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Diplomatic/Political Actions

Option 1. A strong representation to the DRV demanding a halt to the infiltration.

PROS -- Hanoi would be put on notice that we are aware of its violations and consider them sufficiently serious to require a formal U.S. reaction.

CONS -- Hanoi might not consider such an unsupported approach seriously and thus not be deterred from continued violations.

-- We would be entering an implied commitment to do something about it if Hanoi should disregard our demands.

TIMING- We estimate it would have more effect on Hanoi if done before X+60 than afterwards. It would show us as sufficiently concerned to run the risk -- albeit a small one -- of having the North Vietnamese stall on POW release. In fact, we recommend that such a step be instituted immediately by whatever private channels are deemed most appropriate.

Option 2. Halt all other dealings with the North Vietnamese, including particularly a hold on the Joint Economic Commission and any other discussions of interest to the DRV.

PROS -- If invoked in combination with Option 1, Hanoi would take our protest more seriously.

-- Hanoi would be faced with the decision whether to compromise the development of relations with the United States.

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CONS -- The issue could well come into the open, whether we wanted it to or not. (This could, of course, be desirable.)

TIMING- As with Option 1.

Option 3. Representations (separate ones) to the USSR and the PRC protesting the DRV's massive sabotage of the Paris Agreement; invoking their roles in the International Conference on Viet-Nam and as the main suppliers of war materiel to Hanoi; calling on them to ensure compliance on the part of North Viet-Nam just as we are continuing to do our best to sustain peace; and issuing a warning that relighting the flames of war in Viet-Nam could prejudice our bilateral relations across the board. (Note we have already undertaken representations with Poland and Hungary on the North Vietnamese violations.)

PROS -- The message to Hanoi would be much more convincing, especially if we were seen as again willing to put our relations with the USSR and PRC on the line.

-- The message would be equally clear to Moscow and Peking for the same reasons, and they would have to contemplate a decision on how to react with less possibility of throwing the blame on the United States (than if we had already moved with military force).

-- We would be making a record with Options 1 and 2 of seeking redress by peaceful means before invoking force.

CONS -- It would put some further tension on our relations with the USSR and the PRC, risking possible delays on other bilateral issues of interest to us.

-- We would be raising the implied (if not explicit) commitment to react more vigorously if our demands were not met.

TIMING- Same as Option 1.

Option 4. Escalate Option 3 to include an explicit demand that the USSR and the PRC limit the supply of arms to the DRV (perhaps coupled with an offer of a reciprocal limitation on our side).

PROS -- Our concern over the situation would be unmistakable to the communist powers.

-- Any evidence of Soviet and Chinese readiness to limit war supplies would have an immediate and major impact on Hanoi causing the DRV leadership to think of conserving supplies rather than expending them in the South.

-- This Option, like military Options 4, 5 and 6, would affect in a significant measure the DRV's capability to buildup its overall war-making potential.

CONS -- There is little prospect that either the USSR or the PRC would accede to such a proposition.

-- For us to make the demand and have it rejected would weaken our negotiating position.

TIMING- Same as 1.

Option 5. Consultations with the interested allied governments calling their attention to the serious view we take of the DRV violations and invoking their intercession with Hanoi, Peking and Moscow.

PROS -- We would again be building the record of seeking to halt violations by peaceful means.

-- Our friends would be better prepared to support us in case we had to resort to military actions.

-- The feed-back to the USSR, PRC and DRV would underline the seriousness of our purpose.

CONS -- Because of the limited leverage of such third countries in the communist capitals, their help would not have much direct practical effect.

-- There would be a greatly increased risk of leaks (assuming we did not want to attract much publicity at this stage).

-- We would be giving governments a chance to exert restraining influence on us.

TIMING- Same as Option 1.

-- The signal to Hanoi that we were serious would presably be considerably clearer if we confined ourselves to private steps, private approaches to Hanoi, Moscow and Peking

Option 6. Reconvene the International Conference on Viet-Nam.

PROS -- This is a step called for in the Act signed March 2.

-- Again, we would be seen as seeking to correct the situation by peaceful means.

-- The responsibilities of the other 11 parties would be invoked in the interests of peace.

CONS -- The effort to reconvene might be futile if the communist parties were opposed and persuaded France to their point of view.

-- In any event, it would be a time-consuming process.

-- It would immediately bring the glare of world-wide publicity to our problem. (As with certain other options, this could be an advantage.)

-- It is unlikely that the Conference would actually find North Viet-Nam guilty and require it to desist.

-- An unsuccessful (or even inconclusive) conference could further weaken the Paris Agreement structure.

TIMING- As in Option 1.

Option 7. Resort to the Security Council.

PROS -- Invokes the responsibility of other powers for keeping the peace.

-- Adds to the record of peaceful efforts to retrieve the situation.

CONS -- The communist powers (and possibly some neutralists) could be expected strenuously to resist any UN action.

-- The Security Council meeting could degenerate into an angry and futile dispute, further degrading the UN without advantage to our cause in Viet-Nam.

TIMING- Same as Option 1.

Option 8. Reveal in detail for public knowledge, possibly in the form of a White book, the record of North Vietnamese infiltration of men and supplies in violation of the Agreement.

PROS -- Wide-spread knowledge of the DRV violations could embarrass Hanoi and its backers and lead them to fear further action by the United States if they did not correct the situation.

-- Such a detailed statement would provide the proper perspective, whereas uncontrolled leaks might put this situation in the wrong light.

(V) -- Friends here and abroad would have a basis for supporting our efforts with North Viet-Nam.

CONS -- Some additional elements in Congress might be encouraged to oppose the idea of aid to North Viet-Nam, or even to other countries of Indochina. Others might move to try and foreclose our resort to military measures.

-- Such public disclosure might trigger an over-reaction against the whole structure of the Paris Agreement, encouraging calls for us to pull out of Indochina once and for all, or from the opposite side, to bomb Hanoi into submission. It is hard to foresee where this process would lead.

TIMING- A formal public charge of this nature might lead Hanoi to take counter actions, and if made before X+60 the

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DRV might decide to hold up release of POWs with the thought of using them to bargain against a resort by us to military measures.

Option 9. Encourage the GVN to take on its own initiative or in cooperation with us some of the diplomatic/political options discussed above.

Discussion -- It would seem proper and useful for the GVN to seek contact with the DRV for a separate demarche along the lines of Option 1.

-- The GVN could also usefully spread the word to friendly governments, especially those in Southeast Asia, as in Option 5.

-- Should it be decided to reconvene the International Conference, we would have to count on GVN cooperation. (Option 6.)

-- As for the UN (Option 7) we see little role for the GVN, except perhaps to help keep the Secretary General properly informed of the true state of affairs.

-- A white paper issued by the GVN might be useful; however, a comprehensive treatment of the DRV infiltration necessarily involves intelligence only US resources can provide.

-- A special factor to keep in view is President Thieu's forthcoming visit to the United States beginning April 1 or 2.

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PROS -- Manifestation of concern for its own interests, rather than passively waiting for the US to act, would be desirable.

-- Independent diplomatic initiatives tend to affirm Saigon's position internationally vis-a-vis the PRG.

CONS -- GVN initiatives are likely to have little practical impact.

-- It may prove difficult to coordinate our moves effectively with Saigon, especially if security considerations are involved.

TIMING- Approximately as in the respective foregoing options.

Option 10. Intensify psyops against North Viet-Nam and the NVA in South Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia.

PROS -- The signal of our concern would be considerably reinforced for the DRV should we shift from the current relatively conciliatory note to a more threatening (harassing) tone.

-- We could expect the North Vietnamese people to become more aware of the true state of affairs and more concerned over the prospects of a resumption of the war, including possibly US bombing.

-- The Hanoi leadership might then feel compelled to explain its actions, or (possibly hopefully) modify them.

CONS -- The North Vietnamese have proved relatively resistant to our psyops in the past.

-- Official control over the population and army is probably sufficient to prevent our psyops causing any major difficulties for Hanoi.

-- Failure to achieve the obviously desired results could debase our overt voice.

TIMING- Same as Option 1.

Military Moves

Option 1. Bomb North Vietnamese depots in Cambodia.

PROS -- Heavy air strikes in Cambodia could be undertaken with relatively few international risks, since we are conducting air operations over that country at the present time and it would not be a direct violation of the Paris Agreement. It would represent a tangible demonstration of our determination to halt the communist military build-up.

CONS -- There are relatively few identified targets in Cambodia. Thus we would not expect to achieve any marked practical effect with stepped-up air strikes.

TIMING-- This and all other military options discussed in this paper entail the risk of provoking the North Vietnamese to retaliate, and, if taken prior to the final phase of the prisoner release, Hanoi could well choose to stall on the POW issue. Moreover, we believe that the delivery of communist equipment and personnel to South Viet-Nam in the remaining three weeks before the time for the final prisoner release would not have enough overall impact on the balance of forces in South Viet-Nam to justify

the risk to our prisoners. Finally, we believe we should not use up our military options now but rather keep them in reserve as a reaction on the chance that the North Vietnamese might invoke the prisoner issue for some other reason. Admittedly the specific military option of stepped-up bombing in Cambodia carries the least risk of provoking a DRV reaction on the POW issue.

Option 2. Suspend Operation End Sweep.

PROS -- North Viet-Nam would recognize this as an unmistakable signal of serious U.S. determination.

-- It would delay improvement of North Vietnamese waterways for logistics use.

CONS -- It would promptly become public knowledge, and draw attention to our actions against North Viet-Nam, whether we wanted publicity or not. (Of course, if we wanted to go public, this aspect would be an asset rather than a liability.)

-- By itself, it would not reduce the present level of logistics movement and would not greatly hinder further improvement of road and rail lines.

TIMING-- See comment under Option 1. Undertaking this option before X+60 would entail somewhat more risk than bombing in Cambodia but possibly less than other military options cited below.

Option 3. Reseed the mines in North Vietnamese harbors and waterways.

PROS -- Resort to this -- and following military options -- would represent an unmistakable re-escalation of U.S. force against North Viet-Nam and therefore convey a very strong threat to Hanoi.

-- It would assure continued interdiction of supplies by sea and corresponding reliance on land lines, which would presumably again be subject to air strikes.

CONS -- Throughout the world this -- and the following military options -- would probably be viewed as the reintroduction of American military forces into the Indochina conflict and could evoke strong opposition to "the resumption of the war".

-- By itself, closing the water approaches would not halt the flow of supplies and men at the present level of movement.

TIMING-- If taken before X+60, we believe, as mentioned above, this and all the following military options would carry a heavy risk of a North Vietnamese reaction in the form of suspending the release of the remaining American POWs.

-- If taken after X+60, this and the following military options would entail a risk to our objectives relating to MIAs and to finding and possibly recovering the remains of Americans who died in North Viet-Nam.

Option 4. Air Strikes against North Vietnamese logistics in Laos.

PROS -- A surprise resumption of heavy bombing on the Trail would probably be very effective for the first 24 to 48 hours in actually destroying materiel and LOCs with relatively heavy North Vietnamese casualties. Even after this period it would require reimposition of greater precautions by the North Vietnamese with a concomitant decline in the efficiency of the system.

-- The message to North Viet-Nam would be loud and clear.

CONS -- The effectiveness of air strikes against the Trail would decline (somewhat) with time.

-- Adverse reaction around the world would be more intense, leading possibly to moves in Congress to halt our military activities.

-- It could be interpreted as U.S. recognition that the structure of peace negotiated in Paris had collapsed irretrievably.

-- We would probably again begin to lose aircraft and personnel.

-- It would embarrass the RLG; we would in any event need to consult Vientiane.

TIMING-- The same considerations apply as to Option 3, but with appreciably greater risk of DRV resort to the POW issue if before the final release, or to the MIA issue, if after X+60.

Option 5. Air strikes against major mountain passes on routes from North Viet-Nam in to Laos.

PROS -- The interdiction would be much more effective, particularly if the strikes were sustained on a daily basis to keep the passes closed.

CONS -- The same drawbacks would be entailed as with Option 4 but on an appreciably larger scale.

TIMING-- Same as Option 4 but with higher risk.

OPTION 6. Air strikes against other LOCs in North Viet-Nam.

PROS -- Yet more effective interdiction.

CONS -- Same as with Options 4 and 5 but at a greater level of intensity.

-- There could be a re-opening of the debate on the effectiveness of air power against North Viet-Nam with a resumption of protests against "terror bombing".

-- By this stage, the USSR and the PRC would again be faced with the decision on how to react to US force against North Viet-Nam proper; there would presumably be some risk of the wrong decision.

TIMING-- We would have to assume that Hanoi would halt POW releases, if before X+60, or MIA investigations if

Option 7. Suspend U.S. troop withdrawals.

PROS -- It would underline to Hanoi the seriousness of our concern.

-- It would retain in South Viet-Nam some residual resources (and an implicit personnel ceiling) of possible future use.

CONS -- Public attention would immediately be attracted to our difficulty with North Viet-Nam (could be an asset.)

-- The move has no direct impact on the DRV's capability to continue the military build-up.

-- This option is available only before X+60 and since POW release and troop withdrawals are linked in the Peace Agreement, its use would almost certainly provoke the North Vietnamese to halt POW releases.

TIMING- See above.

Option 8. Urge the GVN to use guerrillas against infiltration routes in South Viet-Nam.

PROS -- If successful, it would have a direct effect on movement of communist forces within South Vietnam. infiltration.

-- The NVA would at least be required to take additional precautions.

-- It would not directly involve the United States.

CONS -- There are no effective guerrilla forces in being for this purpose.

-- It is highly unlikely they could be organized in time to have an impact this dry season.

TIMING- Not relevant.

Option 9. Urge the GVN to mount operations against infiltration routes using regular forces including VNAF.

PROS -- If feasible, it could have a direct impact on infiltration.

-- The NVA would probably have to shift forces to provide greater security for the supply routes.

-- The United States would not be directly involved.

CONS -- Stepped-up bombing by VNAF or large offensive operations by ARVN would be seen as an escalation of the fighting attributable to our side.

-- Given VNAF's present inventory and proficiency only marginal effectiveness could be expected from a bombing campaign against supply routes, especially in MR II.

-- Use of GVN ground forces in this mission would degrade security elsewhere and leave populated areas vulnerable to communist seizure.

TIMING- If such steps were undertaken -- or initiated -- before the final prisoner turn-over, the DRV would probably hold up prisoner releases as a means of exerting pressure on our side to halt the campaign.