

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON INFORMATION

3 May 1971

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MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL HAIG

Subj: Military Strategy in Southeast  
Asia

Two recent memoranda from the Secretary of Defense state or imply that all U.S. ground combat responsibilities will end this summer. See Tabs A. and B.

Admiral Moorer has expressed serious reservations over this assumption. See Tab C.

UCS REVIEWED 28-Sep-2010: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

REFER TO OSD

OSD REVIEWED 28-Nov-2011: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301~~MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF~~~~SUBJECT: Military Strategy In Southeast Asia (U)~~

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the assistance of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, have periodically conducted a broad reassessment of military strategy in Southeast Asia. These reassessments considered the employment of our land, sea, and air forces as well as the forces of our allies. These studies provided me with important new perspectives on our options for the future and pointed to new directions for our policies and programs.

Since the last review was completed in July 1970, a number of major developments have occurred and other trends have become more evident. Some examples are:

- . A reduction in US forces to less than 300,000, nearly a 50% cut from the level of two year's ago.
- . An announcement to reduce US forces to 184,000 by November 30, 1971.
- . A Presidential commitment to continue the present redeployment pace until our forces are reduced to a MAAG.
- . The continued improvement in the RVNAF and growth of their self-confidence.
- . A continued decline in both the size and effectiveness of NVA/VC forces in and adjacent to South Vietnam.
- . A continued reduction in the intensity of conflict in South Vietnam.
- . The survival of a friendly government in Cambodia which has caused major problems to the VC/NVA and reduced the threat to South Vietnam.
- . Successful RVNAF operations in Laos which should pay big dividends over the next 6 to 12 months.
- . Continued economic, political and pacification progress in South Vietnam.

~~It is time to reassess again our strategy in light of these and other significant changes in the situation. This revised strategy should focus on the period of mid-1971 to mid-1973, but not ignore the longer term. Among the topics that would be appropriate having considered in the strategy assessment are:~~

- ~~The roles and methods of operation of US forces once their direct responsibility for combat operations ends this summer.~~
- . Required shifts in location or missions of the RVNAF to compensate for US and TCC withdrawals.
- . The nature and extent of future RVNAF cross border operations.
- . Alternative ways to interdict enemy material infiltration that the South Vietnamese might adopt when the US air interdiction effort is greatly reduced or eliminated.
- . Required actions by the RVNAF to preserve gains of the pacification program and to ensure continued security and political/economic development.

The above list should not be considered exhaustive. It is only indicative of the areas that require thought and attention. I am sure you recognize the importance of a periodic fresh look at our strategy and plans. Such a review is especially needed now in view of the major achievements of the past year and the fundamental changes in the situation now existing in SEA.

In conducting the review, it is important that you fully consider the constraints within which we must operate. The dollar costs of the proposed strategy must be supportable within the resources we can realistically expect to have available in FY 72 and FY 73. Any proposals affecting the RVNAF should not require significant added financial or manpower resources.

Please advise me of the date you expect to have the strategy re-assessment completed.



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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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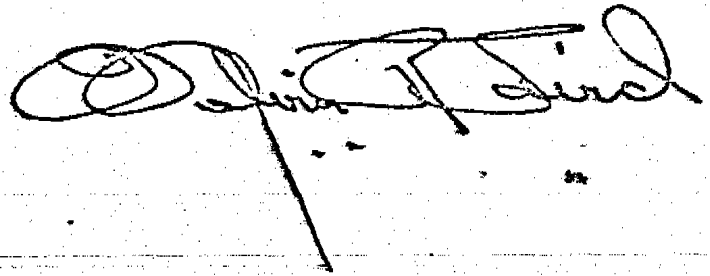
~~MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF~~

~~SUBJECT: US Redeployment from~~

~~In planning for US redeployments through 1 December 1971, I assume that Phase I of the Vietnamization Program will have been completed on or about 1 July 1971. Implicit in that assumption is the premise that all ground combat responsibilities will have been turned over to the RVNAF by 1 July.~~

Therefore, request you submit by 7 May for my review the plans for the remaining forces to include:

- Concept for their employment.
- Major unit composition on 30 June, 31 October and 1 December 1971.
- In-country basing plans.



[TS - HK 657d]



THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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CM-855-71

27 APR 1971

~~MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE~~~~Subj: US Redeployments from Southeast Asia (U)~~

1. (TS) Reference is made to your memorandum, dated 21 April 1971, subject as above, which postulated an assumption that all ground combat responsibilities will have been turned over to the RVNAF by 1 July 1971.

2. (TS) While the Joint Chiefs of Staff will submit a separate review of the plans for the remaining US forces as requested by the reference, I would like to invite to your immediate attention one facet of your memorandum which I judge could be seriously misconstrued.

3. (TS) It is visualized that the scope of our effort must be reduced and that all ground combat operations which are inherently offensive in nature will have to be turned over to the RVNAF as soon as practicable. However, I am deeply concerned about the adverse impacts arising from a literal interpretation of a statement that US forces remaining in the RVNAF after 1 July 1971 will not engage in any form of ground combat operations. A rigid interpretation of the assumption, as stated in the reference would be undesirably inhibiting for the following reasons:

a. In order for our forces to adequately defend themselves and their installations, there is a requirement for active patrolling. A static defense policy would most certainly result in an increasing number of incidents such as that which occurred recently at Fire Support Base MARY ANN.

b. There will be a continuing requirement to protect US artillery employed on fire support bases, as well as US airfields, helicopter installations, and communication centers! As US redeployments continue, we may be required to depend primarily on the RVNAF for protection of larger joint-use

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installations such as Danang Airfield. However, ~~I believe~~  
~~we would be open to severe criticism and adverse publicity~~  
~~should a US artillery unit be overrun while occupying a~~  
~~fire support base protected exclusively by RVNAF, or by US~~  
~~forces which were inhibited from taking the optimum defensive~~  
~~measures.~~

~~C. Severe leadership and morale problems could arise~~  
~~should US soldiers, having been told that the RVNAF had~~  
~~assumed responsibility for all ground combat operations, be~~  
~~required to participate in defensive patrolling beyond the~~  
~~perimeters of their installations. Active patrolling actions~~  
~~on routes of approach to installations are an essential~~  
~~element of defense in the type of war underway in RVN.~~

~~4. (TS) In order to preclude the many and various pitfalls~~  
~~inherent in the possible interpretations of the phrase "all~~  
~~ground combat responsibilities," I strongly recommend that~~  
~~any public pronouncements or official documents refer instead~~  
~~to, "passing to the RVNAF primary responsibility for ground~~  
~~offensive combat operations."~~

(Sgd) T. H. MOORER

T. H. MOORER  
Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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