

THE AIR FORCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA  
TOWARD A BOMBING HALT

1968

by

Jacob Van Staaveren

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## FOREWORD

This monograph is the twelfth in a series of historical reports on the war in Southeast Asia prepared by the Office of Air Force History. Other titles in the series include: USAF Plans and Policies: R&D for Southeast Asia, 1965-1967 and 1968; The Air Force in Vietnam: The Search for Military Alternatives, 1967; USAF Plans and Operations: The Air Campaign Against North Vietnam, 1966; USAF Logistic Plans and Policies in Southeast Asia, 1965.

In this report the author has focused on the roles of the Chief of Staff and the Air Staff and their proposals for the conduct of the air war. He examines the closely linked plans and policies of the White House, Secretary of Defense, and Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the views of the Pacific Command and the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. He describes briefly the siege of Khe Sanh and the 1968 Tet offensive and the impact these two major events had on the U. S. government's conduct of the war, particularly the President's decision to halt partially and later completely the bombing of North Vietnam in an effort to facilitate peace negotiations. He also discusses U. S. efforts to hasten the modernization and self-sufficiency of South Vietnam's armed forces.

In preparing this narrative, the author relied mainly on primary documents in the files of the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force and the Directorate of Plans, Headquarters USAF, and recently published reports by several key officials and participants in the dramatic events of 1968.



R. A. GRUSSENDORF  
Major General, USAF  
Chief, Office of Air Force History



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## I. THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN EARLY 1968

As 1968 began, Washington officials were optimistic about the war in Southeast Asia since it seemed that the Allies were closer to achieving their objectives. The armed forces of the free world had grown stronger during 1967, while those of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong had become weaker. "We feel," President Lyndon B. Johnson stated on New Year's Day, "that the enemy knows that he can no longer win a military victory in South Vietnam."<sup>1</sup> Studies for a deescalation of the war were under way and there was new confidence that a cease-fire might be negotiated with the enemy.

### Evaluations of the War

During a visit to Washington in November 1967, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV), and the American Ambassador to Saigon, Ellsworth Bunker, had expressed considerable optimism. In meetings with the President, members of Congress, State and Defense Department officials, and in public statements, they declared that the United States and its allies were now winning the war. However, General Westmoreland--although he supported the President's military policy--desired to increase the pressure on the enemy and warned against any letup in the bombing of North Vietnam. He also wished to increase the number of B-52 sorties from 800 to 1,200 per month, modernize South Vietnamese forces as fast as they could absorb additional equipment, and send the remainder of Deployment Program 5 forces\* to South Vietnam as soon as possible. By the end of 1967, Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara had authorized an increase in B-52 sorties and a speed-up in the movement of Deployment Program 5 forces. He was studying a proposal to accelerate the modernization of South Vietnamese forces.<sup>2</sup>

(3) Hopeful but somewhat less sanguine as 1968 began was a report on the war's progress prepared by the Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Pointing to the enemy's heavy losses in manpower, decline in population control, failures to launch major attacks, and the need to operate from border areas, the report said that the

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\*See below, p 5.

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allied military objectives were closer to attainment than at the beginning of 1967. It saw significant political gains in the South Vietnamese national election of 3 September 1967 and the inauguration of President Nguyen Van Thieu on 31 October of the same year as the head of the new Saigon government. The report concluded that the air campaign against the North had reduced to "less than optimum" the number of troops and the quantity of supplies reaching the South. In fact, air operations had transformed North Vietnam's economy into little more than a distribution system. On the other hand, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese were not yet "down and out." Dedicated and vigorous, they could transport the necessary military resources into South Vietnam, sustain current levels of operation, and commit major forces where there was a high probability of success. The North Vietnamese were able to adjust to selective bombings. Also, bad weather frequently halted or reduced air operations and the use of more anti-aircraft weapons further degraded the effectiveness of allied bombings.<sup>3</sup>

More disquieting was an assessment by Maj. Gen. William E. Deputy, Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities, JCS, who warned Gen. John P. McConnell, Air Force Chief of Staff, and other service chiefs that the new Thieu government still had to demonstrate its ability to govern. Despite plans for civil and military reform announced by President Thieu on 31 October, government ministries had not yet made civil changes nor had the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) reorganized in accordance with the recommendations of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV). Also, the powers of "war lord" corps commanders, who acted without regard to Saigon, had not been reduced, junior officers were increasingly restive about corruption, and morale was low among revolutionary development (pacification) cadres and province officials who lacked power to institute new programs. In short, there was an absence of "forward motion" which could put the government "on the road." General Deputy felt that "leverage" to force changes in lower echelons of the Saigon government was not possible unless it was applied first by Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland. Although Saigon's concern about "negotiations" made it difficult to apply pressure, General Deputy nevertheless believed that the "nettle had to be grasped."<sup>4</sup>

The status of the Saigon regime and U.S. strategy in the war were increasingly debated in Congress and the public media. In January 1968 Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (Dem., Mass.) proposed placing



greater emphasis on effecting social and political reforms, reducing corruption in South Vietnam, and adopting a "clear and hold" rather than a "search and destroy" strategy in the war. President Johnson asked his service chiefs to comment on the Kennedy proposals.

(S. [redacted]) In his reply to the President, General McConnell said that military success should take priority over efforts to achieve internal reforms in the Saigon government. He recognized the need for national stability in developing viable social and political institutions, but opposed U.S. threats to withdraw forces until the Saigon regime reduced corruption--a condition not unique in South Vietnam although of special significance there. As for "clear and hold" military operations, he thought such a change in U.S. strategy would give the Communists more freedom to attack and inflict losses on Americans and would create demands for additional troops. The Air Force Chief of Staff felt that the administration should continue to explain to the public that the complex problems of Vietnam did not lend themselves to "simplistic solutions" but required military as well as nonmilitary actions.<sup>5</sup>

[redacted] Concerning military actions, the Air Force had long contended that the war could be shortened and won with fewer U. S. casualties and with acceptable risks if the administration reduced its manifold restrictions on bombing North Vietnam. But top officials, including Secretary McNamara, disagreed. They were convinced that heavier bombing would not reduce significantly the enemy's minimal combat requirements and that such a policy might trigger a conflict with the Russians or Chinese. Further, they argued that the war had to be won in the South.\*

#### Studies on a Bombing Halt and Negotiations to End the War

[redacted] In early 1968 the Air Staff also continued to examine proposals for deescalating or ending the war in Southeast Asia. One study dealt with a 10 July 1967 plan developed by Representative

\*For a resumé of the views of General McConnell and Secretary McNamara on bombing operations in Southeast Asia (SEA), see Hearings (22, 23, 25 Aug 1967) before the Senate Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, 90th Cong, 1st Sess, Air War Against North Vietnam, parts 3 and 4.

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F. Bradford Morse (Rep., Mass.) calling for a five-step deescalation of the conflict. This would be achieved by reducing gradually the bombing of North Vietnam southward toward the demilitarized zone (DMZ) while the Communist forces similarly deescalated. General McConnell sent his critique of the Morse plan to Air Force Secretary Harold Brown on 4 January 1968. He said the plan contained "serious pitfalls" and he particularly questioned its assumptions for attaining mutual deescalation. Nevertheless, he believed the plan merited further analysis.<sup>6</sup>

~~(S)~~ Examining another proposal to achieve "tactical deescalation" of the war, the Air Staff and Joint Staff agreed that in order to "tacitly" lower the tempo of the fighting, the administration's objective should not be less than a negotiated end to the war. And before the United States halted the bombing of the North, Hanoi should meet "minimum conditions" previously outlined by the JCS. Although the services disagreed on some details of the tacit deescalation proposal, they continued to examine its possibilities.<sup>7</sup>

~~(S)~~ The Air Staff also participated in a JCS study, "Sea Cabin," that explored President Johnson's 29 September 1967 San Antonio "formula" for ending the air and naval bombardment of the North and negotiating an end to the war.\* The JCS views, generally in consonance with those held by the Air Force, were sent to Secretary McNamara at the end of January. The service chiefs recommended that the United States exact a stiff quid pro quo from Hanoi for a bombing halt. They felt strongly that bombing should be resumed if there were no serious discussions within seven days, if the enemy resumed major attacks, or if they concluded the bombing halt had given the enemy a substantial military advantage.<sup>8</sup>

~~(S)~~ Early in 1968 there was also considerable speculation about a statement on 29 December 1969 by North Vietnam's Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, who suggested that negotiations might soon be possible. He indicated that his government's position had changed from "would talk" to "will talk" if the United States halted its attacks on the North. But President Johnson, Gen. Earl G. Wheeler (the JCS chairman), and other officials did not regard the statement as a

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\*See Jacob Van Staaveren (TS), The Air Force in Vietnam: The Search for Military Alternatives, 1967 (AFCHO, 1969) pp 51-52.

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"breakthrough" toward negotiations. The Hanoi regime, they believed, had not yet met their requirements for a bombing pause, and would probably take advantage of a cessation of attack to strengthen its military posture. The new Secretary of Defense designate, Clark M. Clifford, informed a Senate committee on 25 January that he too opposed a bombing suspension, feeling it was premature.<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding these high-level views, the impact of new military crises in the Asian theater would soon alter fundamentally the administration's position concerning a bombing halt and negotiations with Hanoi. Meanwhile, the United States and her allies continued to pit their combat strength and strategy against the Communists in the field.

#### U. S. and Allied Strength in Southeast Asia

In terms of manpower, the allies at the beginning of 1968 still enjoyed considerable superiority over the Communists, having fielded forces totaling more than 1,300,000 military personnel. Of this number, in South Vietnam, 496,000 were American (including 55,900 Air Force), and 641,000 were South Vietnamese (including 16,253 in their air force).<sup>\*</sup> Saigon also could call upon a special South Vietnamese civilian irregular defense group of 42,000. In addition, 60,300 other allied troops, mostly South Korean, were deployed in South Vietnam. Offshore 36,500 Americans manned the U. S. Seventh Fleet and, in Thailand, 45,500 U. S. personnel (including 33,400 Air Force) supported the air war in North Vietnam and Laos. American manpower was controlled tightly by the Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) through its Southeast Asia Deployment Program 5, issued on 5 October 1967. This document imposed a ceiling of 525,000 U. S. personnel in South Vietnam and 45,724 in Thailand.

Allied combat aircraft included 992 American, 90 Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF), and eight Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) tactical fighters. Of the U. S. total, 650 were Air Force. In addition, 51 Strategic Air Command (SAC) B-52 bombers were stationed in Thailand and Guam to carry out Arc Light saturation bombing, mostly in South Vietnam. Also operating in the area were 1,440 noncombat aircraft used for transport, forward air control (FAC), reconnaissance, electronic, and other support missions. Of

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<sup>\*</sup>The 641,000 total consisted of regular, regional, and popular forces.

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[REDACTED]

these, the Air Force possessed more than half. Helicopters numbered 2,965 and belonged chiefly to the Army and Marine Corps, although the Air Force operated 69 on air rescue missions.

[REDACTED] Arrayed against the free world forces were an estimated 200,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers, strongly backed by the resources of the Soviet Union, China, and other Communist states. As a result of allied air and ground operations in 1967, the Communists were believed to have suffered a net loss of 55,500 men. Air strikes had also discouraged Hanoi from maintaining many jet aircraft on its airfields. At the end of 1967, there were only 10 MIG-15's and eight MIG-21's stationed in North Vietnam, whereas 60 jets were on nearby South China bases. These consisted of 49 MIG-21's, three MIG-16 trainers, and eight IL-28 bombers.<sup>10</sup>

[REDACTED] This order of battle, so heavily weighted in favor of the allies, undoubtedly contributed to the aura of optimism about the war at the beginning of the year.

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## II. MILITARY CRISES FROM LATE JANUARY THROUGH MARCH

(S) The feelings of optimism expressed by military and civilian officials in Saigon began to fade in late January as a result of a series of unexpected events in Vietnam and Korea. On 21 January a specially trained team of 31 North Korean agents infiltrated into South Korea on a mission to assassinate President Park Chung Hee. Two days later the North Koreans seized the U. S. intelligence ship Pueblo about 13 miles off their coast. In South Vietnam, about this time, the Communists completed an encirclement of the Marine base at Khe Sanh not far from the Laotian border and the DMZ. For 77 days they lay siege to about 6,000 Marines and a South Vietnamese Ranger battalion defending the post, while fears arose in the United States that the enemy was trying to achieve another Dien Bien Phu. Although the enemy suffered huge casualties, he continued to ring the base, shelling it frequently while a major U. S. airlift replenished the stocks of the besieged Leathernecks.<sup>1</sup>

(S) The most important enemy action, however, began in the early hours of 30 January. Under the cover of a military truce for South Vietnam, the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese launched a month-long "Tet" offensive, attacking Saigon and key cities in I and II Corps in the north, and numerous South Vietnamese and American military headquarters and airfields. The repercussions of these almost simultaneous blows throughout South Vietnam were far-reaching.

### Crisis in Korea

(S) The seizure of the Pueblo and other North Korean provocations along the Korean DMZ induced President Johnson on 25 January to order a limited callup of Reserve forces, a step long advocated by the JCS. Fourteen Air National Guard (ANG), eight Air Force Reserve (AFRES), and six Navy Reserve units totaling 14,878 personnel were called to active duty. Some Air Force units flew immediately to South Korea,\* and a squadron of Air Force F-4's redeployed from Cam Ranh Bay in South Vietnam to South Korea, having been replaced

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\*In May and June 1968, after further training, four of eight ANG F-100C squadrons recalled on 25 January were sent from the United States to South Vietnam.

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by a Tactical Air Command (TAC) squadron from the United States.\*

In a further show of force, the next day Secretary McNamara approved the movement of 26 additional B-52's and supporting tankers from the United States to the Pacific. In early February, under the code name Port Bow, 11 bombers joined those already on Guam. Fifteen others, along with nine KC-135 tankers went to Okinawa to be on hand if needed.<sup>2</sup>

Even as he was reacting to the Pueblo crisis, the President suspected--as he remarked in a brief report to the nation on 26 January--that the North Koreans might be trying to divert America's attention and energies from the Vietnam struggle.<sup>3</sup>

### The Air Force at Khe Sanh

3) Whether the President's supposition was correct or not, the fact was that the intractable Communists were preparing a major assault on Khe Sanh. Although there were strong arguments for abandoning the base, General Westmoreland, the JCS, and Secretary McNamara agreed it should be held for political and strategic reasons. General Wheeler termed Khe Sanh "the anchor of our whole defense of the northern portion of South Vietnam," and felt that defending it would tie down many North Vietnamese who otherwise would be free to attack elsewhere. Since the United States had the firepower and resupply skills to hold the base, military commanders saw "exploitative opportunities" for delivering a "severe" or "knockout" blow to the Communists.<sup>4</sup>

In an attempt to determine the size of the enemy forces in the area and to develop "target boxes" for B-52 strikes which were to follow, General Westmoreland in mid-January had launched an extensive air and ground intelligence search operation, known as Niagara I. On 22 January, after the Communists had encircled Khe Sanh, the MACV commander began Niagara II operations, the greatest air offensive of the war. All available Air Force, Navy, and Marine tactical aircraft, SAC B-52's and Marine artillery were employed to prevent the garrison's capture.<sup>5</sup>

\*For two accounts of the Pueblo incident, see Hildreth, et al., The Air Force Response to the Pueblo Crisis, 1968 (TS) (AFCHO, Jan 69) and Chronology of the Korean Crisis, 1968 (TS) (AFCHO, Jun 68).

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(~~TS-6-1~~) Despite the confidence of military commanders that the Marine base could be held, there was considerable anxiety in Washington. In late January, General Westmoreland had warned that if the situation near the DMZ and at Khe Sanh worsened drastically, nuclear or chemical weapons might have to be used. This prompted General McConnell to press, although unsuccessfully, for JCS authority to request Pacific Command (PACOM) to prepare a plan for using low-yield nuclear weapons to prevent a catastrophic loss of the Marine base.<sup>6</sup>

(~~TS-6-1~~) 1) At the White House the President made clear he did not wish to risk a defeat such as suffered by the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Replying to a query from the President, General Wheeler assured him on 3 February that the military situation at Khe Sanh differed from that of the French in three ways: the United States had more and better equipped reconnaissance, all-weather, fighter, and other tactical aircraft, plus B-52 bombers; there was reinforcing artillery from Marine positions east of the mountains; and there were vastly improved aerial techniques for resupply, medical evacuation, and for other needs.<sup>7</sup>

(~~TS-6-1~~) 3) Official and public concern heightened when Communist forces overran the Special Forces camp at Long Vei near Khe Sanh on 6-7 February. This loss, accompanied by other temporary setbacks inflicted by the enemy's Tet offensive, raised probing Congressional inquiries about the war, evoked more criticism from the press, and led commanders in Saigon to request urgent reinforcements from the United States.<sup>8</sup>

(~~TS-6-1~~) Meanwhile, additional air power was brought to bear on Communist forces at Khe Sanh and related targets in South Vietnam and Laos. On 11 February the Joint Chiefs authorized the SAC and PACOM commanders to use the newly arrived Port Bow B-52's at Guam and Okinawa for these strikes. They also permitted an increase in the overall B-52 Arc Light sortie rate from 1,200 per month (originally scheduled to be attained by 1 February) to 1,800 per month.<sup>9</sup>

(~~TS-6-1~~) 3) In mid-February another change in policy--long sought by the Air Force and other services--aided the defenders of Khe Sanh and other allied positions under attack by the Communists. It involved terminating the restriction, imposed by the Thai government in March 1965, on using Thai-based tactical aircraft for



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combat in South Vietnam. Heretofore, except for B-52's, Thai-based aircraft could be used only for operations in North Vietnam and Laos. The change permitted a more efficient use of existing theater resources. To accommodate more Air Force personnel the U. S. military ceiling in Thailand was raised slightly to 47,461. \*10

~~SECRET~~ The intensity of the fighting at Khe Sanh and elsewhere evoked new decisions on the use of equipment. A test of acoustic and seismic sensors to detect enemy vehicular traffic and troop movements, begun by the Air Force in its Muscle Shoals program (renamed Igloo White on 1 June 1968) in Laos in December 1967, was extended to the Khe Sanh area. + Beginning 21 January the sensors were dropped by specially equipped Navy OP-2E aircraft and hand-launched from CH-3 helicopters based at Nakhon Phanom AB, Thailand. USAF A-1's dropped special "gravel" munitions to impede enemy movements. The tests soon demonstrated the usefulness of sensors in gathering intelligence. 11 At Khe Sanh, an Air Force prototype AC-130A Gunship II also went into action, adding to the massive firepower poured down on the North Vietnamese troops surrounding the base. 12

~~SECRET~~ The heavy concentration of American and South Vietnamese ground and air units around Khe Sanh and in other parts of I Corps prompted General Westmoreland, on 8 March, to designate Gen. William W. Momyer, the Seventh Air Force commander and MACV's Deputy Commander for Air, as "single manager" for air operations in that area. Within the JCS, this decision was contested vigorously by the other services, especially the Marines, who alleged

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\*Since issuance of Deployment Program 5, 5 Oct 67 which authorized 45,724 U.S. military personnel in Thailand there had been only slight incremental increases in the ceiling.

+Enemy vehicular or personnel movements detected by sensors were relayed to orbiting USAF UC-121 aircraft which, in turn, further relayed the data to the USAF-operated Task Force Alpha infiltration surveillance center at Nakhon Phanom AB. For the origin of this project and initial results see Hist Rprt (S), 7/13 AF, 1969, subj: Hist of Task Force Alpha, 1 Oct 1967-30 Apr 1968; Proj CHECO SEA Rprt (TS), 31 Jul 68, subj: Igloo White (Initial Phase); and Herman S. Wolk, USAF Plans and Policies: Logistics and Base Construction in Southeast Asia, 1967 (TS) (AFCHO, Oct 68), pp 48-61.

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that the single manager concept for air threatened the "integrity" of Marine Corps air operations, and that it established a precedent for centralized air control during periods of heavy combat. However, Generals McConnell and Wheeler supported Westmoreland's decision as did Admiral U. S. G. Sharp, the PACOM commander. The issue was eventually resolved by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul H. Nitze who upheld General Westmoreland's right to make the appointment.\*13

Meanwhile, the air effort to save Khe Sanh continued. Tactical air sorties for Niagara provided what the Marines called a "mammoth air umbrella" of fighter-bombers which covered Khe Sanh around the clock. From 22 January through 31 March Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps fighter-bombers averaged more than 270 sorties each day responding to the needs of the surrounded Marines (see Table 1). The results were impressive: on an average, there

TABLE 1

U.S. ATTACK SORTIES IN DEFENSE OF KHE SANH (OPERATION NIAGARA)

22 January-31 March 1968

	<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>Total</u>
USAF	2,143	3,911	3,630	9,684
USN	963	1,814	2,290	5,067
USMC	<u>1,640</u>	<u>1,926</u>	<u>3,132</u>	<u>6,698</u>
Total Tactical Sorties	4,746	7,651	9,052	21,449
SAC Sorties	<u>334</u>	<u>1,057</u>	<u>1,176</u>	<u>2,567</u>
Grand Total	5,080	8,708	10,228	24,016

SOURCE: Project CHECO SEA Rprt (S), subj: Khe Sanh (Operation Niagara), 22 Jan-31 Mar 68, 13 Sep 68, pp 112-114.

\*For a discussion of the single manager system, see Project CHECO SEA Rprt (S), subj: Single Manager for Air in South Vietnam, 1 Jul 68.

were 87 secondary explosions and fires reported each day in March alone. During the entire period tactical aircraft touched off more than 4,700 secondary explosions and 1,910 secondary fires. They were credited with destroying much of the enemy's equipment.<sup>14</sup>

	<u>Destroyed</u>	<u>Damaged</u>
Trucks	250	50
Gun Positions	300	40
Bunkers	900	100

When fighter-bombers let up in their strikes against pinpointed targets, the B-52's of SAC unloaded their bombs on enemy strongholds, troop concentrations, and supply areas. Flying above 30,000 feet altitude and carrying a 27-ton payload of 108 mixed 500- and 750-pound bombs, they devastated their targets, occasionally scoring hits within 1,000 meters of the Marine base. Photo and visual reconnaissance of Khe Sanh subsequently revealed that B-52's had destroyed more than 300 defensive positions, weapon sites, and line of communications (LOC) targets; and triggered more than 100 secondary fires and 1,300 secondary explosions. Of 95,430 tons of air ordnance used during Operation Niagara in defense of the Marine base (22 January-31 March), B-52's dropped 59,542 tons, USAF tactical aircraft 14,724 tons, and Navy and Marine aircraft the remainder. As a result of combined B-52 and tactical air strikes, the enemy lost an estimated 10,000 troops, and his failure to overrun the base, according to General McConnell, "was directly related to the effectiveness of airpower."<sup>15</sup>

The effects of the B-52 raids also demoralized the enemy. Following one of the Arc Light strikes, Marines reported that North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers were found wandering in a daze, bleeding and internally hemorrhaging. Explosions, reported a North Vietnamese diary, were "so strong that our lungs hurt." Fear of the B-52's also caused enemy desertions as in one instance when 300 North Vietnamese troops en route to Khe Sanh fled from the ranks.<sup>16</sup>

4) While the B-52 raids and the tactical air strikes sustained the defense of Khe Sanh, USAF airlift assured the garrison's

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survival. Surpassed perhaps only by the Berlin airlift was the dramatic demonstration of aerial resupply for the surrounded garrison by the Air Force's 834th Air Division, and for two nearby outposts, hills "861" and "881," by Marine helicopters. From 22 January until 8 April when "land route 9" was reopened to the base, USAF C-123's and C-130's made 447 landings and 576 airdrops. Of the latter, 15 were accomplished by the ground proximity extraction system (GPES), 58 by low-altitude parachute extraction system (LAPES),\* and 503 by the container delivery system. C-7A Caribou aircraft were used on eight occasions. All casualty evacuations and personnel replacements also were made by air. Of the 12,430 tons of supplies delivered, 8,120 tons were airdropped and 4,320 tons were airlanded. General Westmoreland termed the resupply of Khe Sanh "the premier air logistical feat of the war."<sup>17</sup>

Elsewhere in South Vietnam during the 77-day siege, the Seventh Air Force and other Navy, Marine, and VNAF tactical aircraft flew thousands of close support, interdiction, reconnaissance, gunship, and electronic sorties in order to blunt another Communist military gamble of the war--the Tet offensive. This massive onslaught over the length and breadth of South Vietnam would have a greater impact on American and allied policy than the enemy's effort to capture Khe Sanh.

The 1968 Tet Offensive

Despite their optimism about the war, as the new year began allied commanders had anticipated another large-scale enemy assault. As early as 9 January General Momyer was certain that there would be a new offensive and doubted that it would be confined to the Khe Sanh area. When the siege of the base began,

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\*The GPES and the LAPES methods delivered supplies by approaching the delivery area slightly above ground level. With GPES the cargo was extracted by a hook attached to the cargo and extended from a boom at the rear of the aircraft. As the C-130 swooped low over the runway, the pilot tried to snag an arresting cable which upon engagement would jerk the pallets from the aircraft. With LAPES the cargo was snatched from the plane by the jolt of a blossoming parachute.

General Westmoreland requested authority to cancel a 36-hour military truce recently proclaimed by the allies (versus a one-week truce announced by the Communists) in recognition of the annual Vietnamese Lunar New Year, or Tet, beginning 30 January. His request was approved in Washington on the 29th, but it was to be applied only to South Vietnam's five northernmost provinces in I Corps. 18

3) While the Americans awaited the enemy, the Saigon government generally disregarded the threat. Plans to celebrate the Tet holiday had not been interrupted, liberal military leaves and passes were granted, and on the eve of the enemy blitz, the South Vietnamese Army units outside of I Corps were only at 40 to 50 percent of their regular strength. Some units were in a state of alert, but others were not. 19

Consequently, when in the early hours of 30 January the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese attacked the capital and many other cities and towns, as well as numerous South Vietnamese and American military bases and airfields, South Vietnam's Forces were unable to stem the enemy's surge. President Thieu quickly canceled the truce and placed his nation under martial law.

By the 31st the Communists were on the rampage throughout the country, and within a few days had struck 36 of 45 provincial capitals, five of six autonomous cities, 64 of 242 district capitals, and 50 hamlets. Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops penetrated 11 cities in strength. In Saigon, where there was heavy fighting, 19 insurgents blasted a hole in the wall around the American Embassy, entered the grounds, and were finally killed trying to enter the building. Completely overrun and largely destroyed by air strikes and artillery fire, Vietnam's ancient capital Hue was not liberated by U. S. Marines and South Vietnamese troops until 25 February. The intensity of the far-flung assaults temporarily placed the allies on the defensive, forcing the troops to abandon much of the countryside in order to protect the cities. 20

Among the enemy's targets were 25 allied airfields. Communist troops at Hue overran the airstrip, destroying eight USAF O-1 and O-2 FAC aircraft. They also launched major assaults on the principal USAF-occupied airfields at Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, Da Nang, and Binh Thuy, but none were overrun or forced to discontinue operations. Some premature attacks had warned the allies.



thus prompting General Momyer to declare a maximum alert for Seventh Air Force installations before the full impact of the enemy's Tet offensive began. But the poor performance of some of the South Vietnamese assigned to air base security weakened the defense system. Between 30 January and 29 February, 25 Air Force aircraft were totally destroyed\* and 157 damaged on the ground by enemy rocket and mortar attacks. For the three services, the ground attacks in this period destroyed 53 aircraft of all types (30 fixed wing, 23 helicopters), and damaged 344.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, all available aircraft were thrown into the battle. A substantial portion of tactical air was used for close air support of American and South Vietnamese troops. The Communist offensive warranted heavier bombing of supply routes in North Vietnam, but air operations were handicapped throughout February by the worst weather since bombing began in 1965.<sup>+22</sup>

The VNAF's performance initially was poor. The liberal leave policies adopted for the Tet holiday had left its units unprepared for sustained combat, and many flight line and cockpit jobs had to be filled temporarily by USAF advisors. By the end of the month, however, the situation had improved and the advisors rated the VNAF's performance as "highly satisfactory."<sup>+23</sup>

General Westmoreland predicted on 2 February that the Communist offensive "was about to run out of steam." He also anticipated a major attack on Khe Sanh, where the enemy had massed 20,000 to 40,000 troops, and stated that his defeat there "may measurably shorten the war."<sup>24</sup>

In Washington, on the same day, administration officials viewed the Tet offensive with concern but not alarm. At a news conference, President Johnson said that the enemy's objective was to demonstrate military and psychological success, to overthrow the

\*By type, they included: O-1's, seven; O-2's, six; F-4, one; RF-4's, four; A-37, one; F-84's, two; F-100's, two; RF-101, one; and C-130, one.

+In fact, effective air operations over the North were greatly curtailed in the first three months of 1968 because of unprecedented bad weather. In the northern "route packages" (IV through VI), visual air strikes were possible only an average of three days per month.

+For a later evaluation of the VNAF's performance, see p 54.

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existing Saigon government,\* and to prepare the way for a Communist-led coalition government. Pointing to heavy Communist casualties, he said the JCS, General Westmoreland, and Secretary McNamara agreed that the Tet offensive was a military failure and there was no need to change basic strategy nor to increase the 25 525,000 American military personnel ceiling for South Vietnam.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ The JCS, however, were apprehensive. With the onset of the Tet attacks, General Wheeler directed the services to prepare a paper for Secretary McNamara demonstrating the need to fight North Vietnam on "a sound military basis." General McConnell, replying for the Air Force, favored an unrestricted air and naval campaign to destroy all military targets regardless of location. This meant full employment of B-52's and no strictures on the number of tactical attack sorties to be flown or on the use of munitions.<sup>26</sup>

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Approval for a "wraps off" air and naval effort was unlikely since the administration, on 18 January, had imposed additional restraints on the bombing at the Hanoi-Haiphong area in response to a statement on 29 December 1967 by North Vietnam's Foreign Minister expressing an interest in negotiations. Consequently, on 3 February, the JCS asked for authority to strike enemy targets up to three nautical miles of Hanoi and one and one-half of Haiphong.<sup>+</sup> This would make more transportation staging areas, transshipment points, roads, railways, and waterways in the two cities vulnerable to air attack. Admiral Sharp would take measures to avoid striking populated areas and foreign shipping. The Joint Chiefs believed that Soviet and Chinese reaction probably would be limited to propaganda and diplomatic pressure and that air effectiveness could be increased

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\*Whether the Communists expected a general uprising, the overthrow of the Saigon government, and a "decisive" victory remains debatable. Many officials, including General Westmoreland, believed this was their true objective. A subsequent Defense Intelligence Agency analysis of the Tet offensive, however, states that "more persuasive additional evidence suggests the Communists were fully aware of the improbability of a full-scale military victory over the allies."

<sup>+</sup>In 1967, the administration had imposed a "prohibited" bombing area of ten and four nautical miles, respectively, from the center of each city. Selected air strikes were possible in the prohibited area only with Washington approval.

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without additional risk. In response, OSD partially relaxed its recent restrictions on air strikes in the Hanoi-Haiphong area.<sup>27</sup>

[REDACTED] Meanwhile, in-ground fighting General Westmoreland pursued a strategy which assigned top priority to clearing the enemy from the cities of South Vietnam and second priority to denying him any territory of value. But to accomplish these twin objectives and to capitalize on the military opportunities open to him, the MACV commander needed more air and ground forces.<sup>28</sup>

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### III. WESTMORELAND SEEKS MORE TROOPS, AIRCRAFT, AND EQUIPMENT

~~SECRET~~ 4) In his request to Washington for more assistance in early February, General Westmoreland initially asked for one more USAF C-130 squadron (complete with ground handling equipment and maintenance crews), possibly a second squadron which he would keep on alert, more O-1 FAC aircraft, helicopters, air drop equipment, and one naval mobile construction battalion for I Corps. He also desired faster distribution of M-16 rifles, M-60 machine-guns, and M-29 mortars for the South Vietnamese Army. The Air Staff and other services immediately reviewed the impact that the emergency shipments would have on deliveries previously scheduled under Deployment Program 5.<sup>1</sup>

~~SECRET~~ 4) Airlift augmentation was arranged promptly. The JCS approved the temporary retention in PACOM of 16 C-130's scheduled for return, the deployment of a second squadron to the Pacific, and the alerting of a third which followed shortly. Two of the squadrons would operate from Japan. In other actions, USAF UC-123 defoliation aircraft were pressed into airlift service for the remainder of February, and a large part of the Air Force's transport fleet in the theater began flying on an emergency basis.<sup>2</sup>

~~SECRET~~ 4) Responding to additional appeals from Saigon, Secretary McNamara directed the immediate movement by air of 16 CH-34 and 30 CH-47 helicopters, 143 M-113 personnel carriers (to be taken from other military aid programs), and various arms including 20,000 M-16 rifles from Air Force units outside of Southeast Asia. Eighty-five tanks would be shipped from Okinawa and the United States.<sup>3</sup>

~~SECRET~~ 4) Because of high losses and the need for more air sorties, General Westmoreland asked for 119 additional FAC aircraft. The only available "extras" were to be found in Army national guard and reserve units, and these would have to be modified for use in Southeast Asia. On the recommendation of the JCS, production of newer FAC O-2's was stepped up, although deliveries would take some time.<sup>4</sup>

(S) 4) A MACV request for the Air Force's low-altitude parachute extraction system to air drop supplies at Khe Sanh also posed a problem since the system, in early February, was still undergoing tests. The Air Staff finally concluded that it would be feasible to order sets for immediate production, and simultaneously complete the tests and prepare operating instructions. Soon the LAPES and other air drop systems made signal contributions to resupplying the Marines at their besieged base.<sup>5</sup>

(S) Gp 1) Meanwhile, General Westmoreland redeployed troops from other areas to I Corps and established there a MACV forward headquarters under his Deputy Commander, Gen. Creighton W. Abrams. These redeployments generated a need for more manpower as did the weakness of Saigon's forces and unexpected strength of the enemy. By 11 February the South Vietnamese had lost about 2,000 killed, 7,000 wounded, and there were unknown numbers of absences from units.<sup>6</sup>

(S) The cost to the enemy was considerable, totaling an estimated 32,000 killed and 5,000 captured and he also had lost more than 7,000 individual and "crew-served" weapons (those requiring more than one man to handle). However, he remained strong. The 84,000 troops believed committed to the Tet offensive represented only 20 to 25 percent of his strength, and most of his uncommitted manpower was still in I Corps.<sup>7</sup>

(S) In view of the crises and new assessments of enemy strength, General Westmoreland, through General Wheeler, asked Washington authorities to prevent any withdrawal of the present 49,000-man Republic of Korea (ROK) force in South Vietnam.\* If possible, he proposed to augment allied forces with 11,000 more ROK troops and to expedite the deployment of a Thai infantry division (promise on 12 August 1967 by the Thai government for deployment in 1968).<sup>8</sup> Any increases in troop strength from these sources, he soon learned, would probably be too little and too late.

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\*On 3 February, the ROK Defense Minister said that more U. S. aid was necessary to combat North Korean incursions, and without it his government might recall some of its troops in South Vietnam.

~~SECRET~~Plans to Speed Up Deployment of American Troops

(~~1~~) As there was little prospect of obtaining quickly more ROK or Thai troops, it became apparent that additional reinforcements would have to be American. On 9 February Secretary McNamara asked the JCS for three alternate plans to reinforce MACV. These should include provisions for dispatching 150 more aircraft. However, he cautioned against recommendations requiring Congressional approval as this could trigger a further divisive debate on the war.<sup>9</sup>

(~~2~~) 4) Of the three plans hurriedly completed, the service chiefs proposed adopting the one that called for sending to South Vietnam the Army's 82d Airborne Division and six-ninths of a Marine Division Wing Team. Despite the apprehensions of the Defense Secretary, they thought he should ask Congress for additional legislation to extend service tours and recall more reservists. The Army and Marine force would also need support units. Although the Air Staff supported the JCS recommendation, it believed that it should have included a request for more support aircraft and heavier air attacks on North Vietnam.

(~~3~~) 4) The JCS cautioned, however, that the additional troops should not be sent until the military situation became clearer and serious manpower problems were resolved. "Deployable" forces (including the 82d and the Marine team), they noted, contained many personnel who had completed their Vietnam tours or were nearing the end of their military obligations. There also was a shortage of specialists for aircraft, helicopters, munitions, communications, and other jobs and it was important to continue to maintain an adequate training and rotation base. The JCS suggested that, while readying the Army and Marine Force, certain reserve units should be recalled promptly and procurement actions taken to alleviate shortages of aircraft, helicopters, munitions, and other important items.<sup>10</sup>

(~~4~~) 4) Before OSD acted on the JCS plans, General Westmoreland, in concert with American Embassy officials in Saigon, asked the President to rush one brigade of the Army's 82d Airborne Division and one Marine Corps regiment to I Corps to preclude using troops needed elsewhere in South Vietnam. Although the Communists had been repulsed in the other Corps area, more manpower was needed in I Corps to regain the initiative. The MACV commander said he could support these forces logistically, would need them only for six months, and planned to include them within the 525,000 U.S. manpower ceiling.<sup>11</sup>

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(S) 3) President Johnson approved the request the same day (12 February), and on the 13th the Pentagon announced the decision to send 10,500 more men to South Vietnam, characterizing it as a "speed-up" in deployments authorized under the troop ceiling. Most of the 27th Regimental Landing Team (RLT) was already in the Pacific, deploying by ship from Okinawa, while Military Airlift Command's C-133's and C-141's flew the 82d's brigade and other personnel to I Corps by 26 February. The Saigon government, for its part, announced that it would add 65,000 more men to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces by June 1968.<sup>12</sup>

(S) The President's decision led the JCS to request again a reserve callup. The service chiefs desired to mobilize immediately 46,000 Army, Navy, and Marine reservists to support the 10,500-man deployment force and to rebuild the strategic reserve. Volunteer Air Force reservists could provide additional airlift needs. Anticipating further requests from General Westmoreland, the JCS warned that an additional Marine regiment and the remainder of the 82d would add to demands for support. To meet all pressing requirements, they desired to plan for the recall of an additional 137,000 reserve and national guard personnel (28,300 Air Force, 11,700 Navy, 39,000 Marine Corps, and 58,000 Army).<sup>13</sup>

(S) When Secretary McNamara solicited alternatives to these proposals, the service chiefs reaffirmed vigorously the need to recall 46,500 reservists immediately and plan the recall of 137,000 more. Although their entreaties were not approved, the debate over mobilizing the reserve and national guard continued.<sup>14</sup>

#### General Westmoreland's Request for 206,000 More Troops

(S) As the Tet offensive continued into the second and third week of February, General Westmoreland advised Washington that he would need considerably more American manpower. To obtain a first-hand report of his requirements and the military situation, the President sent General Wheeler to Saigon to confer with the MACV commander. The JCS chairman returned to Washington in late February with a sobering report.

(S) General Wheeler said that the Tet attacks had nearly succeeded in a dozen places and that defeat had been avoided only by the timely reaction of American forces. The revolutionary development



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(pacification) program had suffered a severe setback and was aggravated by 474,000 more displaced personnel (by 1 March the estimate was 800,000). The urban people also reeled under the psychological blow of this harrowing month. With its effectiveness severely limited, the Saigon government had barely survived. Surprisingly, its army had withstood the initial assaults, but Vietnamese troops were now in a defensive posture around towns and cities, and there was concern about their steadfastness. MACV thought it would take the South Vietnamese army two to three months to recover from equipment losses and three to six months to recover its strength, although its problems were considered to be more psychological than physical. To be sure, the enemy suffered enormous casualties; nevertheless, he was operating in relative freedom in the countryside, recruiting heavily, while more North Vietnamese were infiltrating southward.

1) In reporting his assessment, the JCS chairman said that, despite considerable aircraft attrition, American air operations had lost none of their effectiveness. From 29 January to 21 February, Seventh Air Force increased its tactical fighter sorties by 8.5 percent and FAC sorties by 11 percent. Airlift resources, however, were strained from resupplying Khe Sanh and redeploying troops to I Corps, and because of enemy attacks against land and sea lines of communications in the Hue-Phu Bai area.

General Wheeler cited three major military problems that faced the command in Vietnam. First were the problems of logistics caused by bad weather, enemy action, and massive U.S. troop movements into the Da Nang-Hue area. Secondly, the poor defensive posture of the South Vietnamese Army had allowed the Viet Cong to enter pacified areas. Finally, insufficient forces outside of I Corps area weakened the whole military structure. Moreover, there was the danger of synchronized enemy attacks on Khe Sanh, Quang Tri, the highlands, and around Saigon, which strained General Westmoreland's Forces severely to meet all possible threats. He needed more troops.

The MACV commander's "stated requirement" was for 206,756 more U.S. military personnel, which would boost the authorized total in South Vietnam to 731,756 by the end of 1968. This would increase Air Force personnel by about 22,000. The Army's increase would be 171,000 and the Navy would gain 13,000. The additional force would provide 15 more tactical fighter squadrons and the equivalent of three U.S. ground divisions. General Westmoreland also

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desired one more ROK light division (about 11,000 men). According to the proposed deployment schedule (including units previously approved in Deployment Program 5 but not yet deployed), eight of the Air Force's tactical fighter squadrons would deploy by 1 May 1968, four more by 1 September, and the final three by 31 December.<sup>15</sup>

Reviewing the requirements, Under Secretary of the Air Force Townsend Hoopes assured OSD that the Air Force could meet General Westmoreland's proposed deployment schedule and, if necessary, deploy two squadrons within 48 hours. He warned, however, that the forces requested by the MACV commander would generate a need for more munitions and air bases (especially completing Nam Phong AB, Thailand). They would also require regular, national guard, and reserve units to provide additional reconnaissance, airlift, and aeromedical support.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Hoopes also estimated that the costs for deploying and maintaining in Southeast Asia the new Air Force units would range from a minimum of \$635.5 million for the remainder of fiscal year 1968 to a maximum of \$1.229 billion in fiscal year 1969.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, the President had queried General Wheeler on the "maximum amount" of air power General Westmoreland could use "profitably" to carry out his mission. The JCS chairman's minimum estimate was 15 tactical fighter squadrons with deployments contingent on completing the present air base expansion program in Vietnam and Thailand. The MACV commander also needed, he said, two more C-130 airlift squadrons, 138 more FAC O-1's, O-2's, and OV-10's, more AC-47, AC-119, and AC-130 gunships, plus an increase in B-52 sorties from 1,800 to 2,250 per month.

Proposed naval air power augmentation included one more aircraft carrier (which would result in a major change in U.S. worldwide carrier deployments), more aircraft and helicopters for the Navy's water surveillance operations, and one Marine air group containing three helicopter squadrons. For the Army, General Westmoreland wanted substantially more helicopter assault and support units. These forces would have to be in place by the end of 1968.<sup>18</sup>

General Wheeler's report to the President was submitted by Deputy Defense Secretary Nitze, who observed that increased air effectiveness might better be achieved by good target intelligence and accuracy in delivering munitions than by the number

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of sorties flown. He also said that the services desired more aircraft to support additional ground forces and that this problem was being studied.<sup>19</sup>

~~SECRET~~ Before decisions were reached on these new military requirements, there was a change in the leadership of the Department of Defense. On 1 March, Mr. Clark M. Clifford succeeded Mr. McNamara as Secretary, an event that promised to alter profoundly the strategy in the war.

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#### IV. DEBATE OVER MORE DEPLOYMENTS AND STRATEGY

General Westmoreland's request for a 40 percent increase in U. S. forces in South Vietnam created much consternation in the administration, the Congress, and the public. The war was already the subject of violent debate in the nation. Nevertheless, the President asked his new Secretary of Defense to chair an ad hoc, cabinet-level task force which would determine how General Westmoreland's needs could be met. The Air Force, the other services, and the Joint Chiefs were called upon to review or suggest alternate plans.

##### Three Air Force Strategies

As part of the review by Secretary Clifford's task force, Secretary Brown, Under Secretary Hoopes, and the Air Staff were jointly engaged in formulating three air strategies for prosecuting the war. On 4 March Dr. Brown and Mr. Hoopes prepared a summary report to which were appended three pages describing the proposed air campaigns. Two had been prepared by the Air Staff and one by an ad hoc Operations Analysis-Rand study group. While the task force was reviewing the papers, the Air Staff continued to refine details for the strategy in these studies.

Under the first strategy, called Campaign I, the existing restrictions on bombing North Vietnam would be lifted to allow for more air strikes against a broader target base without regard to civilian damage or casualties. The principal targets would include military headquarters, government control points, population centers harboring vehicles and materiel, the ports of Haiphong, Cam Pha, and Hon Gai (all three harbors would be mined), over-the-beach materiel centers, the northeast and northwest rail lines, and roads contiguous to the North Vietnamese-Chinese border.

Campaign I would focus on the North above the 20th parallel and consist of two types of operations: air harassment of the enemy to raise his defense costs, inflate manpower needs, reduce productivity, and cause problems in distribution, management, and other internal affairs; and heavier air attacks on significant targets to increase casualties, destroy more military potential, ruin

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rice crops, and close ports and harbors. The North's road, rail, and port capability, down from 15,000 to 8,000 short tons per day, could be lowered to 4,000 to 2,000 tons per day. Air harassment could reduce imports by about 25 percent, an amount probably insufficient to end the war decisively, whereas strikes on ports and mining of harbors would reduce imports by 75 to 90 percent. To accomplish these tasks, the Air Staff proposed a total of 170,000 combat sorties annually: 120,000 by USAF tactical and B-52 aircraft, 35,000 by the Navy, and 15,000 by the Marines. The expected rise in aircraft losses and munition expenditures would require an additional \$2.5 billion, although the dollar outlays might be cut by using more guided bombs and substituting B-52's for tactical air strikes on a one for 10 basis.

~~SECRET~~ Secretary Brown believed that Soviet reaction to Campaign I probably would consist of a hardened attitude toward the United States, some diversionary action against West Berlin and along the Korean DMZ, and a step-up in the delivery of supplies, equipment, and MIG's--including possibly Soviet pilots--to the North. The Chinese also would likely increase logistic and maintenance forces already in the North (estimated at 50,000), and occupy ports of northern North Vietnam if they felt that the bombing threatened the Hanoi government. However, Dr. Brown pointed out that more study was needed on possible reaction of the Soviet Union, China, and other countries.

~~SECRET~~ The Air Staff, on the other hand, believed that Moscow's response would be less severe than anticipated by Secretary Brown. It thought the Soviets might apply some pressure outside of Southeast Asia but probably would not use military forces to create a diversion. Thus Campaign I could force Hanoi to slow the tempo of fighting and eventually seek a compromise or to abandon the war. If it began in March, the campaign's maximum effect would be felt by October when bad weather normally restricted the bombing and allowed the North Vietnamese to improve their transportation system.

~~SECRET~~ The analysis for the second strategy, Campaign II, was prepared by an Operations Analysis-Rand study group. It suggested various measures for exerting more pressure on the North Vietnamese-Laotian panhandles: diverting only USAF or all U.S. sorties from route packages IV through VI to route packages I through

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III and in the Laos panhandle,\* interdicting selected LOC "belts" in southern North Vietnam, adding antipersonnel air strikes, using new land mines, and launching more B-52 attacks against LOC's in the Mu Gia and Ban Korai passes in Laos. The strategy further called for tripling the current sortie rate to produce a 10-fold increase, compared with 1967, in the destruction of trucks. Also proposed was stepped-up harassment of enemy repair crews and supply handlers to cause more delay in his transport of supplies.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ The Air Force Secretary acknowledged the difficulty in limiting significantly the movement of Communist supplies by bombing. A study showed that the North Vietnamese had transported more goods than they required for operations despite "our most optimistic estimates of current damage, given the current rate of imports." To reduce the supply flow to a minimum meant improving air effectiveness "by a factor of four." He thought there was "an even chance" of achieving this by using new or improved sensors, aircraft, and munitions, and by flying more sorties. If 120 trucks could be destroyed each day, Dr. Brown surmised, the Communists would find it most difficult to move many of them from China to the North Vietnamese and Laotian panhandles, refuel them en route, and provide the necessary support for 30,000 people manning the routes.<sup>2</sup>

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ The third strategy, Campaign III, called for a basic change in ground strategy and for more reliance on air power. It assumed that search and destroy operations had not given the South Vietnamese meaningful security and held no realistic promise of doing so. Thus, South Vietnamese and American ground forces would re-deploy to give maximum protection to the heavily populated cities, ports, and adjacent rural areas. Once the population was secure, the Viet Cong infrastructure could be routed out. This was the "oil spot" concept tried earlier but never on a realistic basis. The free-fire zones outside of the secure areas would be subject to day and night air attacks by AC-47, AC-119, and AC-130 gunships, other tactical aircraft, and B-52's. Ground forces would hit main enemy units at a reasonable distance from the population centers.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ The principal demands of Campaign III would require an additional 126 FAC aircraft, 125 gunships, and 172 other tactical fighter aircraft to assure 24-hour surveillance and immediate air

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\*See map p48.

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strikes. This strategy would accept somewhat higher aircraft attrition rates and relinquish territory to the enemy; as areas became secure, allied troops would move outward. Because of large casualties inflicted upon the enemy, his tempo of operations would slow down and eventually lead to tacit stabilization of the conflict at a lower level of intensity.

Campaign III required no increase in American ground troops. By safeguarding the population from terrorism, the Saigon government could concentrate on developing leadership and other programs that could generate enthusiastic support. In time, this scheme would enhance prospects for a compromise in a political settlement for all South Vietnam.<sup>3</sup>

As part of the Campaign III withdrawal of allied forces to secure limited areas, the Air Force proposed, as a beginning, the evacuation of Khe Sanh. Within six months the limited areas would be adequately protected, then extended, and in 18 months the Saigon government would have sufficient control over most of the population and other resources in South Vietnam (in three-fourths of the country) to permit initial departure of U.S. ground forces. This objective would call for tight population control, a necessity demonstrated in previous insurgencies by the British in Malaya and the French in Indochina and Algeria.

In conjunction with expanding air action, the Air Staff recommended creating a center to consolidate the processing and evaluating of sensor data for "real time" evaluation of intelligence.

The Air Staff conceded there were risks in Campaign III. The Communists probably would try to establish a government in the areas initially relinquished by the allies, although air attacks on facilities and installations might prevent this. Also Hanoi might call for a cease-fire and propose a military status quo for both sides. If this were accepted, the United States would, of course, have to forego its objective of bringing all of South Vietnam under the control of the Saigon government.

Subsequent study led the Air Staff to conclude that the effective implementation of any of the three air campaigns would require a minimum of 1,101 USAF, Navy, Marine, and VNAF aircraft, 105 B-52's, and 104 gunships. This force could provide a total of

44,123 combat sorties per month as follows: tactical aircraft, 39,720; B-52's, 2,200; and gunships, 2,203.

~~SECRET~~ Although developed separately, General McConnell felt the three campaigns should be combined into a single military concept "with a reasonable probability of providing the decisive impact required to achieve early settlement of the conflict." He solicited JCS support in requesting Secretary Clifford to recognize that, contrary to the administration's view, the war in South and North Vietnam was inseparable. The alternatives to "new and decisive emphasis on air operations against the North," he pointed out, were higher American costs for each cycle of enemy destructiveness leading eventually to a military standoff or a politically disadvantageous withdrawal of U.S. forces. General McConnell's proposal was made several days after the President had ordered a partial bombing halt and the JCS did not act upon it.<sup>4</sup>

~~SECRET~~ At Secretary Clifford's request, another high-level appraisal of the three air strategies took place on 9 April when Air Staff representatives reviewed them with five members of the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC). The conferees agreed that Campaign I required the removal of air restrictions and better munitions. They also agreed that 20-mm cannons and incendiary munitions had proved thus far to be the most effective weapons against enemy trucks.<sup>5</sup>

~~SECRET~~ There was further study of the strategies, but on 10 May U.S. and North Vietnamese representatives made an initial contact preparatory to peace talks. By then the adoption of the Air Force's three strategies, especially Campaign I, appeared remote. Mr. Hoopes, in fact, subsequently advised Secretary Clifford to resist pressures to resume the bombing in North Vietnam. He believed that Hanoi's intransigence or its willingness to cooperate at the peace talks should dictate a ground strategy emphasizing shorter defense lines, better protection for the South Vietnamese people, and lower American casualties. He thought OSD should be ready with a plan based on such a strategy.<sup>6</sup>

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\*See Chapter V.

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Response to the Westmoreland Troop Request

Meanwhile, the task force headed by Secretary Clifford had on 7 March completed its initial review of General Westmoreland's request for 206,000 additional troops. To meet the MACV commander's most urgent needs, the task force proposed, in a memorandum to the President, sending immediately 20,000 troops. It also approved calling up more reserves, larger draft calls, and longer duty tours in Vietnam to provide the remaining 186,000 men desired. Simultaneously, it proposed stepped-up bombing of the North but not to the extent urged by Presidential consultant Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, General Wheeler, and Walt W. Rostow, the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. Except for reiterating the San Antonio formula of 29 September 1967, there would be no new initiative toward negotiations.

~~SECRET~~ 3) On the issue of sending the full 206,000-man force, the task force was cautious. Such a step, it explained should be contingent on evidence of better performance by the Saigon government, the completion of new political and strategic studies to guide General Westmoreland, and week-by-week examination of the situation in Vietnam. New studies might show, for example, that MACV should not expect to destroy or rout all enemy forces from the South, that no number of allied forces could do this, and that the dispatch of more American troops without substantial improvement in Saigon's armed forces might prove counterproductive.<sup>7</sup>

~~SECRET~~ 4) On 7 March, Secretary Clifford discussed the implications of the task force's memorandum at the White House. He informed the Chief Executive that he neither agreed nor disagreed with its recommendations. However, he expressed doubts about the efficacy of the present ground strategy, the bombing campaign, and the deployment of more American troops to Vietnam. The meeting assured further study of General Westmoreland's manpower requirement and the war's overall strategy.<sup>\*8</sup>

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<sup>\*8</sup>In a Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) television interview on 6 February 1970, former President Johnson gave a considerably different account of high-level administration actions during this period than has been described by some of his principal officials at the time, including Secretary Clifford. The issues, which remain in controversy, are over whether the President had asked for "recommendations" and "alternatives" to fulfill General Wheeler's "preliminary" manpower request and who should be credited for proposing the partial bombing halt.

### New Proposals for More U.S. and Allied Deployments

[REDACTED] In the ensuing days, the MACV commander, still desiring reinforcements, asked for and the President tentatively agreed to send him at least 30,000 more troops as soon as possible, of which 4,025 would come from the Air Force. The Air Force portion would include airlift, FAC, tactical air control, support personnel, as well as four tactical fighter squadrons, two of which had been included in Deployment Program 5.<sup>9</sup>

[REDACTED] The Air Staff quickly assented to the proposal, believing that four more fighter squadrons would enable the Seventh Air Force to support the additional ground forces. But by the time a final decision was reached on 11 April, the figure had been reduced to 24,500. In the intervening period the administration, the JCS, and the services had made an exhaustive review of the war, debating the cost and political impact of calling up more U.S. reserves, providing support forces, obtaining additional South Vietnamese or Korean units, finishing construction of Nam Phong AB, Thailand, and adopting one of the Air Force's three air strategies.<sup>10</sup>

(S-Cp 6) [REDACTED] The debate on reserve callups was touched off in February following the President's decision to send 10,500 troops to South Vietnam because of the Tet offensive.\* With the reservoir of trained military manpower rapidly depleting, new sources had to be tapped to support additional deployments and maintain an adequate strategic reserve in the United States. Accordingly, the JCS on 15 March proposed three alternate national guard and reserve callup programs. The first required 39,677 personnel including 6,590 Air Force, the second 13,437 Army personnel plus an Army brigade to replace the Marine RLT (which had been sent to Vietnam in February only as an emergency reinforcement), and the third would alert 51,079 personnel, including 10,079 Air Force, for callup. OSD took no immediate action on these proposals.<sup>11</sup>

[REDACTED] Another source for obtaining more troops was sought from America's other allies in the war. On 15 March the MACV commander proposed raising the strength of the South Vietnamese armed forces from 685,739 (approved on 7 October 1967) to 779,154 in fiscal year 1969, and to 801,215 in fiscal year 1970. The latter

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\*See p 21.



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would include 5,124 more spaces for the VNAF, increasing its manpower to 21,572. OSD made no decision on these proposals until May.\* Meanwhile, to help speed the interim growth of Saigon's forces, General Wheeler proposed, and OSD agreed on 4 April, to add 31,475 "pipeline" spaces, including 750 for the VNAF, raising the authorized South Vietnamese strength to 717,214. In view of these actions the Air Staff asked the Seventh Air Force to consider a speedup in the training of the South Vietnamese air arm.<sup>12</sup>

~~(S)~~ Plans to obtain another ROK infantry division also deeply involved the Air Staff, since the Seoul government desired, as a quid pro quo for sending more troops, American support for a ROK Air Force (ROKAF) squadron in South Vietnam. The JCS took the position, based on Air Staff and PACOM views, that unless the Koreans insisted on deploying a squadron, no action should be taken. If, on the other hand, a squadron was sent, it should be fully equipped with F-5 aircraft, pilots, support, and maintenance personnel. An alternate plan called for using F-5's from U.S. sources with ROK manpower already trained to fly, support, and maintain the aircraft. In subsequent weeks, however, it became clear that no more Korean forces would be available.<sup>13</sup>

~~(S)~~ Anticipating large troop augmentations in the war theater, Secretary Brown and General McConnell renewed their efforts to obtain JCS and OSD concurrence to complete Nam Phong AB, Thailand. On 16 September 1966, Secretary McNamara had approved only its "bare base" construction.† But in the first 16 days of the Tet offensive (in February 1968), Dr. Brown observed, the financial loss arising from the destruction and damage of many aircraft manifestly justified spending the \$14 million needed to make Nam Phong a main operating base. After completion of the base, estimated to take about 120 days, dispersal and safety of aircraft in Southeast Asia would be enhanced.<sup>14</sup>

~~(S)~~ These importunings again were to no avail. The Army did not wish to spend \$7.5 million and assign 124 of its support personnel to help maintain Nam Phong and the Air Force would have to

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\*See pp 45-47.

†For a brief discussion of early decisions concerning Nam Phong AB, see Herman S. Wolk, USAF Logistic Plans and Policies in SEA, 1966 (TS) (AFCHO, Oct 1967), pp 33-35.

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add 1,505 personnel after the base became operational. This would create a demand to raise a tight American manpower ceiling in Thailand. At the same time, the U.S. Ambassador in Bangkok, Leonard Unger, was advising the State Department that more U.S. deployments to Thailand might exacerbate the political and military difficulties with that country. In the light of these problems, Deputy Defense Secretary Nitze informed Secretary Brown on 23 March that the administration should not proceed "at this time" with further construction of the base.<sup>15</sup>

#### Air Staff Views of Other Proposals

While the administration was studying the Air Force's strategic views and other recommendations, the Air Staff was reviewing other policy papers written for Secretary Clifford's task force. One of the papers prepared by Army planners, advocated a change in the objective of NSAM\* 288, 17 March 1964, which envisaged an independent, non-Communist South Vietnam. If this objective could not be achieved without an "all-out" military effort requiring large troop reinforcements, the revised NSAM 288 would call for an "honorable peace," and allow the South Vietnamese to devise their own political and economic system. The United States would negotiate with Hanoi unilaterally and depart from South Vietnam in a phased withdrawal over an 18-month period, or longer, without achieving a decisive victory. Although such a course would damage American prestige, the Army felt that there would be no serious long-term effect.

The Air Staff criticized the Army paper for its failure to consider that a basic change in strategy (i.e., the use of more air power against North Vietnam) could attain the NSAM objective in the South. Moreover, in the eyes of the Air Staff, whatever strategy was adopted should permit the United States to extricate itself without jeopardy to its world position.<sup>16</sup>

Another paper reviewed by the Air Staff was prepared by OSD's Office of International Security Affairs (ISA). It also recommended a revision in NSAM 288. The ISA office believed that the South Vietnamese Army had been greatly weakened and could not contribute substantially to allied progress in the ensuing months.

\*National Security Action Memorandum.

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Further, the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese could maintain a state of "protracted conflict," offset any increase in American forces in the South, and were threatening allied forces in I Corps. There was danger of a collapse of Saigon's authority in the Mekong delta. The current strategy of destroying the enemy and driving him out of South Vietnam would require doubling the strength of American troops. But this would completely Americanize the war, totally frustrate the development of political and military strength in the South, and make impossible the attainment of U.S. objectives.

~~Top Secret~~ The ISA paper, sent as a draft memorandum to the President, also sought to achieve an honorable peace by permitting the South Vietnamese people to fashion their own political and economic institutions. It proposed sending U.S. military personnel to defend only the most populated areas of South Vietnam, stepping up the modernization of Saigon's armed forces, and warning the Thieu government to clean up corruption and improve its military forces. The paper assumed that the President would not authorize new military moves, such as ground operations into Laos, Cambodia, or North Vietnam (including the northern half of the DMZ), nor change the policy with respect to bombing the North and mining Haiphong harbor.<sup>17</sup>

~~Top Secret~~ The Air Staff disagreed with this paper, believing that the current NSAM 288 should not be revised or replaced and that force withdrawals to populated areas in the South would not be in consonance with Presidential policy. It also noted that General McConnell had repeatedly pointed to the need to remove restrictions on air and naval operations against North Vietnam and, as the war continued, there would be more compelling reasons to do so.<sup>18</sup>

~~Top Secret~~ A third paper, prepared by Secretary Clifford's task force, proposed a new in-depth study of American policy and strategy in the war. This might show, the paper conjectured, that General Westmoreland's request for massive reinforcements was no quick solution to his problem and that enemy forces could not be kept out of South Vietnam regardless of allied strength. Also, better performance by the Saigon government's military units should precede the deployment of more American troops.\* The paper recommended a new NSAM limiting U.S. objectives to providing

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\*Parts of this paper were included in the initial report of Secretary Clifford's task force to the President on 7 March (see

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security for the South Vietnamese in populated areas rather than destroying enemy forces, and leaving all of the populace in the South free to develop their own political system.<sup>19</sup>

~~SECRET~~ The Air Staff objected to this paper as it too would rescind NSAM 288, and pointed to observations by Lt. Gen. Glen W. Martin, Deputy Chief for Plans and Operations, on past American strategy on the war. General Martin noted that every time the military situation deteriorated, the authorities immediately looked for more ground troops while proposals to expand air operations received decreasing consideration. He emphasized the need--and the Air Staff agreed--for U.S. policy-makers to recognize the interrelationship of military operations between the two parts of Vietnam. This concept called for a single strategy and demanded decisive air action especially against the North in order to achieve allied objectives in the South.<sup>20</sup>

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## V. THE PARTIAL BOMBING HALT AND REASSESSMENT OF RESOURCES

As studies of alternate Air Force strategies, troop deployments, and administration policies were discussed and reviewed, Secretary Clifford concluded during his first month in office, that current American strategy in Southeast Asia was no longer justified, and that some of the proposed alternatives were unlikely to attain U.S. objectives. Heavier bombing in North Vietnam and Laos could inflict heavier losses, but it would not stop the war. Dispatching the 206,000 more U.S. troops to South Vietnam desired by General Westmoreland also appeared untenable, as it would require 280,000 more reservists, higher draft calls, and longer duty tours for most men in the services. An augmentation of that size, moreover, would cost \$2 billion more in fiscal year 1968 and \$10 to \$12 billion more in fiscal year 1969, would invite domestic financial controls, and would aggravate the balance of payments deficit by \$500 million annually. Further, there was no assurance that 206,000 more men would suffice. The enemy, who showed no diminution in his will to fight, probably would respond to the American buildup, and it was uncertain when South Vietnamese forces could "take over" the war.

(U) The problems facing the new Defense Secretary were apparent when he asked for "a military plan" for victory in the "historic American sense" and was told there was none. The lack of such a plan was attributed to three major political restrictions on waging the war: there could be no invasion of North Vietnam since it might trigger Hanoi's mutual assistance pact with Peking; there could be no mining of Haiphong harbor lest a Soviet ship be sunk; and there could be no pursuit of the enemy into Laos or Cambodia. These and other constraints, he was told, precluded an all-out military effort. Since the Secretary and other high civilian officials had no intention of recommending their cancellation to the President, Mr. Clifford became "convinced that the military course we were pursuing was not only endless but hopeless," and that the primary U.S. goal "should be to level off our involvement and to work toward gradual disengagement." 1

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### The President Decides to Halt the Bombing

After the President heard the views of Mr. Clifford, in the "closing hours" of March, he decided on a new course of action in an effort to end the war. As an initial step to entice Hanoi to the bargaining table, on the 31st he announced to the nation a partial halt to the bombing of North Vietnam. He said in part:

Tonight I have ordered our aircraft and our naval vessels to make no attacks on North Vietnam, except in the area north of the demilitarized zone where the continuing enemy buildup directly threatens allied forward positions and where the movements of their troop and suppliers are clearly related to that threat.

The area in which we are stopping our attacks includes almost 90 percent of North Vietnam's population, and most of its territory. Thus there will be no attacks around the principal populated areas, or in the food-producing areas of North Vietnam.<sup>2</sup>

The President limited the bombing of North to the area below the 20th parallel.\* Urging Hanoi to join him in "a series of mutual moves toward peace," he asked for a prompt initiation of talks between the two sides and cautioned the Communists not to "take advantage of our restraint." He renewed a pledge made in Manila with five allied nations on 24 October 1966 to withdraw all allied units (within six months) if North Vietnam disengaged from the war, and violence subsided.

In addition to his new peace overture, the President made other major decisions. He limited U.S. military strength in South Vietnam to 549,500 troops and announced plans to accelerate the training and equipping of South Vietnamese forces so they could assume more combat responsibility and maintain military pressure on the enemy.<sup>3</sup>

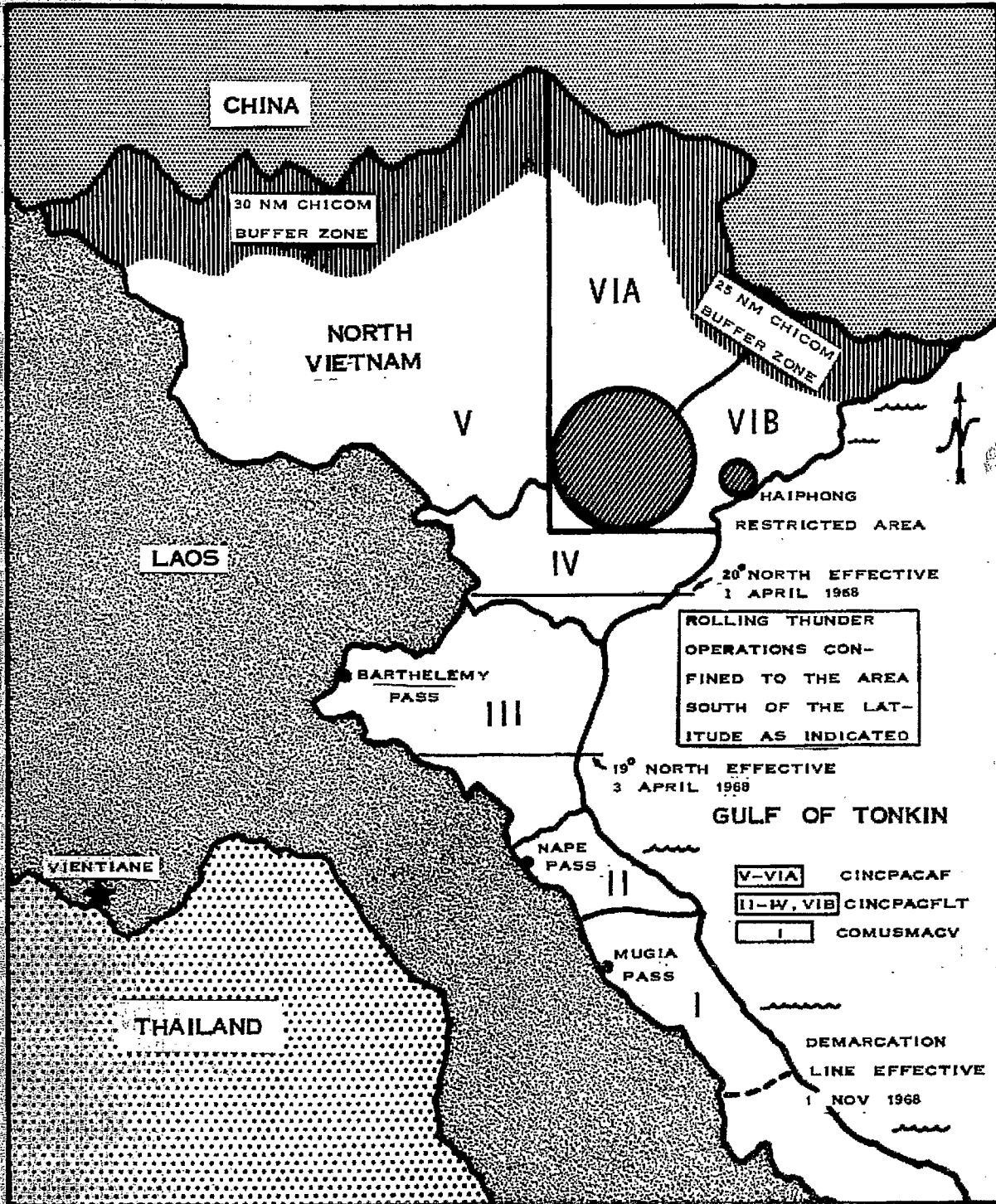
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\*On 3 April he changed the boundary to the 19th parallel.

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# ROUTE PACKAGES AND BOMBING LINES IN NORTH VIETNAM 1968



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Service Views on the Bombing Halt

[redacted] The service chiefs would, of course, support the President's decision, although they had opposed a bombing halt. General Wheeler had argued strongly against such a step on the grounds that it would prove costly to the allies, would prolong hostilities, and could be interpreted by the Communists as an "aerial Dien Bien Phu." The Air Staff and the JCS had agreed that a bombing halt promised Hanoi's leaders many advantages, as they would interpret it as a weakening of American resolve, and be encouraged to redouble their war efforts. It would thus preclude a favorable outcome for the allies. General McConnell, in August 1967, had told a Senate subcommittee that limiting the bombing to below the 20th parallel would, after a short period, "certainly be disastrous." Throughout 1967 the JCS had expressed opinions that air and naval bombardment should be stepped up, not halted; that target areas should be expanded, not narrowed. Consequently, in the eyes of the services, it appeared that the President sacrificed a tremendous military advantage as an enticement for peace.<sup>4</sup>

[redacted] Two weeks after the 31 March decision, PACOM completed a study on the effect of the bombing halt. The study confirmed that Hanoi had gained a military advantage and that in light of apparent American and free world weakness, Communist intransigence in negotiations could be expected. Further restrictions on bombing--below the 18th parallel or the DMZ--would reduce the number of available targets in the North and expose allied positions in South Vietnam to a greater danger from MIG's, artillery fire, and rockets. If the bomb line extended to the provisional military demarcation line (PMDL)--i. e., to all of North Vietnam, the enemy's advantageous position would be "militarily unacceptable."<sup>5</sup>

[redacted] Nevertheless, a reorientation in bombing strategy was producing more salutary results. The administration had authorized only unescorted photo and visual reconnaissance sorties to fly above the 19th parallel. Below it, however, Air Force, Marine, and Navy combat sorties nearly doubled over those flown during previous months, increasing truck "kills" nearly fourfold by May. Aircraft losses over the North decreased. Following a visit to South Vietnam, Secretary Brown reported that the "substantial increase in (bombing) effectiveness" in the North's panhandle below the 19th parallel was contrary to what he had anticipated.<sup>6</sup>

~~SECRET~~Further Debate on Reserve Callups

( ) The Presidential decision to restrict the bombing did not end OSD-JCS debates on additional national guard and reserve callups. If anything, the arguments grew more contentious. On 2 April General Wheeler sought Secretary Clifford's approval to recall more reserves to support recently deployed forces and rebuild partially the strategic reserve. His request was for 56,877 assigned and 63,385 authorized reserve personnel including 6,435 and 7,685 Air Force personnel, respectively. Six ANG fighter groups (three F-84's, two F-86's, and one F-100) would enter active service, a part of which would be used to step up training of more FAC and air liaison officers (ALO's). As in the 15 March proposal, all of the ANG and reserve units would be recalled in three increments by 30 June 1968. Additional costs were estimated at \$180.1 million in fiscal year 1968 and \$530.4 million in fiscal year 1969.<sup>7</sup>

( ) Concerned about the government's financial situation, Secretary Clifford advised the JCS Chairman that he was considering a less costly alternative. On 4 April he proposed a total callup of only 22,767 personnel (2,048 Air Force, 1,027 Navy, and 19,692 Army). Omitting the recall of six tactical fighter groups, he asked the Air Force to find a less expensive way of training FAC's and ALO's, perhaps by substituting A-37, AT-33, F-5, or F-100 aircraft for the more sophisticated types. Mr. Clifford also indicated that he wished to limit the U.S. strategic reserve to six and two-thirds divisions and cancel the rotation part of the Pentagon's "Reforger" plan committing certain units exclusively to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This would make more units available, if necessary, outside of NATO.<sup>8</sup>

( ) With strong Air Staff support, the JCS vigorously objected to calling up only 22,767 ANG and reserve personnel and to any change in the use of Reforger units. They agreed, however, to drop their request for three F-84 groups and the F-100 group.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, on 6 April the JCS again asked for authority to call up the first increment of the total force proposed on 2 April and said they would review the requirement every 30 days. Four days later, in a new statement on America's worldwide military posture, they warned that reserve forces were inadequate against Communist threats facing NATO forces; the Asian countries of Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and South Korea; and Latin America.<sup>10</sup>

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Meanwhile, during the debate on the reserve callup, Secretary Brown sent the Defense Secretary a revised Air Force plan to ensure sufficient FAC-ALO training and to meet other pressing air unit needs. The two objectives, he reported, could be met by modifying or substituting other aircraft for those initially desired, and by recalling 3,489 ANG and AFRES personnel to man additional units.<sup>11</sup>

11 April, Secretary Clifford made his decision. He overruled JCS recommendations and announced a national guard and reserve callup of only 24,550 men, but he accepted Secretary Brown's revised proposals for the Air Force. The service manpower allocations were as follows: Air Force, 3,488 (2,201 ANG and 1,287 AFRES); Navy, 1,028; and Army, 20,034. About 10,000 men would go to South Vietnam and the remaining 14,500 would be used to strengthen the strategic reserves. The Secretary confirmed that the President's decision raised the American troop ceiling for South Vietnam from 525,000 to 549,500, and reiterated the administration's policy to transfer gradually to the South Vietnamese the major responsibility for the war effort. In achieving this goal, President Thieu planned to add about 135,000 more men to his armed forces.<sup>12</sup>

#### Southeast Asia Deployment Program 6

To reflect the change in the U. S. manpower ceiling for South Vietnam and other force structure adjustments in Southeast Asia, OSD on 4 April replaced Deployment Program 5 (issued 5 October 1967) with Southeast Asia Deployment Program 6.\* It called for deploying to South Vietnam four ANG F-100 squadrons and one Marine squadron in May and June; deferring the deployment of one USAF F-4 squadron to Thailand (from February to June); deploying the redeployment from Thailand to the United States of one USAF A-1 squadron and a Navy SP-2E unit; and extending the B-52 sortie rate of 1,800 per month from 15 February through June 1968, then dropping it to 1,400 sorties per month.

Deployment Program 6 also called for an increase in South Vietnamese Army maneuver, artillery, and engineer battalions. Two new Army brigades would replace the 82d Airborne

\*See appendix.



Division brigade and the Marine RLT 27, hurriedly sent to Vietnam in February. It also contained a new schedule, effective in September 1968, for converting 12,545 military to civilian spaces in South Vietnam--600 of them Air Force--to preclude any overrun of the new 549,500 U. S. manpower ceiling.<sup>13</sup>

(S) Deputy Defense Secretary Nitze questioned the necessity for five more squadrons in South Vietnam in view of the President's decision to decrease the bombing of the North. He also asked the JCS for a plan to reduce the number of temporary duty units in South Korea, and wondered if the present force of 151 USAF tactical aircraft in that country would be needed through 1968.<sup>14</sup>

The JCS, strongly backed by the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) and PACOM commanders and the Air Staff, opposed any delay in the dispatch of the five squadrons to Vietnam. Foreseeing continued North Vietnamese infiltration and insurgency activity in South Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, they emphasized the need for adequate air support for additional ground units. They also wanted no change in U. S. air strength in South Korea until the Pueblo crisis ended.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Nitze subsequently withdrew his objections to the deployment of the five fighter squadrons to South Vietnam, although he continued to question the requirement in view of plans to use more Air Force and Army gunships, and the availability in July of the Thai-based A-1 squadron. He indicated he might reopen the issue at a later date.<sup>16</sup>

#### Further Review of the B-52 Sortie Rate

The new restrictions on bombing North Vietnam and other considerations also had prompted Mr. Nitze on 14 April to ask for a review of the B-52 sortie rate (providing 1,800 sorties per month through June, and 1,400 per month thereafter). The cost of B-52 operations was high and the evidence of their effectiveness fragmentary. Moreover, the Army and the State Department desired to withdraw the bombers from Okinawa because of the forthcoming

Ryukyuan elections on the island. \* In view of these developments he asked for a report by 31 May. 17

In an initial reply to Mr. Nitze on 23 April, they urged the continuance of the 1,800 per month rate after June and pointed to the results achieved at Khe Sanh, where the enemy suffered a major defeat losing about one-half of his committed forces. Evidence of personnel, ammunition, equipment, and fortification losses found in prisoner of war reports attested to the importance of B-52 bombing. The JCS stated the 1,800 sortie rate was needed to support friendly ground operations against the enemy in the A-Shau Valley and around Hue, to hit truck parks, troop concentrations, and supply centers built up since the partial bombing halt, and to meet another possible enemy offensive in June or July if peace negotiations were unsuccessful. 18

Separately, General McConnell and Secretary Brown asked Mr. Nitze to delay the scheduled phaseout from the SAC inventory in early fiscal year 1969 of four B-52 squadrons. The current high B-52 sortie rate, they said wore out the bombers faster and speeded up their modification schedule. In addition, more B-52's were needed to handle other nonnuclear contingencies in Southeast Asia or elsewhere. Mr Nitze disagreed. He said that the lack of funds necessitated the inactivation of the four B-52 squadrons, and he foresaw no emergency requiring more B-52 nonnuclear bombers. If an emergency should arise, present "surge" strength would suffice until stored B-52's could become operational. 19

A second JCS report on the B-52 sortie rate requested by Mr. Nitze was submitted late in May. It concluded that the bombers were effective and accomplished their task with the highest degree of accuracy and reliability, although bomb damage assessment was limited by bad weather, jungle canopy, terrain inaccessibility, and by

\*The Japanese, who retained "residual sovereignty" over the island, and the Ryukyans, were fearful lest the flights of B-52's from Okinawa involve them in the war in Southeast Asia. The continued presence of the bombers could result in a decline in the Ryukyuan political party, with which the American High Commissioner (an Army General) could deal most easily.

insufficient follow-up by ground troops in the bombed areas. The 1,800 per month sortie rate should be maintained to assure striking all lucrative targets, and the bombers should not be removed from Okinawa for political reasons.

(S. 10-1) While bombing effectiveness could not be measured statistically, the report continued, there was evidence that the B-52 strikes forced the enemy to disperse, inhibited his speed of maneuver, compounded his command and control problems, and shattered his morale. Furthermore, the bombers constituted a "dynamic reserve force" that could be used without incurring troop casualties.

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In this report to OSD, General Wheeler conveyed his and General Abram's concern about the administration's tendency to economize on the sortie rate, especially in light of the enemy's determination to achieve a major victory. Should funding cutbacks also hamper efforts to make the South Vietnamese forces more self-sufficient and responsible in combat, American involvement in the war would be prolonged.<sup>21</sup>

The JCS arguments were successful, at least temporarily. On 22 June Mr. Nitze approved "for planning purposes," continuation of the 1,800 sorties per month rate through December 1968, but said he would review his decision in 60 days and periodically thereafter. But in view of the State Department's belief that the Korean situation no longer warranted bombers on Okinawa, he asked the JCS to determine if they could be added to the forces already in Thailand and Guam. Subject to the consent of the Thai government, he agreed to increase the number of B-52's at U-Tapao from 25 to 35 plus support personnel.<sup>22</sup>

The service chiefs replied that an 1,800 sortie rate could be sustained if 35 regular and four rotational bombers were stationed at U-Tapao, 70 on Guam, and if six KC-135 tankers were moved from U-Tapao to Taiwan (for a total of 21 tankers there). However, they strongly urged retention of the B-52's on Okinawa, citing additional costs of the alternate plans, and emphasizing "overriding military considerations." With the strong backing of PACOM, MACV, and SAC commanders, the JCS persuaded OSD not to remove the B-52's from Okinawa, at least for the remainder of 1968, although discussions of lowering the sortie rate continued.<sup>23</sup>

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### Faster Buildup of South Vietnamese Forces

~~(S)~~ The President's decision to speed up the training and equipping of the South Vietnamese armed forces imposed additional work on the Air Staff and Joint Staff. Because peace talks in Paris could result in limiting the size of belligerent forces in Southeast Asia, General Wheeler on 10 April requested the Joint Staff to prepare a paper for the Defense Secretary soliciting his support for the largest RVN forces possible. Also, Deputy Defense Secretary Nitze asked for a plan which would assure South Vietnam's swift self-sufficiency in tactical air, logistics, and artillery.<sup>24</sup>

~~(S)~~ To fulfill General Wheeler's request, the JCS, on 15 April proposed accelerating the buildup of Saigon's forces to 801,215 men by the end of fiscal year 1969. The Air Force-supported VNAF would receive 5,124 more spaces for a total of 21,572, and there would be a step up in the distribution of M-16 and M-2 weapons to the regular and paramilitary units, respectively.<sup>25</sup>

~~(S)~~ In response to Mr. Nitze's request, the JCS on 23 May submitted a plan recommending faster delivery of arms and equipment to the Republic of Vietnam, partly by diverting military items from American units. This program would continue through fiscal year 1973, although the total strength of RVN forces would remain at 801,215. VNAF units would expand to 11 tactical fighter, four gunship, and 17 helicopter squadrons (see Table 2, opposite page). Its personnel strength would increase to 36,855 with offsetting reductions in regular and paramilitary personnel. The cost of a larger VNAF for fiscal years 1968 through 1973 would total slightly more than \$1 billion.

~~(S)~~ The service chiefs warned that the program to build up Saigon's armed forces would encounter major obstacles. The South Vietnamese lacked trained manpower, particularly for the VNAF and the Vietnamese Navy (VNN); and there would be difficulties in diverting U.S. equipment, including UH-1 Army helicopters to the VNAF, and in obtaining supplemental appropriations from Congress.<sup>26</sup>

~~(S)~~ On 24 May Mr. Nitze approved the JCS plan of 15 April, but temporarily deferred its funding until an "action plan" and additional data on personnel "pipeline" increases were submitted. Then on 25 June he approved the JCS plan of 23 May to accelerate the RVN military buildup, but only that portion of it pertaining to fiscal year 1969. This would give the VNAF two improved UH-1 helicopter

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squadrons in exchange for two older H-34 squadrons, more 105-mm and 155-mm artillery battalions for the Army and Marines, and somewhat larger Regional and Popular Forces.<sup>27</sup>

TABLE 2  
JCS PLAN FOR VNAF  
(23 May 1968)

	<u>Authorized FY 68 Forces</u>	<u>Interim Force Structure End FY 69</u>	<u>Expanded and Improved Force Structure End FY 73</u>
Tactical fighter sqs	6	6	11
Helicopter sqs	5	5	17
Liaison sqs	4	4	7
Transportation sqs	3	2	4
Reconnaissance sqs	1	1	1
Gunship sqs	0	1	4
Training sqs	1	1	1
Hawk bns	0	0	2
Antiaircraft Wpn Btry	0	0	1
Air Bases	6	6	7

SOURCE: JCSM-324-68 (S), 23 May 68.

(S) Simultaneously, Mr. Nitze asked for a two-phase plan for expansion of South Vietnam's forces: Under "Phase I," Saigon's ground combat capability would be maximized and American participation in the war continued at the present level. "Phase II" would assume Saigon was self-sufficient to deal with any insurgency after U. S. and North Vietnamese troops withdrew from South Vietnam. The

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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

( ) 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

( ) 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

( ) 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.

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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.<sup>31</sup>

~~SECRET~~ 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.<sup>32</sup>

~~SECRET~~ 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.

~~SECRET~~ 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 de facto partition of the country, 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.

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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.<sup>33</sup>

~~(S-Gp 1)~~ 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.<sup>34</sup>

~~(S-Gp 3)~~ 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.<sup>35</sup>

~~(S-Gp 5)~~ 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.<sup>36</sup>

~~(S-Gp 5)~~ 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

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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.<sup>37</sup>

~~(S)~~ 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.<sup>38</sup>

~~(S)~~ 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)~~ 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.<sup>39</sup>

~~(S)~~ 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.

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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 on 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.

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## VI. FURTHER POLICY REVIEW AND NEW PLANS

The administration's guidelines for implementing its new policies in Southeast Asia were well established by mid-1968. Despite another Communist offensive in May, the partial bombing halt remained in effect with U.S. air strikes on North Vietnam restricted to targets below the 19th parallel. The Allies sought to increase military pressure on the Communists in South Vietnam and Laos, while speeding actions to improve the South Vietnamese armed forces. In Paris, American and North Vietnamese negotiators were debating a variety of issues, including Hanoi's insistence that all bombing of its territory had to stop before a peace agreement could be reached.

### Review of the War in Saigon and Honolulu

To examine the impact of new policies on the military situation, in July Secretary Clifford, General Wheeler, and other high officials met in Saigon with General Abrams,\* Ambassador Bunker, and their staffs. They reviewed thoroughly all aspects of the war.<sup>1</sup>

MACV briefers declared that the major Communist objectives during the Tet offensive of February had been to generate a popular uprising, overthrow the Thieu regime, force the collapse of the Army, and isolate Saigon from the United States. Since Tet, the enemy had tried to undermine the U.S. will to continue the war. But his effort had been costly as he continued to suffer attrition and disastrous military failures. Nevertheless, in the North the Hanoi government remained undefeated and was now rebuilding its economy in the areas where bombing had ceased. Receiving more imports and enjoying the shortest LOC's since the war began, the government's revitalized military posture would allow it to launch another offensive. MACV estimated that Communist recruitment in the South would average about 3,500 men per month for the next six months, and infiltration from the North 10,000 per month. These gains, weighed against losses, would permit a buildup to 234,000 men by 1 September, a figure close to pre-Tet strength at the end of 1967.

\*General Abrams succeeded General Westmoreland as MACV commander on 3 July 1968.

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~~SECRET~~ A summary of air operations revealed that by early July about 63 percent of allied tactical air operations were flown in South Vietnam and 37 percent in Laos and southern North Vietnam. MACV hoped to increase tactical air sorties soon by about 10 percent. About 75 percent of the B-52 effort was expended in the South and 25 percent in Laos and North Vietnam. The B-52 strikes "greatly motivated" the South Vietnamese troops.<sup>2</sup>

~~SECRET~~ The results of the air operations, Secretary Clifford was informed, were gratifying to MACV commanders. Flexibility in shifting the striking power of aircraft prevented a major Communist offensive in May. When Saigon was threatened in June, tactical and B-52 sorties were directed to the III Corps area around the capital. Since the B-52's could "shift firepower rapidly and would continue to have a major influence on ground battles," there was no need to plan for major movements of U.S. maneuver battalions between corps areas to counter enemy threats. The single manager system for controlling air power (inaugurated in I Corps on 8 March 1968) also contributed to flexibility by making it easier to divert tactical air power to where it was needed most.\*

~~SECRET~~ Air interdiction of vehicular traffic was focused on Laos, where 85 percent of enemy trucks moved at night. During the past year, about 72,000 trucks had been sighted in that country and in route package I of North Vietnam. Despite the current rainy season, truck sightings in Laos averaged 25 to 150 per day. Air attacks in Laos and in route package I in the period 1 July 1967 through June 1968 cost the enemy an estimated 34,000 tons of supplies, an amount equal to 600,000 rounds of 122-mm rockets. The breakdown was as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Tons Destroyed</u>
Trucks destroyed	8,782	17,564
Trucks damaged	3,138	1,569
Secondary fires and explosions	59,662	<u>14,916</u>
Total		34,049

~~SECRET~~ In conducting the air strikes on vehicular traffic, the Air Force employed a combination of FAC's, gunships, flare ships,

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\*See p 10.

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B-57's, A-1's, and sensors. During an average night in April 1968, for example, the airborne command and control center (ABCCC) directed about 84 attack sorties and hit about 49 trucks. About 10 percent of all trucks sighted were destroyed and 15 percent were damaged.

(S [redacted] 4) USAF aircraft operating over North Vietnam, MACV reported, had encountered improved enemy air defenses in late 1967 and early 1968. The heavy anti-aircraft fire had reached the point where FAC and other propeller-driven aircraft could no longer risk flying in many areas, or could do so only at higher altitudes, which reduced the ability of pilots to find and destroy trucks at night. Since 3 April, when air operations were limited to below the 19th parallel, the number of aircraft receiving fire had doubled. By the end of 1969 it was expected the enemy would have twice as many anti-aircraft weapons as at present. The environment had become too dangerous for UC-130's and only FAC O-2's could be used for marking targets in the southwest corner of the Tally-Ho area (above the DMZ). As an alternative, F-4's were being used on flare and reconnaissance missions, and other F-4's and F-105's were flying bombing missions with MSQ-77 radar.<sup>3</sup>

(S [redacted] 4) The VNAF, according to MACV briefers, was performing well. It was averaging 85 strike sorties per day and its bombing accuracy was comparable to that of USAF units. The quality of personnel was high and there were sufficient volunteers. The VNAF possessed 348 aircraft of all types, including five A-1 squadrons, and one A-5 tactical fighter squadron which had begun operations in June 1967. Current plans called for converting three A-1 squadrons to A-37 aircraft.

(S [redacted] 4) In a discussion of current North Vietnamese logistic strength, the MACV briefers portrayed a dark picture of allied problems arising from the President's decision of 1 April, which restricted the bombing to route package I. Compared with 1967, the monthly rate of enemy imports had more than doubled. Tens of thousands of 55-gallon POL drums, far in excess of military needs, were being distributed along roadsides leading to the DMZ. They would enable the enemy to undertake mechanized operations in and around the zone. The repair of bridges eliminated the transshipment of supplies totaling 226,000 tons--an amount equal to 75,300 truckloads. The partial bombing halt also permitted 100,000 of 300,000 LOC maintenance personnel to move southward. All road, rail, and waterway lines to Thanh Hoa

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were in operation, and transit time for supplies from the China border to Thanh Hoa was reduced drastically. Eight major airfields had reopened in the new sanctuary area with one of them, Bai Thong, probably serving as a forward staging base. MIG's now flew daily as far south as Vinh, and MIG training had increased fivefold. All this enhanced North Vietnam's capability to engage U.S. aircraft and allied ground forces in the South.

(S) (4) Concerning South Vietnamese military strength, Secretary Clifford was advised that on 30 June 1968 there were officially 717,000 men under arms but as a result of vigorous recruiting the true total was 765,000. By the end of fiscal year 1969 there would be 801,000 on the rolls. Saigon's performance in the first half of 1968--including the Tet offensive--was also better than in a comparable period in 1967 in terms of enemy killed and weapons captured. But "soft spots" remained. Because OSD was still withholding funds, there would be no new equipment (except M-16 rifles) for 84,000 additional recruits until June 1969. Thus, only about 10,000 of them, principally those joining the VNAF, VNN, or in administrative activities, would be able to perform their primary missions adequately. Desertion in South Vietnamese combat units remained a problem. Records for the first five months of 1968 showed the following rise: January, 6,700; February, 8,400; March, 7,700; April, 11,500; and May, 12,900.

(S) (4) The outlook on pacification was termed favorable with a "good chance" that 70 percent of the population would be "relatively secure" by the end of the year. South Vietnam's social, political, and economic problems were also discussed.<sup>4</sup>

(U) After leaving Saigon, the Defense Secretary flew to Honolulu to attend a conference between Presidents Johnson and Thieu. In a joint communique issued on 20 July, the two Presidents took note of the unabated military activity of the North Vietnamese, the "greatly stepped-up infiltration of men and modern equipment" into the South,

\*In conversations with Mr. Clifford, South Vietnam's Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky attributed the 30 percent desertion rate largely to inadequate pay. He proposed, as a solution, cutting back on bombing and channeling the savings to the Saigon government for use in increasing troop salaries.

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signs of a renewed offensive, and the "negative position" of Hanoi's negotiators in Paris. President Johnson promised that steps would be taken to improve "the fighting power" of the South Vietnamese and that the United States would not impose a coalition government on Saigon.<sup>5</sup> Later, in Washington, Secretary Clifford warned of a new possible enemy offensive in late July, August, or early September. However, he stated there would be no significant change in allied tactics or strategy, and that "spoiling" operations would continue.<sup>6</sup>

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ In a separate report to the President, General Wheeler expressed confidence that if the enemy renewed an offensive, American and allied forces, plus tactical air, B-52's, and artillery could counter it. He said that General Abrams had neither asked for nor needed additional forces, and that information obtained from captured enemy personnel, documents, and ralliers, indicated a lower quality of enemy forces.<sup>7</sup>

#### Deployment Adjustments in the Remainder of 1968

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Because General Abrams said he had sufficient troops, U.S. deployments leveled off by midyear. In fact, U.S. military strength in South Vietnam dropped by nearly 1,500 spaces from 1 July to the end of the year, at which time the total stood at about 536,000 (including 59,024 Air Force), although authorized strength was still 549,500. There were, of course, changes in units and personnel, but all increases were compensated by trade-offs to maintain the lowest possible level of manpower consistent with military needs.<sup>8</sup>

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Subsequently, OSD approved two principal changes for the Air Force. The first action, on 27 November, authorized the exchange of new AC-119 gunships for AC-47 gunships (being transferred to the VNAF) or for in-country fighter aircraft. The higher cost of the AC-119's and their tremendous firepower, OSD believed, made such a trade-off feasible.<sup>9</sup> The other change, approved on 9 December, allowed one of the three C-130 squadrons--sent to the Pacific to bolster airlift operations during the Tet offensive--to remain in the theater.

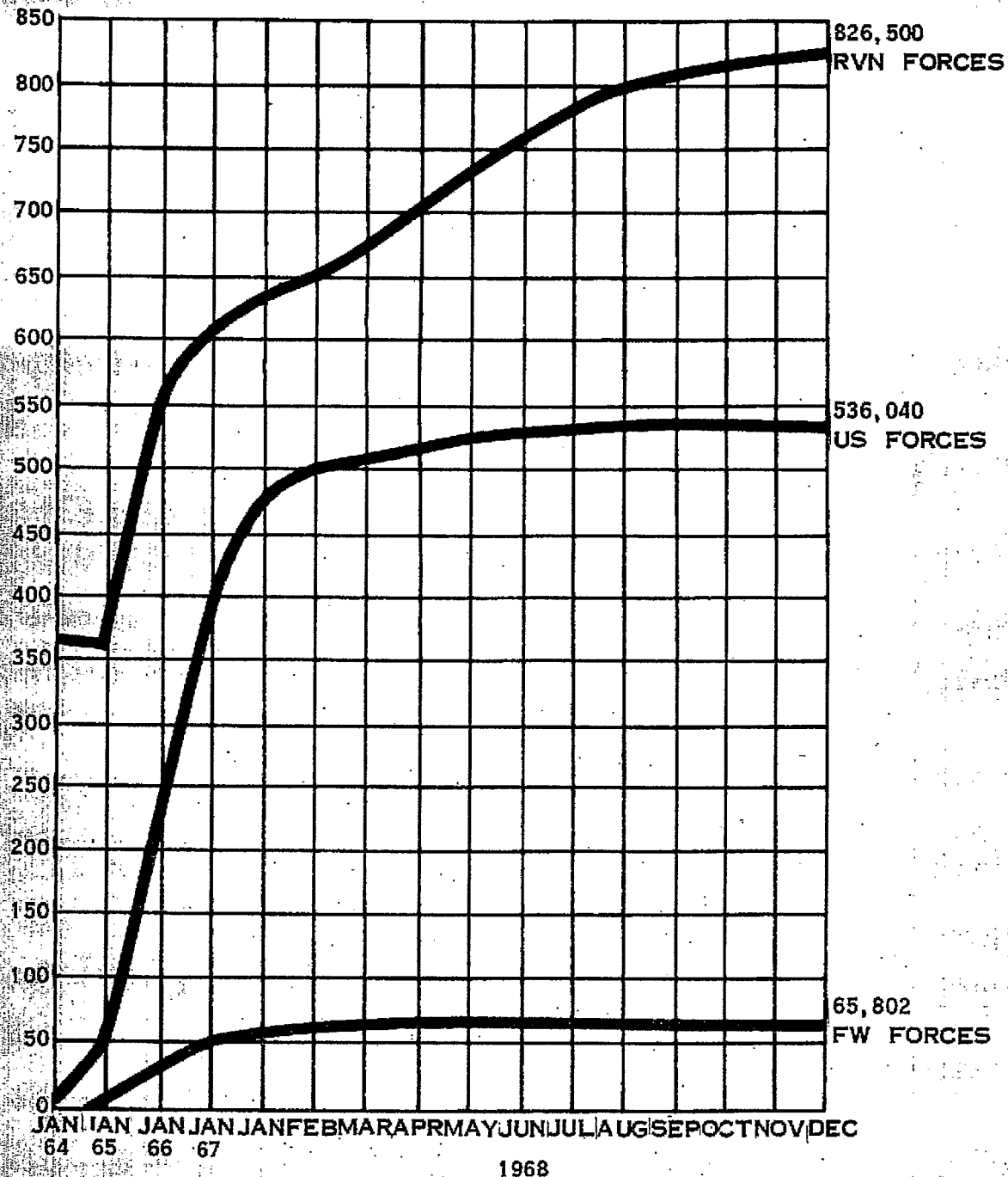
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Meanwhile, on 15 August, OSD had approved for Thailand a new U.S. military personnel ceiling of 47,778--327 more than on 21 February. Incremental increases in the manpower authorization remained small, largely because of pressure from the American



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# BUILDUP OF U.S., RVN, AND OTHER FREE WORLD FORCES 1964-1968

(THOUSANDS)



SOURCE: HIST (TS), MACV, 1968, VOL 1, P 224

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Embassy in Bangkok which feared that an excessive American presence would jeopardize American-Thai working relationships. As a result, the Air Force in previous months had encountered considerable difficulty in deploying more units to Thailand. In the spring of 1968, JCS asked OSD to approve 3,690 more spaces for units to enhance combat operations from that country, but as only 1,594 "offsetting" ones could be found, the manpower ceiling (at that time, 47,451), would have to be increased by 2,096 personnel.<sup>10</sup> OSD, however, refused to approve the increase.

Subsequently, in a new effort to find an acceptable formula, General Wheeler on 6 August proposed a "trade-off" of 2,378 badly needed U.S. spaces for 2,162 other spaces that could be saved largely by transferring certain U.S. functions to Thai nationals or to South Vietnam. He also observed that, in contrast with the fears of the American Embassy in Bangkok, American-Thai military relations were satisfactory and that Thai officials displayed no lack of cooperation.<sup>11</sup>

Deputy Defense Secretary Nitze approved most of General Wheeler's proposal on 21 August, but insisted on not going beyond the current U.S. strength figure of 47,778 in Thailand. In accordance with these decisions, 10 more B-52's and 851 personnel were earmarked for Thailand in September; eight AC-130 Gunship II's and 414 personnel, and three EC-121 Igloo White aircraft (minus personnel) in October 1968; and 46 propeller aircraft and 916 personnel in February 1969. To offset these augmentations the Air Force planned to employ 1,474 local nationals in place of U.S. personnel, cancel plans to transfer two DC-130 "Combat Angel" aircraft and 76 supporting personnel to Thailand, and take other manpower-saving measures. The American Ambassador in Bangkok subsequently obtained the approval of the Thai government to these changes.<sup>12</sup>

In November OSD also approved an Air Force request to deploy to Thailand six more KC-135 tankers (but no personnel), F-4E aircraft, and to withdraw five F-111A Combat Lancer aircraft to the United States.\* OSD further approved the deployment to Taiwan of six more KC-135's with 255 personnel to bolster SAC's refueling capability. By the end of 1968 the number of U.S. personnel in Thailand again had risen slightly to 48,301 of which 35,846 were Air Force.<sup>13</sup>

\*The F-111A unit, consisting initially of six aircraft and 385 personnel, was sent to Thailand in mid-March 1968 for combat testing.

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Additional Planning to Build Up the RVN Forces

~~SECRET~~ The end of the American manpower buildup in South-east Asia promised to give new impetus to strengthening RVN military forces, although General Wheeler foresaw major problems that presumably could retard the effort. Among these were the long lead times required to train crews and technicians for the VNAF and VNN; the adverse impact a larger VNAF and VNN would have on efforts to build up simultaneously the support elements of the South Vietnamese Army; and finally, the need for the Defense Department to absorb a cut of \$3 billion of the \$6 billion reduction in federal expenditures ordered by Congress and the administration for fiscal year 1969.<sup>14</sup>

~~SECRET~~ Nevertheless, Secretary Clifford on 7 August informed the service secretaries, the JCS, and other officials that improving the capability and performance of the armed forces of South Vietnam was "a matter of highest priority." He designated Richard C. Steadman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific in OSD, and Rear Adm. William D. Houser of the Strategic Division, JCS, as the principal OSD and JCS representatives to accelerate efforts to improve Saigon's forces. The Air Staff's chief representative, appointed by Secretary Brown, was Brig. Gen. Harold V. Larson, Director of Military Assistance in Headquarters USAF. The Air Staff, the Seventh Air Force Advisory Group, the MACV, and PACOM soon pooled their efforts to launch the program.<sup>15</sup>

~~SECRET~~ The redirection of the war effort presented the planners with a number of immediate problems. They quickly determined that using personnel on active duty to train new recruits would degrade the VNAF's combat capability, that neither the Air Force nor the Army possessed adequate facilities to train a large influx of VNAF trainees, and that the construction of a new training center (e.g., on an island offshore from South Vietnam), would be very costly. A basic interservice problem also needed resolution: whether the Air Force or the Army would have primary responsibility for VNAF helicopter training. Of 3,789 additional VNAF personnel needed for the Phase I training program, 2,336 would be assigned to UH-1 helo units. The Air Staff was also concerned lest the U.S. Army obtain full control of the helicopter training program (and thus seek more funds to expand its training facilities), and make helicopter units organic to the South Vietnamese Army rather than to the VNAF.<sup>16</sup>

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On 29 August and 2 October the JCS submitted preliminary and final Phase I plans to assure the increased fighting strength of the South Vietnamese. Both plans assumed continued American participation at the current level. Phase I envisaged 801,000 personnel by the end of fiscal year 1969 and contained only a modest increase of 3,789 in the VNAF, which would raise its strength to 20,987. Two H-34 helo squadrons would be converted to UH-1 squadrons (requiring the diversion of 17 helicopters from the Army), and there would be more personnel for the UH-1 wing, aircraft maintenance, base supply, and civil engineering. Conversion of three A-1 squadrons to A-37's and one C-47 squadron to AC-47's would continue. The South Vietnamese Army force structure was expected to be completed by the third quarter of fiscal year 1970 and the VNAF by the second quarter of fiscal year 1971.<sup>17</sup> Phase I also called for the activation of one UH-1 helo wing and eight UH-1 squadrons (four converted from H-34 squadrons, and four new UH-1 squadrons).

Over a five-year period, the cost of Phase I was placed at about \$8.029 billion, of which \$1.147 billion was allocated for fiscal year 1969. The balance, or \$6.881 billion, consisted of unprogrammed costs of equipment, which could not be absorbed without reducing other Vietnamese force modernization programs.<sup>18</sup>

Deputy Defense Secretary Nitze approved the final Phase I plan on 23 October and asked for a list of requirements for unprogrammed equipment anticipated for fiscal years 1969 and 1970. He conceded that supplying the VNAF would adversely affect the readiness of some U.S. units outside of Southeast Asia.<sup>19</sup> Secretary Brown subsequently asked for \$13.1 million in fiscal year 1969 supplemental funds and \$82.4 million in fiscal year 1970 to purchase UH-1 helicopters. Following an Air Staff review, he reaffirmed the necessity for the Army to divert some of its UH-1's to the VNAF and thus assure a larger number of helicopters in fiscal year 1970.<sup>20</sup>

To take advantage of Saigon's "mobilization momentum," General Abrams on 4 October urged raising the Phase I RVNAF ceiling from 801,215 to 850,000, with 39,000 of the spaces for Regional Forces. The remainder of the 9,785 spaces, consisting of 1,500 VNAF, 1,700 VNN, and 6,585 Army, Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), would be used to allow more on-the-job training and longer leadtime training for Phase II. PACOM endorsed the change as did the Air Staff, which observed that the 1,500 VNAF spaces were slated primarily for pilots and technicians, some of whom required 22 months of

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schooling. The JCS concurred on 23 October, adopted the 850,000 figure as a revision of Phase I, and asked for more funds to support the larger force.<sup>21</sup> Mr. Nitze approved on 1 November.<sup>22</sup>

### Post-Hostilities Planning

(U) [redacted] related to a faster South Vietnamese buildup was U.S. planning for the end of hostilities (T-Day) and the beginning of force withdrawals from South Vietnam (R-Day).

[redacted] On 25 July 1968 Mr. Nitze asked the service secretaries and the JCS, in cooperation with OSD, to submit troop redeployment proposals to meet each of three alternate U.S. and allied post war force structures (designated plans A, B, and C). Plans A and B called for the retention in South Vietnam of 30,000 U.S. and allied troops (a 13,425-man Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) and 16,575 residual personnel) six and 12 months, respectively, after all other allied forces were withdrawn from the country. Plan C envisaged leaving 149,030 troops (a 13,425-man MAAG, and a two-division corps with 135,605 supporting personnel) 12 months after all allied forces were withdrawn.<sup>23</sup>

[redacted] In submitting their redeployment proposals the JCS said that the strength levels provided in plans A and B were inadequate. Air Force and Navy air units, they felt, should be retained in South Vietnam until the VNAF completed its expansion. Communication requirements alone would absorb about 6,500 U.S. personnel, leaving only 10,000 spaces for combat and combat support. This would provide little room to incorporate other allied units. The substantial manpower in plan C, on the other hand, would leave insufficient troops in the United States to meet contingencies outside of Southeast Asia if current plans to cut overall American military force levels were carried out.<sup>24</sup>

[redacted] Under Secretary Hoopes amplified Air Force needs for OSD's plans A, B, and C but offered an alternative plan D. Submitted to OSD on 2 October as Air Force Operations Plan 12-68, it would stretch out the redeployment of U.S. forces from South Vietnam over an 18-month period, and supporting forces 36 months; enlarge the USAF posture in the Pacific area to support the VNAF and resume hostilities if necessary; and demonstrate American resolve to help Asian allies.<sup>25</sup>

[redacted] Mr. Nitze accepted the JCS-prepared redeployment proposals but asked for more data on a speedy withdrawal from South



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Vietnam, possibly in accordance with provisions of the Manila Communique of 24 October 1966.\* He agreed, that a 135,000-man residual force in South Vietnam might be too large, and he saw no need to change current estimates of future U.S. force strength (i.e., the fiscal year 1971 "baseline" force structure in the five-year defense plan). He envisaged returning to a June 1964 post-hostilities defense posture in PACOM.<sup>26</sup>

However, the JCS believed that the administration should clarify the meaning of the Manila Communique. Six months would be insufficient to permit an orderly withdrawal and to dispose of military assets. There was a need, furthermore, to clarify the status of a MAAG and the extent U.S. combat support forces should back an unbalanced South Vietnamese force structure pending its complete modernization.<sup>27</sup>

Post-hostilities planning gained new urgency after the President, on 1 November, ordered a complete halt to the bombing of North Vietnam. On 13 December, the JCS again sent OSD three alternate U.S. force structures to aid the RVN forces after the war's conclusion:

<u>Alternate</u>	<u>MAAG Troops</u>	<u>Support Troops</u>	<u>Other Troops</u>	<u>Total</u>
I	14,313	24,697	None	39,010
II	14,313	24,697	32,303	71,313
III	14,313	24,697	131,519	170,529

Alternative III would comprise a balanced, two-division corps with supporting elements. The Air Force portion for the first force structure would include only headquarters personnel and five advisory teams; for the second, a total of 10,861 personnel; and for the third, 25,676 personnel as part of the two-division corps. The second and third force structures would include numerous USAF fighter, reconnaissance, airlift, training, and other units.<sup>28</sup> The JCS, with Air Staff concurrence,

\*The Communique stated in part: "The people of South Vietnam will ask their allies to remove their forces and evacuate their installations as the military and subversive forces of North Vietnam are withdrawn, infiltration ceases, and the level of violence thus subsides . . . . Those forces will be withdrawn as soon as possible and not later than six months after the above conditions have been fulfilled."

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also submitted plans to OSD for disposing of the U.S. communication system, much of it Air Force, in South Vietnam.<sup>29</sup>

~~SECRET~~ To facilitate work on post-hostilities arrangements, Deputy Defense Secretary Nitze on 18 December asked the services to maintain quarterly reports of T-Day planning, with emphasis on schedules for U.S. troop redeployments from Southeast Asia and plans for force adjustments on a worldwide basis.<sup>30</sup>

~~SECRET~~ At year's end the Air Staff and other services felt the administration still needed to clarify the meaning of the Manila Communique of 24 October 1966 regarding troop redeployments from South Vietnam, the status of a MAAG, and what U.S. and allied forces should retain in-country to compensate for RVN military deficiencies in combat and technical capability.<sup>31</sup>

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## VII. THE COMPLETE BOMBING HALT

Notwithstanding JCS concern about the administration's policy in Southeast Asia, there were indications in early October that the Paris peace talks were leading to a complete bombing halt as a quid pro quo for more fruitful American negotiations with the North Vietnamese. A "break" in the Paris discussions occurred on the 9th, and by the 13th Hanoi agreed, in exchange for a halt to all attacks on its territory, to admit the Saigon government to the conference table, and to begin substantive negotiations promptly. It also agreed not to shell indiscriminately the major cities of South Vietnam, nor to violate the DMZ in a manner that jeopardized allied troops. The JCS agreed "under these circumstances" that a bombing halt was acceptable. The understandings were virtually consummated when President Thieu announced that he would not send a delegation to the Paris talks (where representatives of the National Liberation Front also would be present). Nevertheless, the administration decided to proceed without the South Vietnamese.\*1

Meanwhile, President Johnson and his military leaders were reviewing the implications of a bombing halt. On 23 October he met with General Momyer, former Seventh Air Force Commander,+ and on the 29th with General Abrams, who flew to Washington for the conference. The President was reassured that, under the conditions agreed upon, a complete bombing halt would not endanger American or allied troops.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, President Johnson on 31 October announced an end to the air, naval, and artillery bombardment of all North Vietnam and its territorial waters (12-mile limit). He indicated that his decision resulted from an "essential understanding" with Hanoi on deescalating the war and moving seriously toward peace. He further said:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, all military men, have assured me--and General Abrams very firmly asserted to me on Tuesday. . . that in their military judgment this action should not result in any increase in American casualties.

\*After many weeks of debate on seating arrangements, the South Vietnamese joined the peace talks in early 1969.

+General Momyer became commander of TAC on 1 August.

A regular session of the Paris talks is going to take place on next Wednesday, Nov 6, at which the representatives of the Government of South Vietnam are free to participate.<sup>3</sup>

Representatives of the National Liberation Front would also be present, although their attendance "in no way involves recognition." On the basis of the understanding, the President said he expected prompt, productive, serious, and intensive negotiations in Paris in an atmosphere conducive to progress. He pointed to "hopeful events" in South Vietnam, where the government had steadily grown stronger and armed forces had improved.<sup>4</sup>

Secretary Clifford publicly confirmed, the same day, that he had "strongly recommended" the bombing halt and that the JCS considered the bombing halt to be "a perfectly acceptable risk." The Saigon government conversely, declared its unhappiness over this "unilateral" U. S. decision.<sup>5</sup>

On 4 November Secretary Brown commented further on the President's move. He said that, even though bombing had stopped, aerial reconnaissance of North Vietnam would continue and General Abrams would respond to any move threatening American troops. He reported that about 40,000 enemy troops had pulled back from the battle area (in I Corps), thus improving the military situation. The "evolution" of negotiations indicated this was the right time for productive talks with the other side.<sup>6</sup>

Why had the Communists agreed to withdraw certain troops and begin substantive negotiations? Lt. Gen. Lewis D. Walt, Assistant Commandant, Marine Corps, credited allied military victories, including those during the February Tet offensive, in which many of the enemy's best troops were wiped out. General Westmoreland, now Army Chief of Staff, said that American fighting men had "raised the price of aggression to the point where now the enemy apparently wants to negotiate, thus bringing peace one step closer." Brig. Gen. George J. Keegan, Jr., intelligence chief of Seventh Air Force, believed that the allied summer air campaign in southern North Vietnam and in Laos from 14 July through 31 October had collapsed the enemy's August-September offensive and forced him to withdraw substantial forces to neighboring sanctuaries.<sup>7</sup>

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### Enemy Response and Revised Military Operations

As expected, the North Vietnamese took immediate advantage of the respite from air and naval attacks to improve their military posture. By mid-November, Air Force and Navy reconnaissance revealed that the movement of trucks moving down from the 19th to the 17th parallel had increased fourfold. The Communists were repairing roads and bridges, improving airfields, and strengthening anti-aircraft defenses.<sup>8</sup>

Allied forces, under close Washington guidance, adjusted to the new military situation. Outside of I Corps, U.S. troops continued to search out and maintain pressure on the enemy in South Vietnam. Although air operations over the North were limited to reconnaissance, the Americans stepped up tactical and B-52 air strikes in the Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger sectors of Laos.<sup>9</sup>

Gp 3) The withdrawal of about 40,000 enemy troops from the I Corps area enabled General Abrams to announce, on 10 November, that he was transferring his 19,000-man 1st Air Cavalry Division from near the DMZ in I Corps to provinces bordering Cambodia in III Corps, where Communist forces threatened to launch a new offensive. Under the code name Liberty Canyon, the troop movement was carried out over a three-week period, principally by transports of the Air Force's 834th Air Division. There was further concern about Communist shellings of cities in November and December, in violation of the Paris understandings, and about the rapid enemy logistic buildup in the North since the bombing halt.<sup>10</sup>

To forestall a possible enemy thrust, the JCS sought OSD authority for General Abrams to probe into the DMZ to test enemy strength, to conduct a surprise 48-hour air and naval attack against targets in southern North Vietnam up to the 19th parallel, or to pursue the enemy into Cambodia with ground forces, tactical aircraft, and B-52's. Secretary Clifford requested more information concerning the military effect of such operations in the light of current American objectives in Southeast Asia, but took no action on the proposals.<sup>11</sup>

As part of the program designed to protect American and allied forces from surprise attacks, the administration continued, over Hanoi's objections, limited reconnaissance of enemy activities in North Vietnam up to the 19th parallel. Following the complete bombing halt, the Air Force flew the first of such missions on 4 November.

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On the 7th, PACOM approved a MACV plan calling for 20 sorties per day (15 Air Force, five Navy) to observe 66 targets or target areas, and this rate continued until the 15th when the JCS limited the flights to 12 per day. Only daytime observation was allowed, weather reconnaissance was charged against the authorized flying rate, drones could not be used, and there were other restrictions.<sup>12</sup>

PACOM protested against the low sortie rate, citing the need for at least 90 to 175 sorties per week to fulfill minimum reconnaissance needs. On 20 November, General McConnell sought JCS support in seeking the concurrence of Secretary Clifford for 25 reconnaissance sorties per day, the use of drones, and unlimited weather missions. He pointed to the massive resupply effort under way by the North Vietnamese in the absence of bombing harassment. But in the face of almost certain rejection by the Defense Secretary, the service chiefs did not endorse General McConnell's proposal.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, North Vietnamese antiaircraft gunners had gone into action against the reconnaissance flights on 7 November. The next day Seventh Air Force fighters began to escort the reconnaissance aircraft. On the 13th, the first reconnaissance aircraft was damaged by ground fire, and on the 23d the first RF-4C was downed since the bombing halt. From 4 November through 9 December, 317 reconnaissance missions were flown south of the 19th parallel, of which 96 drew fire. In the same period, four aircraft were lost and four were damaged.<sup>14</sup>

The stepped-up air action in Laos following the complete bombing halt took the form of a specially devised air program. Nicknamed Commando Hunt and officially begun on 15 November 1968, it was designed to destroy as many supplies as possible moving South, tie down enemy manpower, and further test the effectiveness of the Igloo White sensor system.\* Directed by the Air Force's Task Force Alpha unit at Nakhon Phanom AB, Thailand, Commando Hunt air strikes concentrated on traffic control and transshipment points, troop encampments, fleeting targets, and enemy defenses.

Commando Hunt operations encompassed 1,700 square miles of the Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger areas of Laos. Compared

\*For more details on the Commando Hunt operation, see Herman S. Wolk, USAF Plans and Policies: Research and Development for Southeast Asia, 1968, (TS) (AFCHO, 1970).

with the air effort in October, they shattered records in the total number of tactical attack and B-52 sorties flown in November and December: 15

	<u>USAF</u>	<u>USN</u>	<u>USMC</u>	<u>Total Tactical Attack</u>	<u>SAC B-52</u>
October	4,681	10	73	4,764	273
November	9,676	2,312	833	12,821	661
December	10,125	3,672	1,344	15,141	687

Two reports, one summarizing the summer air campaign through 31 October and the other from 1 November, dramatized the impact of air power in Laos in the last half of 1968. Prepared under the direction of General Keegan, the Seventh Air Force intelligence chief, they showed how, after 1 November, heavy air attacks successfully blocked considerable enemy truck traffic. About 75 percent of the logistic "throughput" was impeded while the remaining 25 percent pushed through on repaired roads and bypasses. About 48 trucks entered Laos every 24 hours through the Nape, the Mugia, and Ban Karai passes, but only eight trucks per day reached South Vietnam. These provided roughly half of the daily minimum logistic needs of the Communists in northern South Vietnam.<sup>16</sup>

The reports further demonstrated the extent a heavy air campaign, carried out on a 24-hour basis, could successfully interdict key control points, and how new munitions could increase bombing effectiveness. The air strikes forced the Communists to rely more on Sihanoukville and Cambodian LOC's for most of their supplies and munitions in the III and IV Corps areas of South Vietnam. Even if the volume of supplies passing through Laos in November doubled in subsequent months, the Seventh Air Force believed that it would still be insufficient for stockpiling.<sup>17</sup>

#### Decision to Lower the B-52 Sortie Rate

Although the complete bombing halt prompted OSD to authorize more tactical air sorties in South Vietnam and Laos, it desired, conversely, to reduce the rate of 1,800 B-52 sorties per

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month authorized by Deputy Defense Secretary Nitze on 22 June.\*

The Air Staff and the Joint Staff had studied B-52 operations throughout the summer and autumn of 1968. On 18 November, at the request of General Abrams, the JCS urged OSD to maintain the rate of 1,800 sorties per month through mid-1969. In a reply on the 26th, Mr. Nitze--stressing financial and logistical problems, the cyclical nature of the war, and difficulties in detecting priority targets--said he was considering a variable rate of 1,400 to 1,800 B-52 sorties per month or a monthly average of 1,600 beginning 1 January 1969. This would give General Abrams 19,200 sorties per year and allow him to use the 1,800 sorties in periods of intense combat. The new rate would save about \$180 million in fiscal year 1970. He asked for comments on his proposal.<sup>18</sup>

The service chiefs dissented, arguing that the complete bombing halt of North Vietnam since 1 November in itself justified heavier B-52 attacks. They cited the unanimous views of ground commanders who considered the bombers a highly mobile reserve force which could singularly influence the outcome of a battle and obviate the need to transfer large troop contingents from one area to another. General Abrams personally believed that centrally controlled B-52's were so effective that there was "no possible substitute within the conventional arsenal." He equated the present 1,800 per month sortie rate to the "punching power of several ground divisions." Reports of prisoners of war and Communist "ralliers" further attested to the bomber's effectiveness, and the excess of targets over B-52 sortie availability slowed the need to maintain the rate.<sup>19</sup>

Unpersuaded by these arguments, Mr. Nitze on 9 December informed the service chiefs that financial and logistical considerations nevertheless would dictate shortly the 1,400 to 1,800 monthly B-52 sortie rate which he had proposed. OSD would assure adequate production of munitions to sustain a rate of 1,800 sorties if necessary.<sup>20</sup>

Both the Air Staff and Joint Staff planned to contest Mr. Nitze's decision, but with a new administration prepared to assume power in Washington on 20 January 1969, action to do so was momentarily deferred.<sup>21</sup>

\*See p 44.

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TABLE 3

U.S. ATTACK SORTIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA  
(1965-1968)

South Vietnam

	<u>USAF</u>	<u>USN</u>	<u>USMC</u>	<u>Total Tactical</u>	<u>SAC</u>	<u>Grand Total</u>
1965	36,299	18,825	10,798	65,922	1,538	67,460
1966	70,646	21,610	32,430	124,686	4,364	129,050
1967	116,560	443	52,825	169,828	6,609	176,437
1968	<u>134,890</u>	<u>5,427</u>	<u>64,933</u>	<u>205,250</u>	<u>16,505</u>	<u>221,755</u>
Total	358,395	46,305	160,986	565,686	29,016	594,702

North Vietnam

1965	11,599	13,783	26	25,408	0	25,408
1966	44,482	32,954	3,695	81,131	223	81,354
1967	54,316	42,587	8,672	105,575	1,364	106,939
1968	<u>41,057</u>	<u>40,848</u>	<u>10,326</u>	<u>92,233</u>	<u>686</u>	<u>92,919</u>
Total	151,454	130,172	22,719	304,347	2,273	306,620

Laos

1965	6,235	3,259	363	9,857	24	9,881
1966	31,834	9,044	7,591	48,469	647	49,116
1967	35,328	6,565	2,558	44,451	1,713	46,164
1968	<u>58,908</u>	<u>13,022</u>	<u>3,344</u>	<u>75,274</u>	<u>3,377 *</u>	<u>78,651</u>
Total	132,305	31,890	13,856	178,051	5,761	183,812

SOURCE: USAF Mgt Summary, SEA (S), 24 Jan 69, pp 25 and 37.

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The Phase II Plan for RVN Forces

The complete bombing halt also gave further impetus to building up RVN forces. The Phase I plan for modernizing and improving them had been approved by Deputy Defense Secretary Nitze on 23 October,\* but it became obsolete with the bombing halt on 1 November. General Abrams on his return from Washington, proposed moving faster toward Phase II objectives. On 9 November he sent the JCS a revised plan to raise South Vietnam's manpower ceiling to 877,000, and the JCS sent it with modifications to OSD on the 15th.<sup>22</sup>

Covering a six-year period (fiscal years 1969 through 1974), the Phase II plan was designed to create a self-sufficient military force capable of meeting an insurgency threat after American and North Vietnamese troops withdrew from South Vietnam. It provided for 855,594 personnel (versus 850,000 approved by Mr. Nitze on 1 November) by the end of that period, distributed among the following services:

Air Force	32,587
Marine Corps	9,304
Navy	26,100
Regular Army	363,831
Regional Forces	245,632
Popular Forces	178,140
Total	855,594

Since the number of educationally qualified South Vietnamese was limited, the JCS believed that the forces recommended were the maximum possible. The VNAF personnel roster would rise about 50 percent, from 20,987 to 32,587, and its fighter, helicopter, gunship, liaison, reconnaissance, and training strength would increase from 20 to 40 squadrons (see Table 4). There would, however, be fewer fighter and helicopter squadrons than envisaged in the 23 May 1968 plan (see Table 2, p 46). It would take six years to complete the VNAF buildup, whereas the force structure of the Army would be reached by the end of fiscal year 1971, and the Navy's by the end of fiscal year 1973. Equipment and support costs of the Phase II plan for the regular RVNAF (i.e., excluding the Regional and Popular Forces) were estimated at \$3.139 billion, of which \$1.4 billion would be allocated to the expansion of the VNAF.

\*See p 60.



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TABLE 4  
 PHASE II PLAN FOR VNAF IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNIZATION  
 Fiscal Years 1969-1974

	<u>End FY 69*</u>	<u>End FY 70</u>	<u>End FY 71</u>	<u>End FY 72</u>	<u>End FY 73</u>	<u>End FY 74</u>
Authorized Personnel Strength	20,987	25,239	28,520	30,977	32,587	32,587
<u>Type and Number of Squadrons</u>						
Fighter (A-1's, F-5's, A-37's)	6	6	6	6	8	9
Helicopter (H-34's)	3	1	1	1	1	1
Helicopter (UH-1's)	2	5	11	12	12	12
Helicopter (CH-47's)	0	0	0	1	1	1
Gunship (AC-47's)	1	1	1	1	2	2
Training (U-17's)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Training (U-41's)	0	1	1	1	1	1
Transport (C-47's, C-119's, C-123's)	2	2	2	2	3	5
Liaison (O-1's, U-17's, O-2's)	4	4	5	6	7	7
Reconnaissance (C-47's, RF-5's, U-6's)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Special Air Mission (C-47's, U-17's, UH-1's)	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	20	22	29	32	37	40

\* Force Structure at end of Phase I plan

SOURCE: JCSM-678-68 (S), with atch, Phase II Plan for RVNAF Improvement and Modernization, vol I, 15 Nov 68.

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(S) In conjunction with the latest planning for the RVN force buildup, the JCS cautioned that any withdrawal of U.S. or other free world forces should comply strictly with the conditions of the Manila Communique of 24 October 1966. The removal of troops should take place only after the enemy ceased his operations or pulled back his units in the field, and the level of violence subsided. Otherwise the South Vietnamese would not be able to cope with the remaining enemy forces. Even if early Communist troop withdrawals began, U.S. manpower would be needed to offset South Vietnamese deficiencies in combat, logistics, and communications; to transfer installations and dispose of U.S. property; and to advise and support a MAAG. The American military presence would diminish as Saigon's forces attained combat self-sufficiency. <sup>23</sup> 15 Nov 68

TABLE 5

ESTIMATED UNPROGRAMMED COSTS OF PHASE II REGULAR RVN FORCE PLAN  
Fiscal Years 1969-1974

(In thousands of dollars)

Service	FY 69*	FY 70	FY 71	FY 72	FY 73	FY 74	Total
Air Force	22,070	112,428	386,432	433,103	429,707	17,786	1,401,526
Navy	30,053	155,274	19,835	13,740	8,162	8,100	235,164
Marine Corps	308	145	7	6	5	1	472
Regular Army	10,708	187,099	264,938	260,122	389,477	389,428	1,501,772
Total	63,139	454,946	671,212	706,971	827,351	415,315	3,138,935

\* Estimated unprogrammed costs of Phase I plan

SOURCE: JCSM-678-68 (S), with atch, Phase II plan for RVNAF Modernization and Improvement, vol I, 15 Nov 68.

(S) After extensive OSD deliberation, Mr. Nitze on 18 <sup>Dec</sup> November approved, with some exceptions, the JCS recommendations of 15 November, but he deferred a decision on General Abrams' plan of 9 November to accelerate Phase II until more details could be provided. He warned that the time available to implement Phase II might be short and enjoined the MACV commander and the service secretaries to plan

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for accelerated training, unit activations, and equipment deliveries. From the JCS he desired a concept of "essential conditions" for ceasing hostilities and a postwar RVNAF plan, Phase III, but only to meet an insurgency threat from the Viet Cong.<sup>24</sup>

On 26 December General Abrams sent to the JCS his plan for accelerating the RVN force buildup. It called for a South Vietnamese armed force of 877,090 personnel by the end of fiscal year 1969, and 877,895 by the end of fiscal year 1971, with all units activated by June 1972 instead of June 1974. By June 1971 manpower would be distributed in the following proportion:<sup>25</sup>

Air Force	32,587
Navy	30,805*
Marine Corps	9,304
Regular Army	374,132
Regional Forces	252,927
Popular Forces	<u>178,140</u>
 Total	 877,895

To assure a more rapid VNAF buildup, the plan provided for the diversion of 60 UH-1 helicopters earmarked for the U.S. Army in Vietnam to the VNAF by June 1969 and conversion of four squadrons of older H-34's to the newer UH-1's. The Army had opposed a large transfer of its helicopters to the VNAF, and the Air Staff, generally supporting the Phase II plan, expected Army resistance to continue. At year's end the JCS were reviewing the accelerated plan.<sup>26</sup>

Not yet resolved near the end of 1968 was the alarming desertion rate of South Vietnamese troops which threatened to undermine all planning. Ground combat personnel were abandoning their units at an annual net rate (i.e., less those who returned) of 35 percent of their strength. The following net desertion rate (per 1,000) prevailed in October 1968: Regular Army, 17.2; Regional Forces, 19.2; Popular Forces, 10.2; Navy, 1.3; Marine Corps, 72.1; and Air Force with the lowest rate of all--0.8. Both General Abrams and Ambassador Bunker were gravely concerned with this problem, discussing it frequently with President Thieu throughout the remainder of the year.<sup>27</sup>

\*Tentative.

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## VIII. SUMMARY

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ In retrospect, 1968 was a watershed in U.S. military planning and operations in Southeast Asia. At the beginning of the year, the authorized manpower ceiling of 525,000 for South Vietnam and 45,724 for Thailand still allowed for more deployments. Many officials were optimistic, believing that if the allies maintained military pressure on the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, and pursued pacification with vigor, a negotiated settlement would soon be possible.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ The Communist Tet offensive of February 1968, however, shattered the feeling of confidence and changed the administration's overall conduct of the war. To be sure, American commanders in Vietnam believed that the enemy's offensive and his effort to seize the Marine base at Khe Sanh were colossal failures. He suffered enormous casualties--more than 10,000 at Khe Sanh alone, largely from B-52 strikes--and the allies soon routed him out of the urban and rural areas he had overrun temporarily. However, General Westmoreland's request for 206,000 more troops, including air support, to capitalize on the enemy's setbacks, shocked many important administration, congressional, and public leaders who believed that the foe had been badly underestimated. Faced with growing financial and other domestic difficulties, the administration was unwilling to increase substantially its commitment in Southeast Asia or risk a wider war by relaxing long-enforced restrictions on combat. It therefore decided to reduce America's involvement and increase the role of South Vietnam in the conflict, and to make a greater effort to disengage through negotiations.

~~(S-3p-17)~~ In a first step toward this policy the President, on 1 March 1968 despite strong JCS objections, halted the bombing of North Vietnam above the 20th (and then the 19th) parallel to encourage Hanoi to enter into peace talks. These began in Paris in May. Meanwhile, he limited the increase in U.S. air, naval, and ground deployments to South Vietnam to counter the Tet offensive, restricted the rise of the authorized U.S. manpower ceiling in that country to 549,500, and ordered a speedup in training the South Vietnamese forces. With less area to bomb, air strikes on enemy territory below the 19th parallel increased.

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(S-Cp 3) The initial months of peace talks proved unsuccessful. However, after reaching certain "understandings" with Hanoi's leaders, the President on 1 November ordered a complete bombing halt of the North in exchange for a promise by Hanoi to withdraw some of its forces from I Corps and engage in more substantive discussions in Paris. Simultaneously, the President approved a massive air interdiction program, Commando Hunt, against the infiltration routes of southern Laos. Administration officials made additional plans to hasten the buildup of South Vietnam's air, naval, and ground units.

(S-Cp 3) By the end of the year the administration appeared to be making progress in arresting further expansion of U.S. involvement in the war and in moving toward more productive negotiations. U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam stood at about 536,000 (including 59,024 Air Force), well below the authorized ceiling. In Thailand, U.S. manpower had leveled off at 48,301 (including 35,846 Air Force). The latest plan to assure a self-sufficient South Vietnamese force as quickly as possible called for 877,000 men with all military units activated by June 1972. With the bombing halt of North Vietnam, the representatives of Hanoi and the National Liberation Front seemed ready for more substantive talks with the U.S. and South Vietnamese governments, although Saigon momentarily refused to participate.

(S-Cp 3) The bombing cessation of the North and year-end studies on reducing the number of expensive B-52 sorties belied the fact that the administration still relied heavily on air power to achieve its goals. In December 1968 U.S. tactical and B-52 attack sorties in South Vietnam remained at a high level and in Laos they had tripled over the average monthly totals of midyear. The attack sorties in both countries exceeded considerably the number flown in previous years. To sustain this effort, the United States operated more tactical combat aircraft in the theater than at the beginning of the year (1,099 versus 992). Of a total 2,641 U.S. combat and noncombat aircraft and 3,431 helicopters in the war theater at the end of 1968, the Air Force possessed 1,177 (including 48 helicopters) in South Vietnam and 595 in Thailand (including 34 B-52's and 36 helicopters). There were a total of 106 B-52's in Thailand, Okinawa, and Guam versus only 51 a year previously. Assessing the air effort since the Tet offensive, the Seventh Air Force believed that the allied summer campaign had forced Hanoi in October to withdraw some troops and agree to more serious discussions, and that Commando Hunt operations after mid-November had curbed drastically the enemy's logistic "throughput" from Laos into South Vietnam.

\*OSD Southeast Asia Deployment Program 6, 4 April 1968, and through change 44, 14 March 1969.



**TABLE 6**  
**USAF AIRCRAFT DEPLOYMENT IN ASIA**  
29 December 1968

SOUTH VIETNAM													
BINH THUY		CAM RANH BAY		DA NANG		HHA TRANG		PHU RANG		PHU CAT		PLEIKU	
AC47	3	C7	29	A1	2	AC119	4	AC47	3	AC47	3	A1	18
C47	1	C130	37	AC47	5	AC47	8	B37	14	C7	21	AC47	4
HH43	2	F4	49	C7	4	C47	3	C123	37	F100	65	C47	2
O1	38	HH43	2	C47	1	C130	3	F100	67	HH43	1	EC47	17
U10	8			F4	54	EC47	16	HH43	2	O1	6	HH43	2
				F102	6	HH43	2	O1	6	O2	12	O2	5
				HH3	10	O1	36						
				HH43	2	O2	24						
				O1	15	U10	6						
				O2	59	UHI	8						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>

SOUTHEAST ASIA													
A37	20											C123	16
AC47	5											C130	26
C47	3											EC47	15
DC130	2											HH43	2
F100	55											RB57	2
HH43	3											RF4	29
O1	62											RF101	15
O2	15											<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>
OV10	21											<b>TUY HOA</b>	
U10	9											C130	10
UG123	22											F100	75
WU2	3											HC130	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>											HH43	3
												<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>97</b>
												<b>VUNG TAU</b>	
												C7	30
												<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>

THAILAND													
BANGKOK		KORAT		NAKHON PHANOM		TAKHLI		UBON		UDORN		U-TAPAO	
C7	2	EC121	31	A1	40	EB66	29	AC130	4	C47	3	B52	34
C130	6	F4	20	A26	17	F105	56	C130	7	C130	6	KC135	41
F102	4	F105	35	C123	5	HH43	2	F4	72	CH3	8		
		HH43	2	CH3	10			HH43	3	F4	41		
				HH3	7					F102	6		
				O2	37					HH43	2		
				OV10	6					HH53	6		
				U10	13					RF4	34		
				UC123	2					UHI	4		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>

WESTERN PACIFIC																	
GUAM		JAPAN		KOREA		OKINAWA		PHILIPPINES		TAIWAN							
ANDERSEN	ITAZUKI	MISAWA	KUNSAN	KWANGJU	KADENA	NANA	CLARK	CHING CHUAN KANG									
B52	53	EB66	4	F4	18	F4	8	F105	10	B52	19	C130	28	B57	4		
HC130	3	RF101	19	HH43	2	F100	50	HH43	2	C130	3	F102	15	C130	25		
KC135*	2					HH43	2			F105	15	F106	1	F4	19		
						HH43	2			HH3	3	HH3	1	F102	30		
										KC-135	37	HC130	4	HC130	4		
										RC135	8	HH3	2	HH3	2		
										RF4	13	HH43	2	HH43	2		
										SR71	3						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>

\* Transit and administrative support aircraft not included.

SOURCE: USAF Mgt Summary, Southeast Asia, 3 Jan 1969, p 22.

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~~SECRET~~ How soon America could attain its objectives by an expeditious buildup in South Vietnam's forces, continuous heavy air operations in South Vietnam and southern Laos, pacification, and resolute negotiations in Paris, remained to be seen. The only certainty was that this policy would come under exhaustive review by a new administration under President-elect Richard M. Nixon on 20 January 1969.

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APPENDIX

US MILITARY AND AIRCRAFT STRENGTH IN SOUTHEAST ASIA  
(SOUTHEAST ASIA DEPLOYMENT PROGRAM 6, 4 April 68)

US Military Strength in South Vietnam

	<u>Jan 68*</u>	<u>Mar 68*</u>	<u>Jun 68*</u>	<u>Sep 68*</u>	<u>Dec 68*</u>	<u>Jun 69*</u>
USAF	56,400	57,300	59,900	60,700	60,500	61,500
USN & CG	32,800	35,100	37,200	37,500	37,400	37,300
USMC	78,200	87,100	87,700	82,100	82,000	82,200
USA	<u>326,900</u>	<u>344,500</u>	<u>353,400</u>	<u>369,100</u>	<u>369,400</u>	<u>368,400</u>
Total	494,300	524,000	538,200	549,400	549,300	549,400

US Military Strength in Thailand

USAF	32,000	33,500	35,100	35,100	35,100	34,900
USN-USMC & CG	800	800	500	500	500	500
USA	<u>10,900</u>	<u>12,500</u>	<u>12,700</u>	<u>12,200</u>	<u>12,200</u>	<u>12,200</u>
Total	43,700	46,800	48,300	47,800	47,800	47,600

US Offshore Navy

	35,200	39,700	42,000	39,500	42,000	42,000
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US Fighter and Attack Aircraft in Southeast Asia (by Services)

USAF	643	686	758	776	776	770
USN	184	202	206	196	198	212
USMC	150	171	191	191	183	183
USA	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	977	1,059	1,155	1,163	1,157	1,165

B-52s

Thailand	20	20	25	25	25	25
Guam	36	++	++	++	++	++

\* Actual  
 + Current Plan  
 ++ Not Included

~~SECRET~~Allied Fighter and Attack Aircraft in Southeast Asia

	<u>Jan 68</u> *	<u>Mar 68</u> <sup>+</sup>	<u>Jun 68</u> <sup>+</sup>	<u>Sep 68</u> <sup>+</sup>	<u>Dec 68</u> <sup>+</sup>	<u>Jun 69</u> <sup>+</sup>
VNAF	70	72	54	36	36	36
RAAF	8	++	++	++	++	++

USAF Fighter and Attack Aircraft in Southeast Asia (by Type)

A-1	40	61	61	61	61	61
A-26	12	12	12	12	12	12
AC-47#						
B-57	23	24	24	24	24	18
F-100	218	198	252	270	270	270
F-102	24	30	30	30	30	30
F-104##	-	-	-	-	-	-
F-105	104	108	108	90	90	72
F-4	191	216	234	252	252	288
F-5##	-	-	-	-	-	-
T-28	6	12	12	12	12	12
A-37	25	25	25	25	25	25
Total	643	686	758	776	776	788

US Helicopters in Southeast Asia

USAF	75	97	95	97	97	97
USN	-	-	-	-	-	-
USMC	334	304	304	304	292	292
USA	2,614	2,771	2,835	2,899	3,098	3,410
Total	3,023	3,172	3,234	3,300	3,487	3,799

US Helicopters in Southeast Asia (by Type)

UH-1	12	15	15	15	15	15
HH-43	30	32	32	32	32	32
HH-53	5	6	6	8	10	10
HH-3	15	22	20	18	18	18
CH-3	13	22	22	22	22	22
Total	75	97	95	97	97	97

\* Actual

+ Current Plan

++ Not Included

# 34 AC-47's erroneously included under non-attack aircraft, See p 81.

## Phased out in 1967

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US Fixed-Wing Nonattack Aircraft in Southeast Asia (by Services)

	<u>Jan 68*</u>	<u>Mar 68<sup>+</sup></u>	<u>Jun 68<sup>+</sup></u>	<u>Sep 68<sup>+</sup></u>	<u>Dec 68<sup>+</sup></u>	<u>Jun 69<sup>+</sup></u>
USAF	809	840	845	867	886	965
USN	52	53	45	42	40	44
USMC	47	46	58	58	82	68
USA	<u>586</u>	<u>545</u>	<u>564</u>	<u>588</u>	<u>590</u>	<u>612</u>
Total	1,494	1,484	1,512	1,555	1,598	1,689

USAF Fixed-Wing Nonattack Aircraft in Southeast Asia (by Type)

RB-57	3	4	4	4	4	4
EB-66	24	41	41	41	41	41
RF-4	74	76	76	76	76	76
RF-101	17	16	16	16	16	16
AG/C-47 <sup>++</sup>	52	46	46	46	46	46
EC-47	43	47	47	47	47	47
EG-121	29	27	27	27	27	27
G-123	79	87	91	91	91	91
HC/C-130	16	17	17	17	17	17
KC-135	39	30	30	30	30	30
C-7A	81	96	96	96	96	96
O-1	173	174	158	150	135	61
O-2	150	147	147	147	155	285
OV-10	-	-	19	47	73	96
U-10	32	32	32	32	32	32
HU-16#	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	812	840	847	867	886	965

\* Actual

+ Current Plan

++ Erroneously includes 34 AC-47 attack aircraft for Jan 68. Ratio of AC-47 to C-47s projected through Jun 69 is uncertain. See p 81.

# Not Included

SOURCE: Memo. (S), Dep SECDEF to Secys of Mil Depts, et al., subj: SEA Deployment Prog. 6, 4 Apr 68; USAF Mgt Summary, SEA, 26 Jan 68, p 25.



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LAPES	low altitude parachute extraction system
LOC	line of communications
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
mg <sup>t</sup>	management
mil	military
MR	memorandum for record
mun	munitions
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLF	National Liberation Front
NMCB	Navy Mobile Construction Battalion
NVN	North Vietnam
NSAM	National Security Action Memo
NSC	National Security Council
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
ofc	office
opl	operational
ops	operations
OSAF	Office, Secretary of the Air Force
OSD	Office, Secretary of Defense
Pac	Pacific
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PACOM	Pacific Command
plcy	policy
PMDL	Provisional Military Demarcation Line
poli	political
POW	prisoners of war
prep	prepared
Pres	President
PSAC	President's Scientific Advisory Committee
procur	procurement
prog	program
proj	project
qtr	quarterly

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RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
rcrd	record
recon	reconnaissance
R-Day	Beginning of Force Withdrawals
req	request
Res	Reserve
RLT	Regimental Landing Team
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROKAF	Republic of Korea Air Force
rppt	report
rqmts	requirements
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
SA	Systems Analysis
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SAF	Secretary of the Air Force
SAFOI	Secretary of the Air Force Office of Information
SEA	Southeast Asia
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
secys	secretaries
SIG	Special Interdepartmental Group
sit	situation
spec	special
stmt	statement
strat	strategy, strategic
subcmte	subcommittee
SVN	South Vietnam
sys	systems
tac	tactical
TAC	Tactical Air Command
T-Day	End of Hostilities
trng	training
USA	United States Army
USAF	United States Air Force
USMACV	United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy

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VN	Vietnam
VNAF	Vietnamese Air Force
VNMC	Vietnamese Marine Corps
VNN	Vietnamese Navy

wpn	weapon
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