

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

*Status Foreign Affairs*INFORMATION

May 19, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL HAIG

THROUGH: JOHN HOLDRIDGE

FROM: SVEN KRAEMER SK

SUBJECT: Vietnam Talking Points

Our office has recently informally discussed the Communist offensive and Allied responses with a variety of doubting Administration officials, Congressional and media representatives and academic, church and other private groups. Included were presentations last week to several Congressional offices, to the entire Republican National Committee staff (350 people) and to the senior staff (150 people, including John Mitchell) of the Committee to Re-elect Richard Nixon.

Attached for your information, at Tab A, is a copy of one of the informal summaries which we prepared for use as background on the current situation and which has been very favorably received by the above groups. The summary has also been sent by USIA to all U. S. diplomatic posts. In addition, at Tab B, is a "key points" paper we prepared with Colson/Clawson's office for White House use. At Tab C, are revealing official statements from Hanoi on wide-spread opposition inside North Vietnam.

In the current situation, the following points have proved particularly effective in providing understanding and in eliciting support for the U. S. position. I recommend their further utilization by Administration spokesmen at home and abroad.

-- U. S. Restraint. North Vietnam's invasion marks its response to U. S. restraint. The three-and-one-half year old bombing halt understanding, the withdrawal of over 85% of all U. S. forces from Vietnam, the substantial cut-back in U. S. air sorties, the intensive Allied negotiation efforts, and the generous Allied peace proposals have all been totally rejected by Hanoi's leaders.

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-- Hanoi's Aggression Across International Frontiers. Hanoi's regular army divisions massively violated the international borders of neutral Laos and Cambodia and the Demilitarized Zone established by the 1954 Geneva Accords. The DMZ has international legal status as an inviolable frontier similar to the provisional demarcation lines separating East and West Germany and North and South Korea. South Vietnam is recognized as a sovereign state by over 50 countries; in 1957 the Soviet Union proposed the admission of North and South Vietnam to the United Nations as separate states.

-- Hanoi's Violation of the Bombing Understanding. Hanoi has totally failed to meet the conditions of the bombing halt understanding of 1968 as spelled out in 1968 by Averell Harriman, Clark Clifford et. al. The understanding clearly provided for the inviolability of the DMZ, the end of shelling of South Vietnam's cities, productive negotiations and the continuation of U. S. aerial reconnaissance over North Vietnam.

-- Hanoi's Risky Gamble. Hanoi's all-out offensive is a very risky gamble for the Communists. It demonstrates Hanoi's lack of faith in its own propaganda, in its remaining southern guerrilla forces and in its two super-power allies. It also reflects a bad misjudgment of the U. S. response.

In violation of the precepts of "peoples war," Hanoi's home army has been recklessly thrown into a conventional invasion. It is now dependent on massive employment and uninterrupted resupply of sophisticated Soviet armor, artillery and anti-air weapons. It is committed to the indiscriminate shelling of South Vietnam's population centers and it clearly cannot rely on southern Viet Cong forces to carry the brunt of the battle.

Hanoi's clock has been running rapidly as its fears have increased concerning the growing progress of Vietnamization, the Peking and Moscow summits, the relative stabilization of the American political scene and the expected re-election of President Nixon. In its fears, however, Hanoi has miscalculated several major factors including: its own military strength, the military and political strength of the South Vietnamese, the U. S. response and the reactions of Moscow and Peking.

-- The Situation in Vietnam. Far from producing pro-Communist "peoples uprisings" or mass desertions and surrenders among the South Vietnamese, Hanoi's invasion has produced political unity and strong resistance even among traditional opposition groups including the Buddhists and the students. A few miles of border territory, some fire-bases and some Communist gains in three to four provinces have been achieved after six weeks of all-out offensive, but at the cost of alienating the population and

at the cost of enormous casualties and equipment losses. The unexpectedly firm and effective U. S. response to Hanoi's gross violations has badly disrupted Hanoi's battle time tables and its essential logistics routes and supply stocks. The mild Chinese and Soviet reactions have brought additional sobering insights to the North Vietnamese.

-- Hanoi's Credibility. The bland insistence of Hanoi's spokesmen that none of their troops are fighting abroad further deeply corrodes Hanoi's credibility in the U. S. and the world and among the North's own long-suffering people. Le Duc Tho's crude lies about the NVA troops, North Vietnam's alleged air defense capability, the U. S. "war criminals" POWs and an allegedly non-Communist future for Vietnam, are fooling few people and are causing credibility problems for Hanoi's nominal supporters.

The platform of the People's Revolutionary Party (the Marxist-Leninist "core" party of the NLF), the Hue bloodbath of Tet 1968, the fate of the 1946 and 1954 "coalitions" and the current "North Vietnamization" of the war are clear previews of Hanoi's actual intentions in South Vietnam. Similarly, Hanoi has been unable to substantiate its claims about extensive Northern civilian casualties attributable to U. S. bombing, whereas its own misfiring SAMs have caused many random casualties throughout North Vietnam and whereas the indiscriminate shelling of its invading forces have killed many civilians in South Vietnam.

-- Hanoi's Problems in North Vietnam. Having miscalculated badly on its strength in South Vietnam and vis-a-vis the possibility of U. S. bombing and mining in the North, the Hanoi leadership is facing increasingly widespread dissent in its own society. Senior DRV figures and an increasing volume of DRV publications and radio broadcasts are attacking the "counter revolutionaries," "defeatists," "romantics," and "corrupt elements" in North Vietnam. While Hanoi's Stalinist regime still appears firmly committed to a "people's dictatorship" and to continuing its wars in Indochina, Ho's successors must deal with increasingly angry questioning and opposition.

The summit meetings, Hanoi's current losses and lack of military and political success in the South and the unexpected U. S. air and mining response are likely to exacerbate such opposition to the Party's costly war policies. A significant indication of pre-offensive problems is found in the recent article (attached at Tab C) by Hanoi's Minister of State Security, who explicitly warns the cadres that the current anti-war and Party mood in North Vietnam recalls the bad experiences of Hungary in 1956 ("rightist deviation") and Czechoslovakia in 1968 ("peaceful evolution") and that it must be repressed with violence at all costs.

-- The U. S. Response. The U. S. response, while restrained, has been militarily, psychologically, and diplomatically effective. Both its military and its negotiations components are designed to foster the chances of an early settlement and return of the POWs and deserve unified support of the American people.