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20 March 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary of State *copy*

I asked the Board of National Estimates to keep their estimates and position papers on the Vietnamese situation under continuing review.

Attached is a copy of the latest memorandum from Sherman Kent to me and I believe his observations will be of interest to you. You will note in numbered paragraph 5. his reference to the joint CIA-DIA-State Memorandum of 17 March, "Strength of Viet Cong Military Forces in South Vietnam."

(Signed) JOHN A. McCONE

JOHN A. McCONE

Attachment

Attachment is Sherman Kent Memo dtd 18 March 1965
Subject: Vietnam Estimates

The Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

JAM/mfb

3 originals types - all same letter to:
Sec State/SecDefense/McGeorge Bundy

- ① - ER w/cy atch
- 1 - DCI White Hs file w/atch
- 1 - DCI Defense file w/atch
- 1 - DCI State file w/atch
- 1 - DCI chrono, no atch.
- 1 - Sherman Kent - no atch.

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18 March 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Vietnam Estimates

1. We have kept our recent SNIEs* under continuing review and believe that no new evidence or situations have arisen since our memorandum of 12 March which would warrant any change in their main judgments, with respect to South Vietnam or to the Communists.

2. The USSR is patently embarked on a multi-level political/propaganda campaign which includes a firm public posture condemning the US, various ambiguous overtures about negotiations, and a worldwide assortment of "fortuitous" or "personal" chats between Soviet diplomats and US opposite numbers, or locals with US contacts, intimating that the US and the USSR should avoid a head-on conflict in Vietnam which could only benefit the Chinese.

3. Hanoi, and, especially, Peiping maintain a tougher, more rigid posture on the whole subject of negotiations than

* Note that insofar as these estimates were on probable Communist reactions to certain US courses of action, we assume no change in these US courses.

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does Moscow -- though with respect to all three major Communist powers, the situation has not yet ripened enough for us to be able to distinguish real intentions from politico-diplomatic tactics. We still have no evidence of major military moves or deployments on the part of either Communist China or North Vietnam. There has been no diminution in the scale or intensity of VC action in the South. Nor is there any indication of diminution in DRV guidance and support of that action.

4. From the Communist viewpoint the present situation is roughly comparable to that US course of action dealt with in the second part of SNIE 10-3/1-65: that is, the initial stage of a declared and sustained program of bombing in the North. We still believe that Hanoi's leaders probably remain uncertain as to US intentions and determination, and they may still think that US military sanctions are not likely to become severely damaging in the near future. We also continue to believe that some further intensification of US air attacks -- e.g., making them somewhat more frequent and extending them a bit further into North Vietnam than even Phu Qui -- would be unlikely either to produce early concessions or to provoke large-scale military attack from the DRV.

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5. We wish to call attention again, however, to the fact that VC forces already in place in South Vietnam have the capability and almost certainly the intention of exerting considerable military pressure even without new or augmented support from the North. In this context, we note the Joint CIA-DIA-State Memorandum of 17 March, "Strength of Viet Cong Military Forces in South Vietnam," in which this office participated.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

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SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

APR 18 1968

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**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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DATE

Sherman Kent

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