

ETS - HK 834A 2

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dec. 14, 1971

GENERAL HAIG

AL:

I ran this down. JCS and Air Force confirm that as a result of this message (see page 3) the ten B-57s stationed in Thailand will remain until May. This will make an important contribution to the efforts in both Cambodia and Laos.

RTK
RTKennedy

JCS REVIEWED 29-Nov-2010: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

REFER TO OSD

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great!
[Signature]

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

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FROM GEN ABRAMS. DELIVER IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT,
SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN MILITARY SITUATION (U)

REF: A. JCS 4674/071929Z DEC 71 (TS/SPECAT).
B. CINCPAC DTG 080027Z DEC 71 (TS/SPECAT).

1. (TS) REF A EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER SITUATION IN CAM-
BODIA, REQUESTS ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SITUATION AND
SEEKS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTIONS THAT MIGHT BE
TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION. REF B REQUESTS COMUSMACV
ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

2. (S) THIS IS AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MILITARY SITUATION
IN CAMBODIA AS VIEWED FROM HERE. IT DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO
ASSESS OKR OR FANK POLITICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, LEADERSHIP,
OR MORALE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES. IT ADDRESSES ONLY
THE MILITARY SITUATION. IT DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO SPECU-
LATE ON THE ENEMY'S OBJECTIVES.

3. (TS) NORTH OF PHNOM PENH THE ENEMY HAS SUCCEEDED IN
SEVERING ROUTE 6 AND REGAINING THAT PORTION HE CONTROLLED
PRIOR TO CHENLA II. FANK HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN SHAKEN BY
THIS ACTION AND THEIR ABILITY TO STAND UNDER A DETERMINED
ENEMY ATTACK IS QUESTIONABLE. THEIR ACTIONS TO DATE HAVE
DEMONSTRATED AGAIN THEIR WEAKNESSES IN COMMAND AND CONTROL
FIRES SUPPORT COORDINATION, ARTILLERY FIRE TECHNIQUES, AND
MILITARY PLANNING AND LOGISTICS TECHNIQUES. THEIR INABIL-
ITY TO MANEUVER OFF THE ROADS AS THE ENEMY DOES HAS COST
THEM.

4. (TS) MANY OF THE SAME DEFICIENCIES HAVE BEEN DEMON-
STRATED BY THE SEVEN FANK BRIGADES DEFENDING AGAINST THE

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CSAF (GEN RYAN) (C5) CMC (GEN CHAMPAGNE) (166) (PER MR KEARNEY/OCJCS) (9DEC71 AB
ADDED DIST: SECDEF (MR LAIRD) (C107) DEPTSECDEF (MR PACKARD) (C108) ASD:ISA (MR MUTTER)
(C109) CIA (MR HELMS) (C110) HOUSE (MR KISSINGER) (C111) / PER MR KEARNEY (OCJCS) / 13DEC71 / FJG

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101D AND 52ND REGIMENTS OF THE 1ST NVA DIVISION SOUTH AND WEST OF PHNOM PENH. THE SITUATION THERE, TOO, APPEARS TO REST WITH THE INITIATIVES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ENEMY, SINCE THE DETAILS OF THE SITUATION IN EACH OF THESE AREAS HAVE BEEN WELL REPORTED FROM PHNOM PENH. I WILL NOT DWELL ON THEM BUT ON WHAT ADDITIONAL ACTIONS MIGHT BE TAKEN IN THE EVENT THE SITUATION DETERIORATES FURTHER.

5. (TS) THE IMPORTANCE OF CAMBODIA TO OUR NATIONAL EFFORT IN SEA IS APPRECIATED HERE. IT FOLLOWS THAT EVERY ACTION NECESSARY MUST BE TAKEN TO INSURE THE STABILITY OF THE GKR AND FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF FANK. ACTIONS TAKEN SHOULD HAVE A REGIONAL FLAVOR AND THE U.S. PROFILE SHOULD REMAIN LOW. IN THIS RESPECT, REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE SHOULD ORIGINATE WITH THE GKR AND BE DIRECTED TO THE GVN. DURING MY DISCUSSIONS WITH PRESIDENT THIEU ON TUESDAY, 8 DEC, I WAS IMPRESSED WITH HIS DEPTH OF INTEREST IN AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE CAMBODIAN SITUATION. IT IS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT ANY REALISTIC AND JUSTIFIED REQUEST FROM THE GKR WOULD BE HONORED. IN FURTHERANCE OF THE ABOVE, THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE OFFERED:

A. THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA MUST BE VIEWED IN PERSPECTIVE WITH THE TOTAL SITUATION DEVELOPING IN SEA. U.S. FORCES CONTINUE TO REDEPLOY AT AN ACCELERATED RATE. THE ENEMY THREAT IN NORTHERN LAOS IS SIGNIFICANT THIS YEAR, HE CONTINUES TO DEVELOP AND EXPAND HIS LOGISTICS EFFORT IN SOUTHERN LAOS AND CAMBODIA, THE ENEMY HAS LAUNCHED NEW INITIATIVES AT RETAKING SARAVANE AND THE SOLOVENS. RICE SHORTAGES IN NORTH VIETNAM MAY INFLUENCE ENEMY DETERMINATION TO REAP THE HARVESTS IN THE SARAVANE AREA OF LAOS AND THE BATTAMBANG AREA OF CAMBODIA. IN THE RVN THERE ARE INDICATIONS OF HEIGHTENED ACTIVITY IN MR 1 AND MR 2 DURING THE COMING MONTHS.

B. REMAINING US ASSETS---PARTICULARLY TACAIR---ARE BEING STRETCHED TO MEET THE ABOVE THREATS. THE AIR EFFORT HAS BEEN WEIGHTED TO SUPPORT THE INTERDICTION CAMPAIGN. THE BULK OF TACAIR SUPPORT FOR PHASE VI, TOAN YANG 01-71 HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY VNAF. TACAIR AND GUNSHIP SUPPORT TO FANK HAVE BEEN PROVIDED BY USAF. U.S. HELICOPTER GUNSHIP SUPPORT HAS BEEN PROVIDED THE FANK SOUTH-WEST OF PHNOM PENH FROM RVN MR 4. ADEQUACY OF THIS SUPPORT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS SINCE THIS IS A FUNCTION OF COORDINATION AND TARGETING. IT IS LIKELY THAT AS PRESSURE MOUNTED ON THE FANK, USE OF SUPPORTING ARMS GAVE WAY

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TO CONCERN OVER FAMILIES AND SURVIVABILITY. ADDITIONAL TACAIR CAN BE DIVERTED TO SUPPORT ACTION AROUND PHNOM PENH WHEN REQUIRED; BUT THE EFFORT ELSEWHERE WILL SUFFER. IN THIS RESPECT, IT IS SUGGESTED THAT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO RETAINING THE B-57S IN THAILAND UNTIL LATER IN THE INTERDICTION CAMPAIGN RATHER THAN REDEPLOYING THESE ASSETS ON 31 DECEMBER.



C, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT TACAIR SUPPORT COORDINATION COULD BE IMPROVED BY USING VNAF TACTICAL AIR CONTROL PARTIES WITH SELECTED FANK UNITS. THIS WOULD BE A MODEST INVESTMENT IN THE IMPROVED USE OF AIR AND IS BEING EXPLORED.

D, RIVERINE OPERATIONS WERE SUGGESTED IN REF A. THESE OPERATIONS WOULD HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON THE ENEMY AND MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST USE OF EXISTING ASSETS. IT WOULD APPEAR MORE PRUDENT TO DEVOTE THESE ASSETS TO KEEPING THE MEKONG OPEN AS THE PRESENT MAIN SUPPLY ROUTE TO PHNOM PENH.

E, REF A ALSO SUGGESTED RVNAF GROUND OPERATIONS WITH U.S. AIR SUPPORT IN CRITICAL AREAS SIMILAR TO LAST DECEMBER'S AIRBORNE BRIGADE OPERATION IN THE VICINITY OF KAM-PONG CHAM. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT THIS OPERATION WAS ACCOMPLISHED ALMOST ENTIRELY WITH RVNAF ASSETS. OPERATIONS SUCH AS THIS ARE FEASIBLE, BUT WOULD HAVE TO BE IN RESPONSE TO A GKR INITIATIVE AND SUPPORTABLE IN CONSIDERATION OF OTHER OPERATIONS AT THE TIME.

F, THE POSSIBILITY ALSO EXISTS THAT RVNAF COULD LAUNCH AN ATTACK FROM MR 4 TARGETED AT THE 1ST NVA DIVISION SOUTH AND WEST OF PHNOM PENH. THIS ALSO WOULD BE IN RESPONSE TO A GKR REQUEST.

G, REF B SUGGESTED A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TRIPARTITE DEPUTIES TO SEEK SOLUTIONS. GENERAL WEYAND IS MONITORING THE SITUATION CLOSELY AND WE ARE UTILIZING THE TRIPARTITE MECHANISM TO GENERATE ACTION. IT IS POINTED OUT THE GENERAL WEYAND VISITED PHNOM PENH ON 13 NOVEMBER TO SURVEY THE SITUATION. THE NEXT TRIPARTITE DEPUTIES MEETING CONVENES IN PHNOM PENH ON 17 DECEMBER.

(TS) INHERENT TO THE ABOVE MENTIONED RVNAF OPERATIONS IS USE OF US TACAIR, FIXED AND ROTARY WING GUNSHIPS, AND OTHER HELICOPTER SUPPORT TO SATISFY RVNAF REQUIREMENTS BEYOND THE CAPABILITY OF VNAF. IT MUST BE MENTIONED HERE THAT US REDEPLOYMENTS HAVE PROGRESSED TO A POINT THAT RVNAF CAN NO LONGER ENJOY US SUPPORT ON A SCALE PROVIDED IN THE PAST, ASSETS ARE BECOMING SCARCE AND PRIORITIES MUST BE ESTABLISHED, WHILE THIS IN ITSELF IS NOT A MAJOR PROBLEM, IT MUST BE APPRECIATED THAT THE US LOGISTICS EFFORT IS NOW ORIENTED TOWARD RETROGRADE AND PROGRAM 981/982, EACH US HELICOPTER DAMAGED

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DIVERTS SOME AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE EFFORT FROM THE RETROGRADE PROGRAM, AUGMENTATION OF THE RVNAF LOGISTICS SYSTEM TO SUPPORT THE OPERATIONS FURTHER DETRACTS FROM THE RETROGRADE AND SUSTAINING EFFORTS. THOUGH THESE PROBLEMS ARE MANAGEABLE, IT IS POINTED OUT THAT ALL OF THIS FORCES RVNAF TO EXERCISE THEIR SYSTEM TO A GREATER DEGREE THAN PREVIOUSLY REQUIRED.

7. (TS) MANY FACTORS MUST BE CONSIDERED WHEN ASSESSING RVNAF

PERFORMANCE IN PHASE VI, TOAN TANG 01-71. JOINT PLANNING ON THE PART OF ARVN AND VNAF IN PREPARATION FOR THE OPERATION WAS MOST

ENCOURAGING. WE ARE SEEING AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE USE OF VNAF TACAIR AND HELICOPTER ASSETS, TO INCLUDE FLEXIBILITY OF EMPLOYMENT BEYOND THE LIMITS OF MILITARY REGIONS. IN ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT OF FORCES, THE JGS HAS REINFORCED THE EFFORT WITH AN ARMORED CAVALRY SQUADRON FROM MR 4, THE ARVN AIRBORNE DIVISION HAS DEMONSTRATED SKILL IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF SMALL UNITS, RATE OF MOVEMENT MUST BE ASSESSED AGAINST THE REALITIES OF LOGISTIC SUPPORT CAPACITY, THE ACTUAL SITUATION ON THE GROUND, AND ENEMY CAPABILITIES, ON BALANCE, OVERALL RVNAF PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN CREDITABLE CONSIDERING THEIR STAGE OF TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE IN LARGE SCALE OPERATIONS, DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR AIR FORCE, AND OVERALL CAPACITY.

8. (TS) IN SUMMARY, THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA WARRANTS CONCERN AND LITTLE CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE FANK EFFECTIVENESS IN THE SHORT TERM. HOWEVER, SEVERAL COURSES OF ACTION FOR RVNAF ASSISTANCE TO FANK APPEAR FEASIBLE, COORDINATION WILL BE INITIATED IN DEVELOPING CONTINGENCY PLANS, AND ACTIONS CONTINUED TO FURTHER ENHANCE RVNAF EFFECTIVENESS IN PHASE VI, TOAN TANG 01-71, THE TRIPARTITE MECHANISM IS BEING USED TO IMPROVE COORDINATION, PRESIDENT THIEU IS SENSITIVE TO THIS SITUATION AND WILL PROBABLY RESPOND, AS HE HAS IN THE PAST, TO ANY RATIONAL REQUEST FROM THE GKR. IN THE LONG TERM, LESSONS LEARNED FROM FANK PERFORMANCE DURING RECENT MONTHS MUST BE CORRECTED AS A PRIORITY MATTER, GP-4.

BT

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ANNOTES

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