area. The

\textsuperscript{34} (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Use of ARC LIGHT Forces," 7 Sep 66, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 66.

\textsuperscript{35} (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2105 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 8 Sep 66, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 66. (TS) Msg, JCS 5333-66 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 8 Sep 66, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 66.

\textsuperscript{36} (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 41191 To CINCPAC, 13 Sep 66, JCS IN 99085, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 66.
strike, which straddled the Demarcation Line, was carried out on 16 September. 37

This strike took care of only one of the nine B-52 targets he had requested authority to strike on 21 August. On 17 September, he asked to bomb the remaining eight because of their "highly critical nature." Three of the remaining eight were approved for execution on that same day. 38

Additional strikes were conducted north of the DMZ and within its boundaries, throughout 1966. Of the 68 targets recommended by COMUSMACV in the last month of the year, 6 were in the DMZ and 4 in NVN. 39

The decision to launch ARC LIGHT forces against enemy targets in the area of the DMZ and the southern part of NVN brought with it the danger that NVN would deploy SAMs within range of the relatively unmaneuverable B-52s. Evidence that the SAMs were being positioned close to the DMZ was discovered late in September 1966, when B-52 crews reported that efforts were being made to track them and that they were receiving signals from the radars used by SA-2 missile systems. 40

On 10 October, a SAM installation was observed about 12-15 miles northeast of Dong Ho. The site was attacked by tactical aircraft two days later. 41

The possibility that the SA-2s were being moved toward the DMZ heightened on 18 October when two pilots reported

38. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 41856 to CINCPAC, 17 Sep 66, JCS IN 17771.
39. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2979 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 17 Sep 66.
observing what they believed to be a missile in flight approximately 16 miles north of the 17th Parallel. It was suspected that the installation could have been located six to eight miles north of the DMZ.\footnote{43. (S-NOFORN) DIA TB 191-66, 20 Oct 66, p. A-4. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 45395 to CINCPAC, 20 Oct 66, JCS IN 77260. 

The following day, ARC LIGHT forces were to conduct a mission, LIGHT SIGHT, in the vicinity of the suspected site. Although CINCPAC assured the Joint Chiefs of Staff that adequate measures were being taken to preclude the possibility of a B-52 shootdown, the Joint Chiefs of Staff disapproved execution of LIGHT SIGHT. Explaining their decision, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, "considering the world-wide publicity which would result from the loss of a B-52 to SAM action . . . this strike should not be undertaken prior to 2 November 1966." During December, other B-52 raids were authorized against targets within and north of the DMZ because intelligence sources concluded that either the SAM installation had been reported erroneously or it had been moved.\footnote{44. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5877 to CINCPAC, 19 Oct 66. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6143 to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, and COMUSMACV, 21 Oct 66, JMF 9155.3 (21 Oct 66). (TS-NOFORN except Canada-RD-GP 1) SAC History, 1966, p. 256.}

In early September, CINCPAC sought permission to conduct "SHINING BRASS type (ground) reconnaissance" in the area north of the DMZ to a depth of 20 km. This reconnaissance could identify and direct air strikes against enemy infiltration targets in the area above the DMZ. Washington, however, disapproved the request. In response to a further request by CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum on 20 October 1966 to approve the operation of US-advised reconnaissance teams in the southern half of the DMZ and of all-indigenous reconnaissance teams supported by US-manned helicopters in the northern half of the DMZ and into NVN to a depth of 20 km. The Joint
Chiefs of Staff recognized the political risks of such action, but considered them outweighed by the critical need for "hard intelligence" of the area. They informed the Secretary of Defense that ground reconnaissance teams could not only verify intelligence obtained by technical means, but could take immediate action to direct air strikes against appropriate targets. The Joint Chiefs of Staff added that "relatively few" US troops would actually be committed to these operations and those only in a supporting role "with no US personnel . . . committed into NVN in a ground role." Such reconnaissance missions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, would represent only an extension of the type of operations currently authorized for OPLAN 34A and USAF SAR helicopters.45

This request apparently became the subject of lengthy debate at the State-Defense level, and a decision was not reached until late January 1967. The State Department objected to the operation of reconnaissance teams north of the Demarcation Line and, as a result, on 28 January 1967 the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved only the conduct of "ground reconnaissance operations with US-advised teams in the DMZ south of the Demarcation Line."46

Despite the US air strikes in the DMZ, artillery fire into the southern portion of the DMZ, and air operations just north of the DMZ, the VC/NVA forces continued to operate in the area. By November, there were indications of numerous fortifications and antiaircraft positions within the DMZ, and in one day, 11 November 1966, antiaircraft fire from the DMZ destroyed four US aircraft. Intelligence confirmed that the enemy had the potential of constructing additional land artillery emplacements just north of the DMZ, which could fire on US and ARVN forces south of the DMZ. In a memorandum of 29 November the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out to the Secretary of Defense that the restriction of artillery fire (land and naval) to the southern portion of the DMZ had allowed enemy forces to improve field fortifications, particularly antiaircraft positions, and had made it "extremely hazardous" for forward air control aircraft to operate in areas north of the DMZ. The Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that the enemy was aware of these restrictions and was taking

46. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 28 Jan 67, Encl to JCS 2343/292-1, 31 Jan 67, same file.
advantage of them, together with the cover of bad weather, to develop additional positions north of the Demarcation Line. They requested authority to employ artillery and naval gunfire against clearly defined military activity in NVN territory north of the Demarcation Line, including the TALLY HO area south and east of the Dai Gang River.47

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) was prepared to support the JCS proposal, subject to the concurrence of the Department of State, but at the year's end, there had been no reply from State.48

In 1966, another possibility considered for inhibiting enemy use of the DMZ, especially infiltration routes through the zone, was defoliation. Defoliation had been practiced in RVN and Laos since 1961, and approximately 630,000 acres had been defoliated. Defoliation operations had evolved to a routine stage and the defoliants used were not harmful to human or animal life. Defoliation in the DMZ would remove the dense vegetation there, exposing enemy activity and permitting more effective countermeasures.49

In August 1966, COMUSMACV suggested to Ambassador Lodge defoliation in the southern half of the DMZ. Lodge recognized the military advantages of such an operation, but he feared that, inadvertently, the northern part of the DMZ might be sprayed, resulting in NVN charges of chemical warfare. As an alternative, General Westmoreland suggested the defoliation of a large area just south of the DMZ, and Ambassador Lodge found this acceptable.50

Both the State Department and Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) supported the alternate defoliation proposal, but CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored COMUSMACV's original suggestion. The Joint Chiefs of Staff

47. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-736-66 to SecDef, 29 Nov 66 (derived from JCS 2343/964), JMF 9155.3 (1 May 66).
48. (TS-GP 3) Memo, OASD(ISA) to DepAsstSecState for FE Affairs, 1 Dec 66, Encl to JCS 2343/964-1, 29 Dec 66; (TS-GP 3) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 4 Feb 67; JMF 9155.3 (1 May 66).
49. (S-GP 4) JCS 2343/910, 17 Sep 66, JMF 9155 (16 Aug 66).
50. (S) Msg, Saigon 3601 to State, 16 Aug 66, JCS IN 51790, same file.
informed the Secretary of Defense on 22 September that current defoliation guidelines were adequate to minimize adverse political effects, and they requested that he obtain State Department approval for defoliation operations in the southern half of the DMZ. The Chairman suggested to the Secretary of Defense that the proposal might be presented to the State Department as an action that would assist the ICC as well as COMUSMACV.51

The Secretary of Defense accepted the JCS proposal and requested the Secretary of State on 4 October to concur. The Secretary of Defense assured Secretary Rusk such defoliation had political as well as definite military advantages, were defensive in nature, and would assist the ICC.52

On 18 November, the Secretary of State gave his concurrence. While the Secretary of State could foresee some unfavorable political reaction to these operations, he believed the reaction could be managed so long as defoliation of any area of NVN was avoided. In implementation of this agreement, the Departments of State and Defense jointly authorized the conduct of defoliation operations within the southern portion of the DMZ, subject to positive control to prevent inadvertent spraying north of the Provisional Military Demarcation Line. The actual defoliation did not begin until 5 February 1967.53

Meanwhile, on 4 October, Ambassador Lodge and General Westmoreland had sought Washington consideration of a COMUSMACV proposal for defoliation of the northern portion of the DMZ and specified infiltration routes in NVN. Again the Joint Chiefs of Staff supported COMUSMACV. They informed the Secretary of Defense on 10 November that the proposed

51. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-603-66 to SecDef, 22 Sep 66 (derived from JCS 2343/910); (S-GP 4) CM-1772-66 to SecDef, 22 Sep 66; same file.
52. (S-GP 4) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 4 Oct 66, Encl to JCS 2343/910-1, 10 Oct 66, same file.
53. (S-GP 3) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 18 Nov 66, Att to Encl to JCS 2343/910-3, 8 Dec 66; (S-GP 3) Jt State-Def Msg, (State 91707) to Saigon and JCS, 28 Nov 66, JCS IN 54955; (S-GP 4) DJSM-196-67 to ASD(ISA), 13 Feb 67, Encl to 1st N/H of JCS 2343/910-3, 16 Feb 67; same file.
defoliation would aid visual and photographic detection of movement, thereby improving all other military operations aimed at restricting enemy use of the DMZ.\(^5\)

In light of Secretary Rusk's views on limiting defoliation to the area south of the Demarcation Line, the Secretary of Defense deferred action on any expansion of defoliation in the DMZ, pending evaluation of the military and political consequences of the currently authorized operations.\(^55\)

**The Anti-infiltration Barrier**

Another possible method of impeding the infiltration of men and material, in addition to authorized military operations, was the construction of a defensive barrier along the 17th Parallel in RVN and Laos. Washington officials had considered the idea of a barrier in the vicinity of the DMZ in 1965, but discarded it as militarily infeasible, and as a "visible, fixed, long-term" violation of the 1962 Geneva Accords.\(^56\)

The Secretary of Defense raised the question of a barrier again in the Spring of 1966. In late March, he requested the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to assess the requirement to establish "an iron-curtain counter-infiltration barrier across northern South Vietnam and Laos from the South China Sea to Thailand." The Secretary of Defense requested the Chairman to determine the effectiveness and engineering feasibility of such a barrier, the time required for construction, and the requirements for construction units and for men, materials, equipment, and weapons to man the barrier, without weighing dollar costs or the political aspects.\(^57\)

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\(^54\) (S) Jt Emb-MACV Msg, (Saigon 7583) to State, 4 Oct 68, JCS IN 46905. (S-GP 3) JCSM-711-66 to SecDef, 10 Nov 66 (derived from JCS 2343/910-2), JMF 9155 (16 Aug 66).  
\(^55\) (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 5 Dec 66, Encl to JCS 2343/910-3, 8 Dec 66, same file.  
\(^56\) (TS-GP 1) J-3 TP-58-65 for CJCS, 8 Nov 65, JMF 9155 (8 Nov 65).  
\(^57\) (TS-GP 4) CM-1286-66 to SecDef, 22 Mar 66, Encl to JCS 2339/222, 24 Mar 66, same file.
The Chairman forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 18 April 1966 a counterinfiltration barrier study prepared by the Joint Staff. The study described a 500-meter cleared and mined strip, bounded by two barbed wire entanglements. At the rear edge of this strip would be a chain-link electrified fence with watchtowers or bunkers and lighting for night observation. The barrier would employ a variety of detection devices and booby traps, and would be emplaced along the north side of Route 9 for a total length of 225 miles; the study also called for another barrier (about 120 miles) on the south side of Route 9 in order to protect the troops guarding the main barrier from rear attack. The Joint Staff estimated that, overall, the establishment of such a barrier would require: from two to four years for completion, including assembly and deployment of forces; approximately 206,000 tons of construction materials; 271 engineer battalion months for construction; and a minimum of three US divisions for manning purposes.

The Joint Staff doubted that a barrier would be effective or worth the cost in terms of men and materials. The study pointed out that a barrier could only stop large-scale infiltration, not small groups. The Joint Staff also believed that, with the erection of a barrier, the enemy would increase his infiltration by sea and through Cambodia. COMUSMACV, COMUSMACTHAI, CINCPAC, and CINCPAC's component commanders all opposed the fixed barrier concept, and the Joint Staff study concluded that the large forces required to construct and maintain a barrier would cause a dangerous diversion of forces from current missions. According to the study additional forces, if made available, could be employed to better advantage under concepts previously recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Staff recommended that a barrier system not be undertaken, and in submitting the study to the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman supported this recommendation.

In the summer of 1966, the JASON Division of the Institute for Defense Analyses studied several subjects related to the war in Vietnam, including the feasibility of an anti-infiltration barrier. The JASON Summer Study, forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 30 August 1966,

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58. (TS-GP 4) CM-1353-66 to SecDef, 18 Apr 66, Encl to 1st N/H of JCS 2339/222, 20 Apr 66, same file.
59. Ibid.
contained a concept for an air-supported anti-infiltration barrier. The concept provided for a barrier with two "somewhat different parts"—one against foot traffic and one against vehicles. The preferred location for the antipersonnel portion was the region along the southern edge of the DMZ to the Laotian border and then north of Tchepone to the vicinity of Muong Sen. This area was virtually unpopulated and its terrain was rugged. The location for the antivehicular part of the system was an area in Laos, "about 100 by 40 kilometers." The road network there tended to be more constricted than elsewhere and there was a smaller area available for new roads. The study considered this concept not very different from previous barrier proposals. New aspects reflected in the JASON Study included: "the very large scale of area denial," especially mine fields kilometers deep rather than the conventional 100-200 meters; the large numbers and persistent employment of weapons, sensors, and aircraft sorties in the barrier area; and the emphasis on rapid and carefully planned incorporation of more effective weapons and sensors into the system.\(^{60}\)

The antipersonnel system of the barrier concept would encompass a constantly renewed minefield of nonsterilizing gravel (and possibly button bomblets) distributed in patterns covering interconnected valleys and slopes along the entire barrier (the actual mined area would be equivalent of a strip 100 by 5 km). There would also be a pattern of acoustic detectors to listen for attempted penetrations as indicated by mine explosions. The antivehicular system would consist of acoustic detectors distributed every mile or so along trackable roads in the interdicted area, monitored 24 hours a day by patrol aircraft. Vectored strike aircraft using SADEYE (bomb clusters) would respond to signals of truck or truck convoy movement. Patrol aircraft would distribute self-sterilizing gravel over parts of the road net at dusk (the self-sterilizing feature was needed so that road-watching and mine-planting teams could be used in this area) and reconnaissance aircraft would cover the entire area each few days.\(^{61}\)

The authors of the JASON Summer Study believed that construction of such a barrier could be initiated using currently available or "nearly available" components, with some

\(^{60}\) (TS-GP 1) Memo, IDA to SecDef, "JASON Summer Study," 30 Aug 66, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 66.

\(^{61}\) Ibid.
necessary modifications, and could be installed within "a
year or so" from go-ahead at an estimated cost of $800
million per year. Although recognizing that countermeasures
to the barrier system would be found, they stated that it
would take some time to bring these countermeasures into
operations. The study recommended the establishment of a
task force to carry out detailed design and planning of a
barrier, to experiment with and decide on modifications of
present components, and to design and accelerate development
of modified and new components to be fed into the barrier.
The study also proposed that, after a few months, and if the
prospects still appeared promising, the task force could be
merged into a task force charged with helping the operating
forces implement the system.62

The Secretary of Defense was favorably impressed with
the barrier concept of the JASON Summer Study, and on 3
September he forwarded the concept, though not the entire
study, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "He believed that the
proposal had "sufficient merit to warrant a decision that we
will accept the plan or some modification thereof in prinCi­
ple and install it at the earliest practicable date." He
requested the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and asked
that they be prepared in consultation with CINCPAC and
COMUSMACV. If the Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred in his
proposal, said the Secretary, he would form an organization
to expedite plans and supervise the several concerned DOD
components.63

The Secretary of Defense did not await the reply of the
Joint Chiefs of Staff to begin action on the barrier. On
15 September, he established Joint Task Force (JTF) 728
(unclassified designation: Defense Communications Planning
Group) "to achieve the objective of having" an infiltration
interdiction system "to stop (or at the minimum substantially
reduce) the flow of men and supplies from North to South
Vietnam." The Secretary of Defense directed that the system
be designed, produced and put into place in RVN and Laos by
15 September 1967. The Secretary named Lieutenant General
Alfred D. Starbird as Director of JTF 728, authorizing General
Starbird to report directly to him and to have direct contact

62. Ibid.
63. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 3 Sep 66, Encl to
JCS 2343/898, 6 Sep 66, JMF 9155/3330 (3 Sep 66) sec 1.
with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military services. The Secretary of Defense assigned the project the unclassified name PRACTICE NINE. 84

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were obviously not enthusiastic about the barrier concept. In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 17 September, they stated that they would concur with the concept so long as the barrier was in addition to, and not a substitute for, "any major US or Free World military effort" in Vietnam. They stated that logistical support for the barrier should be large enough to preclude the diversion of critical munitions and strike forces from other combat operations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized the "historic use of barriers and the potential inherent in this concept," but they shared with CINCPAC a concern over its "practicality." Although they considered the 15 September 1967 operational date given General Starbird optimistic, they admitted that the concept might have "the potential of shortening the war and that proceeding in the manner directed will provide a quick determination of validity and accelerated development of the associated hardware." 85

JTF 728 proceeded with its task at once. On 29 September, General Starbird provided the Secretary of Defense with a preliminary report, including a draft program with initial estimates of personnel, equipment, and facilities for achieving and maintaining barrier capability. Several weeks later, after a further refinement of requirements, General Starbird requested and the Secretary of Defense approved immediate funding authorization for certain research and development and production activities. 86

64. (S) Memo, SecDef to LGEN Starbird, Dir, JTF 728, 15 Sep 66, Encl to JCS 2343/907, 15 Sep 66, same file, same sec.
65. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-594-66 to SecDef, 17 Sep 66 (derived from JCS 2343/898-2), same file, same sec.
66. (TS-GP 3) JTF 728, "Report to the Secretary of Defense on Schedules and Requirements for the Project of JTF 728 (C)," 29 Sep 66, same file, sec 2. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dir, JTF 728, to SecDef, 16 Oct 66, Encl to JCS 2343/907-6, 17 Oct 66; (TS) Memo, ASD(A) to DDR&E et al., 19 Oct 66, Encl to JCS 2343/907-9, 25 Oct 66; same file, sec 3.
These actions gave the Joint Chiefs of Staff concern. In a memorandum of 10 October 1966, they informed the Secretary of Defense that the JTF 728 draft program would hamper current combat programs by committing critical resources "without prerequisite determination of practicality." They recommended to the Secretary a modification in the JTF 728 terms of reference to require determination of feasibility prior to commitment of resources, to allow adjustment in the initial operational date, and to provide that the JTF project definition plan be submitted to the Secretary of Defense through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Secretary of Defense agreed with the Joint Chiefs of Staff concerning the feasibility of the barrier project before commitment of resources "to the extent it applies to feasibility of components of the interdiction system (munitions, sensors, aircraft modifications, etc.)." Also Mr. McNamara instructed General Starbird to make his reports, including the project definition, available to the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the same time they were submitted to him. 67

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff were concerned that Secretary McNamara's approval of the JTF 728 request would divert essential weapons and materials from current programs, they decided to reserve their views for the overall consideration that would be given JTF 728's project definition plan in November. 68

Meanwhile, during a visit by the Secretary of Defense to RVN in October, COMUSMACV suggested an alternate barrier plan. The COMUSMACV proposal included: "a physical barrier, in the traditional sense, on the eastern end of the line where the country is relatively flat and open . . . ; secondly, an extension to the northwest from the Laos-South Vietnam border, which would be laid by air and policed by air"; and a "center section through the mountains to the east of the Laos-South Vietnam border" consisting of a series of physical obstructions in the mountain passes. At the Secretary's request, General Westmoreland refined his proposal into a requirements plan

that he submitted on 25 October. General Westmoreland's plan assumed that additional forces, over and above COMUSMACV's operational force requirements, would be provided for the barrier construction and manning. But, because of the strength ceilings imposed by Program #4, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on 18 November 1966 that additional forces could not be made available to meet the requirements of the barrier plan. The Joint Chiefs of Staff added that COMUSMACV should plan to meet all PRACTICE NINE requirements from within approved in-country strengths. Subsequently, both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC expressed disagreement with this decision.69

On 14 November 1966, General Starbird submitted his Project Definition Report to the Secretary of Defense. In his report, he analyzed four approaches to a barrier system: the Prescribed Plan, a modified version of the JASON Summer Study concept providing for the installation of a groundemplaced linear barrier south of the DMZ "on the 30 km adjacent to the coast" and an air-emplaced antipersonnel barrier from the linear barrier westward into Laos and an antivehicular barrier in the Laos area; COMUSMACV's barrier plan; and two alternate proposals that were phased composites of the Prescribed and MACV Plans. The first alternate, titled the Phased Installation Plan (PIP), called for the installation of a ground-emplaced linear barrier from the RVN coast to the Laos border similar in nature and timing to the MACV proposal. In Laos, the PIP provided for the installation of the "originally conceived" air-supported antivehicular portion by 1 November 1967 and the antipersonnel portion by 1 April 1968. The second alternate, the Phased Installation Plan (Modified) was the same as the PIP, except that both the antivehicular and antipersonnel portions would be installed by 1 November 1967.70

70. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dir, JTF 728, to SecDef, 14 Nov 66, Encl to JCS 2343/907-14, 15 Nov 66, JMF 9155/3330 (3 Sep 66) secs 4 and 4A.
After reviewing and comparing the requirements of the four proposals in terms of personnel, major equipment, facilities, construction, and unprogrammed funding, General Starbird recommended that barrier preparations proceed on the basis of the Phased Installation Plan. The Secretary of Defense, however, requested JCS views on any increases in programmed forces required to execute the Phase Installation Plan (Modified) and any other comments or recommendations they wished to make.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff took advantage of the opportunity afforded them to express again their dissatisfaction with the whole barrier concept. In a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, dated 1 December 1966, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the plan not be approved for execution and, instead, that current efforts to reduce infiltration be continued and expanded. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the forces required to form the barrier could not be realized either from Program #4 forces without jeopardizing existing programs or from out-of-country sources because of equipment and sustaining base limitations. They considered the technical and operational feasibility of the plan open to question and the estimated piaster cost of the plan dangerous to the already critical inflation in RVN. They believed that the division of effort and increased costs of the barrier would not produce benefits commensurate with the resultant loss of military initiative and momentum in current programs.

After considering the JTF 728 Project Definition Plan and the subsequent JCS comments, the Secretary of Defense directed General Starbird to prepare a revised barrier plan that would minimize the impact on other Southeast Asia missions and that would require only minimum additional forces from the CONUS. General Starbird submitted the revised plan, entitled "Plan for Increased Anti-Infiltration Capability for SEA (S)," on 22 December. It provided for materials for the linear portion of the barrier to be procured and in-country by 1 July 1967, but without a commitment for deployment. Aircraft and other resources unique to the air-supported portion of the barrier were to be developed and prepared on a schedule to permit

71. Ibid. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 15 Nov 66, Encl to JCS 2343/907-16, 17 Nov 66, same file, sec 4.
72. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-740-66 to SecDef, 1 Dec 66 (derived from JCS 2343/907-24), same file, sec 5.
The Joint Chiefs of Staff were still dissatisfied with the barrier plan. At a meeting on 6 January 1967, they re-affirmed their opposition to an anti-infiltration barrier until plans could be properly evaluated. They stated that, if the Secretary of Defense had decided to construct a barrier, then they would proceed as directed, but since he had not made such a decision, they wished their concern to be understood. Rather than be "aggravating" by lengthy repetitions of their position, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a memorandum of 9 January 1967, merely called the Secretary's attention to their views on the barrier as stated on 1 December. They also requested certain minor revisions in the 22 December Anti-Infiltration Capability Plan. Apparently the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not expect Secretary McNamara to reverse his support for the barrier for they had already instructed COMUSMACV and CINCPAC to prepare the anti-infiltration interdiction plans responsive to the 22 December plan.73

The JCS expectation proved correct. For on the same day that they forwarded their latest comments, the Secretary of...
Defense directed General Starbird to prepare an anti-infiltration capability in accordance with the 22 December plan. He did, however, request General Starbird to make the minor changes that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had requested.75

As if to underscore the importance that the Secretary of Defense attached to the barrier project, the Deputy Secretary of Defense requested and the President approved on 13 January 1967 the designation of project PRACTICE NINE "as being in the highest national priority category." After nearly a year of planning and debate, the United States was fully committed to the construction of an anti-infiltration barrier in South Vietnam.76

75. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to Dir, DCPG, 9 Jan 67, Encl to JCS 2343/907-35, 11 Jan 67, same file, same sec.
76. (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to Pres, 7 Jan 67, Encl to JCS 1725/644, 10 Jan 67; (S-GP 4) NSAM No. 358, 13 Jan 67, Encl to JCS 1725/644-3, 29 Mar 67; JMF 418 (7 Jan 67).