

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND  
THE VIETNAM WAR

Executive and Legislative Roles  
and Relationships

PART III: JANUARY-JULY 1965

WILLIAM CONRAD GIBBONS

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APPENDIX I

SUMMARY OF TWELVE INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES, 1964-1965

On June 11, 1965, the CIA sent the White House a briefing paper of 12 National Intelligence Estimates and Special National Intelligence Estimates on Vietnam during the previous year which provides an excellent summary of the intelligence community's assessment of key issues facing policymakers as they considered whether to approve Westmoreland's "44 battalion" request and therefore to commit the U.S. to deploying large-scale ground forces to Vietnam.<sup>1</sup>

PART I

PRINCIPAL ISSUES IN THE SHORT TERM

The Communists think they are winning the war in South Vietnam, because:

- (a) It is a guerrilla war, of small-scale operations, in jungle and difficult terrain, where advanced weapons, air power, and large-unit formations are not of decisive importance;
- (b) it is a "war of national liberation"—a political and social struggle—the kind of struggle which they believe they will inevitably win;
- (c) they think the US does not understand how to fight such a war
- (d) they perceive the weaknesses of the South Vietnamese government;
- (e) they remember that they defeated the French;
- (f) finally, they think they are winning because in fact they are winning. (See General Westmoreland's recent cable.)

*As long as the Communists think they are winning in South Vietnam, bombing of North Vietnam is unlikely to lead them to make conciliatory gestures.*

The main judgments here are found most recently in SNIE 10-6-65 of 2 June 1965.

Virtually all the Estimates stress Communist confidence in ultimate victory.

No NIE would declare that the Communists are winning the war, and none does.

This proposition is most recently in SNIE 10-6-65, 2 June 1965, applying, however, only to bombing as in (a) and (b).

<sup>1</sup>Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, "NIEs and SNIEs on South Vietnam," TS#185866, June 11, 1965, prepared by the CIA's Office of National Estimates. (emphases original)

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## Bombing of North Vietnam could be:

- (a) limited to targets and areas approximately as at present;
- (b) extended to airfields and SAM sites near Hanoi (and done with SAC aircraft);
- (c) extended (gradually) to North Vietnamese industrial and economic targets (not population centers as such);

- (d) indiscriminate and complete

III. *As long as the Communists think they are winning in South Vietnam it is unlikely that Chinese Communists or Soviets will intervene with substantial military forces of their own in combat.*

Note however that continuance of the flow of military supplies, equipment, and probably small numbers of technical and training personnel from China and the USSR to North Vietnam is virtually certain.

The chances of large-scale DRV invasion, of attacks on US aircraft carriers or bases, or of large-scale Chinese Communist military intervention call for further consideration, as follows:

## CONTINGENCIES

I. *Large-scale, overt, DRV invasion of South Vietnam—on the "Korean" model.*

- (a) Appears to us to be militarily imprudent. The only north-south road is the coast road, open to US air and naval bombardment.
- (b) *Caution.* This does not rule out accelerated and substantial infiltration of regular DRV forces along trails west of the coastal plain. This is occurring and probably will continue.

Estimated in 10-6-65, 2 June, as unlikely in response to SAC bombings of North Vietnamese airfields and SAM sites, because of the risks to the DRV in such an invasion.

[paragraph excised]

All Estimates on the matter allow for the possibility of such an invasion. State consistently has judged it more likely, in certain contingencies, than have the other Agencies.

Since February 1965, SNIEs have stated that this degree of bombing would not lead Hanoi to make conciliatory gestures.

SNIE10-6-65 (2 June 1965) says odds are against this leading Hanoi to conciliatory gestures. (Air Force dissent)

SNIE 10-3/1-65 18 February, said (with State dissenting) that "if the US vigorously continued in its attacks and damaged some important economic or military assets the DRV . . . might decide to intensify the struggle, but . . . it seems to us somewhat more likely that they would decide to make some effort to secure a respite from US attack. . . ."

The 2 June SNIE, however, in effect though not specifically, reversed this judgment

This has not been considered in any USIB [U.S. Intelligence Board] paper.

The message of all recent SNIEs is in agreement with this proposition for three main reasons:

1. Such intervention would not be necessary.
2. It would involve China and Russia in undesired risk of larger war with the U.S.
3. The North Vietnamese do not want a massive Chinese Communist presence in their country, at least not until their regime is facing severe defeat.

I. Attacks on US carriers or on US air bases in South Vietnam.

Attacks on carriers are barely possible [two lines excised] possible but almost suicidal with IL-28s.

Attacks on airfields in South Vietnam are possible but very dangerous with IL-28s from North Vietnam; are highly likely by sabotage teams.

II. Substantial Chinese Communist Military Intervention in Vietnam, in Combat, with

(a) Chinese Communist aircraft and pilots, based in North Vietnam.

(b) Chinese Communist aircraft from bases in China

(c) [three lines excised]

(d) Large numbers of Chinese Communist "volunteers"—in the Korean style

Question: When would the Chinese Communists intervene militarily with ground forces in a substantial fashion (so as to change the character of the war)?

(a) If the US/GVN were winning the war in South Vietnam? Probably not.

(b) If US air attacks began to damage the industrial and military sector of North Vietnam? Probably not.

(c) [three lines excised]

(d) If US ground forces invaded North Vietnam in such strength as to control most of the country? Probably yes; almost certainly yes if US forces approached the Chinese frontier.

Question: What about Soviet military intervention in combat

Such intervention is judged to be extremely unlikely

(a) Vietnam is too far away for the Soviets to support a useful military operation, especially in view of their unfriendly relations with Communist China

(b) The Soviets wish to avoid a military confrontation with the US

The possibility of such attacks is recognized in SNIEs, but (except for sabotage or sneak attacks on US airfields) they are deemed unlikely

Considered likely, in response to US bombing of North Vietnam, as far back as SNIE 10-3-65, 11 February 1965. Limited, however, by capability of North Vietnamese airfields, especially if these airfields were under US attack.

State considered this likely if US bombing extended to northern North Vietnam. All other agencies considered it unlikely. SNIE 10-3-65, 11 February. Also SNIE 10-6-65, 2 June. [four lines excised]

Not estimated by USIB

Judged unlikely in SNIE 10-3-65, 11 February 1965 (with partial State dissent). This Estimate almost certainly still holds.

[six lines excised]

This is a judgment agreed in USIB a long time ago. There has been no occasion to repeat it in the past year.

SNIEs generally estimate Soviet reactions to be confined to propaganda, diplomatic maneuver, and supply of weapons and equipment to North Vietnam.



## SOME POLITICAL FACTORS

- I. The *Chinese Communists* are violent, unyielding, offering no avenue to settlement acceptable to the US.
- II. The *DRV* is almost, though not quite, as obdurate as the Chinese, and have apparently grown more so in recent weeks.
- III. The *Soviets* would probably like to get the problem settled, but they cannot force the *DRV* to a settlement, and there is no reason to suppose that they feel either the necessity or the desire to work towards a settlement on US terms. Their attitude has hardened in recent weeks. It is worth noting that Brezhnev and Kosygin have reversed Khrushchev's policy of disengagement from the Vietnam problem.
- IV. The Sino-Soviet quarrel is a factor of first importance. Much simplified:
  - (a) The Chinese maintain their extreme revolutionary posture, expecting that a successful outcome in Vietnam (from their point of view) will enhance their position in the Communist world among underdeveloped nations. They wish to maximize their influence in North Vietnam, at Soviet expense
  - (b) The Soviets cannot afford (even if they wish) to appear backward in their support of a "revolutionary struggle." But they are challenging Chinese influence in North Vietnam by supplying things (SAMs, IL-28s) which the Chinese cannot produce
  - (c) The *DRV* appears eager to balance the overwhelming Chinese presence (owing to size and proximity) in their affairs with a growing Soviet involvement
- V. The fragility of the governmental structure in South Vietnam is also an important factor in Communist calculations.
- VI. *Free World Attitudes*

There is widespread disapproval of US action in Vietnam in the Free World generally, including the US itself

All this is in accord with SNIEs and NIEs.

Generally in accord with various USIB pronouncements.

Not covered in NIEs.

We believe that the Communists rely heavily on this feeling to restrain the US from (1) anything approaching unrestricted bombing of North Vietnam and (2) widening the area and scope of the war

Emphasized in all SNIEs.

Communist diplomacy and propaganda is vigorous in encouraging the disapproval of US policy. It is an extremely important element in their general line of policy

Emphasized in all SNIEs.

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*FINAL NOTE*

[Three and one-half lines excised.] The general proposition is that the Communists will try to restrain further expansion of military conflict—if only because they [are] doing well in conflict on the present scale.

## APPENDIX II

### SUMMARY OF THE JULY 14, 1965 REPORT OF THE JCS AD HOC STUDY GROUP, "INTENSIFICATION OF THE MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, CONCEPT AND APPRAISAL"\*

The "major assumptions," within the bounds of which the U.S. could win if the assumptions held true, were summarized in the report as follows:<sup>1</sup>

a. China and Russia will not intervene with armed forces, overtly or covertly, so long as there is no US/SVN land invasion of NVN.

b. Restrictions on US/SVN use of force do not exceed the following:

- (1) No land invasion of NVN by US/SVN forces.
- (2) No use of nuclear weapons or chemical weapons.
- (3) No mass bombing of population per se.

c. Once the concept envisaged in this study is approved by higher authority, operations within the scope of the proposed strategy will not be subject to restriction, delay, or planning uncertainties. This implies that the GVN will cooperate as necessary to this end.

d. Operational coordination between US and SVN forces meets minimum acceptable professional standards of effectiveness.

e. Neither the government nor the population of SVN turns against the US and demands withdrawal.

Following the summary of the major assumptions, the report then discussed each one in turn. With respect to major assumption (a)—the support of the Chinese—the report stated:<sup>2</sup>

a. The Chinese Communists will almost certainly give the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese every encouragement to carry their insurgency program in South Vietnam to a successful conclusion. In efforts to prevent escalation of the Southeast Asian conflict, Peiping will try to restrict its assistance to a generous measure of political and material support.

b. Should the VC receive serious setbacks in South Vietnam it is probable that the CHICOM's would try to keep the VC/DRV in the war with increased political and material assistance. Although the Chinese may make threatening troop movements along their frontiers, it is unlikely that they would employ these troops as reinforcements to the VC.

<sup>1</sup> Goodpaster Report, p. iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. C-1.

\*For the introductory portions of the report, herein called the Goodpaster Report (Gen. Andrew Goodpaster was Chairman of the Study Group), see pp. 360-362 above.

c. In the event of a US/Allied ground force invasion of North Vietnam and if the North Vietnamese appeared to be unable to handle the situation thus created and requested Chinese assistance the Chinese would probably intervene with ground forces.

d. The CHICOMs will react strongly to US air strikes against Chinese bases, but whether such attacks would generate a PLA [Chinese People's Liberation Army] ground attack, or simply result in counter air strikes and air defensive actions remains open to conjecture.

The report added that, "As our air strikes against North Vietnam continue, and especially if the DRV air defense capabilities prove inadequate to cope with the US strike program, it is likely that the Chinese would supply ground equipment and personnel to the DRV for air defense purposes and would also supply fighter aircraft units on request, providing they could be based in North Vietnam. They would not wish to use bases in China because of the risk of US retaliatory strikes against these bases."<sup>3</sup>

With respect to the support of the Russians, the report stated:<sup>4</sup>

a. The Russians, to demonstrate their support of a fellow socialist nation, probably would feel obliged to continue to provide North Vietnam with military and economic assistance to enhance the DRV's capabilities to defend itself.

b. Although the USSR would recognize that the need to maintain its position in the Communist World demanded it provide support for the DRV/VC cause, the Soviets probably would continue to moderate the extent of their commitment, to minimize the chances of a major US/Soviet confrontation.

The report added: "It is not believed however that this USSR help would include attempts to breach a blockade [of the port] of Haiphong; although it is probable that technical assistance would be provided."<sup>5</sup>

The discussion of the other major assumptions—(b) through (e)—was organized by four categories of restrictions: (1) "restrictions deriving from consideration of the CHICOM and Soviet hazard"; (2) "restrictions deriving from our relationship with Allies, neutrals, UN, etc."; (3) "restrictions deriving from SVN Relationships"; (4) "restrictions deriving from other sources."<sup>6</sup>

Under category (1), the report said, "... it is assumed that the sole restriction ... is that US/SVN forces will not conduct a ground invasion of North Vietnam, nor attack Red China (unless Red Chinese air or ground forces were to intervene in NVN or SVN)."

Under category (2), relations with allies, neutrals, UN, etc., the report said that because there would be "almost universal worldwide disapproval," the "sole restriction in this category is that the US will not employ nuclear or chemical weapons; and will not conduct bombing attacks against population per se."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. C-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. C-4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. C-5.

<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. C-1 to C-12.

With respect to restrictions under category (3), relations with South Vietnam, the report said: "The attitude of the South Vietnamese government and people toward US involvement and the presence of sizeable US forces in SVN will depend upon the success of the US/RVN effort against the Viet Cong." If successful, public morale would improve and the government would be in a position to win popular support; if not, the public would turn against the government and the U.S. and there would be growing pressure to end the war.

Restrictions deriving from relationships with South Vietnam, the report added, could also affect military operations and the carrying out of a winning strategy. At the time the report was written, many military operations were conducted on a joint or coordinated basis by South Vietnamese and U.S. forces, but the South Vietnamese were in charge of their own forces. The resulting need for combined planning, as the report stated, led to "lessened security of information," and it was a "well-recognized hazard in Vietnam" that coordinated plans "are often communicated to the Viet Cong." "It is therefore assumed," the report said, "that, within the bounds of the strategy and operations contemplated in this study, no restriction, delay or substantial degradation of operational security will be imposed as a result of SVN action."

In addition, there was the question of restrictions on operations resulting from reluctance of South Vietnamese military units to go on the offensive or to fight in a determined fashion. "It is therefore assumed," the report stated, "that the SVN will be willing in principle to allocate forces to this role [offensive military operations], that these forces will fight effectively, and that the proportion of forces so allocated will be a matter determined on the basis of valid military considerations relating to the needs for pacification and territorial security, as well as the offensive campaign."

Under category (4)—other sources of restrictions—the report stated that there could be restrictions resulting from the way in which U.S. domestic political factors ("public opinion") and bureaucratic ("institutional") interests affected decisionmaking and operations:

... Those of potential significance include delay or limitation of operations for reasons of domestic public opinion, desired scheduling for press coverage and timing in relation to governmental process, and the time consumed in consideration of added force movements which would bear, under the concept in this study, upon the degree of success in gaining and keeping a preponderance of force over the VC/DRV. Institutional interests reflected, for example, in interdepartmental clearance for the striking of specific targets included in the proposed air campaign could deny us the ability to "get the jump" on the enemy and keep him, rather than US, "behind the power curve." Also, force of habit will tend to continue in effect restrictions imposed in the past that could adversely affect these operations.

"It is assumed for this study," the report said, "that the operations envisaged take priority over restrictions of the foregoing type, and that these operations will be neither limited, delayed nor subjected to planning uncertainty because of considerations of this kind."

In other words, the Goodpaster group took the position that, in order to win the war, the normal U.S. political and bureaucratic processes—presumably including political/bureaucratic relations between and among the military services themselves—could not be allowed to interfere with military planning and operations.

Following the consideration of major assumptions, the report discussed the “principal lines” of proposed U.S. military action and of Communist counteraction:<sup>7</sup>

*Proposed U.S.-South Vietnamese actions:*

a. Operations against North Vietnam. The object is, at a maximum, to bring about a DRV decision to stop the war or, failing this, at a minimum to cut down and limit sharply the support by the DRV of VC/DRV forces in SVN, at the same time being prepared to limit the introduction of additional DRV forces into SVN, if attempted, in order to permit containment of the insurgency in the south.

b. Action against infiltration routes. The maximum objective is physically to halt the infiltration of men and supplies moving into SVN. At a minimum, curtailment of the flow should be such as, in conjunction with other major lines of action, to permit containment of the insurgency in SVN.

c. Operations against VC/DRV main force battalions in SVN. At maximum the objective is to destroy these forces, their bases and VC strongholds, and open VC-held areas to pacification. The minimum is to permit a state of containment to be achieved and maintained, with limited US continued involvement and combat losses.

d. Pacification, i.e., security of territory and population. The maximum objective is restoration of law and order, freedom of movement, and economic activity throughout the country, with no more than minor continuing violence. The minimum is containment within an acceptable area with sufficiently well-established law and order to start the country on an upward course.

*Communist counteraction:*

a. In NVN, they will seek to cause our bombing to cease or to fail. They will employ active means, which may include AAA [anti-aircraft artillery], SAMs [surface-to-air missiles], MIGs [Russian-made fighters], and IL 28s [Russian-made Ilyushin light bombers] (the latter attacking the air bases supporting our attacks). In addition, they may try to overcome the effects of the bombing, e.g., through use of improvised expedients to by-pass destroyed bridges, coolie labor to man-pack supplies around choke-points and craters, and the like. More importantly, they may seek to restrict the intensity, the area, or the targets of our bombing effort by generating restrictive pressures on us through China, Russia, or neutral or allied countries.

b. Along the infiltration routes, they may use methods such as the above. Also they may give emphasis to clandestine or highly dispersed movements both on land and sea. In addition, they provide security forces along the routes to locate and de-

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. D-2 to D-4.

stroy, if possible, SVN/US land elements which attempt physically to interdict the routes. Lastly, they employ large numbers of AAA weapons, and expend large quantities of AAA ammunition against photographic or attack aircraft within range.

c. In SVN, the VC/DRV will seek to carry forward the takeover of the country. They may continue to attempt the destruction of sizable forces, even after US and third-country forces are in position, but it seems more likely they will employ attrition tactics, except where unusually favorable circumstances present themselves, and will rely on dispersion, movement and concealment to avoid giving US/SVN offensive forces a chance to fix them in position and destroy them. Undoubtedly, they will continue to try, through terror and violence, to prevent the extension of effective GVN government to areas of the countryside now VC-infested and will, in fact, try to extend their control. They will continue to disrupt transportation routes and exact a heavy toll on those attempting to carry on normal economic life or community activities. They will continue to exploit base areas and safe-havens left undisturbed, and take advantage of every failure of SVN forces to act energetically and aggressively to clear and secure zones for which they are responsible. In addition, they will seek by all means to foster hostility toward US and third-country forces on the part of the SVN people, and to cause friction between these forces and the RVNAF [Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces].

Within this general framework, the report then discussed specific objectives and plans of action as well as anticipated results for each of three major areas: (1) air operations against the North, (2) action against infiltration routes, (3) military operations in South Vietnam.<sup>8</sup>

1. *Air Operations against the North.* "It was hoped," the report said, "that aerial strikes in NVN would clearly demonstrate the will and determination of the US to carry the war directly to the true enemy while reducing to varying degrees of ineffectiveness military targets or targets essential to maintenance of the north-south LOC." However, "ROLLING THUNDER results through June," the report added, "show that this operation, as conducted to date, has not achieved the purpose intended. As the result of constraints on targeting, and weight of effort, after some 10,000 sorties the economic effects of the bombing have been minor in relation to total activity in NVN." From a military standpoint, there had also been limited results, and infiltration of personnel and supplies to the South "is still considerable." Moreover, while bombing of military installations had produced some disruptive effects, it had not "discernibly weakened the fiber of the DRV military structure." "In short," the report said, "the DRV still seems ready and able to endure air strikes at the current level."

Because of this failure of ROLLING THUNDER to achieve its objectives, it was necessary, the report said, to consider the "principal objectives for an air campaign aimed at the systematic reduction of the ability of the DRV to serve as the fountain head for aggression

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. G-1 to G-30.

in the south, and to hurt him badly should he persist in efforts to support the south," namely:

(1) By the weight of the campaign as a demonstration of US/GVN resolve and capability, to bring about a DRV decision to stop the war or to negotiate for an armistice on terms favorable to the US/GVN.

(2) By systematic target selection to reduce to relative ineffectiveness his ability to produce or process war supporting materiel and replacements for the VC/DRV forces operating in SVN.

(3) Through armed route reconnaissance and related air interdiction measures, to prevent or sharply limit his introduction of additional DRV forces into SVN.

To achieve these objectives, the Goodpaster group proposed a "full scale air campaign against all selected military and industrial targets to effect their destruction as well as that of the DRV's will and capability to continue its support to the insurgents." Noting that 122 industrial and military targets had already been damaged or destroyed out of a total of 240 potential targets,<sup>9</sup> the report called for more than doubling the number of sorties per month, from 2,500 to 6,700, in order to destroy the remaining targets in three months. Attacks would be made on the following categories of target systems: air facilities; ground force installations; naval bases and facilities; lines of communication including railways, ports, (through bombing and mining), waterways and roadways; the electric power system; the machine tool industry (consisting of one plant); telecommunications facilities; petroleum storage.

Such attacks, the report said, could achieve the following results:<sup>10</sup>

The stepped-up program of air strike should reduce in major degree the ability of the NVN to support the insurgency in SVN. The SAMs, MIGs and IL-28s can be effectively eliminated. By attacks against the planned target systems, particularly POL, and railroads, roads and waterways, together with mining of harbors, the DRV will be sharply limited in their ability to support VC/DRV forces in SVN at the intensified level of combat envisaged, and will in particular be limited in their capability to reinforce the VC with effective units of division size.

The report examined briefly whether, despite these attacks, the North Vietnamese could meet their logistical needs by importing more supplies from China and the U.S.S.R. This depended upon transportation facilities. Some sea cargo could still be imported at minor ports (unless the U.S. also mounted a naval blockade) using smaller boats (lighterage) to transfer the cargo from ships anchored offshore. An increased amount of material could also be imported overland from China by rail or road. Inland and coastal waterways could be used to transship materiel imported by sea or overland from China. By these various means, the report concluded, the North Vietnamese could maintain a logistical system for handling

<sup>9</sup> These included many of those on the original 94-target list of May 1964, but others had been added.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. J-2 to J-3.



"substantial portions of the most urgent imports," but "The effect [of the attacks] upon the DRV economy, transport, and military logistics capabilities would be extensive, and the psychological impact of these operations should be felt by the DRV early in the program."

2. *Action against infiltration routes.* The objective of reducing infiltration could be achieved by:<sup>11</sup>

a. Reducing the amount available at the source, by a more concentrated effort in NVN, thus reducing the amount available for movement.

b. Reducing the amount entering SVN, or at least disrupting current operations as to timing, by air interdiction of present movement and/or establishment of some type of anti-infiltration barrier.

c. Raising the intensity of combat to that level where VC/DRV consumption rates of heavy items, principally ammunition, could not be sustained by present efforts, thus causing a loss in effectiveness or greater effort on his part.

An "aggressive" anti-infiltration effort along these lines "should result in some reduction of the number/amounts reaching SVN."

Air attacks on land infiltration routes, however, both on the routes themselves and on trucks and troops using the routes, would yield only limited results, the report said, unless infiltration of supplies and troops increased considerably. "As long as logistical requirements for VC/DRV support in SVN remain at present low levels (estimated at about 14 tons per day), no great reduction in quantities arriving is contemplated." Air attacks on troops (the report did not give any estimates on the number of troops being infiltrated) ". . . would have little inhibiting effect on such movements per se. Those measures envisioned in attack of way stations, rest areas, etc., appear to offer the best method of attacking such forces. Saturation bombing of known or suspected troop areas along routes into SVN should at least have a deleterious effect on morale."

Better control of infiltration along the routes into South Vietnam could be obtained by ground action in South Vietnam and Laos by U.S. forces, based on improved intelligence, rather than by air attacks. According to the report, "It is estimated that agreement of the Laotian Prime Minister could be obtained for such operations inside Laos." These actions would include the establishment of "blocking positions" along infiltration routes, and "aggressive patrolling" from secure bases to detect new routes.

In addition to air and ground attacks on infiltration routes, the report said, another possibility would be to establish a barrier against infiltration, and "in the absence of some exotic means of establishing a land barrier to such infiltration [such as an electronic system], one measure would be to establish such a barrier utilizing ground/air forces with all possible supporting means." This might be possible, the report said, along the 175 miles of Route 9 running between Dong Ha in South Vietnam across Laos to Savannahket on the Thailand border. However, this would require two

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. H-1.

divisions of U.S. forces, and "It is considered more productive to use forces of similar size in offensive operations."<sup>12</sup>

In summarizing the results of action against infiltration routes, the report stated:<sup>13</sup>

In the short run, at present low levels of requirements of VC/DRV forces in SVN, only limited additional effectiveness is visualized over and above current results. In the long run, however, particularly when the intensity of combat operations is raised significantly, the combination of more effective efforts in all areas, along with offensive operations visualized, should decrease measurably the ability of VC/DRV forces to move personnel and supplies to SVN and their ability to withstand the pressure of our attacks against their forces in SVN.

3. *Military Operations in South Vietnam.* "The objective of military operations in South Vietnam is to demonstrate to the Viet Cong and to their DRV/CHICOM directors and supporters that the Viet Cong cannot win an insurgency campaign in South Vietnam. This will require the destruction as effective fighting forces of a large percentage of the main force [VC] battalions."<sup>14</sup> To achieve this objective, U.S. forces, with help from some South Vietnamese forces and from third country forces, would conduct offensive operations against Communist main force units, freeing the larger part of South Vietnam's armed forces for pacification programs by which to secure and extend the area controlled by the government.

The report noted that, "... finding and fixing Viet Cong units and locating Viet Cong bases will be one of the most difficult problems encountered" because of their tactic of "attacking only when conditions are favorable to them"; a condition which was expected to continue unless more regular North Vietnamese units were deployed in the South. However, because of the superiority of U.S. troops, together with South Vietnamese and third country troops which would fight with them, there was a "high prospect" that Communist main force units could be found, fixed and destroyed. The report estimated that the probability of success in offensive operations in South Vietnam was 70-75 percent. It emphasized again, however, that, "The greatest variable remains that of the ability to find and fix the enemy."<sup>15</sup>

One aspect of the problem of finding and fixing the enemy was the fact that in offensive battles in which South Vietnamese forces had pinned down the enemy, "usually in such cases the VC unit has managed to extricate itself under the cover of darkness." "Under the concept described here," the report declared, "such escape is expected to be the exception rather than the rule." "When VC units are located, forces will be concentrated by use of air mobility to assure the VC unit is destroyed."

After discussing actions in these three areas (against the North, against infiltration routes, and in the South), the report then presented the details of the force requirements for carrying out U.S. objectives.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the 77,999 U.S. troops which the report

<sup>12</sup> At this point in the report there is an excision of approximately 15 lines.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. H-8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. I-1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. I-14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. T-1 ff.

said had already been deployed or approved for deployment, it noted that Westmoreland and the JCS had recommended deploying another 92,797 by the end of 1965, for a total U.S. force of 176,000.<sup>17</sup> This total included 34 U.S. maneuver battalions (22 Army and 12 Marines), twice the number then deployed or approved for deployment. The addition of nine maneuver battalions from Korea and one from Australia and New Zealand would add 20,000 troops and raise the total to 200,000 U.S. and third force country troops and 44 maneuver battalions (the number requested by Westmoreland).

It also noted that as of July 1965, South Vietnamese forces consisted of 261,102 regular troops, 261,345 more lightly armed paramilitary (106,500 Regional Forces, 151,000 Popular Forces, and 3,845 in the coastal forces engaged in anti-infiltration activities), and 24,700 "irregulars," for a total of 547,147.

By the end of 1965, the combination of U.S. and third country and South Vietnamese forces, not allowing for a planned expansion of South Vietnamese forces, would therefore be on the order of 750,000.

Communist forces in the South, on the other hand, consisted as of July 1965 of approximately 66,150 regular forces and 100,000-110,000 irregulars for a rounded total of 170,000.

Thus, on the basis of a straight comparison of the total number of troops on both sides (170,000 Communist forces, including irregulars; 760,000 U.S., third country and South Vietnamese forces including all categories of South Vietnamese forces), the ratio after deployment of the additional U.S. and third country forces would be approximately 4.4 to 1, compared to 3.7 to 1 as of July 1965.

In its calculations of force requirements, the Goodpaster group made the following assumption:<sup>18</sup> "That a force ratio of four friendly units to one enemy unit is sufficient to fix and destroy the enemy." (There was no explanation in the report as to the basis for this assumption.) By "units," the group was referring to maneuver battalions, however, rather than to persons, and in calculating force ratio it compared the number of maneuver battalions on each side rather than the number of the troops. On this basis, it concluded that, "At the present time the force ratio of GVN battalions to known Viet Cong battalions is about 1.9 to 1. Assuming no further VC/PAVN buildup and on the assumption that a US or Allied battalion is the equivalent of two GVN battalions, that force ratio under planned deployments would be 3.3 to 1 by the end of 1965."<sup>19</sup>

Thus, even with the 44 battalions there would still be a shortfall in the 4 to 1 ratio needed "to take and keep the offensive throughout the country." To achieve a 4 to 1 ratio, Westmoreland had estimated, and the report confirmed, would require 7-35 additional battalions beyond the 44 battalions, "depending upon whether the US/SVN operation can be limited to a zone such as that of the I, II, and III Corps [the area to the north and west of Saigon], or must be

<sup>17</sup>The report does not explain the discrepancy in these figures. The total of 77,999 and 92,797 is 170,796, not 176,000.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. I-12.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. E-4. On pp. I-19-20, different ratios are given, apparently based on doubling the number of Communist battalions by including Communist irregulars in the calculation.

extended to cover the delta region [IV Corps, south of Saigon] as well." <sup>20</sup> If U.S. forces were deployed only in the three areas, the force ratio in those areas, which was 2.7 to 1, would become 4.9 to 1 after deployment, and could even become 15 to 1, based on calculations of the number of days per month of intensive combat of which both sides were capable.

Thus, the Goodpaster report concluded, if the 44 battalions were deployed only to I, II and III Corps, allied forces in those areas, with their superior firepower and mobility, would have a 4-1 edge and could carry out their objective: "At times when the VC exerts his maximum capability our superiority is calculated to be 4 to 1, a circumstance which should assure us a high probability of destroying his units engaged." <sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. ix, I-5. This is the way the 35 battalion shortfall was calculated (*ibid.*, pp. I-12-I-13): First, it was assumed that three U.S. and third country battalions would be needed to defend each of 15 bases throughout the country, a total of 45, plus 10 mobile battalions for each of the four Corps areas, a total of 40, making a combined total of 85 battalions to carry out the objective. From this was subtracted the number of U.S. and third country battalions to be deployed, but instead of using the figure of 44 the report added 6 battalions, raising to 50 the number to be deployed, for a net sum (shortfall) of 35. The extra six battalions were gained by using Marine "battalion equivalents," based on the fact that a Marine battalion is half again as large as an Army battalion. Thus, the 12 Marine battalions increased to 18 "Marine equivalents."

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. I-24.

