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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
25 June 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Vietnamese Communist Attitudes on a Phased  
Withdrawal of US Forces from South Vietnam

1. Since the opening of the Paris talks, the North Vietnamese have been holding out the prospect that they would accept a phased withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam if they had a firm commitment that the US intended ultimately to disengage completely. Such hints have appeared with increasing frequency in private conversations between North Vietnamese and a wide variety of sources over the past two months.

2. This is not the first time that Hanoi has indicated that it is prepared to be flexible on troop withdrawal. The hints are now appearing at a rate, however, which suggests that the Communists wish to emphasize the subject. In contrast to the current initiative shown by the North Vietnamese in raising this issue, Communist leaders in the past offered such hints only on a very selected basis to questions from prominent westerners or to newsmen who were probing Communist demands for a political settlement. In those instances Hanoi spokesmen were making every effort to plead their cause effectively without spelling out North Vietnam's basic bargaining position. They have been, however, fairly consistent in maintaining that they would make the withdrawal process as easy as possible.

3. Since April of this year, Hanoi spokesmen have both taken the initiative and been more specific in hinting to a wide variety of sources that the Communists were prepared to accept a phased withdrawal of American troops which would last as long as several years. The earliest report of this nature came from a French Communist, [redacted] who claims to have

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talked to important but unidentified high-level North Vietnamese leaders. He told [redacted] that Hanoi was prepared to make concessions on the withdrawal issue, such as permitting the US to retain certain military bases in South Vietnam. He did not volunteer any time frame, but used the US base at Guantamamo, Cuba, as an example of the kind of arrangement the Vietnamese could live with.

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4. Another [redacted] reported [redacted] the North Vietnamese consul [redacted] had talked to his staff about Hanoi's position in the upcoming Paris peace talks and told them that the only concession that the North Vietnamese would make would be to allow some time for the withdrawal of the US "as was done in the case of the French." [redacted] a North Vietnamese propaganda official,

[redacted] told his hosts privately that Hanoi intended to be flexible in the Paris talks. He gave as an example the fact that his country was prepared to see American withdrawal from South Vietnam accomplished in phases.

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5. Since the opening of the Paris talks, such comments have also come from sources close to the North Vietnamese negotiating team. Their chief western press contact, Wilfred Burchett, is quoted as saying on 26 May that the North Vietnamese would "in the end show themselves surprisingly accommodating." He was specifically talking about American "disengagement" from South Vietnam. Hanoi's diplomatic representative in Paris, Mai Van Bo, told [redacted] that if the US cannot leave Vietnam all at once, it can take a few years to complete the withdrawal. The US can close one base at a time, said Bo, and the timetable for departure and "similar problems" will raise no difficulty.

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6. The statements of Liberation Front officials on US troop withdrawal are generally in line with Hanoi's. Front spokesmen have consistently indicated on a selected basis [redacted] that the modalities of withdrawal were subject to negotiation. In recent months they, too, have

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been more specific and have discussed the issue in terms of phases and enclaves.

7. Annex A contains specific examples of earlier North Vietnamese statements on US troop withdrawals and Annex B cites examples of Liberation Front statements on the subject.

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ANNEX A

Representative North Vietnamese Statements on US Troop Withdrawal from South Vietnam

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[REDACTED]

Loan stated that the time of the withdrawal of the American troops was not a decisive question. In this connection, he pointed to the agreement on the withdrawal of the French troops.

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[REDACTED]

A pro-Communist Japanese, who was in Hanoi for three years prior to his return in July 67, claims that in late April 1967 Nguyen Duy Trinh said peace talks could only be entertained if the US and its allies withdrew from Vietnam or announced a set date before which such a withdrawal would be completed.

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[REDACTED]

DRV press officer in Paris, Tran Ngoc Kha, said "There are a great many intermediary solutions between the extremes of total US victory and total US withdrawal and anything is negotiable except the bombing of North Vietnam."

4.

[REDACTED]

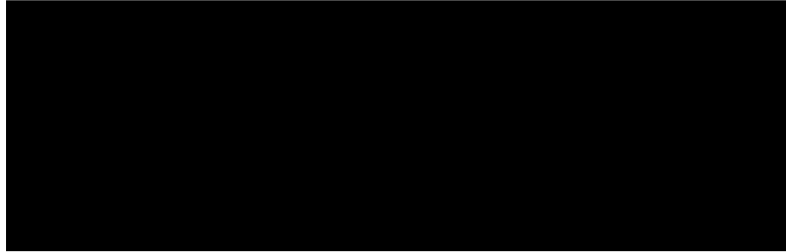
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On 6 June 67, Tran Ngoc Kha told [REDACTED] in Paris: "What we want is the final unification of the Vietnamese people. We are fully aware of the fact that this will take time. North Vietnam is not demanding the immediate withdrawal of US

[REDACTED]

forces, but the withdrawal of US forces after the conclusion of peace negotiations and within an "appropriate period of time."

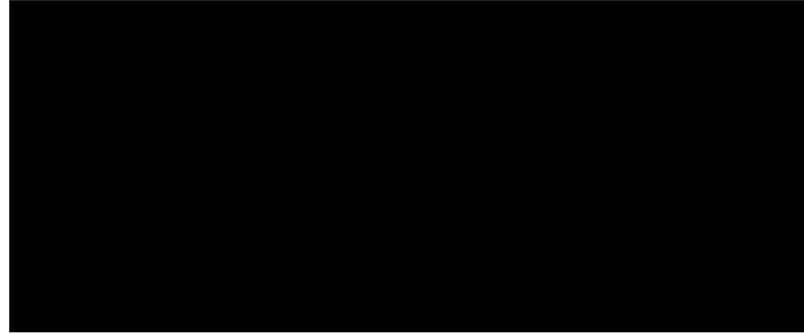
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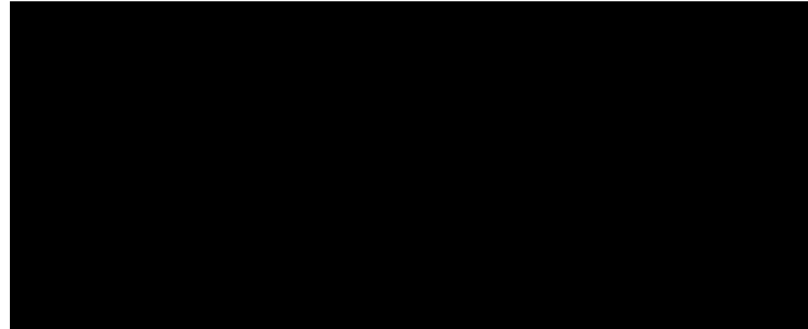
6. 22 July 67 Pham Van Dong  
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Ending the war for us has two meanings: an end to the bombings and a withdrawal of US forces. We like the formula of President de Gaulle. Some US troops would have to stay until the end of the process of political settlement. We do not want to humiliate the US.

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ANNEX B

Representative Liberation Front Statements on US  
Troop Withdrawal from South Vietnam

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1.

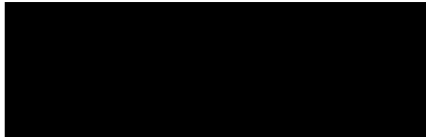


Nguyen  
Van Hieu, Front (NFLSV)  
rep in Cambodia.

"Hieu stated that the NFLSV would negotiate only with the Americans and only to determine the terms (1) of an American military withdrawal from Vietnam and (2) the recognition of the NFLSV ...the principle of withdrawal is not negotiable. The NFLSV is, however, ready to negotiate the terms of such a withdrawal (timing, etc.)..."

2.

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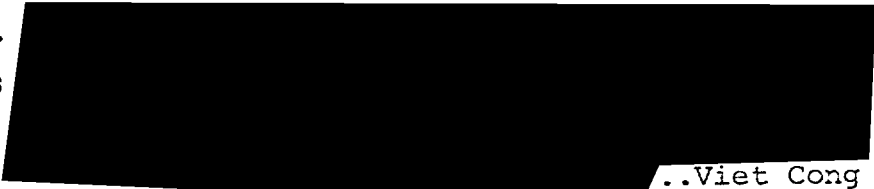
A Vietnamese writer-journalist known to have contacts within the Alliance.

"The end of the present situation will come in three phases...The first...unconditional halting of the bombing of North; second...participation of the NFLSV in the negotiations...A cease-fire will probably come in this phase, with the withdrawal of US forces, possibly into enclaves; the third phase will consist of the formation in South Vietnam of a provisional government."

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7.

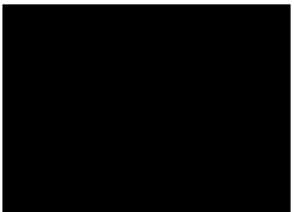
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..Viet Cong  
reps imply (A) that reuni-  
fication is well down on  
their timetable...(B) that  
in exchange for agreement  
to negotiate with them, Viet  
Cong, unlike Hanoi, would  
not pose as prior condition  
withdrawal of US forces; (C)  
that, in event of US-Viet  
Cong political settlement,  
US troop evacuation might  
be spread over considerable  
period of time; (D) give  
impression that they mis-  
trust Hanoi and Chicoms but  
are unable to take independ-  
ent stand unless this would  
pay off in settlement accept-  
able to Viet Cong..."

8.

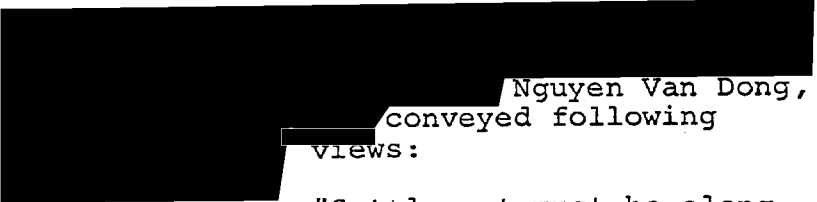
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Wilfred Burchett in October  
1965, said that he believed  
the Liberation Front was  
quite prepared to discuss  
the modalities of a military  
withdrawal with US repre-  
sentatives.

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Nguyen Van Dong,  
conveyed following  
views:

"Settlement must be along  
lines of 1954 Geneva agree-  
ments, with withdrawal of  
US forces from SVN. There  
would be interim period of  
two governments in Vietnam.

Neither two Vietnam governments nor subsequent united gov't could have any foreign military alliances, but in interim, they--presumably NFLSV--could contemplate a symbolic American presence. However, large American force could create problems of control.."

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