

ORR Comments on NIE Staff Memorandum, 5-66, 21 March 1966

THE PROGRAM

Second Paragraph 2nd sentence revise:

This is to be continued as long as required and would be accompanied by sustained harassment of traffic movements and repair activities on the LOCs in the southern regions of North Vietnam and Laos.

Part I

Line 4 ". . . fewer than 4,000 attack and flak suppression sorties. Spread over a two week period this would be under 2,000 a week, or 40 percent higher than the peak level of 1965. The location and nature of the targets are more sensitive than those attacked in 1965, and the program will obviously reflect a new escalation of the US air offensive particularly since air operations against LOC's in the southern regions would continue. This escalation would mark an end to the sanctuary status of the Hanoi/Haiphong area, the Northeast, and the 30-mile strip along the Chinese border, and mining the major ports would introduce a new element with broader international implications.

Paragraph 2

Most observers would see this program as a strong demonstration of US will to prevail in the conflict. This escalation would be seen as more or less dangerous in individual Free World and Communist

countries. The nature of their reaction will be tempered in most cases by US policy statements on the limits and objectives of the campaign. Only those countries in extreme opposition to the US would proclaim the program to be a dangerous step toward further escalation at a later stage.

Paragraph 5, line 7 this factor

Paragraph 6, delete sentence "If the bombing . . ." and substitute:

The likelihood of the casualties resulting from this program reaching "opinion-shocking" levels is remote principally because of the DRV programs of evacuation and shelter and the methods of executing the attack. Moreover, those injured by the attacks will for the most part be principally workers engaged fairly directly in war supporting activities -- e.g., transport and government services.

Page 14, Paragraph 2, change last sentence to read:

We therefore conclude that the conducting of a maximum and sustained air defense of North Vietnam by Chinese aircraft operating from Chinese bases would mean that the Chinese were willing, if necessary to take the succeeding steps toward war with the US.

Page 14, Paragraph 3.b - add to last sentence

" . . . precise and limited, and accompanied by a "no sanctuary" statement by a senior US official in the event of Chinese air involvement.

Page 18

Sub para 4 -- "... would not be directly restricted..."

Add to sub para 8: The diversion of manpower to defense and logistic activities and the disruption of interior lines of communication could result in increasing although localized food shortages. As these shortages become widespread, there is an increasing probability of popular alienation from the regime.

Page 21, Para F. b --

Substitute: Peking probably will increase its efforts to maintain ^{or enlarge} the flow of essential military and logistic materials to North Vietnam although movement of these goods would become increasingly difficult and costly.

Page 22, Para 4. a --

Add to sentence: They would also fear other military measures such as a naval blockade of the Chinese coast which by denying imports, particularly grain, would generate enough starvation and unrest to compound political control.

Page 23, line 2 --

Delete "almost imperceptible."

Specify the reasons Peking and Hanoi wish to avoid China's becoming the chief antagonist.

Page 25-26, Para 3

Delete sentence "They might feel compelled to try to break the port closure." Substitute: "The risk of direct confrontation with the US would lead the Soviets to reject any attempt by them to break the port closure."

Penultimate sentence: Change to read:

We cannot estimate what new measures the DRV, USSR and China would agree on. While US-Soviet relations would almost certainly be worsened, we believe the USSR would find it most difficult to become more deeply involved in the war without assuming risks which to us seem unacceptably high.