

26 February 1965

ER

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

1. As a follow up to the DCI's concern lest CIA and the Intelligence Community be caught by surprise over any sudden and major reversal in South Vietnam, either through intervention of North Vietnamese and/or ChiCom troops or by a Government upheaval in South Vietnam, the DDCI called a meeting in the DCI Conference Room at 3:00 p.m. today. Attending were virtually all of the Agency officers dealing with the Vietnam problem as well as DD/P, Chief, FE, Acting DD/I, Acting AD/CI, and the Chairman of the Board of National Estimates. General Carter read verbatim minutes from the 25 February USIB meeting during which Mr. McCone had charged all of USIB with remaining especially alert. (The USIB minutes on this subject are attached.)

2. General Carter then covered the points, numbers 1 through 6, in his memorandum of 24 February which is also attached.

3. After a discussion of various aspects of the Vietnam problem, it was agreed that analysts must not ignore intelligence indicators, no matter how wild they may seem, that current SNIE's and NIE's be updated and revised as necessary, that analysts state their requirements and tailor their requirements to collection vehicles.

4. General Carter asked all at the meeting not to hesitate in requesting DCI and/or DDCI help in taking steps to closing gaps in our knowledge that now exist.

HK
H. Knoche
EA/DDCI

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Ominous Developments in
South Vietnam**

In connection with the discussion of the Watch Report, Mr. McCone said that he wished to stress again the extremely important responsibilities of the intelligence community in regard to South Vietnam. He indicated his grave concern that a situation might develop which would be relatively as dangerous to US interests in 1965 as Dien Bien Phu was to the French in 1954. He asked all the members to assure that the closest attention is given to every available indicator, no matter how tenuous, which might suggest in any way the possibility of a serious reversal of the situation in South Vietnam. The Chairman noted that he had asked CIA to be particularly alert to the situation and requested that USIB members alert all relevant components to the problem, including MACV. He emphasized the particular responsibilities of NSA, CIA and DIA.

In his review of the situation Mr. McCone noted that, in addition to possible Communist moves against Americans and American installations on a much larger scale than any previous attacks, there were two other very serious possibilities:

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a. Preparations for a massive Viet Cong military effort, with the support of the North Vietnamese and possibly even the Chinese Communists, to cut South Vietnam in half, separating land connections between the northern provinces and the rest of the country.

b. Regarding the internal political situation, Mr. McCone stressed the need to be particularly alert to the attitude and frame of mind of the South Vietnamese generals, who conceivably could be planning actions inimical to US purposes. In this connection he noted that some of the generals now in positions of power do not have unblemished backgrounds.

Mr. McCone concluded his remarks by stressing again the very great responsibility that the intelligence community has to be particularly sensitive and alert to every possible indicator regarding the developing situation in South Vietnam. *

*As a separate action dated 25 February, the Director of Central Intelligence has requested the Critical Collection Problems Committee to review all resources for intelligence coverage of indications of possible large-scale intervention in South Vietnam by military forces of North Vietnam alone or in connection with the Chinese Communists, and to make appropriate recommendations for improvement of our capabilities for such ~~coverage~~ coverage.

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The Intelligence Community, and particularly CIA, must ensure that all of the collection and analytical machinery is well oiled and cranked up in order to provide the earliest possible warning of any major movement related to the Vietnam crisis. In essence, what we need to be on our guard for involves sudden movements into Southeast Asia of large numbers of ChiCom or North Vietnamese ground forces; a sudden collapse of the resistance in South Vietnam arising from increased infiltration, terrorism, and the like; or a sudden collapse of allied Government in South Vietnam with a sudden advent to power of a regime bent on anti-U.S. policies. We need also, of course, to continue to watch carefully for any Communist preparations for major outbreaks elsewhere as a diversion, such as an increase in military pressure in Korea, the Taiwan Strait, and even Berlin and other pressure points.

The DCI and I ^{have taken} ~~are taking~~ steps to inform the Community of our concern about all this. USIB ^{has been} ~~is being~~ advised and the Critical Collection Problem Committee will do a survey of Community resources available to ensure a successful watch on all these contingencies. In addition, of course, the USIB Watch Committee will continue to shoulder much of the load in assessing the indicators and reporting them out.

I am not trying to tell you analysts that you must flood the market with alarming assessments. We all need to remain cool and objective, but there are a number of things that we must do.

1. You can't afford to ignore any report, no matter how wild it may seem, and you must make a special effort to look behind the surface of the reporting we do get.
2. It is absolutely essential that the analysts state their requirements, indicate the importance of each of these requirements, and do all that is necessary to tailor them to specific collection vehicles, whether U-2's, SIGINT, agents, or otherwise. (ACTION: DDI)
3. In this connection, I expect analysts to be in the closest touch with collectors in DDP and DDS&T. DDP and DDS&T must take steps to ensure that analysts know enough about the collection systems available to formulate their requirements intelligently. (ACTION: DDI, DDP, and DDS&T)
4. We need to match the SNIE's and NIE's now on the streets with current information so as to be able to update and warn in national intelligence publications. (ACTION: DDI and ONE)

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5. The Agency must keep the NIC and the Watch Committee supplied with information and assessments. (ACTION: DDI and DDP)

6. Query: Should we broaden the CIA Task Force now working almost exclusively on Vietnam so as to charge it with responsibility for looking at Communist developments throughout the Far East and perhaps in Europe as well? (ACTION: DDI and DDP)

In the final analysis, it is you analysts and experts who are in the best position to crank up all the machinery that is necessary. You know your problems, your lacks, your strengths, and your weaknesses. Advise me. Let me know what actions I can take that will be helpful to you in the light of this very important problem we face.

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EYES ONLY

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General Carter:

Concerning the charge you got this morning to look into intelligence machinery to guard against any surprise developments in VietNam, there are two major areas to be examined. One is collection, the other is analysis. In turn, the problem divides itself into what is to be done in-house within CIA, and the other what to do to crank up the entire community.

Sheldon and Bross have discussed the subject and they recommend that General Reynolds' CCPC be brought together to survey the extent and capabilities of the community's resources dealing with the problem. As a practical matter, the primary area for concern is SIGINT which Sheldon believes is the only really effective and credible source of warning of any major military development.

The following are my suggestions for your consideration:

(1) Make a personal appearance before a special meeting of the Watch Committee to charge the Watch Committee with the importance of the matter and to lay on special reporting procedures from the NIC to you, DCI, and other USIB principals as necessary.

(2) Discuss the matter for the record and for help at tomorrow's USIB meeting.

(3) Assemble a group of senior and junior Agency analysts involved in the VietNam problem and to include such people as Sheldon (in his capacity as Watch Committee Chairman) Colby and Myers, Sherman Kent, Ray Cline, and the CIA Task Force, to inform them of the problem, seek their advice on current problems, shortages, and otherwise get the ball rolling.

Recommend you charge Ex. Dir with arranging.

After all these things have taken place you will have a better feel for levying actions. At the moment, other than directing the CCPC to get into the act, I think there are few actions you can take.

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E. H. K.