

## MEMORANDUM

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**To:** ISP-202 Participants  
**From:** Graham Allison  
**Date:** March 31, 2008  
**Subject:** Strategic Options Memos

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From the real world, see the following five examples:

1. Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara re: Vietnam, March 24, 1965.
2. Douglas Dillon group discussion paper, "Scenario for Airstrike Against Offensive Missile Bases and Bombers in Cuba," October 25, 1962.
3. The "Fork in the Road" Memo from Secretary Robert McNamara and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy to President Johnson, January 27, 1965.
4. Memorandum from Under Secretary of State Ball to President Kennedy, November 10, 1962.
5. Memorandum for General Maxwell Taylor on "Strategic Air Planning and Berlin," from Carl Kaysen, September 5, 1961.

[Document 253]

JTM to MCN

3/24/65 (first draft)

## PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION RE VIETNAM

1. *Assessment and prognosis.* The situation in Vietnam is bad and deteriorating. Even with great, imaginative efforts on the civilian as well as military sides inside South Vietnam, the decline probably will not "bottom out" unless major actions are taken.

2. *The "trilemma."* US policy appears to be drifting. This is because, while there is near-consensus that efforts inside SVN will probably fail to prevent collapse, all 3 of the possible remedial courses of action have been rejected for one reason or another: (a) Will-breaking strikes on DRV; (b) large troop deployments; (c) exit by negotiations.

3. *Urgency.* Even with a stretched-out strike-North program, we could reach flash points within a few weeks (e.g., confrontation with DRV MIGs, hot pursuit of Chicom MIGs, DRV air attack on SVN, massive VC attack on Danang, sinking of US naval vessel, etc.). Furthermore, there is now a hint of flexibility on the Red side: The Soviets are struggling to find a Gordian knot-cutter; the Chicoms may be wavering (PARIS 5326).

4. *Actions:*

- (1) Redouble and redouble efforts inside SVN (get better organized for it!).
- (2) Prepare to deploy US combat troops, first to Pleiku (and more to Danang).
- (3) Continue distended strike-North program, postponing Phuc Yen until June.
- (4) Initiate quiet talks along the following lines:

## PHASE ONE:

- (A) *When?* Now, before a flash point.
- (B) *Who?* US-USSR, perhaps US-China in Warsaw or Moscow, or US-DRV via Seaborn in Hanoi. (Not with Liberation Front or through UK, France, India or UN; be alert for GVN officials talking under the table.)
- (C) *How?* With GVN consent; private and quiet. (Refuse formal talks until *Phase Two*.)
- (D) *What?*
  - (1) Offer to stop strikes on DRV and to withhold deployment of division-size US forces in exchange for DRV withdrawal of named units in SVN, and stoppage of infiltration, communications to VC, and VC attacks, sabotage and terrorism.
  - (2) Compliance would be policed unilaterally. If, as is likely, complete compliance by the DRV is not forthcoming, we would carry out occasional strikes.
  - (3) Do not demand stoppage of propaganda or public renunciation of doctrines.
  - (4) Regarding "defensive" VC attacks—i.e., VC defending VC-held areas from encroaching ARVN forces—we take the *public* position that

ARVN forces must be free to operate throughout SVN, especially in areas where amnesty is offered (but in fact, restraint and discretion will be exercised by the ARVN).

- (5) Terrorism and sabotage, however, must be dampened markedly throughout SVN—e.g., civilian administrators must be able to move and operate freely, certainly in so-called contested areas, and roads and railroads must be open.

## PHASE TWO:

- (A) *When?* At the end of *Phase One*.
- (B) *Who?* All interested nations.
- (C) *How?* Publicly in large Geneva-type conference.
- (D) *What?*
  - (1) Offer to remove US combat forces from South Vietnam in exchange for repatriation (or regroupment?) of DRV infiltrators and hardcore sympathizers and for erection of international machinery to verify the end of infiltration and coded communication.
  - (2) Offer to seek to determine the will of the people under international supervision, with an appropriate reflection of those who favor the VC.
  - (3) Any recognition of the Liberation Front would have to be accompanied by disarming the VC and at least avowed VC independence from DRV control.

NOTE: If the DRV will not "play" the above game, we must be prepared (1) to risk passing some flash points in the Strike-North program, (2) to put more US troops into SVN, and/or (3) to reconsider our minimum acceptable outcome.

5. *Outcomes.* In between "victory" and "defeat" in SVN lie (a) a Laos-like "government of national unity" attempting to rule all of SVN; (b) a live-and-let-live stand-down (ceasefire) tacitly recognizing current, or recent, areas of influence; (c) a "semi-equilibrium" or "slow-motion war" with slowly shifting GVN-VC areas of control.

3/24/65 (first draft)

## ANNEX—PLAN OF ACTION FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

1. *US aims:*

- 70%—To avoid a humiliating US defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor).  
 20%—To keep SVN (and then adjacent) territory from Chinese hands.  
 10%—To permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life.  
 ALSO—To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used.  
 NOT—To "help a friend," although it would be hard to stay in if asked out.

2. *The situation:* The situation in general is bad and deteriorating. The VC have the initiative. Defeatism is gaining among the rural population, somewhat in the cities, and even among the soldiers—especially those with relatives in rural areas. The Hop Tac area around Saigon is making little progress; the Delta stays bad; the country has been severed in the north. GVN control is shrinking to enclaves, some burdened with refugees. In Saigon we have a remission: Quat is giving hope on the civilian side, the Buddhists have calmed, and the split generals are in uneasy equilibrium.

3. *The preliminary question:* Can the situation inside SVN be bottomed out (a) without extreme measures against the DRV and/or (b) without deployment of large numbers of US (and other) combat troops inside SVN? The answer is perhaps, but probably no.

4. *Ways GVN might collapse:*

- (a) VC successes reduce GVN control to enclaves, causing:
  - (1) insurrection in the enclaved population,
  - (2) massive defections of ARVN soldiers and even units,
  - (3) aggravated dissension and impotence in Saigon,
  - (4) defeatism and reorientation by key GVN officials,
  - (5) entrance of left-wing elements into the government,
  - (6) emergence of a popular-front regime,
  - (7) request that US leave,
  - (8) concessions to the VC, and
  - (9) accommodations to the DRV.
- (b) VC with DRV volunteers concentrate on I & II Corps,
  - (1) conquering principal GVN-held enclaves there,
  - (2) declaring Liberation Government,
  - (3) joining the I & II Corps areas to the DRV, and
  - (4) pressing the course in (a) above for rest of SVN.
- (c) While in a temporary funk, GVN might throw in sponge:
  - (1) dealing under the table with the VC,
  - (2) asking the US to cease at least military aid,
  - (3) bringing left-wing elements into the government,
  - (4) leading to a popular-front regime, and
  - (5) ending in accommodations to the VC and DRV.
- (d) In a surge of anti-Americanism, GVN could ask the US out and pursue course otherwise similar to (c) above.

5. *The "trilemma":* US policy appears to be drifting. This is because, while there is consensus that efforts inside SVN (para 6) will probably fail to prevent collapse, all three of the possible remedial courses of action have so far been rejected:

- a. *Will-breaking strikes on the North* (para 7) are balked (1) by flash-point limits, (2) by doubts that the DRV will cave and (3) by doubts that the VC will obey a caving DRV. (Leaving strikes only a political and anti-infiltration nuisance.)
- b. *Large US troop deployments* (para 8) are blocked by "French-defeat" and "Korea" syndromes, and Quat is queasy. (Troops could be net negatives, and be besieged.)
- c. *Exit by negotiations* (para 9) is tainted by the humiliation likely to follow.

6. *Efforts inside South Vietnam:* Progress inside SVN is our main aim. Great imaginative efforts on the civilian political as well as military side must be made bearing in mind that progress depends as much on GVN efforts and luck as on added US efforts. While only a few of such efforts can pay off quickly enough to affect the present ominous deterioration, some may, and we are dealing here in small critical margins. Furthermore, such investment is essential to provide

- a. *Improve spirit and effectiveness.* [fill out further, drawing from State memo to the President]
  - (1) Achieve governmental stability.
  - (2) Augment the psy-war program.
  - (3) Build a stronger pro-government infrastructure.
- b. *Improve physical security.* [fill out]
- c. *Reduce infiltration.* [fill out]

7. *Strikes on the North (program of progressive military pressure).*

- a. *Purposes:*
  - (1) To reduce DRV/VC activities by affecting DRV will.
  - (2) To improve the GVN/VC relative "balance of morale."
  - (3) To provide the US/GVN with a bargaining counter.
  - (4) To reduce DRV infiltration of men and materiel.
  - (5) To show the world the lengths to which US will go for a friend.
- b. *Program:* Each week, 1 or 2 "mission days" with 100-plane high-damage US-VNAF strikes each "day" against important targets, plus 3 armed recon missions—all moving upward in weight of effort, value of target or proximity to Hanoi and China.  
 ALTERNATIVE ONE: 12-week DRV-wide program shunning only "population" targets.  
 ALTERNATIVE TWO: 12-week program short of taking out Phuc Yen (Hanoi) airfield.
- c. *Other actions:*
  - (1) Blockade of DRV ports by VNAF/US-dropped mines or by ships.
  - (2) South Vietnamese-implemented 34A MAROPS.
  - (3) Reconnaissance flights over Laos and the DRV.
  - (4) Daily BARREL ROLL armed recon strikes in Laos (plus T-28s).
  - (5) Four-a-week BARREL ROLL choke-point strikes in Laos.
  - (6) US/VNAF air & naval strikes against VC ops and bases in SVN.
  - (7) Westward deployment of US forces.
  - (8) No deSoto patrols or naval bombardment of DRV at this time.
- d. *Red "flash points."* There are events which we can expect to imply substantial risk of escalation:
  - [(1) Air strikes north of 17°. (This one already passed.)]
  - (2) First US/VNAF confrontation with DRV MIGs.
  - (3) Strike on Phuc Yen MIG base near Hanoi.
  - (4) First strikes on Tonkin industrial/population targets.
  - (5) First strikes on Chinese railroad or near China.
  - (6) First US/VNAF confrontation with Chicom MIGs.
  - (7) First hot pursuit of Chicom MIGs into China.
  - (8) First flak-suppression of Chicom- or Soviet-manned SAM.
  - (9) Massive introduction of US ground troops into SVN.
  - (10) US/ARVN occupation of DRV territory (e.g., Ile de Tigre).
  - (11) First Chi/Sov-US confrontation or sinking in blockade.
- e. *Blue "flash points."* China/DRV surely are sensitive to events which might cause us to escalate:
  - (1) All of the above "Red" flash points.
  - (2) VC ground attack on Danang.
  - (3) Sinking of a US naval vessel.

- (5) Deployment of Chinese troops into North Vietnam.
- (6) Deployment of FROGs or SAMs in North Vietnam.
- (7) DRV air attack on South Vietnam.
- (8) Announcement of Liberation Government in I/II Corps area.

f. *Major risks:*

- (1) Losses to DRV MIGs, and later possibly to SAMs.
- (2) Increased VC activities, and possibly Liberation Government.
- (3) Panic or other collapse of GVN from under us.
- (4) World-wide revulsion against us (against strikes, blockade, etc.).
- (5) Sympathetic fires over Berlin, Cyprus, Kashmir, Jordan waters.
- (6) Escalation to conventional war with DRV, China (and USSR?).
- (7) Escalation to the use of nuclear weapons.

g. *Other Red moves:*

- (1) More jets to NVN with DRV or Chicom pilots.
- (2) More AAA (SAMs?) and radar gear (Soviet-manned?) to NVN.
- (3) Increased air and ground forces in South China.
- (4) Other "defensive" DRV retaliation (e.g., shoot-down of a U-2).
- (5) PL land grabs in Laos.
- (6) PL declaration of new government in Laos.
- (7) Political drive for "neutralization" of Indo-China.

h. *Escalation control.* We can do three things to avoid escalation too-much or too-fast:

- (1) *Stretch out.* Retard the program (e.g., 1 not 2 fixed strikes a week).
- (2) *Circuit breaker.* Abandon at least temporarily the theory that our strikes are intended to break DRV will, and "plateau" them below the "Phuc Yen airfield" flash point on one or the other of these tenable theories:

- [a] That we strike as necessary to interdict infiltration.
- [b] That our level of strikes is generally responsive to the level of VC/DRV activities in South Vietnam.

(3) *Shunt.* Plateau the air strikes per para (2) and divert the energy into:

- [a] A mine- and/or ship-blockade of DRV ports.
- [b] Massive deployment of US (and other?) troops into SVN (and Laos?):
  - [1] To man the "enclaves," releasing ARVN forces.
  - [2] To take over Pleiku, Kontum, Darlac provinces.
  - [3] To create a 16+° sea-Thailand infiltration wall.

i. *Important miscellany:*

- (1) Program should appear to be relentless (i.e., possibility of employing "circuit-breakers" should be secret).
- (2) Enemy should be kept aware of our limited objectives.
- (3) Allies should be kept on board.
- (4) USSR should be kept in passive role.
- (5) Information program should preserve US public support.

8. *Program of large US ground effort in SVN and SEA.*a. *Purposes:*

- (1) To defeat the VC on the ground.
- (2) To improve GVN/VC relative "morale balance."
- (3) To improve US/GVN bargaining position.
- (4) To show world lengths to which US will go to fulfil commitments.

b. *Program:*

- (1) Continue strike-North "crescendo" or "plateau" (para 7 above).
  - (2) Add any "combat support" personnel needed by MACV; and
  - (3) Deploy remainder of the III Marine Expeditionary Force to Danang; and
  - (4) Deploy one US (plus one Korean?) division to defeat VC in Pleiku-Kontum-Darlac area,
- or
- (5) Deploy one US (plus one Korean?) division to hold enclaves (Bien Hoa/ Ton Son Nhut, Nha Trang, Qui Non, Pleiku); and/or
  - (6) Deploy 3-5 US divisions (with "international" elements) across Laos-SVN infiltration routes and at key SVN population centers.

c. *Advantages:*

- (1) Improve (at least initially) manpower ratio vs. the VC.
- (2) Boost GVN morale and depress DRV/VC morale.
- (3) Firm up US commitment in eyes of all Reds, allies and neutrals.
- (4) Deter (or even prevent) coups in the South.

d. *Risks:*

- (1) Deployment will suck Chicom troops into DRV.
- (2) Deployment will suck counterbalancing DRV/Chinese troops into SVN.
- (3) Announcement of deployment will cause massive DRV/Chicom effort pre-emptively to occupy new SVN territory.
- (4) US losses will increase.
- (5) Friction with GVN (and Koreans?) over command will arise.
- (6) GVN will tend increasingly to "let the US do it."
- (7) Anti-US "colonialist" mood may increase in- and outside SVN.
- (8) US forces may be surrounded and trapped.

e. *Important miscellany:*

- (1) There are no obvious circuit-breakers. Once US troops are in, it will be difficult to withdraw them or to move them, say, to Thailand without admitting defeat.
- (2) It will take massive deployments (many divisions) to improve the GVN/US:VC ratio to the optimum 10+:1.
- (3) In any event, our Project 22 planning with the Thais for defense of the Mekong towns must proceed apace.

9. *Exit by negotiations.*a. *Bargaining counters.*(1) *What DRV could give:*

- [a] Stop training and sending personnel to SVN/Laos.
- [b] Stop sending arms and supplies into SVN/Laos.
- [c] Stop directing military actions in SVN/Laos.
- [d] Order the VC/PL to stop their insurgencies.
- [e] Stop propaganda broadcasts to South Vietnam.
- [f] Remove VM forces and cadres from SVN and Laos.
- [g] See that VC/PL stop incidents in SVN and Laos.
- [h] See that VC/PL cease resistance.
- [i] See that VC/PL turn in weapons and bases.

morale must be buoyed), our allies (who must trust us as "underwriters") and the US public (which must support our risk-taking with US lives and prestige).

a. *Urgency.* If the strike-North program (para 7) is not altered: we will reach the MIG/Phuc Yen flash point in approximately one month. If the program is altered only to stretch out the crescendo: up to 3 months may be had before that flash point, at the expense of a less persuasive squeeze. If the program is altered to "plateau" or dampen the strikes: much of their negotiating value will be lost. (Furthermore, there is now a hint of flexibility on the Red side: The Soviets are struggling to find a Gordian knot-cutter; the Chicomys may be wavering (Paris 5326).)

- b. *Possible course:*
- (1) Redouble efforts inside SVN (get better organized for it).
  - (2) Prepare to deploy US combat troops in phases, starting with one Army division at Pleiku and a Marine MEF at Danang.
  - (3) Stretch out strike-North program, postponing Phuc Yen until June (exceed flash points only in specific retaliations).
  - (4) Initiate talks along the following lines, bearing in mind that formal partition, or even a "Laos" partition, is out in SVN; we must break the VC back or work out an accommodation.

#### PHASE ONE TALKS:

- (A) *When:* Now, before an avoidable flash point.  
 (B) *Who:* US-USSR, perhaps also US-India. (Not with China or Liberation Front; not through UK or France or U Thant; keep alert to possibility that GVN officials are talking under the table.)  
 (C) *How:* With GVN consent, private, quiet (refuse formal talks).  
 (D) *What:*

- (1) Offer to stop strikes on DRV and withhold deployment of large US forces in trade for DRV stoppage of infiltration, communications to VC, and VC attacks, sabotage and terrorism, and for withdrawal of named units in SVN.
- (2) Compliance would be policed unilaterally. If, as is likely, complete compliance by the DRV is not forthcoming, we would carry out occasional strikes.
- (3) We make clear that we are not demanding cessation of Red propaganda nor a public renunciation by Hanoi of its doctrines.
- (4) Regarding "defensive" VC attacks—i.e., VC defending VC-held areas from encroaching ARVN forces—we take the public position that ARVN forces must be free to operate throughout SVN, especially in areas where amnesty is offered (but in fact, discretion will be exercised).
- (5) Terrorism and sabotage, however, must be dampened markedly throughout the country, and civilian administrators must be free to move and operate freely, certainly in so-called contested areas (and perhaps even in VC base areas).

#### PHASE TWO TALKS:

- (A) *When:* At the end of *Phase One*.  
 (B) *Who:* All interested nations.  
 (C) *How:* Publicly in large conference.  
 (D) *What:*

- (1) Offer to remove US combat forces from South Vietnam in exchange for repatriation (or regroupment?) of DRV infiltrators.

(j) See that VC/PL surrender for amnesty/expatriation.

(2) *What GVN/US could give:*

- [a] Stop (or not increase) air strikes on DRV.
- [b] Remove (or not increase) US troops in SVN.
- [c] Rice supply to DRV.
- [d] Assurance that US/GVN have no designs on NVN.
- [e] Assurance that US/GVN will not demand public renunciation by DRV of Communist goals.
- [f] Assurance that "peaceful coexistence" (e.g., continuation of Red propaganda in SVN) is acceptable.
- [g] Capitulation: Leftists in GVN, coalition government, and eventual incorporation of SVN into DRV.

b. *Possible outcomes:*

- (1) Pacified non-Communist South Vietnam.
- (2) "Laotian" solution, with areas of de facto VC dominion, a "government of national unity," and a Liberation Front ostensibly weaned from DRV control.
- (3) Explicit partition of SVN, with each area under a separate government.
- (4) A "semi-equilibrium"—a slow-motion war—with slowly shifting GVN-VC lines.

(5) Loss of SVN to the DRV.

c. *Techniques to minimize impact of bad outcomes.* If/when it is estimated that even the best US/GVN efforts mean failure ("flash" or defeat), it will be important to act to minimize the after-damage to US effectiveness and image by steps such as these:

- (1) Publicize uniqueness and congenital impossibility of SVN case (e.g., Viet Minh held much of SVN in 1954, long sieve-like borders, unfavorable terrain, no national tradition, few administrators, mess left by French, competing factions, Red LOC advantage, late US start, etc.).
- (2) Take opportunity offered by next coup or GVN anti-US tantrum to "ship out" (coupled with advance threat to do so if they fail to "shape up").
- (3) Create diversionary "offensives" elsewhere in the world (e.g., to shore up Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, India, Australia; to launch an "anti-poverty" program for underdeveloped areas).
- (4) Enter multi-nation negotiations calculated to shift opinions and values.

d. *Risks:* With the physical situation and the trends as they are, the risk is overwhelming that an exit negotiated now would result in humiliation for the US.

10. *Evaluation:* It is essential—however badly SEA may go over the next 1-3 years—that US emerge as a "good doctor." We must have kept promises, been tough, taken risks, gotten bloodied, and hurt the enemy very badly. We must avoid harmful appearances which will affect judgments by, and provide pretext to, other nations regarding how the US will behave in future cases of particular interest to those nations—regarding US policy, power, resolve and competence to deal with their problems. In this connection, the relevant audiences are the South Vietnamese (whose

4. The President repeated his earlier approval of the 21-point program of military actions submitted by General Harold K. Johnson under date of March 14 and re-emphasized his desire that aircraft and helicopter reinforcements under this program be accelerated.

5. The President approved an 18-20,000 man increase in U.S. military support forces to fill out existing units and supply needed logistic personnel.

6. The President approved the deployment of two additional Marine Battalions and one Marine Air Squadron and associated headquarters and support elements.

7. The President approved a change of mission for all Marine Battalions deployed to Vietnam to permit their more active use under conditions to be established and approved by the Secretary of Defense in consultation with the Secretary of State.

8. The President approved the urgent exploration, with the Korean, Australian, and New Zealand Governments, of the possibility of rapid deployment of significant combat elements from their armed forces in parallel with the additional Marine deployment approved in paragraph 6.

9. Subject to continuing review, the President approved the following general framework of continuing action against North Vietnam and Laos:

We should continue roughly the present slowly ascending tempo of ROLLING THUNDER operations, being prepared to add strikes in response to a higher rate of VC operations, or conceivably to slow the pace in the unlikely event VC slackened off sharply for what appeared to be more than a temporary operational lull.

The target systems should continue to avoid the effective GCI range of MIGs. We should continue to vary the types of targets, stepping up attacks on lines of communication in the near future, and possibly moving in a few weeks to attacks on the rail lines north and northeast of Hanoi.

Leaflet operations should be expanded to obtain maximum practicable psychological effect on the North Vietnamese population.

Blockade or aerial mining of North Vietnamese ports needs further study and should be considered for future operations. It would have major political complications, especially in relation to the Soviets and other third countries, but also offers many advantages.

Air operation in Laos, particularly route blocking operations in the Panhandle area, should be stepped up to the maximum remunerative rate.

10. Ambassador Taylor will promptly seek the reactions of the South Vietnamese Government to appropriate sections of this program and their approval as necessary, and in the event of disapproval or difficulty at that end, these decisions will be appropriately reconsidered. In any event, no action into Vietnam under paragraphs 6 and 7 above should take place without GVN approval or further Presidential authorization.

11. The President desires that with respect to the actions in paragraphs 5 through 7, premature publicity be avoided by all possible precautions. The actions themselves should be taken as rapidly as practicable, but in ways that should minimize any appearance of sudden changes in policy, and official statements on these troop movements will be made only with the direct approval of the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of State. The President's desire is that these movements and changes should be understood as being gradual and wholly consistent with existing policy.

McGeorge Bundy

tors and for erection of international machinery to verify the end of infiltration and communication.

(2) Offer to seek to determine the will of the people under international supervision, with an appropriate reflection of those who favor the VC.

(3) Any recognition of the Liberation Front would have to be accompanied by disarming the VC and at least avowed VC independence from DRV control.

PHASE THREE TALKS: Avoid any talks regarding the future of all of Southeast Asia. Thailand's future should not be up for discussion; and we have the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Accords covering the rest of the area.

c. Special Points:

(1) Play on DRV's fear of China.

(2) To show good will, suspend strikes on North for a few days if requested by Soviets during efforts to mediate.

(3) Have a contingency plan prepared to evacuate US personnel in case a para-9-type situation arises.

(4) If the DRV will not "play" the above game, we must be prepared [a] to risk passing some flash points, in the Strike-North program [b] to put more US troops into SVN, and/or [c] to reconsider our minimum acceptable outcome.

[Document 254]

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

April 6, 1965

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 328

MEMORANDUM FOR  
THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

On Thursday, April 1, the President made the following decisions with respect to Vietnam:

1. Subject to modifications in the light of experience, and to coordination and direction both in Saigon and in Washington, the President approved the 41-point program of non-military actions submitted by Ambassador Taylor in a memorandum dated March 31, 1965.

2. The President gave general approval to the recommendations submitted by Mr. Rowan in his report dated March 16, with the exception that the President withheld approval of any request for supplemental funds at this time—it is his decision that this program is to be energetically supported by all agencies and departments and by the reprogramming of available funds as necessary within USA.

3. The President approved the urgent exploration of the 12 suggestions for covert and other actions submitted by the Director of Central Intelligence under date of March 31.

(2)

~~TOP SECRET~~ -- SENSITIVE

SECRET

32

DILLON  
PAPER

Final Draft

-Scenario for Airstrike against offensive missile bases and bombers in Cuba.

In response to  
Meeting 10/25am  
para. 7 Minute 4

ADVANTAGES

1. Carries out President's pledge to eliminate offensive threat to U.S. and Hemisphere from Cuba and avoids any erosion of U.S. momentum and position. The pledge carried out shows that U.S. has will to fight and to protect vital interests (of great importance vis-a-vis Berlin).

2. Since directed at offensive weapons, keeps issue focused on Soviet nuclear presence in Cuba in defiance of OAS and majority of Security Council.

3. Sharp, possible one time action, may carry smaller risks of further escalation than a series of confrontations over a period of time. Soviet decision to risk major war unlikely to be decisively affected by this action in an area non-vital to the Soviets.

4. Prompt action will avoid danger of a growth of hands-off Cuba movement throughout Latin America which might make it increasingly difficult to strike at offensive weapons. Present willingness of Latin Americans to support strong action probably cannot be maintained indefinitely.

5. Signals clearly that U.S. not prepared to bargain bases in Cuba for positions in Berlin, NATO and elsewhere.

6. It could demonstrate to Cubans, Castro and others, the weakness of Soviet position in Cuba. In the absence of a strong Soviet reaction in defense of Cuba, we would start the process of disenchantment and disaffection requisite to undermining Castro and Cuban reliance on the Soviet Union. We would also weaken any tendencies to rely on Soviets elsewhere in world.

7. Removes a military threat to U.S. from Cuban territory.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE - Bureau of Operations  
Denies Khrushchev a possible cheap victory through successful maintenance of offensive weapons in Cuba.

DIST.  
S, U, G, SIAL, SIS, S/S-S-Davis Mo  
CG/AM

*oade*

Final Draft

~~TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE~~

DISADVANTAGES

1. This action may force Khrushchev to react strongly and could result in some type of war. Khrushchev will not order launch of a missile from Cuba unless he is ready for war essentially on other grounds. There is greater likelihood of a riposte in kind. However, it is unlikely that the risks of major war are greater than through escalation of blockade.
2. There is remote possibility that some local Soviet commander in Cuba may order firing of a missile.
3. Adverse effect on U. S. image of initiation of use of force against a small country. This can be minimized by making attack selective and focused on Soviet offensive weapons. At same time there would be positive increments to our image from demonstration of clear willingness to take on the Soviets in protection of our vital interests.
4. Unless carefully handled could damage long-range U.S.-Cuban relations.
5. May not totally eliminate offensive weapons thus calling for follow up attacks and/or invasion, unless full and unlimited international inspection is agreed to.



Final Draft

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SECRET -- SENSITIVE

PREREQUISITES FOR DECISION

1. Veto of U.S. resolution in Security Council.
2. Evidence that Soviets have continued build-up of existing offensive capability in Cuba in defiance of Presidential warning and OAS resolution.

ACTIONS PRIOR OR SIMULTANEOUS TO STRIKE

1. White House statement that offensive build-up is continuing, a dangerous and provocative act, which increases gravity of situation. Repeats warning for those engaged in this work.
2. Delivery of copy of White House statement to Cuban representative at UN.
3. Evacuation warning (as long as militarily feasible) to personnel in strike areas by leaflet drop. A strike plan designed to accomplish mission with minimum damage to non-military targets.
4. Inform OAS (Chairman) shortly in advance of strike.
5. Arrange for Ambassadors to notify Latin American heads of state at zero hour.
6. Inform NATO Allies and others at appropriate time.
7. Letter to K delivered at zero hour, describing action and indicating regret that continuation of work at offensive sites had forced action, limited nature of operation, our effort to limit personnel losses, and calling for immediate consultations to reduce world-wide tensions.

~~TOP SECRET~~ -- SENSITIVE

Final Draft

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

1. Continuation of close air surveillance.
2. Be prepared to hit SAM sites and airfields if reconnaissance planes attacked.
3. Immediate report to Organ of Consultation (OAS) and adoption of resolution requesting Soviets to evacuate offensive forces from Cuba under international inspection.
4. Report to UN Security Council explaining limited nature of operation and requesting immediate despatch of UN observer team to Cuba.
5. Maintenance of blockade extended to include POL until clear evidence is available that offensive bases have been eliminated.
6. Major Presidential address including special message to Cuban people.
7. Appropriate leaflet drops over Cuba.

42. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to President Johnson

Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Memos to the President, McGeorge Bundy, Vol. VIII. Secret.

Washington, January 27, 1965.

Re Basic Policy in Vietnam

1. Bob McNamara and I have asked for the meeting with you at 11:30/2/ in order to have a very private discussion of the basic situation in Vietnam. In a way it is unfortunate that we are meeting the morning after a minor coup, because that is not the present point. All of us agree with Alexis Johnson that nothing should be done on that until we have particular recommendations from Saigon (though at that point we may well want to urge Taylor and Johnson to make the best of the matter and not try to undo it).

/2/On another copy of this memorandum a handwritten marginal notation by McNamara reads: "1/27/65 Mac & I presented these views orally to the Pres., who had already read this report, in a mtg with Dean Rusk Wed. mtg [January 27] B Mac." (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, South Vietnam Statements and Supporting Papers)

2. What we want to say to you is that both of us are now pretty well convinced that our current policy can lead only to disastrous defeat. What we are doing now, essentially, is to wait and hope for a stable government. Our December directives make it very plain that wider action against the Communists will not take place unless we can get such a government. In the last six weeks that effort has been unsuccessful, and Bob and I are persuaded that there is no real hope of success in this area unless and until our own policy and priorities change.

3. The underlying difficulties in Saigon arise from the spreading conviction there that the future is without hope for anti-Communists. More and more the good men are covering their flanks and avoiding executive responsibility for firm anti-Communist policy. Our best friends have been somewhat discouraged by our own inactivity in the face of major attacks on our own installations. The Vietnamese know just as well as we do that the Viet Cong are gaining in the countryside. Meanwhile, they see the enormous power of the United States withheld, and they get little sense of firm and active U.S. policy. They feel that we are unwilling to take serious risks. In one sense, all of this is outrageous, in the light of all that we have done and all that we are ready to do if they will only pull up their socks. But it is a fact--or at least so McNamara and I now think.

4. The uncertainty and lack of direction which pervade the Vietnamese authorities are also increasingly visible among our own people, even the most loyal and determined. Overtones of this sentiment appear in our cables from Saigon, and one can feel them also among our most loyal staff officers here in Washington. The basic directive says that we

will not go further until there is a stable government, and no one has much hope that there is going to be a stable government while we sit still. The result is that we are pinned into a policy of first aid to squabbling politicians and passive reaction to events we do not try to control. Or so it seems.

5. Bob and I believe that the worst course of action is to continue in this essentially passive role which can only lead to eventual defeat and an invitation to get out in humiliating circumstances.

6. We see two alternatives. The first is to use our military power in the Far East and to force a change of Communist policy. The second is to deploy all our resources along a track of negotiation, aimed at salvaging what little can be preserved with no major addition to our present military risks. Bob and I tend to favor the first course, but we believe that both should be carefully studied and that alternative programs should be argued out before you.

7. Both of us understand the very grave questions presented by any decision of this sort. We both recognize that the ultimate responsibility is not ours. Both of us have fully supported your willingness, in earlier months, to move out of the middle course. We both agree that every effort should still be made to improve our operations on the ground and to prop up the authorities in South Vietnam as best we can. But we are both convinced that none of this is enough, and that the time has come for harder choices.

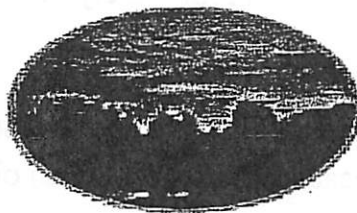
8. You should know that Dean Rusk does not agree with us. He does not quarrel with our assertion that things are going very badly and that the situation is unraveling. He does not assert that this deterioration can be stopped. What he does say is that the consequences of both escalation and withdrawal are so bad that we simply must find a way of making our present policy work. This would be good if it was possible. Bob and I do not think it is.

9. A topic of this magnitude can only be opened for initial discussion this morning, but McNamara and I have reached the point where our obligations to you simply do not permit us to administer our present directives in silence and let you think we see real hope in them.

McG. B.

4

*The Avalon Project*



*at the Yale Law School*

**The Cuban Missile Crisis  
Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State (Ball) to  
President Kennedy**



169.

Washington, November 10, 1962.

**SUBJECT**

Suggested Policy Line for Cuban Crisis(1)

**Assumptions**

Until we have received a definitive Soviet answer regarding the IL-28s and a reliable report as to the progress of the Mikoyan-Castro discussions, we must be ready to proceed on any one of four assumptions:

Assumption A. That the USSR will remove the IL-28s and will arrange adequate ground inspection.

If the removal of the bombers is sufficiently assured and the inspection arrangements adequate, we could presumably regard the incident as closed and give some form of guaranty regarding the invasion of Cuba. These arrangements would, of course, need to include more than a provision for Second-Phase inspection by the five Ambassadors. But even that limited progress might indicate a sufficiently forthcoming attitude to make possible some Third-Phase solution through a nuclear-free zone or otherwise.

Assumption B. That the USSR will arrange ground inspection, but will refuse to remove the IL-28s on the ground that these are Cuban property.

This seems rather unlikely. If the Cubans should agree to yield on the question of adequate

ground inspection, (which means something more than mere Second-Phase arrangements for inspection by the five Ambassadors) then it is hardly likely that they would insist upon the retention of the IL-28s.

Assumption C. That the USSR will agree to withdraw the IL-28s, but will assert that they are unable to arrange ground inspection because of alleged Cuban objections.

Assumption D. That the USSR will neither remove the IL-28s nor provide arrangements for ground inspection and continuing safeguards. Khrushchev will excuse his non-performance on the ground that Cuba is a sovereign country, the IL-28s belong to the Cubans, and Castro is unwilling to permit any form of ground inspection.

Under either assumption C or D we would be presented with a major choice of policy. Stated in large terms, two available lines of policy would seem worth consideration:

First, we might take the position that Cuba is effectively a puppet of the Soviet Union since it is economically dependent on Moscow; therefore, regardless of Cuban intransigence, we would continue to look to the Soviet Union to enforce the Kennedy-Khrushchev undertakings.

Or second, we might take at face value the Soviet assertion that Russia cannot control Castro. In that event we would tacitly or explicitly accept the fact or fiction (whichever it might be) that Khrushchev had complied to the extent of his ability and thereafter concentrate our pressure on Cuba. In that event, not only would we refuse to give any assurance of noninvasion, but we would make it clear that we could not tolerate--for reasons not only of our own security but of the security of the Hemisphere--that Castro be left in the possession of offensive weapons.

### **Advantages of Second Line of Policy**

The second line of policy seems preferable from the point of view of the total American interest, for the following reasons:

1. The shifting of the burden of responsibility would minimize the dangers of a direct confrontation with the USSR, which might escalate into a larger conflict.
2. It would assist Khrushchev in extricating the USSR from an involvement in Cuba which is proving progressively more costly and less profitable.
3. It would eliminate the Cuban question from the US-USSR dialogue and thus permit progress on other major issues.
4. It would provide freedom of action for the United States to deal with Castro directly, both on its own behalf and on behalf of the other American states.

## Continuing Course of Action Regarding Cuba

If the United States should encourage the de facto disengagement of the USSR from its Cuban involvement and thus achieve a measure of freedom of action against Castro, the question would remain: What course of action should we then elect to follow?

Presumably that course of action should include the following elements:

- (a) It should be consistent with our position that the United States cannot accept either the continuance of offensive weapons in Cuba or the absence of adequate safeguards against the introduction of new offensive weapons.
- (b) It should be designed to undermine the authority and prestige of Castro, both in Cuba and in the eyes of the world.
- (c) It should be directed towards setting in motion a train of events that would progressively enhance the American ability to deal decisively with Castro.
- (d) It should involve the least possible direct challenge to the prestige or authority of Chairman Khrushchev and the USSR.

## Available Options

Four possible courses of action would appear worthy of serious consideration:

1. Direct military action against Cuba.
2. Resumption of the quarantine on the basis of an expanded list.
3. Continued systematic aerial surveillance with the strong possibility of provoking interference that might lead to limited or general military action.
4. Solution through Security Council Arrangements.

### I--Direct Military Action

As contemplated in a paper prepared by the Department of Defense, direct military action would be taken against the IL-28s.(2) Preparation for this action would consist of an announcement indicating the measures thus far taken by the USSR to comply with the agreement but emphasizing that the United States would have to take necessary actions to eliminate the threat created by the bombers. The President would, however, be "prepared to

ensure that these actions will not include an invasion of Cuba." The actions described in the Department of Defense memorandum are as follows:

"1. Issue a warning that action to remove the bomber threat is about to be taken, that the areas where these aircraft are located should be evacuated by all personnel, and that any attack on U.S. aircraft will be met with appropriate counter action.

"2. Conduct the air attack by selective and discriminate attack:

"a. At the present time it is estimated that such action within the next few days would require attacks (1) on San Julien Air Base with 16 F101 strike aircraft (includes local suppression aircraft) armed with napalm, 2.75" rockets and 20mm ammunition, accompanied by 8 F-104/F8U aircraft equipped with GAR 8 missile to fly low level CAP, (2) on Holguin Air Base with 8A4D aircraft armed with napalm and Zuni rockets and 8F8U-2/F4H aircraft as CAP equipped with Sidewinder/Sparrow missiles and 20mm ammunition (with suppression provided by 8F8Us armed with Zuni rockets and 20mm).

"b. If the attack is delayed beyond the next 48 hours, dispersal of IL28s may require attack on additional airfields.

"3. In the absence of air counter action, the attack should be strictly confined to the destruction or serious damaging of the IL-28 aircraft by the most precise air attack means available. If there is air counter action, the suppression of this action by the assigned suppression aircraft would be required."

### **Arguments for Direct Military Action**

(a) Such action would presumably be effective in eliminating the threat from these offensive aircraft;

(b) It would be action consistent with our conduct of the Cuban affair, i.e., it would be "clear cut, forthright and have been fairly signaled in advance".

(c) With its preponderant military strength the United States could promptly deal with any Cuban reaction.

### **Arguments Against Direct Military Action**

(a) It would be regarded as a direct attack against Cuba and the Soviet Union might feel compelled to intervene on Cuba's behalf in order to save face, or react elsewhere.



(b) In the absence of any direct Cuban attack on the United States or any other OAS country, world opinion might tend to regard the United States action as excessive--particularly in view of our own maintenance of bomber bases around the world and the disparity in size and resources between the United States and Cuba.

(c) It might well provoke Cuban reaction against Guantanamo and possibly even against the Southeastern United States (presumably by MIGs).

## II--Resumption of Quarantine on an Expanded Basis

The scenario for the reimposition of the quarantine is described in a Department of Defense memorandum as follows:

"(1) A public announcement should be made by the President, or other high government official, that:

- a. Uncrating, assembling and readying of IL-28 jet bombers has continued.
- b. The UN has been frustrated in its attempt to establish adequate inspection of incoming ships.
- c. The UN has been frustrated in its attempts to establish adequate on-site inspections.

These aircraft with a combat radius of 740 miles remain a threat to the entire Caribbean, the northern portion of South America, Mexico, and the southern portion of the United States.

(2) The United States will maintain the present quarantine until the bombers are removed and adequate on-site inspections, including appropriate long term agreements, are achieved. The United States supports the Brazilian Resolution and believes that it may offer an adequate long term solution, not only to the present crisis, but to future crises of this kind. If the Cubans fail to comply, the United States will have to consider taking additional steps.

(3)

- a. If no steps are taken to remove the bombers as a result of this statement, then the US should extend the quarantine to petroleum, reiterating our position that we will lift the quarantine if the bombers are removed and adequate inspection is permitted. The inclusion of petroleum under the quarantine would have immediate and sharp

reflections within Cuba. Not only normal oil consumption, but nearly all electric power production in Cuba is dependent upon fuel oil. The Cubans are estimated to have 60 days' supply of gas and diesel fuel oil, and approximately 110 days' supply for power and industrial use. Sabotage could further reduce this stockpile if necessary. For this reason, it would seem very likely that if such a quarantine were established, compliance should be forthcoming shortly thereafter."

### Arguments for Quarantine

- (a) At the present time not only the OAS but the NATO countries strongly support our insistence on adequate inspection--and, perhaps to a lesser extent, on the removal of the IL-28s.
- (b) The Soviet Union might be willing to withhold the further supply to Cuba of items on the proscribed list in order to reduce its investment in a rapidly wasting asset; for this reason it might secretly welcome a US blockade.
- (c) The quarantine might result in the strangulation of the Castro regime without any direct loss of life.
- (d) The imposition of a quarantine on shipments of POL would be directly relevant to the immobilization of the IL-28s.
- (d) Even were the Soviet Union to run the blockade, the resulting confrontation could perhaps be restricted to sea warfare--an arena in which we have a clear advantage. The danger of escalation might, therefore, be less than in the case of any form of bombing attack on Cuba which might result in bombing reprisals elsewhere.

### Arguments Against Quarantine

- (a) The renewed quarantine would be a direct challenge to the Soviet right of free sea transit. It would thus fail to meet one of the criteria listed earlier--an action directly operating only on Cuba.
- (b) Khrushchev yielded to the threat of our quarantine once by turning his ships around. He could not afford the humiliation of doing so a second time--especially after the missiles have been removed and he has claimed to have complied fully with his undertakings.
- (c) Khrushchev was willing to pull back his ships carrying sophisticated weapons to safeguard USSR technology. He would not have a similar motive for holding back tankers filled with POL.

(d) The USSR could not stand idly by while the economy of a Socialist state was slowly strangled; the loss of face and appearance of impotence would be too high a price for it to pay.

(e) The quarantine would be resented by several of our NATO friends, including the UK, which never acknowledged its legality. They acquiesced before because the limited quarantine did not affect their trade; they might well refuse to recognize a blockade which cut off valuable shipping of POL--particularly since there is a fairly widespread feeling that we have already won our point by expelling the missiles.

### III--Enforced Aerial Surveillance

It is suggested that, instead of reimposing the blockade, we should undertake a systematic and unremitting air reconnaissance over Cuba, both high and low until such time as

- (1) Castro yielded on inspection and the removal of the IL-28's;
- (2) Castro was overthrown; or
- (3) The reconnaissance provoked an armed response that justified our taking direct military action enabling us, at least, to eliminate the IL-28's.

### Arguments for Reconnaissance

- (a) This course could be justified under the authority of OAS action.
- (b) It would be thoroughly consistent with our position that we could not tolerate a situation in which we neither had safeguards against the introduction of offensive weapons nor adequate observation to insure that offensive weapons presently in Cuban hands would not be used.
- (c) It would--hopefully--avoid direct confrontation with the USSR.
- (d) It would provide a means for imposing a constant public humiliation on Castro. No Government can permit national air space to be constantly invaded without demonstrating its weakness, both at home and abroad.
- (e) Castro could not continue for very long to stand down his planes and restrain his anti-aircraft fire without publicly acknowledging his own weakness. The result would be that sooner or later he would almost certainly attack our planes, which would permit an escalating scale of reprisal and counter-reprisal that could permit us to deal conclusively

with the problem of Castro.

#### IV--Solution Through Security Council Arrangements

This course of action is explained and recommended in the attached memorandum of Governor Stevenson.(3)

### CONCLUSION

#### The Problem of Choice

Direct action against Cuba on the basis suggested in Section I can probably be ruled out. Such a course of action would probably be regarded by world opinion as excessive, and it would involve grave risks of provoking retaliation elsewhere in the world.

Realistically, the choice would appear to be between an expanded quarantine, as recommended in Section II, or enforced surveillance, as recommended in Section III.

The decision between these alternative lines of policy turns in large part on a judgment as to the extent to which Khrushchev might in fact be prepared and able to disengage from Cuba. If, as a result of Castro's obduracy, he could cut his investment and leave Cuba without specific security commitments, he might be willing to turn his back while the United States took advantage of the opportunities provided by Castro's response to continued--and necessarily harassing--low and high level surveillance.

On the other hand, if it is felt that Khrushchev could not sit idly by while we forcibly eliminated the IL-28's and wiped out the SAM sites, the surveillance course might appear too dangerous.

On this assumption an expanded quarantine has much to recommend it. If the quarantine route is followed no military action need be taken directly against Cuba; therefore, Khrushchev would not be called upon to respond to what he must necessarily denounce as imperialist aggression. Under these circumstances Khrushchev might be prepared to see Cuba go down the drain through the slow strangulation of a blockade.

But the vice of the blockade is that it directly engaged the prestige of the USSR since it interferes with the freedom of movement of the Soviet merchant fleet. Khrushchev would have to denounce the United States for piracy--as he has already done--and for seeking to starve a small country whose only fault is its allegiance to Communism, and his supine acquiescence in that piracy would be read by all the world as a humiliating confession of impotence.

Against the background of these considerations, the questions for decision must include the following:

1. Would Khrushchev be ready to absorb the prestige loss of acquiescing in a reimposed quarantine or would he feel compelled to use his submarines against our naval vessels?

The existence of substantial doubt regarding the answer to this question suggests that before a quarantine were reimposed some effort might be made to sound out Soviet reactions.

2. If the quarantine did result in limited naval action, how would this affect other US-USSR relationships?

3. Even assuming that we encouraged Khrushchev to disengage from Cuba, if surveillance led to even limited bombing, could the Soviet Union afford to stand by while a nation was attacked that the USSR had vowed to defend? Might not the prestige costs be too great?(4)

George W. Ball

1 Under a covering memorandum of November 10, Ball sent a copy of this memorandum to the Executive Committee "for information and comment." He noted that it "was hastily prepared at the request of the White House" and that it had been slightly revised since submission to the President. Ball also noted that the memorandum created the impression that the optional courses of action were mutually exclusive. They were not and combinations were "possible and perhaps desirable." (Ibid.) **Back**

2 The "Defense paper," which is quoted from extensively, has not been found. **Back**

3 See the attachment to Document 167. **Back**

4 On November 12 Nitze prepared for McNamara a suggested Department of Defense position paper on Ball's memorandum to the President. It dealt with Ball's memorandum on a section-by-section basis. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD (C) A Files: FRC 71 A 2896, Cuba 1962, McNamara's Working Papers) See the Supplement. **Back**

Source: Kennedy Library, Sorensen Papers, Classified Subject Files, Cuba, General, 11/7/62-11/30/62. Top Secret. A note on the source text indicates that it was part of the President's weekend reading for November 10.

<a href="#">Previous Document</a>	<a href="#">Contents</a>	<a href="#">Next Document</a>
<a href="#">20th Century Page</a>	<a href="#">Avalon Home Page</a>	<a href="#">Foreign Relations Page</a>

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September 5, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL MAXWELL TAYLOR, MILITARY REPRESENTATIVE TO THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Strategic Air Planning and Berlin

1. The plan which now determines the use of our strategic striking power in the event of war is SIOP-62. This plan, prepared well before the present Berlin crisis, is built around two concepts that may well be inappropriate to the current situation. First, the plan is essentially a second-strike plan, which envisages a response to an attack on us; the size of which depends essentially on the amount of warning of enemy attack we receive. The minimum warning assumed is one hour; this suffices to generate the alert force of nearly 900 vehicles carrying almost 1500 weapons. In 28 hours, the full force of some 2300 vehicles carrying about 3400 weapons can be launched. Second, the plan calls for strikes against a single set of targets, the "optimum-mix" of Sino-Soviet air and missile bases, and cities, and the various force generation options determine how far down the list the targets are struck, and the degree of their coverage by more than one weapon to assure achievement of planned damage levels. The single target list embodies the notion of "massive retaliation", the threat of which is expected to deter attack. At least two sets of circumstances that seem likely to arise in the context of the struggle over Berlin suggest the need for supplementary and alternate plans. The first is the problem raised by a false alarm, whether arising from a deliberate feint or a misinterpretation of events, that results first in the launching of SAC and then a decision to recall it at the positive control line. The second is the broader question of whether we might wish to strike first, and thus how appropriate both the target list and the operational concept of the SIOP are in that case.

2. If the present state of tension over Berlin persists over a period of months, it is likely that, at some point, a Soviet action will appear to threaten an attack on the United States with sufficient likelihood and imminence to cause us to launch SAC, and initiate the SIOP. After some lapse of time, we may conclude that we had been wrong, and, under the positive control arrangements, recall the force. There is, roughly, a six-hour interval between bases and the positive control line for aircraft

184

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in the first wave. After recall and return to base, that part of the force which had been launched would require a stand-down of about eight hours before it was again ready for launch. Thus, there would be a significant degradation of our capability for a short period of time after such a false alarm. How large it was would depend on how much time had elapsed when the recall was ordered. If the full six hours had elapsed, not only would the alert force (one-third of the vehicles carrying nearly one-half the weapons and a higher proportion of the megatonnage) have reached the neighborhood of the control line, but another 22% of the full force would already have been launched.

Further, in the nature of the SIOP, that part of the force which was still in reserve might not be ready to attack an appropriate set of targets, since their initially assigned targets would have been chosen under the assumption that the vehicles in question were part of the follow-on force, coming after the targets assigned to the first wave had already been attacked. These consequences of a false alarm suggest two dangers: First, the value to the Soviets of a faint; second, the danger that we will have a tendency to refuse to interpret any alarm as a false alarm, once the force has been launched, since the temporary degradation of our striking capacity consequent on a recall may be unacceptable in the situation which provoked the alarm.

3. The second and broader question is whether a second-strike plan of massive retaliation is appropriate to our current position. Our military contingency plans for Berlin call for a number of ground force actions of increasing scope and magnitude. Their basic aim is to force the Soviets to withdraw the impediments to our access to West Berlin which have called them forth. Implicitly, they rest on the expectation that the Soviets will not respond, at least to the earlier steps, by initiating general war. If each increase in the scale of our action is met by a corresponding and always dominating increase in the Soviet response, we will clearly be forced at some point to move from local to general action. Is the SIOP the appropriate form of this action? If the SIOP were executed as planned, the alert force would be expected (in the statistical sense) to kill 37% of the population of the Soviet Union (including 55% of the urban population) and the full force, 54% (including 71% of the urban population), and the two forces, respectively, to destroy 75% and 82% of the buildings, as measured by floor space. (Further, there is reason to believe that these figures are underestimated; the casualties, for example, include only those of the first 72 hours.) Is this really an appropriate next step after the

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repulse of a three-division attack across the zonal border between East and West Germany? Will the President be ready to take it? The force of these questions is underlined by the consideration that the scale and nature of the SIOP are such as inevitably to alert the Soviet to its initiation, and that all

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Thus Soviet retaliation is inevitable; and most probably, it will be directed against our cities and those of our European Allies.

What is required in these circumstances is something quite different. We should be prepared to initiate general war by our own first strike, but one planned for this occasion, rather than planned to implement a strategy of massive retaliation. We should seek the smallest possible list of targets, focussing on the long-range striking capacity of the Soviets, and avoiding, as much as possible, casualties and damage in Soviet civil society. We should maintain in reserve a considerable fraction of our own strategic striking power; this will deter the Soviets from using their surviving forces against our cities; our efforts to minimize Soviet civilian damage will also make such abstention more attractive to them, as well as minimizing the force of the irrational urge-for revenge. The SIOP now provides for no reserve forces, except insofar as aircraft return and can be recycled into operation.

4. Two recommendations for action follow from this discussion: both in the realm of inquiry, initially.

a. CincSac should be asked, in the appropriate fashion, to examine the impact of a false alarm--i. e., one that results in the launch and then the recall of the force--on his plans in the context of the current situation, and to make whatever changes in his plans that the examination indicates. In making this examination, CincSac should be urged to examine targetting, as well as operational aspects of the problem, since the questions involved go not only to how the operational plans can be modified so as to minimize the degradation of capability consequent on a false alarm, but also, what might be done in the way of programming alternate targets for various segments of the force, so that the remaining capability can always be brought to bear in the most useful way.

b. The Joint Chiefs; the Director, Strategic Target Planning; and CincSac should be asked, in the appropriate fashion, to consider

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the preparation of alternatives to SIOP-62 for the use of our strategic striking power in the context of Berlin contingency planning. In so doing, they should be asked to give special attention to planning first strike attacks at Soviet long-range striking power, and planned so as to minimize casualties and damage to the Soviet, and to reduce to the maximum extent possible both Soviet capabilities and Soviet incentives to strike a retaliatory blow at American and Allied cities.

It is clear that much of the concrete planning involved in both of these activities overlaps, and therefore there is an advantage in combining the two requests.

5. To indicate in a crude and sketchy way that plans of the type called for in 4b. may be feasible, Annex A is attached. This sketches some of the elements of such an operation. Annex B, by contrast, provides a summary of SIOP-62. Annex C is a draft request for the planning study described in 4b., so drafted as to be sent out either by yourself or the President.

Carl Kayser

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