Deputy Defense Secretary asked for a preliminary report on Phase I by 15 August and a final report by 15 September. For Phase II he desired only a final report by 1 November.* [28]

([redacted]) Not all efforts to build up the South Vietnamese forces were physical--some were psychological. They desperately needed a boost in morale. To achieve this and encourage self-improvement for their Vietnamese ally, the Air Force and other services participated in Operation Limelight, a public affairs program designed to lift the RVNAF's esprit de corps of the troops and give more recognition to their performance and progress. The State and Defense Departments, PACOM, and MACV, also contributed to this program.[29]

Air Staff/JCS Views on Negotiations

[redacted] Following the President's 31 March address, the Air Staff shared in the preparation of a number of Joint Staff papers which incorporated the services' views on the impending negotiations. These had been solicited by General Wheeler and OSD. One paper called for a review by the Special Interdepartmental Group (SIG) of the 1954 and 1962 agreements on Vietnam and Laos to determine what provisions might be detrimental to American interests. A second contained data for negotiations (e.g., defining the meaning of "preliminary talks," "deescalation," and "cease-fire"), which Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster would use in his role as Senior Military Representative to the U.S. negotiating team. A third, for Secretary Clifford, expounded a concept of negotiations. A fourth paper proposed a two-phase operational and logistic plan for redeploying certain forces in the event all bombing of North Vietnam ended, or for preparing to resume attacks quickly if necessary.[30]

[redacted] While Washington and Hanoi sparred over a suitable place to begin peace talks (finally agreeing to hold them in Paris beginning 10 May), the Air Staff became concerned over the prevailing attitude in Washington which assumed that the negotiations would begin shortly and would be productive. Its apprehensions centered on the military drawbacks facing MACV. If negotiations proceeded swiftly, most of the reinforcements desired by General Westmoreland would not

*These dates subsequently were changed to 30 August, 30 September, and 15 November, respectively.

be sent. And with the bombing of the North cut back to the 19th parallel, Hanoi clearly was "taking advantage" of the situation by increasing its infiltration to the South and by strengthening its air defenses.[31]

([redacted] On 8 May the JCS sent two more papers to the Defense Secretary, both reflecting Air Staff views. The first addressed the negotiations for a complete bombing halt which the enemy insisted upon. The Air Staff believed that U.S. spokesmen in Paris should appreciate fully the impact of halting all attacks on North Vietnam. Though it would lessen domestic criticism of U.S. government policy, it would allow Hanoi to infiltrate more men and supplies, increase allied casualties, and vitiate the effects of three years of bombing. The service chiefs concluded that

> no combination of concessions which the North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front are likely to make unilaterally would afford the allied forces advantages commensurate with those afforded North Vietnam by cessation of bombardment. Maximum pressure should be applied at the negotiating table, therefore, in seeking to redress this initial disadvantage. Only if negotiations led to a cessation of hostilities in South Vietnam under conditions consistent with allied objectives will risks inherent in cessation of bombardment have been justified.[32]

([redacted] The second JCS paper emphasized the importance of attaining U.S. national objectives set forth in NSAM 288, 17 March 1964, calling for an independent, non-Communist South Vietnam. These required the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops and subversive elements from South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia; restoration of the DMZ; effective inspection and verification of such withdrawals; and settlement of the war in accordance with the terms of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva agreements. Prompt repatriation of prisoners of war should be an important negotiating objective.

[redacted] American concessions likely to prevent the United States from attaining its objectives, the JCS continued, would include the establishment of a coalition government with the National Liberation Front (NLF), agreement to an "in-place" cease-fire restricting the Saigon regime's freedom of action and representing a <u>de facto</u> partition of the contry, premature withdrawal of U.S. and free world forces from Southeast Asia, and cessation of air reconnaissance and coastal surveillance of North Vietnam and the DMZ.

The Joint Chiefs pointed to the absence of any Communist deescalatory steps thus far which would correspond to the partial bombing halt, cited the stepped-up infiltration of men and supplies, and warned of the possibility of another offensive against major urban centers. Although the United States was still negotiating from a position of strength, the JCS said they opposed any further reduction of military pressure against the North without substantial achievement of basic U.S. objectives in the war.[33]

[redacted] On 10 May Deputy Defense Secretary Nitze sent both JCS papers to Secretary of State Dean Rusk for Ambassador W. Averell Harriman in Paris. He thought the JCS views were not inconsistent with those of the Ambassador and with other negotiating instructions. Meanwhile, in reply to a query from Mr. Harriman, General Wheeler sent him another paper, again stressing the importance of maintaining military pressure on the North during the negotiations.[34]

[redacted] Late in May, the President and Secretary Clifford sought JCS advice on possible U.S. action if the Paris talks ended in an unsatisfactory agreement or were abandoned. Addressing the first contingency, the JCS counseled against withdrawing any American forces and recommended continuing the war until the enemy became aware of the "inevitable destruction" of his capability. Military response should include air and naval attacks on the North with fewer restraints than had existed on 31 March (when the partial bombing halt began). If the Paris talks were abandoned, air and naval attacks should resume (as indicated) and additional pressure put on the enemy through a series of air-supported, small-scale overt and covert operations in Laos, Cambodia, and the DMZ to aid military operations in South Vietnam. Other possible measures and their costs were also discussed.[35]

[redacted] Not included in the JCS reply was an Air Staff judgment that the partial bombing halt was not the "essential element" that brought Hanoi to the conference table. More plausible, it seemed, was Communist reasoning that, after inflicting many casualties on the Americans during the Tet offensive and with good weather making infiltration easier, it was time to talk and improve military positions. The Air Staff also believed that renewed bombing of the North would not necessarily provoke Hanoi sufficiently to terminate the Paris talks.[36]

[redacted] In a supplementary paper, the service chiefs reaffirmed their agreement with basic U.S. guidelines for the war (i.e., avoid a wider conflict with the Soviets or China, do not invade North

Vietnam or overthrow its government, and restore the principles of the 1954 and 1962 agreements). But they warned that the policy of gradual application of military power, restraints on attacking the North, and allowing protracted negotiations could result only in progressive decline of the allied capability to block attainment of Hanoi's goals in South Vietnam.[37]

(S-Gp-1) In another action, the Air Staff, with some exceptions, endorsed a JCS paper, prepared on 2 July for Ambassador Harriman, outlining requirements before the United States should consider a total bombing halt of North Vietnam. (See chart, next page.) The service chiefs warned that Hanoi already was using the partial bombing halt to strengthen its military position and that a renewal of attacks north of the 19th parallel might be necessary. They recognized, however, that "overriding political considerations" might take precedence over JCS-desired objectives.[38]

(S-Gp-1) Meanwhile, on 1 June the JCS sent Mr. Nitze a two-phase plan for redeploying certain forces from Southeast Asia should all attacks on North Vietnam end, and then for resuming them if necessary. Phase I called for retaining, after a complete bombing halt, Air Force, Marine, and Navy air units at their present locations, concentrating air operations in South Vietnam and Laos, preparing more aircraft to engage in combat operations (including against ground defenses and MIG's), and placing more aircraft on alert. They also recommended actions to assure the readiness of logistic, base, construction, transportation, medical, and communications-electronic units.

(S-Gp-1) Phase II provided four redeployment alternatives, each postulating the withdrawal of certain Air Force or Marine units in South Vietnam or Thailand to Japan, Okinawa, or the Philippines, and withholding from combat a portion of or all Navy carrier aircraft. If necessary, these units could redeploy quickly to the war theater to resume operations. The JCS also restated its views concerning the advantages the Communists gained as a result of the bombing halt.[39]

(U) The Air Force did not hide its skepticism of the enemy's intent in the months following the partial bombing halt. However, in view of the administration's determined effort to reduce the tempo of the war and to achieve a political settlement, the Air Force, together with the other services, had no alternative but to reassess its role.

JCS REQUIREMENTS FOR A COMPLETE BOMBING HALT IN NORTH VIETNAM

2 July 1968

1. Negotiating objectives

a. End to all infiltration.
b. Withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.
c. Restoration of the integrity of the demilitarized zone.
d. Insure control of the Government of South Vietnam over all of South Vietnam.
e. Settlement of the conflict of the basis of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva agreements on Vietnam and Laos, respectively.
f. Provide for effective inspection and verification.

2. Conditions for deescalating the war

a. No US government agreement to accept a small number of unrelated Communist deescalatory measures to create the appearance of progress.
b. Assured security of allied forces.
c. Retention of essential intelligence operations to assure the means of verifying any military arrangements agreed upon.
d. The right of the Government of South Vietnam to move freely throughout its own country.
e. No limitation on the size of the South Vietnamese armed forces.

3. Conditions for a cease-fire

a. Require operational definitions on terms of a cease-fire with respect to constraints and prerogatives of the parties involved.
b. No restrictions on the Government of South Vietnam.
c. Provide for patrolling and reconnaissance activities.

4. Conditions for a withdrawal of forces

a. Establish verification procedures and no reliance on assurances.
b. Recognize that the Government of South Vietnam is not yet strong enough to cope with the present political and military threat.
c. North Vietnam should "not take advantage" (as stated in the San Antonio formula of 29 September 1967) of a bombing halt and try to improve its position.
d. Establish the normal infiltration rate at the time of the San Antonio formula at about 7,000 men per month.

SOURCE: JCSM-415-68 (TS), 2 Jul 68.