

(TS-Gp 1) Air Staff and Joint Staff studies showed that the minimum essential force would provide 21 maneuver battalions (from two and one-third divisions), five fighter squadrons, one C-130 squadron, four river assault squadrons, 59 river patrol boats, and associated engineer and construction battalions. It would require a rise in American personnel in South Vietnam of about 78,000 and bring the 1967 total to 548,801. The optimum force after 1 July 1968 would provide 42 additional maneuver battalions (from four and two-third divisions), 10 USAF fighter squadrons, and require another air base and a complete mobile riverine unit. It would result in the dispatch of about 122,000 additional American servicemen to South Vietnam for an overall total of 671,616.<sup>6</sup>

(TS-Gp 3) Early in April--at the request of Gen. John D. Ryan,<sup>\*</sup> Commander in Chief, Pacific Air Forces (CINCPACAF), Admiral Sharp, and the Air Staff--the Joint Staff agreed to consider incorporating 12,009 more Air Force personnel in General Westmoreland's minimum essential force. A total of 7,989 would be deployed to South Vietnam to support additional UH-1 and CH-3 helicopters in operations outside the country and for general augmentation of other on-going activities. Another 4,020 would be sent to Thailand to support three more tactical fighter squadrons and to convert Nam Phong AB, which was in a "bare base" status, into a main operational base.<sup>7</sup>

Air Staff-JCS Views of General Westmoreland's Requests

(TS-Gp 3) The initial Joint Staff paper advocating increasing the approved June 1968 manpower levels in South Vietnam by another 200,000 men deeply

<sup>\*</sup>General Ryan became CINCPACAF on 1 February 1967, succeeding Gen. Hunter Harris, Jr.

concerned the Air Staff and General McConnell. The Chief of Staff observed that U.S. strength during the past two years had risen "far in excess" of original requirements, yet the enemy was still a "potent threat." As evidence, he cited the recent shift of I Corps units in "Operation Oregon" from one critical area to reinforce another and he noted that the JCS was weighing alternate measures to blunt the Communist thrusts, including a possible lodgment in North Vietnam. \* Although current tactics might relieve pressure, General McConnell said they would not end Soviet or Chinese support of Hanoi. He believed that the fighting and staying power of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong had been underestimated and he was not convinced that the addition of more troops, as contemplated by the Joint Staff, would bring about an early and decisive result.

(S-Gp 3) However, the Air Force chief stated he would "reluctantly" support General Westmoreland's plea for more manpower and a possible reserve callup because of the situation in I Corps and because he was loathe to deny a field commander the forces he deemed essential. However, he said he would endorse the plan only if the JCS also recommend an immediate, expanded, air and naval campaign against the North to reduce or possibly obviate the need for more forces in the South. "The effective application of our superior air and sea power against North Vietnam's vulnerabilities," he argued, "will cripple his capabilities to continue to support the war and will destroy his resolution to continue."<sup>8</sup>

(S-Gp 3) The Joint Staff generally accepted General McConnell's suggestion and reworked its preliminary paper. Subsequently, on 20 April,

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\*Called Mule Shoe, the JCS study on a possible lodgment in North Vietnam was completed early in April.

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14

the JCS recommended to Mr. McNamara that more American troops be dispatched to South Vietnam to maintain pressure against the enemy and that an expanded air campaign be authorized to further reduce the flow of men and supplies to the south. Specifically, the JCS proposed an increase of 127,111 "Case II" personnel in fiscal year 1968 above the number authorized in deployment program 4. The new total would include 4,350 Air Force personnel to man five tactical fighter squadrons (F-100's and A-1's), one civil engineering squadron, and augmentation elements. The Army portion would total 71,200, the Marines 43,098 (consisting of one division/wing team plus augmentations), and the Navy 8,463.

(S-Gp 3) In addition, the JCS recommended an increase of 10,288 "Case II" personnel for Thailand and other PACOM areas. These would be apportioned as follows: 4,025 Air Force for three tactical fighter squadrons, base augmentation, and other support; 3,650 Navy to strengthen forces in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Tonkin; 1,690 Marines for air units on Okinawa; and 923 Army for medical and other support in Japan.<sup>9</sup> To support these additional requirements, the JCS recommended a reserve callup for a minimum of 24 months, a 12-month extension of current service tours of duty, and asked for authority and funds to obtain the necessary equipment and other resources.<sup>10</sup>

OSD Request for Studies of Alternate Force Postures

(S-Gp 3) There was no direct response to the JCS recommendations. Instead, on 26 April, Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus R. Vance asked the Joint Chiefs to examine as soon as they could, certain alternate force postures for Vietnam. One, which he listed as "course A," would add air, ground, and naval units totaling 250,000 men through fiscal year 1969 and possibly more

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later. This would permit greatly intensified military operations outside of South Vietnam to meet "ultimate" JCS requirements. The second, "course B," would add only 70,000 more troops during the next fiscal year. The Deputy Secretary requested an analysis of all aspects of course A: cost, reserve callups, service duty extensions, and military operations (the last to include possible Communist and free world reaction to an invasion of North Vietnam). He also asked for an analysis of bombing strategy for each course and desired special JCS consideration, under course B, of a bombing halt above the 20th parallel, \* and of a complete end to the bombing of all of North Vietnam to "maximize" the possibility of ending the war. Finally, he solicited advice on strengthening the South Vietnamese Army.<sup>11</sup>

(IS-Gp 3) For the next several weeks, the Joint Staff worked to prepare recommendations, coordinating its effort with the services, Admiral Sharp, and General Westmoreland. Meanwhile, at the request of General McConnell, the JCS prepared a separate plan for submission to OSD which called for an accelerated air campaign to reduce "external" imports into North Vietnam. The Air Force Chief of Staff, disturbed over past JCS failures to convince OSD and high administration officials of the importance of such an effort, had brought to the chief's attention a special target study employing a new "econometric" technique and produced at his request. He said it showed "beyond doubt the necessity for a realistic air campaign."<sup>12</sup>

\*The rationale for limiting the bombing in North Vietnam to south of the 20th parallel originated in OSD. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs asserted that at least as much destruction per sortie was possible by missions flown below the 20th parallel as above. He argued, for example, that it was probably 20 times more worthwhile to destroy a truck after it had traveled all the way to route package I near the DMZ than if it were destroyed further north in route package V. The Air Staff and JCS strongly disagreed. See pp 20-21.

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(S-Gp 3) In forwarding the USAF proposal to Secretary McNamara on 20 May, the service chiefs cited the rise of war-sustaining imports into the North by sea,\* and the possibility they might soon include more advanced offensive and defensive weapons. The Joint Chiefs urged "neutralizing" enemy logistic bases in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas employing a "shouldering out" bombing method. This would consist of striking first at peripheral areas, then the port targets, then other logistic sites, followed by the mining of Haiphong harbor. Simultaneously, the USAF and Navy air arms would conduct an intensive campaign against roads and railways leading from China and the eight major North Vietnamese airfields (of which only three had been hit thus far). Calling the proposal "a matter of urgency," the service chiefs asked Secretary McNamara to transmit it to the President.<sup>13</sup>

(S-Gp 3) The following day, 21 May, the JCS submitted to the Secretary its evaluation of the proposed courses "A" and "B" requested by Mr. Vance. For course A, the Joint Chiefs proposed a reserve callup, extension of terms of service, and adding 125,000 troops in fiscal years 1968 and 1969, respectively. In fiscal year 1968, they recommended adding to the Vietnam force three USAF tactical fighter squadrons, one and one-third Army division force equivalent, one Marine division wing-team (including two Marine tactical fighter squadrons), the remainder of the Navy's riverine mobile force, and other units. Outside of Vietnam, they proposed to increase military strength in Thailand by three USAF tactical fighter squadrons, and build up the Navy's

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\*The JCS indicated that about 85 percent of all war-sustaining materiel entered North Vietnam through its ports and about 15 percent by rail or road from China. The total volume had risen from about 800,000 metric tons in 1964 to more than 1.3 million tons in 1966 and was still on the upswing in early 1967.

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Seventh Fleet by adding one cruiser, five destroyers, one assault patrol boat (APB), eight landing ship tanks (LST), and other support. In fiscal year 1969 the principal forces earmarked for Vietnam would consist of five USAF tactical fighter squadrons, two and one-third Army divisions and, off-shore, one battleship.

(TS-Gp 3) Under their proposed course B (providing 70,000 more men, the maximum possible without a reserve callup), augmentation in Vietnam would be limited to three USAF tactical fighter squadrons, one and one-third Army division force equivalent, the remainder of the Navy riverine mobile force, and other minor units. Deployments outside of Vietnam would consist of three USAF tactical fighter squadrons to Thailand and Seventh Fleet additions of one cruiser, five destroyers, one assault patrol boat, eight landing ship tanks, and other support.

(TS-Gp 3) The JCS believed that course A would allow the allies to continue the initiative, provide a better posture for combat operations into Laos, Cambodia, or North Vietnam without reducing pacification and other programs, and hasten an end to the war. On the other hand, course B would permit only more "in-country" deployment of forces to the I Corps which might not suffice to sustain American and South Vietnamese operations beyond the immediate future. Under either "course," the Joint Chiefs urged expanded and intensified air action with emphasis on striking the Hanoi-Haiphong logistic base and import facilities and the aerial mining of specific inland waterways, ports, and coastal areas north of Haiphong.

(TS-Gp 3) Although heavier air and naval pressure against North Vietnam would lead to more Soviet and Chinese assistance to Hanoi, the JCS believed that neither Moscow nor Peking would intervene militarily. The

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Chinese could be expected to provide major reinforcements under three conditions: if requested by Hanoi's leaders, if the United States undertook a sizable ground invasion of North Vietnam, or if the Hanoi regime was in danger of collapse. General McConnell concurred with the above assessment but believed that the JCS strategy outlined on 20 April\* would provide more assurance for ending the war on terms favorable to the United States.<sup>15</sup>

(S-Gp 3) In separate comments, General Wheeler urged "as a matter of high priority" the strengthening of South Vietnamese forces and renewed effort to obtain more free-world troops, although these steps would not lessen the need for additional American deployments. He also strongly opposed any partial or total bombing cessation of the North, arguing this would prove costly to the allies, prolong hostilities, and be interpreted by the Communists as an "aerial Dien Bien Phu."<sup>16</sup>

The Draft Memorandum to the President

(S-Gp 1) In late May, the Air Staff and JCS were also asked to comment on a draft OSD memorandum to the President on future action in Vietnam. Prepared by a study group within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, this paper made an overall analysis of the war and the proposed courses "A" and "B" deployment plans (as modified).

(S-Gp 1) The memorandum observed that the "big war" was going well. The enemy had suffered considerably and, beginning in March 1967 (according to General Westmoreland), the "cross-over" point was reached when his losses

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\*See pp 13-14.

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began to exceed his replacements. Inflation was under control and the transition to responsible government in Saigon was proceeding as well as could be expected.

(TS-Gp 1) However, the "other war" was unsatisfactory. The Saigon government's real control was limited to enclaves. There was widespread corruption and little evidence of remedial action for social and economic ills or of momentum in the pacification program. In the Mekong delta, the tempo of operations was slow, the population apathetic, and many government officials seemed to have working arrangements with the Viet Cong. Imports into South Vietnam were still rising as rice deliveries from the delta decreased. The Communists held large parts of the countryside and believed the United States could not translate military success into political gain for the Saigon government.

(TS-Gp 1) With respect to increasing U.S. strength in Southeast Asia, the draft memorandum found "course A" unacceptable and unnecessary. It would introduce 200,000 or more troops into South Vietnam through fiscal year 1969, raising the total to about 670,000 in that country and to 770,000 within the theater. The additional cost in fiscal year 1968 alone would be \$10 billion.\* Course A would also create "irresistible" U.S. pressure for ground action into Cambodia, Laos, and possibly North Vietnam, thereby risking Soviet, Chinese, and possibly North Vietnamese reaction to such moves, especially if accompanied by heavier American air attacks or mining of harbors. The

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\*General Westmoreland had said that without more U.S. forces above those authorized in deployment program 4, the war could go on for five years; with 100,000 more men, three years; and with 200,000 more men, two years. These estimates took into account a certain "degradation" of military effectiveness because of reserve callups, and morale and leadership problems.

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Soviets, for example, might send more and improved rockets, jet aircraft, and other equipment to the North. Also there was no indication that bombing thus far had reduced Hanoi's will to resist, its ability to resupply the South, or increased its willingness to negotiate. In addition, North Vietnamese morale was probably sustained by continued Soviet and Chinese aid and the expectation that American policy toward the war would change after the forthcoming Presidential election in November 1968.

(S-Gp 1) The paper thus argued that course B deployments (as modified), providing a maximum of 30,000 to 50,000 more U.S. troops in South Vietnam by the end of 1968, would be more acceptable.\* This restrained program would avoid extending the conflict, limit the bombing to south of the 20th parallel, improve prospects for negotiations, and contribute to advances in pacification that might follow adoption of a new Vietnamese constitution, national elections later in 1967, and an improved national reconciliation program.

(S-Gp 1) The draft OSD memorandum emphasized the importance of narrowing and understanding the limited American objective of the war, which was to allow South Vietnam to determine its own future. This did not mean a U.S. effort out of proportion to the South's in the face of coups, corruption, and indications of lack of Vietnamese cooperation. Nor did it mean American insistence on the rule of the country by certain groups or a non-Communist government, although certain groups and types of government were preferred to others.<sup>17</sup>

(S-Gp 1) The Air Staff's view was that the draft memorandum obviously was slanted toward a minimal buildup of U.S. forces and no significant step-up

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\*Course B as described by Deputy Secretary Vance, however, would have provided a maximum of 70,000 more U.S. men for South Vietnam in fiscal year 1968. See pp 14-15.

of military action. It called for little or no augmentation of air operations in South Vietnam and for more restraints on bombing in the North.<sup>18</sup> As the other services were equally critical of the document, the Joint Chiefs on 1 June informed Secretary McNamara that the draft memorandum did not address the implications of free-world failure in South Vietnam. Deployment of 200,000 more U. S. troops and a callup of reserves (course A), they said, would be supported by the American people who did not want "peace at any price," nor would these two measures necessarily create an "irresistible drive" for military escalation. They also believed that an intensified air and naval effort against North Vietnam would not automatically result in a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union or China.

(IS-Gp 1) Course B deployments, the JCS continued, would prolong the war, reinforce Hanoi's belief in ultimate victory, and probably cost the United States much more in lives and money. The proposal to limit the bombing of the North to south of the 20th parallel would give the Hanoi government many advantages, induce it to redouble its efforts, and preclude a favorable end to the war. Observing that the OSD draft memorandum revealed an "alarming pattern" that augured a significant change in U.S. objectives for South Vietnam, the service chiefs reaffirmed their understanding of American policy as that embodied in national security action memorandum (NSAM) 288 of 17 March 1964, which called for a free, independent, non-Communist Saigon regime. They recommended against sending the document to the President, giving it further serious consideration, and asked for the approval of the JCS proposals of 20 April.<sup>\*19</sup>

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\*See pp 13-14.