

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION

March 28, 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER
FROM: W. R. SMYSER
SUBJECT: Item in Yesterday's WSAG

I was taken aback at yesterday's meeting by Colby's suggestion to return U. S. advisors to Vietnam.

I am not sure whether Colby meant military or civilian advisors. Either way, I think it is a bad idea.

From the point of view of the efficiency of the Vietnamese, our advisors have never been as useful as they have been touted to be. The military advisors were mainly useful because they could call in U. S. air and artillery, which has now left the country. The civilian advisors were almost all people of limited competence who did not generally understand what was going on. The only ones who made a really positive contribution were the technicians, many of whom still remain and whose number could perhaps be modestly increased to some advantage.

From the standpoint of American opinion, any big fuss about sending advisors back gets us the worst of both worlds: we will be accused of reinvolverment but we will not get the benefits of reinvolverment. The President will be sliced on both ends, for recommitting us and for inefficient results. The American people will be confused and will rightly wonder what kind of tricks are being played.

I think we have two clear options: either (1) to forget completely about reinvolverment and to ask urgently for more money on the basis of non-involvement, or (2) to choose an involvement, if we think we must have one, that at least has a positive effect and that does not jeopardize as many of our people as the advisor notion. That sort of thing would be use of B-52's against troop concentrations or re-mining of North Vietnamese ports. If we choose those means, we will be making the kind of contribution that could spell a material

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difference and that would justify the explanations that would have to be given at home.

Of the two essential options, I clearly prefer non-involvement but I can see circumstances under which reinvolverment may make some sense if it becomes clear to all concerned that our Congress will not sustain the aid which is an essential part of the non-involvement concept. Even then, I am not sure it would be worth the price here.

Let me sum it up in these terms: I am concerned that the fall of Vietnam can have a traumatic effect in this country (I might note, in passing, that its prospect is already having a deep impact on Asia.) By the same token, reinvolverment of Americans will have a major and perhaps traumatic effect in this country. If we want to avoid the effect of losing Vietnam, and if -- in order to do so -- we choose to suffer the effect of reinvolverment, we must let that reinvolverment be in areas where it has the greatest chance of having an effect and where it most benefits from our special skills and capacities. I do not want you to end up paying a price twice over. If we choose to ask the United States to pay the price of reinvolverment, it should only be under conditions in which we can be confident that we will spare them the price of loss of Vietnam.

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