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TO AMBASSADOR WATSON, AEMBASSY, PARIS
FROM HENRY A. KISSINGER, THE WHITE HOUSE

State Dept. review completed

REF: PARIS 1085

In your meeting with President Pompidou on next Thursday, you have an appropriate opportunity to provide him with some of the rationale for the South Vietnamese operation in Laos and update him on the status of the operation. Recognizing that he is opposed to the operation, you may want to draw on the following:

1. As President Thieu indicated when he announced the operation:

- a. It is designed to disrupt the supply and infiltration network of the North Vietnamese troops in Laotian territory.**
- b. The North Vietnamese have occupied the border area in Laos for a number of years and used it to launch attacks against South Vietnam.**
- c. Attacking them is an act of legitimate and necessary self-defense.**
(This is fully consistent with international law.)
- d. The operation is limited in time as well as in space and the South Vietnamese have pledged to withdraw completely from Laotian territory when the operation is completed.**

e. This is not an expansion of the war but rather an effort to end it sooner.

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2. The operation is intended to reduce North Vietnamese capability to mount an offensive and to strengthen South Vietnam's ability to defend itself as U. S. forces are withdrawn from South Vietnam under the Vietnamization program. The operation should reduce enemy offensive potential both in this dry season and the next. It will insure the continuance of American troop withdrawals.

3. The operation is not an enlargement of the war. The Ho Chi Minh Trail has been the scene of combat since 1965.

4. Both the U. S. and South Vietnam continue to seek an end to the war through negotiations.

5. Reports on the operation thus far indicate that:

a. It has resulted in definite disruption of North Vietnamese logistic activities and substantially reduced the southward flow of war materials. Most of the main trail arteries in the area are now under ARVN control.

b. The heavy fighting reflects the importance the North Vietnamese attach to this area. Although some momentary setbacks may occur in the future, the actions thus far has demonstrated the excellence of South Vietnamese leadership, the perseverance of their forces and the professional skill of their forces. ARVN units which have been hit hard have fought back and inflicted much heavier loss on the enemy. The following examples are indicative of the intensity of the battle and the success of South Vietnamese forces:

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-- There have been over 7,000 NVN KIA as opposed to 455 SVN KIA and 81 US KIA.

-- 95 enemy tanks have been destroyed.

-- Nearly 2500 individual and 850 crew served weapons have been captured or destroyed.

c. Although destruction of enemy supplies in the immediate area is an ancillary benefit and forces are just beginning to exploit caches, results thus far have not been insignificant. Some examples of enemy losses are:

-- Nearly 3 million pounds of rice.

-- Nearly 150,000 gallons of fuel.

-- Some 700 thousand pounds of ammunition.

-- Nearly 200 vehicles.

In addition nearly 1500 bunkers and structures have been reported destroyed and the POL pipeline has been cut in a number of places.

d. As a result of operations in Cambodia and Laos, the enemy has been unable to mount significant offensive activity in South Vietnam during this period. Clearly a serious threat to the security of Military Region I in South Vietnam is being blunted.

On new subject, with reference to WH 10148 of March 1, my plans have changed slightly. I expect to be out of town during period from March 27 through April 4. Therefore, I would welcome visit by Juillet any time this month up to the 26th or in April after the 4th. In this regard, I would

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**appreciate knowing by what mode he plans to travel and whether his
trip plans have been disclosed through normal State channels.**

Warm regards,

AMJTH:sfp: 3-9-71