

28 October 1970

Notes for Briefing Sheet for Conversations with Senator Russell

1. Indochina is an area troubled by the legacies of a turbulent history. The people who live in South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam are clearly all beset with complex and deep-rooted economic, social and political problems. But these are not the primary cause of the particular form of turmoil and bloodshed that has plagued Indochina for the past decade. Instead, as events of the past year have clearly shown, the main cause of trouble throughout Indochina is the aggression waged and directed by the Politburo of the Vietnamese Communist Party in Hanoi, which has completely controlled the government of North Vietnam since that country was established, is endeavoring to gain equal control over the government of South Vietnam, and is also trying to reduce the governments of Cambodia and Laos into satellite subservience.

2. Thus you do not have separate, unrelated problems in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. You have an overall Indochina problem which manifests itself in different guises or forms in the three non-Communist Indochina states (i. e., South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos), but the roots of the problem in all its manifestations run back to the Politburo in Hanoi.

3. The relation of North Vietnamese action in south Laos and Cambodia to the struggle in South Vietnam is readily apparent. The relationship between the situation in South Vietnam and Hanoi's actions in north Laos, far removed from the Ho Chi Minh trail, is less immediately apparent but equally germane. Hanoi's moves in north Laos are keyed to affecting the overall political climate in Indochina in ways that can facilitate the conquest of South Vietnam. For example, North Vietnamese military pressure in north Laos, if successful, could and would be exploited by Hanoi in an effort to force the Royal Lao Government to alter its political stance and call for an end to the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail. Or Hanoi may attempt to score in north Laos the kind of tactical success with political overtones it badly needs to register somewhere in Indochina and may not be able to achieve in South Vietnam or Cambodia. Thus, if Hanoi is to be contained and induced to move into serious negotiations, it must be checked throughout Indochina, not just in those areas in close proximity to South Vietnam.

Typed for C/FE clearance prior to DCI and GAC talking to Senator Russell in Georgia on Friday, 30 October 1970