

28 May 1962

MEMORANDUM OF DISCUSSION WITH THE PRESIDENT,
Saturday, May 26th, 11:30 a. m.

Attending: the President and McCone alone

1. McCone reviewed [redacted] (b)(3)
reports both of which indicated increased dependence by the Soviets
on use of nuclear weapons in their strategic planning and also
and most significantly, their aerial-ground offensive warfare.

2. McCone reviewed recent SNIE on Laos explaining
that an amendment would be forthcoming after the next USIB Meeting.
The President was urged to read this Estimate carefully and he agreed
to do so, taking a copy with him for the week end.

McCone pointed out that the thrust of these Estimates
was to the effect that each increase in our effort in Laos, whether it
involved additional support of the RLG or the placement of American
troops in Laos, or the committing of American troops to combat in
Laos would be met by an escalation in the Communist effort which
would undoubtedly also be in stages involving additional North Vietnam
combat units and very probably covert and finally the overt commit-
ment of Chinese Communists troops to action. McCone stated that
he personally was convinced that this was a reasonable appraisal of
trend of events in Laos and it represented the unanimous view of the
Intelligence Community. However, it was pointed out to the President
that he, McCone, had detected on the part of the military the feeling
that the logistics problem of supplying combat forces in Laos would
be a very inhibiting factor and because of this there was an attitude
that perhaps the Communists would not escalate their effort in Laos
to meet the increase in our own effort. McCone said that he disagreed
with this viewpoint and while he recognized all of the logistics problems,
he nevertheless felt that the Communists would keep the pressure on
and what could not be accomplished one month or in one season would
be an objective for the next month or the next season. This has been
the history of the Communist effort as it moves southward toward
Southeast Asia in the past several years.

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: APR 2002

SECRET

McCone stated that he therefore would urge the President to recognize that the commitment of troops in Laos must be coupled with the decision to take actions against North Vietnam which at first would involve air strikes against military concentrations, airfields, supply depots, transportation facilities, and communications facilities; all of which were readily identifiable from recent photography. In other words, if we are going to commit our forces in Laos, we must not do as we did in Korea, provide the Communist forces with a sanctuary from which they can direct and supply their operations.

3. The President asked McCone again about the "London Times" article and McCone stated that we had exhausted every effort to determine the source and had, through a third party, been told that the "Times" correspondent originally wrote the article as a "think piece" using gossip and other information, and had then taken it to and had cleared it by a White House source, who he felt was responsible. The White House source was not and cannot be identified.

McCone said that he was so disturbed over reports of this nature and also conflicting reports on operations in Southeast Asia, he had decided to go to Southeast Asia leaving on the 3rd of June, returning about 10 days or 2 weeks later. Representatives of DD/I, DD/P would accompany McCone. Also, it was suggested that Mike Forrestal go along. The President agreed this would be a good idea, and suggested that McCone call the President on Monday, to confirm this arrangement.

The meeting lasted approximately 30 minutes with McGeorge Bundy being present for part of the time.

NOTE: Prior to seeing the President, I talked with Mr. McGeorge Bundy, covering in detail the substance of my proposed talk with the President, most particularly my view with respect to a decision to eliminate the sanctuary of North Vietnam in the event that we commit American troops to combat in South Vietnam. Also, I discussed with Bundy the extent to which the Harriman criticism of CIA over Laotian policy had filtered through the Washington press corps, largely as a result of gossip and talk on social occasions in Washington.

John A. McCone
Director

JAM/

(b)(3)