# U.S. Strategy & Assessment in Vietnam War 1965-67

## PART SIX: Summer and Fall 1967

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that has ensnared us for the past three years. It actually gives the troops while only praying for their proper use and for constructive diplomatic action. Limiting the present decision to an 80,000 add-on does the very important business of postponing the issue of a Reserve call-up (and all of its horrible baggage), but postpone it is all that it does -- probably to a worse time, 1968. Providing the 80,000 troops is tantamount to acceding to the whole Westmoreland-Sharp request. This being the case, they will "accept" the 80,000. But six months from now, in will come messages like the "470,000-570,000" messages, saying that the requirement remains at 201,000 (or more). Since no pressure will have been put on anyone, the military war will have gone on as before and no diplomatic progress will have been made. It follows that the "philosophy" of the war should be fought out now so everyone will not be proceeding on their own major premises, and getting us in deeper and deeper; at the very least, the President should give General Westmoreland his limit (as President Truman did to General MacArthur). That is, if General Westmoreland is to get 550,000 men, he should be told "that will be all, and we mean it."

McNaughton was also very deeply concerned about the breadth and the intensity of public unrest and dissatisfaction with the war. To him the draft paper underplayed a bit the unpopularity of the conflict especially with young people, the underprivileged, the intelligentsia, and the women. He examined those lining up on both sides of an increasingly polarized public and he did not especially like what he saw:

A feeling is widely and strongly held that "the Establishment" is out of its mind. The feeling is that we are trying to impose some US image on distant peoples we cannot understand (anymore than we can the younger generation here at home), and that we are carrying the thing to absurd lengths. Related to this feeling is the increased polarization that is taking place in the United States with seeds of the worst split in our people in more than a century. The King, Galbraith, etc., positions illustrate one near-pole; the Hebert and Rivers statements on May 5 about the need to disregard the First Amendment illustrates the other. In this connection, I fear that "natural selection" in this environment will lead the Administration itself to become more and more homogenized -- Mac Bundy, George Ball, Bill Moyers are gone. Who next?
Finally, he quarrelled with the way in which the paper had dealt with the definition of "success." He felt that this definition was the major problem, that the draft had not properly grappled with the redefinition, since "winning" was what the strategy pursued by COMUS-MACV tried to do. He suggested that as a matter of tactics maybe the President should figure it out himself, a point which tied in closely with an earlier one of his about getting the "philosophy of the war" straightened out and thereby avoiding another diplomatic default and military misuse of forces.

McNaughton's review of the situation in South and North Vietnam stressed that the big war in the south between the United States and the North Vietnamese units seemed to be going well but that regretfully the "other war" against the VC was not going so well. In his words:

"The "big war" in the South between the US and the North Vietnamese military units (NVA) is going well. We staved off military defeat in 1965; we gained the military initiative in 1966; and since then we have been hurting the enemy badly, spoiling some of his ability to strike. "In the final analysis," General Westmoreland said, "we are fighting a war of attrition." In that connection, the enemy has been losing between 1500 and 2000 killed-in-action a week, while we and the South Vietnamese have been losing 175 and 250 respectively. The VC/NVA 287,000-man order of battle is leveling off, and General Westmoreland believes that, as of March, we "reached the cross-over point" -- we began attriting more men than Hanoi can recruit or infiltrate each month. The concentration of NVA forces across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the enemy use of long-range artillery are matters of concern. There are now four NVA divisions in the DMZ area. The men infiltrate directly across the western part of the plans to nibble at our forces, seeking to inflict heavy casualties, perhaps to stage a "spectacular" (perhaps against Quang Tri City or Hue), and/or to try a major thrust into the Western Highlands. They are forcing us to transfer some forces from elsewhere in Vietnam to the I Corps area.

Throughout South Vietnam, supplies continue to flow in ample quantities, with Cambodia becoming more and more important as a supply base -- now of food and medicines, perhaps ammunition later. The enemy retains the ability to initiate both large- and small-scale attacks. Small-scale attacks in the first quarter of 1967 are running at double the 1966 average; larger-scale attacks are again on the increase after falling off substantially in 1966. Acts of terrorism and harassment have continued at about the same rate."
The over-all troop strengths of friendly and VC/NVA forces by Corps Area are shown in Attachments I and II.

All things considered, there is consensus that we are no longer in danger of losing this war militarily.

Regrettably, the "other war" against the VC is still not going well. Corruption is widespread. Real government control is confined to enclaves. There is rot in the fabric. Our efforts to enliven the moribund political infrastructure have been matched by VC efforts -- more now through coercion than was formerly the case. So the VC are hurting badly too. In the Delta, because of the redeployment of some VC/NVA troops to the area north of Saigon, the VC have lost their momentum and appear to be conducting essentially a holding operation. On the government side there, the tempo of operations has been correspondingly low. The population remains apathetic, and many local government officials seem to have working arrangements with the VC which they are reluctant to disturb.

The National Liberation Front (NLF) continues to control large parts of South Vietnam, and there is little evidence that the revolutionary development program is gaining any momentum. The Army of South Vietnam (ARVN) is tired, passive and accommodation-prone, and is moving too slowly if at all into pacification work.

The enemy no doubt continues to believe that we will not be able to translate our military success in the "big war" into the desired "end products" -- namely, broken enemy morale and political achievements by the Government of Vietnam (GVN). At the same time, the VC must be concerned about decline in morale among their ranks. Defections, which averaged 400 per week last year, have, until a slump near the end of April, been running at more than 1000 a week; very few defectors, however, are important people.

The transition to a government in Saigon responsive to the South Vietnamese people is moving as well as can be expected. A Constituent Assembly was elected last fall. A constitution has been adopted. Local elections, involving more than 50 per cent of the rural population and a 77-80 per cent turnout, have taken place despite the shadow cast by VC assassinations and kidnappings. The Buddhists have launched a new "peace" campaign with an immolation, but
their political power is less than it was before their defeat in 1966. National elections are scheduled for September 1. No one, unfortunately, has shown any charismatic appeal. Ky and Thieu have promised not to split over the presidency, but there is obviously a serious struggle going on between them (Ky has announced his candidacy, and Thieu, has hinted that he may throw his weight behind a civilian). So there is hope that there will be an orderly transition to stable constitutional rule.

Little has been done to remedy the economic and social ills of the corruption from which VC popular support stems. Partly because of this inaction -- where reform action would destroy the working consensus -- the political situation at the top remains relatively stable.

The port is operating much better. Inflation appears to be under control. But the flow of rice into Saigon from the Delta, as good an indicator as any of the state of affairs, continues to decrease: The flow is 75 per cent of the 1966, and half of the 1965, rates; national exports of rice ceased in 1964, and imports continue to climb.

C. North Vietnam

Hanoi's attitude towards negotiations has never been soft nor open-minded. Any concession on their part would involve an enormous loss of face. Whether or not the Polish and Burchett-Kosygin initiatives had much substance to them, it is clear that Hanoi's attitude currently is hard and rigid. They seem uninterested in a political settlement and determined to match US military expansion of the conflict. This change probably reflects these factors: (1) increased assurances of help from the Soviets received during Pham Van Dong's April trip to Moscow; (2) arrangements providing for the unhindered passage of material from the Soviet Union through China; and (3) a decision to wait for the results of the US elections in 1968. Hanoi appears to have concluded that she cannot secure her objectives at the conference table and has reaffirmed her strategy of seeking to erode our ability to remain in the South. The Hanoi leadership has apparently decided that it has no choice but to submit to the increased bombing. There continues to be no sign that the bombing has reduced Hanoi's will to resist or her ability to ship the necessary supplies south. Hanoi shows no signs of ending the large war and advising the VC to melt into the
jungles. The North Vietnamese believe they are right; they consider the Ky regime to be puppets; they believe the world is with them and that the American public will not have staying power against them. Thus, although they may have factions in the regime favoring different approaches, they believe that, in the long run, they are stronger than we are for the purpose. They probably do not want to make significant concessions, and could not do so without serious loss of face. 5/

He then analyzed two alternative military courses of action which he labeled "A" and "B". In Course A the full troop requirement request from CONUSMACV was to be honored, and subsequent military actions intensified not only in the south, but especially in the north. This program consisted of an addition of the minimum of 200,000 men; 100,000 in the 2-1/3 division "minimum essential" force in FY 68 and another 100,000 in FY 69, with possibly more later to fulfill the JCS ultimate requirement for Vietnam and associated worldwide contingencies. Course B proposed limiting the force increases to no more than 30,000 thereby stabilizing the ground conflict within the borders of South Vietnam and concurrently concentrating the bombing on the infiltration routes south of the 20th parallel. He analyzed the two courses of action in the following terms.

COURSE A would be chosen with a view to bringing additional military pressure to bear on the enemy in the South while continuing to carry out our present missions not directly related to combating enemy main-force units. It would involve accepting the risk -- the virtual certainty -- that the action especially the Reserve call-up, would stimulate irresistible pressures in the United States for further escalation against North Vietnam, and for ground actions against "sanctuaries" in Cambodia and Laos.

Rationale

Proponents of the added deployments in the South believe that such deployments will hasten the end of the war. None of them believes that the added forces are needed to avoid defeat; few of them believe that the added forces are required to do the military job in due course; all of the proponents believe that they are needed if that job is to be done faster. The argument is that we avoided military defeat in 1965; that we gained the military initiative in 1966, since then hurting the enemy badly, spoiling much of his ability to strike, and thus diminishing the power he could project over the population; and that even more-vigorous military initiative against his main forces and base areas will hurt him more, spoil his
efforts more, and diminish his projected power more than would be the case under presently approved force-deployment levels. This, the argument goes, will more readily create an environment in South Vietnam in which our pacification efforts can take root and thrive; at the same time -- because of our progress in the South and because of the large enemy losses -- it will more rapidly produce a state of mind in Hanoi conducive to ending the war on reasonable terms.

Estimates by the proponents vary as to how long the job will take without, and with, the additional forces. General Westmoreland has said that without the additions the war could go on five years. He has said that with 100,000 more men, the war could go on for three years and that with 200,000 more men it could go on for two. These estimates are after taking account of his view that the introduction of a non-professional force, such as that which would result from fulfilling the requirement by calling Reserves, would cause some degradation of morale, leadership and effectiveness.

**Questions to be Answered**

Addressing the force additions alone: We should expect no serious objections based on internal South Vietnamese reasons (the 44-billion piastre inflationary impact can probably be handled, and anti-Americanism is not likely to increase significantly); nor are dangerous reactions likely to come from the USSR, East Europe, or from the non-Communist nations of the world. The questions that must be answered are:

--(1) Will the move to call up 200,000 Reserves, to extend enlistments, and to enlarge the uniformed strength by 300,000 (300,000 beyond the Reserves), combined with the increased US larger initiative, polarize opinion to the extent that the "doves" in the US will get out of hand -- massive refusals to serve, or to fight, or to cooperate, or worse?

--(2) Can we achieve the same military effect by making more efficient use of presently approved US manpower (e.g., by removing them from the Delta, by stopping their being used for pacification work in I Corps, by transferring some combat and logistics jobs to Vietnamese or additional third-country personnel)?
Assuming no specific enemy counter-deployments, are the added US forces likely to make a meaningful military difference? (On the one hand, if we are now "past the cross-over point," cannot the military job be done without the added forces? On the other, if the enemy can conduct his terror "from the bushes," can the military job be done even with them?)

Will the effect of any US additions be neutralized, or stalemated, by specific enemy counter-deployments involving more forces from North Vietnam (and perhaps introduction of more Chinese in North Vietnam and Chinese and other "volunteers" into South Vietnam)?

Will the factors mentioned in (1) above generate such impatience in the United States that "hawk" pressures will be irresistible to expand the land war into Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam and to take stronger air and naval actions against North Vietnam, with consequent risks of a much larger war involving China and Russia and of even more dove-hawk polarization at home and abroad?

The answer to Question 1 (regarding "dove" reaction), we believe, is a qualified no. Barring escalation of the "external" war discussed under Question 5, we believe that increased forces will not lead to massive civil disobedience. However, a request for Congressional authority to call Reserves would lead to divisive debate.

Question 2 (relating to more efficient use of US forces) is an important one, but its answer, even if most favorable, is not likely to free-up enough personnel to satisfy a 200,000-man request. It is true that one of the additional divisions could be eliminated if the US Army eschewed the Delta, and certain of the other ground-force requirements could be eliminated if the US Marines ceased grass-roots pacification activities. Additional fractions might be trimmed if the ARVN (whose uninspired performance is exasperating) were jacked up, if the Koreans provided more combat or usable logistics personnel, or if other third-country forces were forthcoming. Efforts along this line should be made, but the items that prove out will not go nearly as far as the 200,000 request.

Questions 3 and 4 (relating to the value of additional US forces and possible enemy action to offset them) are very difficult ones and can be treated together. In December 1965,
when the US had 175,000 men in Vietnam, I reported that "the odds are even that, even with the recommended deployments, we will be faced in early 1967 with a military standoff at a much higher level..." In October 1966, when our deployments had reached 325,000, I pointed out that that was substantially the case and that "I see no reasonable way to bring the war to an end soon." That remains true today. With respect to Question 3, this is because the enemy has us "stalemated" and has the capability to tailor his actions to his supplies and manpower and, by hit-and-run terror, to make government and pacification very difficult in large parts of the country almost without regard to the size of US forces there; and, with respect to Question 4, because the enemy can and almost certainly will maintain the military "stalemate" by matching our added deployments as necessary. (General Westmoreland has made the point that "this war is action and counteraction; any time we take an action, we can expect a reaction." He added, "It is likely the enemy will react by adding troops.") In any event, there is no suggestion that the added deployments will end the war in less than two years and no assurance that they will end it in three, or five, years.

Question 5 (regarding irresistible pressures to expand the war) is the toughest one.

The addition of the 200,000 men, involving as it does a call-up of Reserves and an addition of 500,000 to the military strength, would, as mentioned above, almost certainly set off bitter Congressional debate and irresistible domestic pressures for stronger action outside South Vietnam. Cries would go up -- much louder than they already have -- to "take the wraps off the men in the field." The actions would include more intense bombing -- not only around-the-clock bombing of targets already authorized, but also bombing of strategic targets such as locks and dikes, and mining of the harbors against Soviet and other ships. Associated actions impelled by the situation would be major ground actions in Laos, Cambodia, and probably in North Vietnam -- first as a pincer operation north of the DMZ and then at a point such as Vinh. The use of tactical nuclear and area-denial radiological-bacteriological-chemical weapons would probably be suggested at some point if the Chinese entered the war in Vietnam or Korea or if US losses were running high while conventional efforts were not producing desired results.
Our bombing of North Vietnam was designed to serve three purposes:

--(1) To retaliate and to lift the morale of the people in the South who were being attacked by agents of the North.

--(2) To add to the pressure on Hanoi to end the war.

--(3) To reduce the flow and/or to increase the cost of infiltrating men and materiel from North to South.

We cannot ignore that a limitation on bombing will cause serious psychological problems among the men, officers and commanders, who will not be able to understand why we should withhold punishment from the enemy. General Westmoreland said that he is "frankly dismayed at even the thought of stopping the bombing program." But this reason for attacking North Vietnam must be scrutinized carefully. We should not bomb for punitive reasons if it serves no other purpose -- especially if analysis shows that the actions may be counterproductive. It costs American lives; it creates a backfire of revulsion and opposition by killing civilians; it creates serious risks; it may harden the enemy.

With respect to added pressure on the North, it is becoming apparent that Hanoi may already have "written off" all assets and lives that might be destroyed by US military actions short of occupation or annihilation. They can and will hold out at least so long as a prospect of winning the "war of attrition" in the South exists. And our best judgment is that a Hanoi prerequisite to negotiations is significant retreatment (if not complete stoppage) of US military actions against them -- at the least, a cessation of bombing. In this connection, Consul-General Rice (Hong Kong 7581, 5/1/67) said that, in his opinion, we cannot by bombing reach the critical level of pain in North Vietnam and that, "below that level, pain only increases the will to fight." Sir Robert Thompson said to Mr. Vance on April 28 that our bombing, particularly in the Red River Delta, "is unifying North Vietnam."
With respect to interdiction of men and materiel, it now appears that no combination of actions against the North short of destruction of the regime or occupation of North Vietnamese territory will physically reduce the flow of men and materiel below the relatively small amount needed by enemy forces to continue the war in the South. Our effort can and does have severe disruptive effects, which Hanoi can and does compensate for by the reallocation of manpower and other resources; and our effort can and does have sporadic retarding effects, which Hanoi can and does plan on and pre-stock against. Our efforts physically to cut the flow meaningfully by actions in North Vietnam therefore largely fail and, in failing, transmute attempted interdiction into pain, or pressure on the North (the factor discussed in the paragraph next above). The lowest "ceiling on infiltration can probably be achieved by concentration on the North Vietnamese "funnel" south of 20° and on the Trail in Laos.

But what if the above analyses are wrong? Why not escalate the bombing and mine the harbors (and perhaps occupy southern North Vietnam) -- on the gamble that it would constrict the flow, meaningfully limiting enemy action in the South, and that it would bend Hanoi? The answer is that the costs and risks of the actions must be considered.

The primary costs of course are US lives: The air campaign against heavily defended areas costs us one pilot in every 40 sorties. In addition, an important but hard-to-measure cost is domestic and world opinion: There may be a limit beyond which many Americans and much of the world will not permit the United States to go. The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1000 non-combatants a week, while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not a pretty one. It could conceivably produce a costly distortion in the American rational consciousness and in the world image of the United States -- especially if the damage to North Vietnam is complete enough to be "successful."

The most important risk, however, is the likely Soviet, Chinese and North Vietnamese reaction to intensified US air attacks, harbor-mining, and ground actions against North Vietnam.
Likely Communist Reactions

At the present time, no actions -- except air strikes and artillery fire necessary to quiet hostile batteries across the border -- are allowed against Cambodian territory. In Laos, we average 5000 attack sorties a month against the infiltration routes and base areas, we fire artillery from South Vietnam against targets in Laos, and we will be providing 3-man leaders for each of 20 12-man US-Vietnamese Special Forces teams that operate to a depth of 20 kilometers into Laos. Against North Vietnam, we average 8,000 or more attack sorties a month against all worthwhile fixed and LOC targets; we use artillery against ground targets across the DMZ; we fire from naval vessels at targets ashore and afloat up to 15°, and we mine their inland waterways, estuaries and coastal waters up to 20°.

Intensified air attacks against the same types of targets, we would anticipate, would lead to no great change in the policies and reactions of the Communist powers beyond the furnishing of some new equipment and manpower. China, for example, has not reacted to our striking NVA fields in North Vietnam, and we do not expect them to, although there are some signs of greater Chinese participation in North Vietnamese air defense.

Mining the harbors would be much more serious. It would place Moscow in a particularly galling dilemma as to how to preserve the Soviet position and prestige in such a
disadvantageous place.

Hanoi would tighten belts, refuse to talk, and persevere — as it could without too much difficulty. North Vietnam would of course be fully dependent for supplies on China's will, and Soviet influence in Hanoi would therefore be reduced. (Ambassador Sullivan feels very strongly that it would be a serious mistake, by our actions against the port, to tip Hanoi away from Moscow and toward Peking.)

Ground actions in Laos are similarly unwise. LeDuan, Hanoi's third- or fourth-ranking leader, has stated the truth when he said "the occupation of the Western Highlands is a tough job but the attack on central and lower Laos is a still tougher one. If a small force is used, the problem remains insoluble. The US may face a series of difficulties
in the military, political and logistic fields if a larger force goes into operation. In effect, an attack on central and lower Laos would mean the opening of another front nearer to North Vietnam, and then the US troops would have to clash with the North Vietnamese main force." In essence, a brigade will bog a division and a division a corps, each calling down matching forces from North Vietnam into territory to their liking and suggesting to Hanoi that they take action in Northern Laos to suck us further in. We would simply have a wider war, with Souvanna back in Paris, world opinion against us, and no solution either to the wider war or to the one we already have in Vietnam.

Those are the likely costs and risks of COURSE A. They are, we believe, both unacceptable and unnecessary. Ground action in North Vietnam, because of its escalatory potential, is clearly unwise despite the open invitation and temptation posed by enemy troops operating freely back and forth across the DMZ. Yet we believe that, short of threatening and perhaps toppling the Hanoi regime itself, pressure against the North will, if anything, harden Hanoi's unwillingness to talk and her settlement terms if she does. China, we believe, will oppose settlement throughout. We believe that there is a chance that the Soviets, at the brink, will exert efforts to bring about peace; but we believe also that intensified bombing and harbor-mining, even if coupled with political pressure from Moscow, will neither bring Hanoi to negotiate nor affect North Vietnam's terms.

B. Analysis of Course B

As of March 18, 1967, the approved US Force Structure (Program 4) for Southeast Asia provided for 87 maneuver battalions, 42 air squadrons, and a total strength of 468,000 men. Based on current forecasts of enemy strength, under COURSE B it should not be necessary to approve now for deployment more than 9 of the 24 available maneuver battalions and none of the air squadrons -- a total of approximately 30,000 men including appropriate land and sea support forces (see Attachment III).

This approach would be based, first, on General Westmoreland's statement that "without [his requested]
forces, we will not be in danger of being defeated,...
but progress will be slowed down," and General
Wheeler's support of that view. General Wheeler
added, "We won't lose the war, but it will be a longer
one." It would be based, second, on the fact that no
one argues that the added forces will probably cause
the war to end in less than two years. COURSE B
implies a conviction that neither military defeat nor
military victory is in the cards, with or without the
large added deployments, and that the price of the
large added deployments and the strategy of COURSE A
will be to expand the war dangerously. COURSE B is
designed to improve the negotiating environment within
a limited deployment of US forces by combining continu­
ous attacks against VC/NVA main force units with slow
improvements in pacification (which may follow the new
constitution, the national reconciliation proclamation,
cour added efforts and the Vietnamese elections this
fall) and a restrained program of actions against the
North.

This alternative would give General Westmoreland
96 maneuver battalions -- an 85 per cent increase in
combat force over the 52 battalions that he had in
Vietnam in June of last year, and 22 per cent more
than the 79 we had there at the beginning of this
year. According to this report, we have already
passed the "cross-over point," where the enemy's
losses exceed his additions; we will soon have in
Vietnam 200,000 more US troops than there are in
enemy main force units. We should therefore, without
added deployments, be able to maintain the military
initiative, especially if US troops in less-essential
missions (such as in the Delta and in pacification
that the northern targets had been destroyed, that that
had been militarily important, and that there would be
no need to return to the northern areas unless military
necessity dictated it. The shift should not be huckstered.
Moscow would almost certainly pass its information on to
Hanoi, and might urge Hanoi to seize the opportunity to
decescalate the war by talks or otherwise. Hanoi, not
having been asked a question by us and having no ulti-
matum-like time limit, would be in a better posture to
answer favorably than has been the case in the past. The
military side of the shift is sound, however, whether or
not the diplomatic spill-over is successful. 6/

McNaughton concluded his case against force level increases by
proposing a time-phased "suggested strategy":

(1) Now: Not to panic because of a belief that
Hanoi must be made to capitulate before the 1968 elections.
No one's proposal achieves that end.

(2) Now: Press on energetically with the military,
pacification and political programs in the South, including
groundwork for successful elections in September. Drive
hard to increase the productivity of Vietnamese military
forces.

(3) Now: Issue a NSAM nailing down US policy as
described herein. Thereafter, publicly, (a) emphasize con-
sistently that the sole US objective in Vietnam has been
and is to permit the people of South Vietnam to determine
their own future, and (b) declare that we have already
either denied or offset the North Vietnamese intervention
and that after the September elections in Vietnam we will
have achieved success. The necessary steps having been
taken to deny the North the ability to take over South
Vietnam and an elected government sitting in Saigon, the
South will be in position, albeit imperfect, to start the
business of producing a full-spectrum government in South
Vietnam.

(4) June: Concentrate the bombing of North Vietnam
on physical interdiction of men and materiel. This would
mean terminating, except where the interdiction objective
clearly dictate otherwise, all bombing north of 20° and
improving interdiction as much as possible in the infil-
tration "funnel" south of 20° by concentration of sorties
that the northern targets had been destroyed, that that
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From the standpoint of ground force strategy, what McNaughton was really saying was that we should make a decision to basically set our objectives within a time frame geared to South Vietnamese Army and South Vietnamese government progress, and that in doing so our own troops in approximately the current strengths could be devoted to providing the shield while the government of South Vietnam provided the shelter and performed the vital pacification function. As he noted, associated in the decision was the very conscious determination not to use large numbers of U.S. troops in the delta and not to use large numbers of them in what he called "grass roots pacification work," the two justifications most frequently used to support requests for additional troops. The appraisal, as well as the alternative military courses of action and their analyses contained in this document provided the catalyst for the subsequent and final decisions on Program 5.

2. JCSM 286-67, Persistent Pressure Up the Ladder--"Shouldering Out" the Parts

On 20 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted JCSM 286-67, entitled "Operations Against North Vietnam," a paper primarily concerned with the air campaign. It stated that the JCS were seriously concerned at the prospective introduction by the USSR into NVN of new weapons including improved antiaircraft and surface to air missiles, guided missile petrol boats, surface to surface missiles and a variety of artillery and direct fire weapons. They felt that such weapons would further improve the NVN air and coastal defense systems and provide offensive capabilities which would pose additional threats to our forces and installations in SEA. Since the Hanoi-Haiphong areas constituted the principal North Vietnam logistical base through which these arms passed the JCS recommended that this complex be neutralized. This was feasible by direct attack on the areas but such direct attack would entail increased danger of high civilian casualties. Preferable to direct attack the Chiefs recommended that the area be interdicted by cutting the land and sea lines of communications leading into it. However, for such an interdiction campaign to be effective, all the elements of the import system of North Vietnam had to be attacked concurrently on a sustained basis, or, in the Chiefs' estimation, the weight of the attack would be insufficient to reduce imports to a level which would seriously impair the overall North Vietnamese war supporting capability. Accordingly, they recommended first an attack of Haiphong, conducted first by surgically "shouldering out" foreign shipping and then mining the harbor and approaches. This concept of "shouldering out" which was to reappear many times in subsequent JCS communications was to be executed by a series of air attacks commencing on the periphery of the port area and gradually moving to the center of the complex. These attacks were designed to reduce the functional efficiency of the port and could be expected to force the foreign shipping out of the nearby estuaries for off-loading by lighterage. Once the foreign vessels cleared port, according to the JCS calculation the remaining elements of the port could be taken under attack and the harbor mined. While the Haiphong port was being attacked...
an intensive interdiction campaign would commence against the roads and railroads from China. Concurrently, another series of attacks would be mounted against the eight major operational airfields. 8/ These recommendations met with predictably cool response and on 26 July 1967 the Deputy Secretary of Defense, in a memorandum to the Chairman of the JCS, stated that "a final decision on the proposals contained in the memorandum will be rendered in connection with the determination of overall future courses of action in Vietnam which should be completed in the near future." 9/

On the same date, 20 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted their World-wide Posture Paper. The most significant recommendation in it was a proposal that a selective call-up for the Reserves be made so that the U.S. could more effectively fulfill world-wide commitments. In it the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that the nation must be able to (1) send large U.S. forces to any of the several trouble spots, such as Korea and Berlin; they also noted that we could not respond fast enough with sufficient forces to meet most of these contingencies. They also wrote that we must meet CINCPAC's FY 68 force requests, and to do so would require an addition of 2-1/3 division forces or the now familiar "minimum essential requirements" stated by General Westmoreland in his original 18 March request. The Chiefs also believed that we had to "regain the Southeast Asia initiative and exploit our military advantage." They stated that they believed present air restrictions crippled our war effort and that limitations should be reduced on targets as well as the rules of engagement, and that more forces, primarily air, evidently, should be sent. Moreover, they believed that we should reinforce as fast as possible, to prevent the enemy from adjusting to the increases in pressure, as he had been able to do thus far.

Of seven alternate U.S. force postures they reviewed, the JCS considered only two to be "adequate." The alternative they endorsed provided the following increases to the approved forces: 4-1/3 active army divisions; one navy attack carrier; two carrier air-wings; two battleships; two gun cruisers; as well as 570 UE Air Force tactical fighters, 72 UE Reconnaissance Aircraft and 80 UE C130's. They did not propose any new permanent additions to the United States Marine Corps. In their estimation the proposed force structure would be adequate to meet the FY 68 CINCPAC "minimum essential force requirements" for SEA without changing current rotation policies. It would also provide forces to reinforce NATO as well as respond to other major contingencies including MACV's tentative FY 1969 add-on requirement for 2-1/3 divisions and 90 tactical fighters. (This was, of course, the "optimum" force which the 18 March COMUSMACV request had contained.) The JCS proposed to extend terms of service, and to call up Reserves to provide this capability quicker. The Reserves they proposed to call would be two
Army and one Marine division forces, plus 15 Naval Reserve destroyers and two Naval construction battalions. In addition, an unspecified number of individual Reservists would be needed along with certain types of Reserve equipment and aircraft. The Reserves would be replaced by permanent units during FY 69-70. The Marine Reserve Division would be deployed to SVN to be replaced after a year by an Army Division, while the Marine Reserve Division would then revert to Reserve status. In the JCS estimate they stated that we could meet the FY 68 CINCPAC requirement by March 1968 if we called Reserves or by September 1969 if we did not. The Chiefs were particularly exercised at the prospect of very slow U.S. build-up over time which would continue to permit the VC/NVA to react. They commented that:

The rate at which US power has been applied has permitted North Vietnamese and Viet Cong reinforcements and force posture improvements to keep pace with the graduated increases in US military actions. It is fundamental to the successful conduct of warfare that every reasonable measure be taken to widen the differential between the capabilities of the opposing forces. Target system limitations, rules of engagement, and force curtailments have combined to mitigate against widening the gap between the total Free World force capability, including South Vietnam, and the capability of the enemy to generate, deploy, and sustain his forces while improving the defense of his homeland.

a. Successful prosecution of the war in Southeast Asia requires the maintenance of simultaneous pressure against all echelons of the enemy forces. In South Vietnam, this involves extensive ground, air, and naval operations against Viet Cong/North Vietnamese main forces and major base areas, while continuing revolutionary development and aggressive operations against Viet Cong provincial forces and guerrillas. In North Vietnam, the effectiveness of LOC interdiction cannot be greatly improved without significant reduction of the present restrictions on bombing and mining operations. Deep-water ports then can be closed or neutralized, and it will be worthwhile to intensify the interdiction effort against other LOCs in North Vietnam. Concomitantly, remaining high-value, war-supporting resources should be quickly, but methodically, destroyed. Attacks against population centers, per se, would continue to be avoided. (See Appendix B for requested changes in operating authorities and proposed expansion in air and naval operations against North Vietnam.) Limited ground action in North Vietnam might also become necessary to destroy forces threatening the northern provinces. 10/
As they continued, however, they fed a fear which was becoming predominant in the administration, that increases in forces might tempt COMUSMACV and our SEA commanders to expand operations into Cambodia and Laos, thereby complicating an already sensitive political situation:

b. It may ultimately become necessary to conduct military operations into Cambodia to deny the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army forces the psychological, military, and logistical advantages of this sanctuary. Should the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese forces increase their use of the Laos Panhandle, it might become necessary to deploy additional forces to Thailand and expand operations further to protect South Vietnam. (To counter large-scale CHICOM...)

On 24 May the JCS submitted to the Secretary of Defense their study entitled, "Alternative Courses of Action for Southeast Asia." This study was in response to a request made on 26 April by Deputy Secretary Vance asking the Joint Chiefs to study in detail the two alternative courses of action, outlined in the State paper prepared earlier by Acting Secretary of State Katzenbach. Strangely enough, between the time of the 26 April memorandum from Deputy Secretary Vance to the Director of the Joint Staff, Course A was altered, changing in the JCS paper from 200,000 personnel to approximately 250,000," roughly 125,000 in FY 68 and another 125,000 in FY 69. In the JCS study this was described as the "optimum force outlined in JCSM 218-67 and includes a 4-2/3 division force." Course B as it was outlined in the original Katzenbach memo confined troop increases to "those that can be generated without calling up reserves -- perhaps 9 battalions (10,000) men in the next year." This figure was altered in the JCS study so that Course B read: "add only forces that can be generated without calling up Reserves. This will amount to approximately 70,000 in FY 68 to include 1-1/3 Army division force equivalents with a limited capability in FY 69." 13

Course A which would necessitate a Reserve call-up and a 12-month involuntary extension in terms of service effective 1 Jun 67 was estimated to cost $12.1 billion through FY 69, as compared to $7.7 billion...
for Course B. The end strength increases for Course A and B were 602,900 and 275,000 men, respectively. Within South Vietnam the additional combat force in terms of battalion months available to COMUSMACV for operations was markedly greater for A than under Course B. The JCS calculated that Course A would add 111 battalion/months in FY 68 and 373 battalion/months in FY 69 for a total of 484. Course B, on the other hand, could add but 39 in FY 68 and 144 in FY 69 for a grand total of 183. This added combat power in Course A which was recommended for deployment in JCSM 218-67 would, in the JCS estimation, improve chances for 'progress in the war to a greater extent than the Course B forces. The primary advantage offered is that of flexibility. COMUSMACV would have forces available with which to maintain his present momentum as well as to expand combat and RD operations throughout the country."

If Course A forces were deployed as they desired the JCS noted they could be used to conduct operations in the DMZ, and into Laos or Cambodia if such operations were desired. Otherwise they could be properly employed in South Vietnam such as in the IV CTZ (the Delta). Course A would, they predicted, contribute to a hastening of the war's conclusion. The smaller Course B force would require the continued in-country deployment of additional forces to I Corps Tactical Zone to meet the "formidable enemy threat in that area." According to the Chiefs, this drawdown of forces from other areas would inhibit the reaction capability of U.S. forces in SVN that even with the increase proposed by Course B the US/FW/RTFAP would not be able to sustain the momentum of present offensive operations. The picture the memo painted of what would happen under the smaller Course B force was bleak:

(1) If the enemy maintains his current strength and force structure trends we cannot expect to attain objectives much beyond present goals, particularly the objective of expanding the areas under GVN control, unless forces are diverted from offensive operations. Thus we are confronted with an undesirable choice of a reduction of continued large-scale offensive operations in order to secure additional areas for expansion of RD activities or slowing the tempo of offensive operations in order to maintain security of areas cleared of the enemy.

(2) Should the enemy successfully exploit a vulnerable point in our military posture we run the risk of having even a modest enemy success publicized as a regression. The present situation, with all forces in South Vietnam fully committed in their respective areas, would not be greatly improved. As a result COMUSMACV cannot influence effectively the course of one operation without disengaging from another.
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f. Significant measures to improve the RVNAF are being taken but only limited improvement can be expected within a reasonable time frame.

g. Efforts to obtain additional allied forces should continue; however, US requirements or capability should not be reduced until the commitments are firm.

h. Communist reactions to Courses A and B, and to the increased air and naval campaign would most likely fall short of forcing a confrontation with the Soviets or Chinese Communists but would involve attempted increased material assistance to NVN and increased propaganda against the United States. Free World support for the United States in each case would not differ materially from the present except where the attacks involved Cambodia.

i. US public reaction to Course A probably would be more favorable than to Course B over the long term.

j. A settlement of the conflict in shorter time at less cost should result from initiating Course A, together with a more effective air campaign.

k. Post-settlement conditions in SEAsia are likely to be better under Course A because of the greater level of US forces on the scene.

A lay-out of the analysis of opposing courses of action as included in this document are presented in the following table.
Part II

ANALYSIS OF OPERATING CONCEPTS OF ATTACK

ASSUMPTIONS: For purposes of this portion of the analysis, the following level of military actions entails OTH are assumed:

a. Deployment of the use of AAM LCAC forces in Line and Southern OTH.
b. Dividing principal OTH ports

c. Early destruction of warning high value targets and intensified air raids on port to OTH.

FACTS

1. Impact on progress of war:

In the event of a war, the impact on the progress of war depends on a variety of factors. Some of these factors are:

- The availability of resources for each nation
- The effectiveness of each nation's military forces
- The political will of each nation's government

2. Effect on settlements:

The effect on settlements can be significant in a war. Settlements can be affected by:

- The destruction of infrastructure
- The displacement of populations
- The loss of life and property

3. Major policy decisions required:

a. Domestic:

In March 1975, the President and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented to Congress a plan for deploying four battalions of Marines in the Persian Gulf. Congress approved the plan, and the deployment began in April 1975.

b. OTH/ Iraq Operations

Increased forces levels would cause an increase in the size of military actions. The deployment of four battalions of Marines in the Persian Gulf would require an increase in the size of military actions. The deployment of four battalions of Marines in the Persian Gulf would require an increase in the size of military actions.

4. International:

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One assumes that the increased force levels would be used to support the deployment of the Marines in the Persian Gulf. The deployment of four battalions of Marines in the Persian Gulf would require an increase in the size of military actions. The deployment of four battalions of Marines in the Persian Gulf would require an increase in the size of military actions.

5. Probable effects on OTH attitudes:

a. National policy (through FY 75) in addition to

- Army: 4,600,000
- Air Force: 1,000,000
- Marine Corps: 1,000,000

b. Theatre and Gt. (through FY 75) in addition to

- Army: 1,000,000
- Air Force: 500,000
- Marine Corps: 50,000

These figures are based on a nominal 1975 budget which does not include the cost of the deployment of the Marines in the Persian Gulf.
Part of the mystery as to why the numbers in the JCS analysis which we have just discussed differ from those stipulated by Secretary Vance in his request for an analysis of Courses A and B is explained by a 29 May 1967 memorandum for the Secretary of Defense from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. In it, General Wheeler identified certain factual corrections and annotations noted by the Joint Chiefs which should be entered so as to provide a "common basis of factual material." The corrections, General Wheeler noted, were factual only and did not address matters of policy, strategy, judgment, or opinion, as expressed in the Draft Presidential Memo of 19 May. He went on to comment that as the draft memorandum for the President indicated, COMUSMACV message 09101, 18 March 1967, included a "minimum essential force" for FY 68 and looking beyond, a probable requirement for an "optimum force" through FY 69. These forces totaled 4-2/3 division or force equivalents and 10 TFS -- 2-1/3 of these division force equivalents and 5 of the TFS to be deployed in FY 68 and the remainder thereafter. COMUSMACV estimated these forces at about 200,000. 20/ However, the Chairman continued, "the changed situation in South Vietnam including the formation and deployment of Task Force OREGON, the addition by CINCPAC of other PACOM requirements, and revised service estimates [had] caused variation in the total numbers for FY 68 and beyond. While exact numbers of the larger forces [could not] then be determined unless detailed troop lists are developed the following appeared at this time to reflect more accurately the probable personnel strengths, end strength increases and costs required to provide COMUSMACV a 4-2/3 DFE/PFS optimum force and the additional requirements through FY 69 that have been stated by CINCPAC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Forces for SEA</th>
<th>250,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional Service End Strengths</td>
<td>600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Additional Costs thru FY 69 over Approved FY 68</td>
<td>12,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Wheeler concluded that although the Joint Chiefs of Staff had not recommended the deployment of COMUSMACV's optimum force or even adoption of Course A as used in the Draft Presidential Memorandum, that the corrected figures which he quoted were more nearly representative of Course A than those of the DPM.

On 20 May, Secretary McNamara sent a short memorandum to the President replying to his request for comments on Senator Brooke's letter of 19 May, which proposed integration of the National Liberation Front into some kind of viable political role in South Vietnam's government or in its political life. Although these views coincided very closely
to those submitted in the Draft Presidential Memorandum of the day earlier, McNamara commented that despite the fact that Brooke's proposals were almost identical to those which he had suggested he had not discussed any part of the paper or any of the ideas with Brooke.

On the last day of May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff replied to the 19 May Draft Presidential Memorandum prepared by McNaughton. It was a sharply worded and strong reply, expressing strong objections to the basic orientation of the paper as well as its specific recommendations and objectives. The Chiefs presented the implication of the DPM that Course A generally reflected their recommendations. They insisted that Course A as outlined in the DPM was an extrapolation of a number of proposals which were recommended separately but not in concert or ever interpreted as a single course of action as they were in the DPM. The JCS categorically denied that the combination force levels, deployments, and military actions of Course A accurately reflected the positions or recommendations of COMSHAVC, CINCPAC or the Joint Chiefs. They stated that the positions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which would provide a better basis against which to compare other alternatives were already set forth in JCSM 218-67, JCSM 286-67 and JCSM 288-67.

There were five major areas of concern detailed in the JCSM: objectives, military strategy in operations, military strategy for air and naval war, the domestic attitude and predicted reactions in the international attitude and reaction. Reference objectives, the preferred course of action in the Draft Presidential Memorandum, Course B, was not considered by the military heads to be "consistent with NSAM 288 or with the explicit public statements of U.S. policy and objectives." In the eyes of the Joint Staff:

The DPM would, in effect, limit US objectives to merely guaranteeing the South Vietnamese the right to determine their own future on the one hand and offsetting the effect of North Vietnam's application of force in South Vietnam on the other. The United States would remain committed to these two objectives only so long as the South Vietnamese continue to help themselves. It is also noted that the DPM contains no statement of military objectives to be achieved and that current US national, military, and political objectives are far more comprehensive and far-reaching. Thus:

a. The DPM fails to appreciate the full implications for the Free World of failure to achieve a successful resolution of the conflict in Southeast Asia.

b. Modification of present US objectives, as called for in the DPM, would undermine and no longer

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provide a complete rationale for our presence in South Vietnam or much of our effort over the past two years.

c. The positions of the more than 35 nations supporting the Government of Vietnam might be rendered untenable by such drastic changes in US policy. 22/

The strategy proposed in the Draft Presidential memorandum which the Chiefs characterized as "making do" was not acceptable either:

Military Strategy and Operations (Other than Air/Naval Operations in the North). The DPM favors Course B with inadequate analysis of its implications for conduct of the war in Vietnam. The strategy embodied in this alternative - largely designed to "make do" with military resources currently approved for Southeast Asia - would not permit early termination of hostilities on terms acceptable to the United States, supporting Free World nations, and the Government of Vietnam. The force structure envisaged provides little capability for initiative action and insufficient resources to maintain momentum required for expeditious prosecution of the war. Further, this approach would result in a significant downgrading of the Revolutionary Development Program considered so essential to the realization of our goals in Vietnam. It would also result in the abandonment of the important delta region on the basis of its being primarily a problem for the Republic of Vietnam to solve without additional external assistance. 23/

There was little more agreement expressed about the bombing, about the domestic attitude or the international attitude:

Military Strategy for Air/Naval War in the North. The DPM stresses a policy which would concentrate air operations in the North Vietnamese "funnel" south of 20°. The concept of a "funnel" is misleading, since in fact the communists are supplying their forces in South Vietnam from all sides, through the demilitarized zone, Laos, the coast, Cambodia, and the rivers in the Delta. According to the DPM, limiting the bombing to south of 20° might result in increased negotiation opportunities with Hanoi. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that such a new self-imposed restraint resulting from this major change in strategy would most likely have the opposite effect. The relative immunity granted to the LOCs and distribution system outside the Panhandle would permit: (a) a rapid
recovery from the damage sustained to date; (b) an increase in movement capability; (c) a reduced requirement for total supplies in the pipeline; (d) a concentration of air defenses into the Panhandle; and (e) a release of personnel and equipment for increased efforts in infiltration of South Vietnam. Also, it would relieve the Hanoi leadership from experiencing at first hand the pressures of recent air operations which foreign observers have reported. Any possible political advantages gained by confining our interdiction campaign to the Panhandle would be offset decisively by allowing North Vietnam to continue an unobstructed importation of war material. Further, it is believed that such a drastic reduction in the scale of air operations against North Vietnam could only result in the strengthening of the enemy's resolve to continue the war. We doubt the reduction in scope of air operations would also be considered by many as a weakening of US determination and a North Vietnamese victory in the air war over northern North Vietnam. The combination of reduced military pressures against North Vietnam with stringent limitations of our operations in South Vietnam, as suggested in Course B, appears even more questionable conceptually. It would most likely strengthen the enemy's ultimate hope of victory and lead to a redoubling of his efforts. (See Part III, Appendix A, for additional comments.)

Domestic Attitude and Predicted Reactions. The DFM presents an assessment of US public attitude and assumed reactions to several occurrences. Its orientation is toward the risks involved in Course A. The difficulty of making accurate judgments in the area of public response is acknowledged, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff concede that their appraisal is subject to the same degree of uncertainty that is inherent in the DFM. Nevertheless, they are unable to find due cause for the degree of pessimism expressed in the DFM. The Joint Chiefs of Staff firmly believe that the American people, when well informed about the issues at stake, expect their Government to uphold its commitments. History illustrates that they will, in turn, support their Government in its necessary actions. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that there is no significant sentiment for peace at any price. They believe also that despite some predictable debate a Reserve callup would be willingly accepted, and there would
be no "irresistible" drive from any quarter for unnecessary escalation of the conflict. (See Part IV, Appendix A, for additional comments.)

International Attitude and Predicted Reaction. There are several inconsistencies between the DFM and the published intelligence estimates. For example, from these intelligence estimates, there is no evidence that Hanoi is prepared to shun negotiation, regardless of the pressure brought to bear, until after the US elections. Also, it is estimated that US prestige will not decline appreciably if prompt military action is taken to bring the conflict to an early close. In the long term, US prestige would probably rise. The effect of signs of US irresolution on allies in Southeast Asia and other friendly countries threatened by communist insurgency could be most damaging to the credibility of US commitments. The DFM contains the view that there is strong likelihood of a confrontation between the United States and the CHICOMs or the USSR, as a result of intensification of air and naval operations against North Vietnam and/or a major increase in US forces in South Vietnam. Intelligence estimates do not support this contention. (See Part V, Appendix A, for additional comments.) 24/

Summarizing, the Chiefs explained that the divergencies between the DFM and the stated policies, objectives and concepts were individually important and in their eyes, reasons for concern. However, as they viewed them collectively, an "alarming pattern" emerged which suggested a major realignment of U.S. objectives and intentions in Southeast Asia. The Joint Chiefs stated that they were not aware of any decision to retract the policies and objectives which had been affirmed by responsible officials many times in recent years (apparently stemming back to NSAM 288). In their view the DFM lacked adequate foundation for further consideration. Their conclusions were strong, namely that the DFM "did not support current U.S. national policy objectives in Vietnam and should not be considered further" and "there is no basis for change in their views in the major issues in the DFM," and that "these views were adequately stated in recent memorandums and reinforced herein." Implementation of Course B in the estimation of the joint body would serve to prolong the conflict, reinforce Hanoi's belief in ultimate victory, and probably add greatly to the ultimate cost in US lives and treasure.

The Joint Chiefs recommended that:

a. The DFM NOT be forwarded to the President.

b. The US national objective as expressed in NSAM 288 be maintained, and the national policy and objectives
for Vietnam as publicly stated by US officials be reaffirmed.

c. The military objective, concept, and strategy for the conduct of the war in Vietnam as stated in JCSM-218-67 be approved by the Secretary of Defense. 25/

4. The Last Interagency Round of Alternatives

Certainly the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been correct in detecting the basic policy realignment and the crystallization of opposition to expansive increases in the war in South Vietnam or in the air war over North Vietnam. If they had misread or underestimated anything it was in the magnitude and the strength of this opposition as it began to crystallize throughout different agencies of the government. As the replies to the 19 May DFM from other agencies—began to filter in there was little doubt remaining that, in fact, the validity of the assumptions in the DFM were not those being called into question, but the ones of JCSM 218-67 were under attack.

Before the other agency views on the DFM were received, however, the JCS reported in again with their discussion of air operations against North Vietnam. This was in response to a SecDef memo of 20 May 1967 in which McNamara requested the JCS to examine two alternative bombing campaigns— one concentrating the bombing of North Vietnam on the lines of communication in the Panhandle Area of Route Packages 1, 2 and 3, with the concomitant termination of bombing in the remainder of North Vietnam; and the other, to terminate the bombing of fixed targets not directly associated with LOC’s in Route Sectors 6A and 6B and simultaneously expand the armed reconnaissance operations in those sectors by authorizing strikes on all LOC’s. Furthermore, the second program was to be examined under two alternative assumptions, one in which strikes against ports and port facilities were precluded, and the other, in which every effort was made to deny importation from the sea. (This final option was essentially that recommended in JCSM 288-67 dated 20 May.) To all of this, the JCS concluded that their original recommendation on 20 May represented the most effective way to successfully prosecute the air and naval campaign against North Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs' position was vigorously stated in their conclusion:

The analysis provided in the Appendix supports the conclusion that the recommendations submitted to you on 20 May 1967 represent the most effective way to prosecute successfully the air and naval campaign against North Vietnam. Such a campaign would exert appropriate military pressures on North Vietnamese internal resources while substantially reducing the importation of the external resources that support their war effort and could be accomplished at risks and costs no greater than those
associated with the most desirable of the suggested alternatives, Alternative II (Ports Closed). Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff recognize and appreciate the necessity for continuing review, they believe that the campaign selected and recommended to you, together with expanded efforts to increase the destruction and enemy consumption of war materials in South Vietnam would have a far-reaching detrimental effect on the North Vietnamese capability to support and direct the aggression against South Vietnam. 26/

Secretary McNaughton asked Mr. Martin Bailey to look this JCSM over to determine if there were any areas of agreement between what the JCS proposed on the bombing and what IMA at the time was proposing. Particularly important was the key point on the unlikelihood of meaningful interdiction. Although the Chiefs did not specifically address this, they did state that increased bombing as they had recommended in the earlier JCSM on 20 May would bring about "a deterioration in the enemy's total environment," leading to curtailment of his overall efforts and increased difficulty in his support of the war in the South. The Chiefs had objected to the first alternative that concentrated the bombing on the southern three route packages because they felt that it would not appreciably reduce the flow of men and material to the south; that it would permit the enemy increased freedom of action in the north by allowing him to increase the density of his air defenses in the panhandle or Route Packages 1, 2 and 3, and finally, because they felt that in the long term such a course of action would not appreciably reduce U.S. losses. An undesirable side-effect, furthermore, was that such cutting back might indicate to the DOD a weakening of the United States resolve to the detriment of our basic goals and objectives in Vietnam. Alternative 2 (ports open) was not felt desirable for all of the reasons cited in the earlier JCSMs and, in addition, because it would not effectively degrade the enemy's war-making capability in any way. The "ports closed" alternative was desirable, but, in a listing of priorities, the JCS listed it behind the JCS course of action previously submitted in JCSM 283-67, 20 May 1967, which proposed a wider, concerted attack against all logistics facilities -- "the shouldering out" proposal. 27/

The issues then, as they were distilled and presented by the JCS, involved first the notion that total pressure was what was required to bring about some degradation of the North Vietnamese ability to support the war in the south; that pilot losses would not be appreciably decreased, and, finally, that shifting the bombing to the southern Route Packages would be indicative of U.S. failure in North Vietnam. This JCSM was carefully examined by McNaughton and his staff and the major arguments as they were presented by the Joint Chiefs were incorporated in the revised June 12th Draft Presidential Memorandum on the subject of bombing options. 28/
The first detailed feedback from the circulation of the 19 May McNaughton Draft Presidential Memorandum came from William P. Bundy on 2 June when he wrote an incisive and highly perceptive memorandum which argued that the "gut" point in Vietnam was not necessarily the military effect of our bombing or the major force increases and all the rest, but the effect that they had on the South Vietnamese. He wrote:

If we can get a reasonably solid GVN political structure and GVN performance at all levels, favorable trends could become really marked over the next 18 months, the war will be won for practical purposes at some point, and the resulting peace will be secured. On the other hand, if we do not get these results from the GVN and the South Vietnamese people, no amount of US effort will achieve our basic objective in South Viet-Nam--a return to the essential provisions of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and a reasonably stable peace for many years based on these Accords....

It follows that perhaps the most critical of all factors in assessing our whole strategy--bombing, major force increases, and all the rest--lies in the effect they have on the South Vietnamese. On the one hand, it is obvious that there must be a strong enough US role to maintain and increase GVN and popular confidence and physical security; although the point is not covered in the CIA papers, it surely is the fact that in early 1965 virtually all South Vietnamese believed they were headed for defeat, whereas the general assumption today is strongly in the opposite direction, that with massive US help the country has a present chance to learn to run itself and a future expulsion of the North Vietnamese will take place although not perhaps for a long time. We have got to maintain and fortify this underlying confidence and sense that it is worthwhile to get ahead and run the country properly.

On the other hand, many observers are already reporting, and South Vietnamese performance appears to confirm, that the massive US intervention has in fact had a significant adverse effect in that South Vietnamese tend to think that Uncle Sam will do their job for them. This point was not included in the levy on CIA, and it may be that we need a judgment from the Agency, recognizing that it will be "broad brush" at best. The tentative judgment stated above need not be considered a shocking one; in our calculations of two years ago, we anticipated the possibility.
But today, in facing decisions whether to make a further major increase in the US performance and whether to maintain at a high level that portion of the war that is really wholly US—bombing—we must at least ask ourselves whether we are not at or beyond another kind of "cross-over point", where we are putting in an undue proportion of US effort in relation to the essential fact that in the last analysis the South Vietnamese have got to do the job themselves. By "do the job themselves" we mean concretely a much more effective South Vietnamese role in security, pacification, and solid government while the war is going on. But we mean also the progressive development of a South Viet-Nam that can stand on its own feet whenever North Viet-Nam calls it off, and can nail down at that point what could otherwise be a temporary and illusory "victory" which, if it unraveled, would make our whole effort look ridiculous, undermine the gains in confidence that have been achieved in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, and have the most disastrous effects on our own American resolve to bear burdens in Asia and indeed throughout the world. 29/

Turning to the specific question of the 200,000 man force increase Bundy argued that the gains from such a major force increase were increasingly marginal while the effect on the South Vietnamese, a very much more important factor and one which went to the heart of the conflict itself and our ability to achieve a lasting peace, may not be so marginal:

Obviously, the assessment of the effect of our actions on the South Vietnamese is an extremely difficult one. It may be that the "cross-over point" was reached in late 1965, when it became clear that we were conducting a massive intervention; perhaps any further change from additional forces, on any scale, is at most one of slight degree. Certainly we have all felt that our force increases up to their present strength were absolutely required in order to bring about a condition even more essential than maintaining South Vietnamese performance—the blunting and reversing of the North Vietnamese effort that, in 1965, was about to take over the country. But the question now presents itself in a new form, when 200,000 more men do not make the difference between victory and defeat, but at most the difference between victory in three years and victory in 5, on what is necessarily a calculation assuming both South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese performance and morale as relative constants. And, on the other side of the coin, we have reached a point where the South Vietnamese have managed in part to pull themselves together and must learn to do so more. Hence, the gains from
major force increases are now more marginal, while the
effect on the South Vietnamese must be rated a very much
more important factor and one which goes to the heart of
the conflict itself and of our ability to achieve a lasting
peace. 30/

On the basic objectives, Bundy disagreed with the Chiefs and
expressed general agreement with what the McNaughton draft had stated.
He believed that the minimum statement which we could make reference
to our objective in Vietnam was certainly "to see that the people of
South Vietnam are permitted to determine their own future." But he
felt it much too pat to say that "this commitment ceases if the country
cesses to help itself," or even to observe that there are not further
elements in our commitment. He believed additional commitments related
not only to getting North Vietnamese forces off the backs of the South
Vietnamese but to making sure that the political board, as he called it,
in South Vietnam was not tilted to the advantage of the NLF. 31/

In his summary, he addressed this question of our commitment again,
and then expanded upon what he called the hard core question, that is,
what to do if "the country [Vietnam] ceases to help itself." Using the
tether-totter analogy, he commented that our commitment must be to see
that the people of South Vietnam were permitted to determine their own
future and to see that the "political board" was level and not tilted
in favor of elements that believed inforce. He also believed that we
should at least hold open the possibility that a future South Vietnamese
government would need continuing military and security assistance and
should be entitled to get it. He agreed with the Joint Chiefs analysis
of the DOD draft and their contention that it displayed a negative bent
to our strategy and to our commitment in Vietnam:

In terms of our course of action, the major implication--
as compared with the DOD draft--is that we will not take our
forces out until the political board is level. The implication
of the DOD draft is that we could afford to go home the
moment the North Vietnamese regulars went home. This is not
what we said at Manila, and the argument here is that we should
not in any way modify the Manila position. Nor should we be
any more hospitable than the South Vietnamese to coalitions
with the NLF, and we should stoutly resist the imposition of
such coalitions. 32/

On the second question, of what would happen if the Vietnamese could
not help themselves or refused to help themselves Bundy argued for more
time to take a closer look at the Vietnamese situation, especially the
elections, before getting into a negative frame of mind about our Viet-
namese military/political/economic commitment. In arguing this position
he broadened the perspective embraced by the question and addressed the
entire range of U.S. interests in Asia:
This is a tough question. What do we do if there is a military coup this summer and the elections are aborted? There would then be tremendous pressure at home and in Europe to the effect that this negated what we were fighting for, and that we should pull out.

But against such pressure we must reckon that the stakes in Asia will remain. After all, the military rule, even in peacetime, in Thailand, Indonesia, and Burma. Are we to walk away from the South Vietnamese, as least as a matter of principle, simply because they failed in what was always conceded to be a courageous and extremely difficult effort to become a true democracy during a guerrilla war.

We should not decide this lightly if the case arises, and above all we should not get into a negative frame of mind suggested by the DOD draft until we see what the situation actually looks like. As in Latin American cases, a great deal would depend on how the military ruled, and whether they made some pledge of returning to the Constitution and holding elections in the not-distant future. And a great deal would depend on whether the military coup appeared in any sense justified by extremist civilian actions from any quarter. At any rate, let us not look at this contingency—or any like it—in quite the negative way that the DOD draft suggests. For the effects in Asia may not be significantly reduced if we walk away from Vietnam even under what we ourselves and many others saw as a gross failure by the South Vietnamese to use the opportunity that we had given them. 33/

If the ISA group proposing a stabilized ground strategy took heart with the Bundy memorandum, it was positively elated when the reply came from Under Secretary of State Nicholas de B. Katzenbach. 34/

Katzenbach quote skillfully outlined the outstanding disagreements included in the draft Presidential memorandum. First, Westmoreland and McNamara disagreed on whether Course A, the infusion of 200,000 troops would end the war sooner. Under Secretary Vance and the CIA disagreed on the ability of North Vietnam to meet the force increases in the South although, as Katzenbach later noted in his paper, the CIA figures were somewhat outdated and the analysis was not "good." He listed a Wheeler-Vance disagreement on the military effectiveness of cutting back bombing to below the 20th parallel and on whether it would save U.S. casualties. (The Wheeler label on this disagreement is not completely accurate since JCSM 280-67 and the later JCSM 312-67, the bases for this disagreement,
were less the product of Wheeler, as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, than of the corporate body itself. As Chairman's Memoranda indicate, Wheeler had a much "softer" line on the military effectiveness of the bombing.) The CIA and Vance were seen as at odds because the CIA believed that the Chinese might not intervene if an invasion of North Vietnam did not seem to threaten Hanoi, while Vance stated that an invasion (of any kind) would cause Chinese intervention. Vance believed that the Chinese would decide to intervene if the ports were mined. CIA reports at the time did not mention this possibility. There was basic disagreement, as to whether or not we had achieved the "cross-over point" and more broadly how well the "big war" was going. One optimistic CIA analysis which Bundy quoted contradicted a later CIA statement expressing the view that the enemy's strategic position had improved over the past year. State's INR also disagreed with CIA on Hanoi's basic objectives, with CIA arguing that Hanoi was determined to wear us down or in the vernacular of the time "wait us out," while INR felt that Hanoi was really determined to seek more positive victories in the South. The INR also believed that the bombing was having a greater effect than did the CIA. CIA and Vance, of course, had been saying for some time that all of the worthwhile targets in North Vietnam except the ports had been struck, while as we have seen, the JCS disagreed with this assessment. There was some allusion to the dispute over whether or not inflationary pressures would be aggravated by the increase in U.S. forces under Course A. DOD said that these pressures were under control and could be handled if Course A were adopted, while the CIA felt otherwise. (Comment: This leads to the suspicion that the piaster limitation might not have been as critical as was originally believed and possibly was just an instrument of a sophisticated rationalization for limiting force increases in the earlier programs.) Katzenbach also cited a basic disagreement about just what message an increase of U.S. forces or a massive call-up of Reserves would communicate to Hanoi.

The general goals which the Undersecretary predicated in Vietnam and upon which he based the analysis which followed were: first, to withdraw U.S. forces from Vietnam; we would only do so with the high degree of confidence that three things were accomplished -- (1) that we would be behind a stable democratic government (democratic by Asian standards); (2) that we would confront the prospect of a reasonably stable peace in Southeast Asia for several years; and (3) that we will have demonstrated that we met our commitments to the government of Vietnam. To do these, we had to persuade the North Vietnamese to give up their aggression and we had to neutralize the internal Viet Cong threat while in the process being careful not to create an American satellite nor to generate widespread anti-American sentiment nor destroy the social fabric of South Vietnam, nor incur disproportionate losses in our relations with other countries or bring in so called "enemy" countries.
His overall prognosis for the war was not optimistic. He believed that during the course of the next 18 months, the probability of achieving our goals was quite low. In two or three years, it was possibly higher depending again on what we did during the intervening period. He entered a caveat, however, stating that because of our uncertain knowledge of the motivation and intentions of both the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the VC in the South, that we may be closer to achieving our goals than we thought. Moreover, the Soviet Union and Communist China would influence the course of events in ways not easily predictable over the next three years.

He assessed the battle in South Vietnam as "the key" and reviewed the "big war" of attrition as one in which a flood of contradictory indicators made it much more difficult to appraise. Enemy losses were up 70% in the first quarter of 1967, but so were U.S. losses up 90%. North Vietnamese/VC intentions were also doubtful but they appeared to be set on an intensive grinding position-warfare campaign in the northern provinces coordinated with offensive thrusts in the central coastal provinces and the Western Highlands. All of these then possibly combined with major actions against cities, provincial capitals in the III Corps area. The overall object of such a strategy evidently being to inflict maximum losses on the US/GVN in an effort to break our will. (Here he noted that INR believed that the VC/NVA had a more positive approach and were looking for real victories.

Pacification efforts came in for little praise. There was little real progress reported and the short term prospects were not bright. However, the long term prospects appeared better if ARVN could be more effectively involved. However, it appeared that GVN and ARVN were going to continue moving slowly, corruption was becoming more widespread and the population was increasingly apathetic. Katzenbach said he could not determine whether this was due to growing anti-Americanism or war-weariness or what. He concluded that if we were winning the war, we were not winning it very quickly -- it had become a question of the will to persist on either side rather than the attainment of an overwhelming military victory.

With this assessment as background he then analyzed the two courses of action. In his estimation, Course A, which added a 200,000 U.S. troop increment and necessitated a call-up of Reserves possessed the following advantages: It could hasten the end of the war by hurting the enemy more. It could dispel Hanoi's notions about weakening U.S. resolve. It could provide more U.S. troops to be used for main force sweeps and might release U.S. units to help provide security for pacification. It might persuade the Russians to counsel Hanoi to accept some kind of negotiations rather than risk a much expanded war, possibly in North Vietnam. Katzenbach listed a score of disadvantages for this course of action:
b. Disadvantages:

1. Introduction of these forces could lead to counter-moves by Hanoi, with result we have simply expanded the present war. (Need paper with better analysis of whether Hanoi could add troops.) Our position is one of meeting infiltration, not stimulating it. Even its proponents do not argue it could end the war in less than two years.

2. It might well be viewed by Hanoi as another sign of US impatience and unwillingness to persist. Hanoi might also see a call-up of reserves as a sign that we are running out of manpower.

3. Congressional and public debate on the reserve call-up would be divisive and give comfort to Hanoi.

4. It could mean a total eventual addition of 500,000 men; some limitation on our ability to act elsewhere in the world; and a cost of approximately $10 billion in FY '68.

5. It could lead to irresistible pressures for ground actions against sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos, and increased actions against NVN. Problems involved in such moves -- NVN and even Chinese reactions. International disapproval. Problems with Saigon.


7. It could produce, to some extent, a growth in the South Vietnamese attitude of "let the US do it."

8. More troops probably mean growth of anti-Americanism. (Although we don't really know how strong it is now.)

10. Adverse international reaction to escalations and to what would appear to be significant US move towards a friendly occupation of the country. 35/

Compared to this course the option of maintaining current force levels possessed the twin advantages of avoiding all of those which we just listed, plus it could improve the negotiating environment if some progress were made without an expansion of forces. The disadvantages of this course were also twofold: Hanoi could be encouraged by forces levelling off and the possible bad effect on morale of U.S. and allied forces.

To these original two options Katzenbach added what he called two middle strategies. Each one of these would incur some of the advantages and disadvantages of the two which we just listed above, but to obvious lesser greater degrees. The first "middle" strategy was to add 30,000 troops. This would not necessitate a Reserve call-up. The second was to add enough U.S. forces to "operate effectively against provincial main force units and to reinforce I Corps and the DMZ area." 36/ This he estimated would include a Reserve call-up.

The overall recommendation he made in this regard was, first, in the South, to emphasize the war of attrition and to do this by adding 30,000 troops. The complete set of recommendations which followed read:

a. Add 30,000 more troops, in small increments, over the next 18 months. This would show Hanoi and our own forces that we are not levelling off, and yet we would not appear impatient or run into the risks and dangers which attend force increases. Continue to try to get as many more third country forces as possible.

b. Make a major effort to get the South Vietnamese more fully involved and effective. A crucial question. (Separate paper with recommendations -- advisers, joint command, threats, etc.) Tell the GVN early in 1968 that we plan to start withdrawing troops at the end of 1968, or earlier if possible, in view of progress in the "big war". Pacification will be up to them.

c. Use the great bulk of US forces for search and destroy rather than pacification--thus playing for a break in morale. Emphasize combat units rather than engineers. Leave all but the upper Delta to the Vietnamese.
d. Use a small number of US troops with South Vietnamese forces in pacification, targeted primarily on enemy provincial main force units. Recognize that pacification is not the ultimate answer—we have neither the time nor the manpower. In any event, only the Vietnamese can make meaningful pacification progress. The GVN should therefore hold what it has and expand where possible. Any progress will (1) discourage the enemy and (2) deprive him of manpower.

e. We should stimulate a greater refugee flow through psychological inducements to further decrease the enemy's manpower base. Improve our ability to handle the flow and win the refugees' loyalty.

f. Devote more attention to attacking the enemy infrastructure. Consider giving MACV primary responsibility for US efforts in this regard.

g. Use all the political pressure we have to keep the GVN clean in its running of the elections. Press for some form of international observation. Play down the elections until they are held, then exploit them and their winner (probably Ky) in the international and domestic press.

h. After the elections, but prior to the Christmas-Tet period, press hard for the GVN to open negotiations with the NLF and for a meaningful National Reconciliation program.

2. In the North—the object is to cut the North off from the South as much as possible, and to shake Hanoi from its obdurate position. Concentrate on shaking enemy morale in both the South and North by limiting Hanoi's ability to support the forces in South Viet-Nam.

a. A barrier, if it will work.... or

b. Concentrate bombing on lines of communication throughout NVN, thus specifically concentrating on infiltration but not running into the problems we have had and will have with bombing oriented towards "strategic" targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area. By continuing to bomb throughout NVN in this manner we would indicate neither a lessening of will nor undue impatience. 37/
This recommendation, essentially in line with that of McNaughton and his staff in ISA, was to provide powerful ammunition for the group pressing for a halt to the force increases and some stabilization of the bombing in North Vietnam.

On 8 June, McNaughton dealt once again with the dispute between the JCS and ISA over whether or not Course A as written into the DFM did or did not, in fact, reflect the recommendations of the JCS. Colonel Amos Wright of the Joint Staff had been queried by ISA as to why the JCS had objected to the wording in the DFM which asserted that Course A (or the addition of the 200,000 men) reflected JCS recommendations. The basis of the JCS objection, according to Colonel Wright, was first that the JCS had not yet actually recommended that COMSHAV and CINCPAC be given the additional 100,000 men they requested for FY 69 and that the DFM discussed, in connection with Course A, various "extreme actions" especially ground actions that the JCS had not actually recommended.

ISA concluded, after this, that although the courses of action included under Course A had not actually been recommended as a complete package by the JCS. The DFM did not, or need not, say this. The Chiefs had discussed these courses of action as ones that "might be required" and had done so in close conjunction with increased force levels and escalated attacks on North Vietnam that they had recommended. Under these circumstances ISA felt justified to argue in the DFM that Course A should be rejected because it could quite probably lead to the "extreme" course of action flagged by the JCS even though the Chiefs had not actually recommended them. 36/

On 12 June, McNaughton submitted a draft memorandum for the President entitled "Alternative Military Actions Against North Vietnam" in which he incorporated the views of State, CIA and the JCS. He analyzed three major alternatives: Alternative A - the JCS proposal to expand the present program to include mining of the ports and attacks on roads and bridges closer to Hanoi and Haiphong; Alternative B - which would continue the present level of attacks but generally restricted to the neck of North Vietnam south of 20 degrees; and Alternative C - a refinement of the then currently approved program. In the memorandum, McNaughton (and later Vance) opposed the JCS program (Alternative A) on grounds that it would neither substantially reduce the flow of men and supplies to the South nor pressure Hanoi toward settlement; that it would be costly in American lives and in domestic and world opinion, and that it would run serious risks of enlarging the war into one with the Soviet Union or China, leaving the United States a few months from now more frustrated and with almost no choice but even further escalation. Refinement of the present program (Alternative C) was also opposed on grounds that it would involve most of the costs and some of the risks of Alternative A with less chance than Alternative A of interdicting supplies or moving Hanoi toward settlement. Finally, McNaughton recommended concentration of the bulk of the bombing efforts on infiltration routes south of the 20th parallel (Alternative B) because this course would, in his
words "interdict supplies as effectively as the other alternatives, would cost the least in pilot's lives and would be consistent with effort to move toward negotiations." 39/

Implicit in the recommendations submitted by Vance and McNaughton on 12 June was the conviction that nothing short of toppling the Hanoi regime would pressure North Vietnam to settle so long as they believed they had a chance to win the "war of attrition" in the South. They judged that actions great enough to topple the Hanoi regime would put the United States into a war with the Soviet Union and/or China. Furthermore, a shift to Alternative B could probably be timed and handled in such a way as to gain politically while not endangering the morale of our fighting men. In their recommendations, Vance and McNaughton were in agreement with Mr. Nitze, Mr. Brown and Mr. Helms in that none recommended Alternative A. Mr. Nitze, Secretary of the Navy at the time, joined with Vance and McNaughton in recommending B; Dr. Brown, Secretary of the Air Force preferred C; while the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Mr. Helms did not make a specific recommendation but stated that the CIA believed that none of the alternatives was capable of decreasing Hanoi's determination to persist in the war or of reducing the flow of goods sufficiently to effect the war in the South. 40/

The 12 June Draft Presidential Memorandum only momentarily diverted attention from the question of the ground force increases which it so skillfully skirted. However, it achieved one important purpose. It had crystallized opinion and also marshaled an impressive array of opposition against any significant expansion of the bombing for the time being, and reflected a surprising turn toward objectives much different than those originally stated in NSAM 288, anachronisms pursued in virtual isolation by the Chiefs.

Another argument against significant increases of forces in Southeast Asia came from the financial side of the Department of Defense. Balance of payment expenditures associated with the then current level of Southeast Asia hostilities was running about $1.35 billion per year above calendar year 1964 levels. If the effect of increased deployments were proportional, then a 25% increase in deployment would mean approximately $350 million dollars annual increase. However, as a later memorandum pointed out, the actual effect was not necessarily proportional. On the one hand there were two forces that would cause the increase to be greater than proportional, such as the increased demand leading to an increase in the prices of foreign products and, as demonstrated earlier in 1966, increased DOD expenditures had an effect on the domestic economy that tended to hurt the trade balance in that it caused inflation. On the other hand, and partially offsetting these two forces in the upward direction, there was some fraction of DOD gross IBP expenditures returned to the U.S. via increased exports to the benefitting nations. But this feedback was conservatively estimated at not more than 25%. Whatever the
effect might be, more or less than $350 million, it was agreed that it would certainly be substantial and that this should be a major consideration before recommending large force increases or larger programs in Southeast Asia. \(41\)

Meanwhile, in the Department of Defense there was increasing emphasis upon exploration of the increased use of South Vietnamese civilians for U.S. troop support. This was partially in follow-up to the directive from the SecDef to the JCS on 23 May of 1967 which asked them to review their combat service support and headquarters staffing to determine whether all units were required in light of the sharply improved logistics posture and support provided from other sources. As part of the overall program of improving the U.S. "tooth to tail" ratio, the JCS were asked to determine which of the resulting "hard core logistical requirements" could be met by increased use of South Vietnamese civilians for U.S. troop support. A preliminary review by Systems Analysis had indicated a potential for saving approximately 20-25,000 troop spaces. \(42\) These, in turn, could be reallocated to increase combat force requirements recommended by the JCS or alternatively used to reduce the U.S. burden in Vietnam. The deadline given the JCS for submitting their study was 1 August but as the press for decisions on increased forces became greater McNamara went back to the JCS and asked for both studies before his planned trip to South Vietnam at the end of July. \(43\) In detailed conversations over force increases with both COMUSMACV and CINCUS McNamara asked:

Can we not make wider use of Vietnamese to reduce the number of U.S. military personnel performing support functions in SVN? This action would free U.S. men for combat duties and train Vietnamese in skills they will need to help build their nation. I believe it would be wise to expand the analysis I requested on May 23, 1967 (Combat Service Support Staffing in SVN) to include an analysis of each essential combat service support function to determine the extent it can be performed by SVN civilian personnel. The unit-by-unit, function-by-function review of support should be performed first; then, the essential requirements should be evaluated to see which can be met by appropriately trained and supervised SVN civilians. The studies forwarded to me should separately show the line items and number of support personnel no longer required and the number for whom Vietnamese can be substituted.

While organic U.S. military combat service support capability is obviously required in an active combat theater, the requirements in the permanent logistic enclaves, such as Saigon or DaNang, should be less than at forward locations, such as An Khe or Dong Ha. Further, some U.S.
military personnel are needed for such contingencies as strikes, but the requirements should vary with the degree of criticality of the functions involved. For example, I understand that MACV's policy is to maintain at least 50% U.S. manning at each deep draft port. Why 50% and not 40% or 60%? Must this rule be followed for all types of port personnel? USARV's use of Pacific Architects and Engineers contract civilians for most of the repair and utility work at 67 SVN locations suggests that neither forward operations nor contingencies are adequate reasons for using as many military personnel for support as we are now.

I also doubt we have adequately explored the use of "Type B" units which are a mix of military cadres and civilian workers. A preliminary review indicates that there are over 72,000 U.S. Army personnel in units which have alternative "Type B" TOE's. Converting these units to "Type B" would cut military personnel in support roles by over 25,000 men: this might provide another combat division.

5. The McNamara Visit to Saigon

As the Pentagon feverishly prepared the background briefings for Secretary McNamara's forthcoming trip to Vietnam an article discussing the problem of mobilization and force levels in Vietnam broke in the Washington Daily News. It touched a nerve around the Pentagon generating a flurry of correspondence and studies. The article by Jim Lucas, entitled "Partial Mobilization?" with dateline Saigon, observed that the manpower squeeze was on in Vietnam. The United States had 472,000 men in Vietnam according to General William C. Westmoreland, who Lucas quoted as having asked Washington for 200-250,000 more, bringing the total to about 700,000. Lucas concluded on the basis of this remarkably accurate estimate that such a total could not be achieved without some sort of mobilization -- at least a partial Reserve call. He wrote that it was equally obvious that the White House did not want any sort of mobilization if it could be avoided before the elections upcoming next year. Most Americans in Saigon, he noted, realized this, but they weren't happy about it. He quoted a helicopter pilot as saying, "A lot of us are going to die before then." The military officers that he had interviewed were especially loath to discuss manpower with anything approaching candor. "I'll be damned if I'm going to tell Charlie how much he has hurt us," one exploded. Lucas also questioned the credibility of military reports and estimates emanating from the White House. He saw clear indications that some records were being camouflaged if not falsified to hide the facts. Many commanders, among them a Marine air group commander, said their reports on personnel and materiel were being consistently upgraded in Dalang and Honolulu before going to Washington. The article wound up on an equally sour note pointing out the various personnel deficiencies by rank and by skills which existed.
within both the Army and the Marine Corps in Vietnam. It noted that the Army was short of buck sergeants everywhere, rifle companies were extremely short of non-commissioned officers, Marine Corps squads and platoons were operating below acceptable manpower levels, and hundreds of Marine enlisted men with infantry training were being jerked out of other jobs and sent to combat units to replace men in battle. 45/

Lucas had come remarkably close to the truth and as a consequence the replies which were requested from the various service secretaries tended to focus upon the more detailed criticisms of manpower levels in different units in Vietnam, on military occupation specialty shortages, etc. None of the internally generated replies really grappled with the basic issue of whether or not the mobilization level was in fact dictating force levels and requirements in Vietnam.

The 3 July edition of the New York Times featured another article this time by Neil Sheehan, entitled "The Joint Chiefs Seek Troop Rise Asked by Westmoreland" in which he noted that 70,000 additional men were needed to retain the U.S. initiative in the ground war. In this article, again very perceptive and accurate, a large amount of detailed information, supposedly classified, surfaced. The writer quoted the Joint Chiefs of Staff as having warned the Johnson Administration that if General William C. Westmoreland's minimum request for 70,000 more troops was not met the United States would run "a high risk of losing the initiative in the ground war in South Vietnam." 47/ Sheehan noted that the recommendation was submitted to Mr. McNamara on April 20 according to his sources and the administration had taken no action on it. This was, of course, JCSM 218-67. Sheehan believed the inaction on the COMMISSARY request was because the administration could not grant the increase without a partial mobilization of Reserves and significant rise in war costs—an estimate that was remarkably close to the truth. In the article Sheehan also revealed discussions about two alternatives, or what he called two levels of requirements, both of which he correctly identified as the "optimum" and the "minimum essential." He was a bit short of the level of the optimum quoting it as only 5 divisions or about 150,000 men. According to Sheehan's sources, Westmoreland had not supported his request for the "optimum" with the detailed arguments, apparently believing that he had little hope of obtaining it. But, the general had argued strongly for his minimum requirement of two more divisions with supporting units, about 70,000 men, warning that he needed these troops to retain the initiative in South Vietnam. On the 4th of July, Secretary McNamara sent a note to Mr. Phil Goulding, Public Affairs, asking him to follow up with Secretary of the Army Resor for replies to the charges made in the Sheehan article. On 5 July, Secretary Resor replied that in view of the low fill levels for officers in the Seventh Army, which reflected upon the overall Army readiness and which tended to substantiate some of the charges Sheehan had made about the problem
of drawing down Army forces all over the world to supply Vietnam, he believed DCI should not attempt to answer Sheehan in the public press, and the matter rested there. 48/

To prepare the SecDef for his trip and to help him get at what were considered to be the "gut" questions to be asked on his field trips, especially reference pacification, Assistant Secretary of Defense Enthoven sent him a study entitled "Holbrooke/Burnham Study on Vietnam." Enthoven cited this study as a perfect example of why the U.S. involvement in Vietnam was so costly. In the Binh Chan district of Gia Din Province there were 6,000 U.S. and GVN troops that were tied down by the VC who really had more than a company stationed there. According to Enthoven and to the Holbrooke/Burnham Study, there was no prospect now that things would change or that anything resembling permanent pacification would take place. Holbrooke and Burnham attempted to tell why. According to them there had been a total failure in rooting out the VC infrastructure; that is, the VC officials and organizers, and unless such infrastructure was destroyed, US-GVN military and pacification forces soon degenerated into nothing more than an occupation Army. Holbrooke cited Operation FAIRFAX which began as a sweep of Binh Chan but bogged down rapidly into a static defense. He concluded that if U.S. forces were withdrawn after FAIRFAX, the VC would be in control of the area almost immediately. Enthoven was pleading for the Secretary of Defense to reorient his questioning as he toured the pacification and rural areas. He wanted the SecDef to specifically focus on the infrastructure questions. He recounted what he had seen as the typical briefing on pacification, the one which first covered the demoralization of the VC in area, the reduced number of incidents, but then skipped over the infrastructure question and went on to the pig program, the number of wells dug, hog cholera inoculations and so forth. Accordingly, he suggested that Mr. McNamara might pursue the following questions when talking to briefing officers on the field trip:

1. Is there an intelligence collection center in this district? Is there a U.S. adviser responsible for the center?

2. Who in this district has specific responsibility for rooting out the infrastructure? on the U.S. side? on the GVN side? What unit of command exists in intelligence gathering? in anti-infrastructure operations?

3. In this district what are the assets available for rooting out the infrastructure? Which are available full-time and which are available part-time? Are these assets sufficient given the population of the district, its area, etc?
4. In a step-by-step manner how do these assets function in rooting out the infrastructure?

5. What guidelines have you developed to measure success in rooting out the infrastructure? How can you tell how well you are doing?

Despite the prospect that these questions might prove very embarrassing to those giving the briefing, Enthoven felt that they were extremely important and they must be answered or pacification might not ever succeed. Of course, he did not include the crucial question, this being whether or not U.S. forces should be or even could be profitably engaged in pacification. The answer to that question, whatever it may be, could have a significant impact upon how U.S. decision-makers viewed any future increases in U.S. forces justified by the pacification requirement.

Probably the most important paper which the Secretary of Defense took with him as he departed for Saigon on 5 July was a study prepared by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis, Alain Enthoven, entitled "Current Estimate of Additional Deployment Capability." In it, Systems Analysis had updated their original estimate of what the Army could provide and was now convinced that approximately 3-2/3 division equivalents could be provided to MACV by 31 December, 1968 without changing tour policy, calling Reserves, or deploying NATO STRAF units. Although development of this force would require drawing upon critical skills and equipment from NATO STRAF, thus reducing their readiness, the capability plan still satisfied the key requirement of not sheltering the mobilization "pane" while still furnishing the 2-2/3 nominal division force. The 2-2/3 force consisted of (1) the 198th Brigade, which had already been approved for PRACTICE MINE; (2) the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade, partially approved and standing offshore, (3) the ARCOY Rifle Company packets for use in making up the 33 additional rifle companies (an earlier approval from the Secretary of the Army had been denied because of the absence of trade-off slots for the 5,500 odd men in this group); (4) the 101st Airborne Division minus one unit which had already been deployed; (5) the 11th Infantry Brigade and a new Infantry Division. Systems Analysis evaluated the augmentation of 33 additional companies as being worth one Division to which they would add the 2-2/3 that were named units, thereby making up the 3-2/3 Division equivalents. The Table which accompanied this study is shown below.
Additional MACV Requirements and Estimated Capabilities
December 31, 1968

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Forces</th>
<th>Program 4 as of 3/18/67</th>
<th>MACV 3/18/67 Proposal</th>
<th>Estimated Capability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength (000)</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisions</td>
<td>8-1/3 a/</td>
<td>4-2/3</td>
<td>2-2/3+1 c/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maneuver Bns</td>
<td>(87)</td>
<td>(42)</td>
<td>(24+11) d/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery Bns</td>
<td>60-2/3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer Bns</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helicopter Cos.</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signal Bns</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a/ Excludes 1 Armored Cav Regt.
b/ Includes 6000 Army contract personnel.
c/ 2-2/3 nominal division equivalents plus 1 additional division equivalent representing the significance of ARCOV augmentations.
d/ 24 maneuver battalions plus the equivalent of 11 additional (approximate) because of ARCOV augmentations.
e/ Includes 6 battalion equivalents of contractor personnel.
f/ 17 companies by end Feb. 69.

The total basic units strength under this 3-2/3 division equivalent was 51,249 troops, with a total force strength of 86,213. Although the documents which are available are unclear on this point, it appears that Secretary McNamara was prepared to authorize eventual deployment of all of the 3-2/3 division equivalent force. Although, again, the documentation is incomplete it appears that he had been given the green light by the President to negotiate anywhere below this level but not to exceed it, that is, not to bump up against the crucial mobilization line.

Within the staffs preparing the briefings and the background papers for the SecDef as he departed for Saigon there was a generally held belief that this was the scenario which the Saigon visit would follow: The Secretary would explore in detail the justifications for General Westmoreland's minimum essential force after which he and the General would bargain and negotiate the civilianization differences which could be worked out. This "compromise" would be the ultimate force package -- Program V. There was little or any doubt among those working on the exact force levels and composition of the different packages, that the 86,000 total which had been developed in the Systems Analysis memorandum would not be exceeded and probably that the final force program package added would approximate closer to 50-65,000.
The briefings given the Secretary in Saigon divulged very little different from the considerations and arguments presented ad nauseam in Washington. In fact they were devoted to nothing more than supporting the programs already submitted which were under consideration in Washington. But the discussions are useful to get a feel for what greeted McNamara in SEA and the tenor of thought of those operators on the ground in South Vietnam. Ambassador Bunker's remarks were guarded, attributed partly to the fact, as he noted, that he had been in Vietnam barely more than two months; Secretary McNamara and perhaps many others cut from Washington had spent more total time in Vietnam than he had. Bunker proclaimed that there was general agreement as to what U.S. objectives were, but he wanted to recall them. They included:

1. A just durable and honorable peace through negotiations leading to a political settlement acceptable to the United States, the GVN, Hanoi and NLF/VC;

2. A chance for the Vietnamese people to choose freely the form of government under which they wish to live;

3. To help them build their own political institutions and develop a viable economy;

4. To make credible our obligations under the Charter of the UN and SEATO to resist aggression;

5. Eventually to develop regional organizations through which the Southeast Asian countries can carry on joint undertakings in economic development and mutual cooperation.

He appraised our progress in the direction of achieving these objectives and noted that the difficulties that we were to face were still formidable. He disliked the term "the other war." To him, it was all one war having many aspects but all a part of the whole with each of them important and essential in achieving a successful conclusion. He thought the problem of Vietnamese capabilities and performance was partially a function of the fact that there was a relatively thin crust of managerial and organizational talent. This talent had to be located and the personnel possessing it trained as we went along. He counseled patience explaining that we could not expect the same degree of competence, efficiency or speed from the Vietnamese that we demanded of ourselves and that this tardiness on the part of the Vietnamese to react often became frustrating and required the exercising of great patience in the future. He did not sound like a man anticipating a quick solution to the problem -- especially a quick military solution. He felt that realism demanded that a number of programs receive top priority. He listed: