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FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER, SAIGON 251
TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, EYES ONLY HENRY A. KISSINGER
REF: WHS-0033

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1. General Abrams and I have considered carefully questions raised in reftel. Answers follow:

1A. General Abrams feels that combined US/ARVN attack in base areas 352/353 is most desirable in relation to any other base area.

1B. General Abrams also feels that attack on base areas 352/353 is relatively of greater value than other military efforts which could be made elsewhere at this time.

We both agree that attack on this area should have maximum unsettling effect on the enemy who has considered until now his sanctuaries immune to ground attack. Conversely it should have beneficial effect on both our own and ARVN forces who have long felt handicapped by this restriction. The political effect in Viet-Nam should be a distinct plus. As General Abrams points out, base area 352/353 has consistently been an area of maximum enemy activity and we both feel that hitting him there will have the maximum effect both militarily and psychologically.

State Dept. review completed

We do not feel attack on any other base area would have as great an effect on the overall security posture of our forces in South Viet-Nam. We believe that the attacks on the Cambodian sanctuaries as now planned will improve the security posture of our own and Vietnamese forces.

ARMY review(s) completed.

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With regard to timing, General Abrams' view is that the closer the operations in the Parrot's Beak or on base areas 352/353 can be coordinated, the greater will be the impact on the enemy. Forces and resources available are adequate to support simultaneous operations. There is not much time remaining before the beginning of the rainy season, consequently the operation should be initiated as soon as practicable.

3. The Parrot's Beak has been the base for enemy operations directed at Saigon and the Upper Delta over the past two years. The base area 352/353, as stated above, has been a focus of enemy operational, logistical, administrative, and command and control activities for a long time. General Abrams and I feel therefore that the attacks on the Parrot's Beak and base area 352/353 would have greater significance militarily and politically than attacks on any other areas.

4. In our estimation 704 does not rank in importance with base areas 352/353 or the Parrot's Beak.

From Abrams:

It is my independent view that these attacks into the enemy's sanctuaries in Cambodia are the military move to make at this time in support of our mission in South Viet-Nam both in terms of security of our own forces and for advancement of the Vietnamization program.

5. With respect to friendly casualties in 352/353, both our own and Vietnamese, every effort will be made to keep these to an absolute

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minimum. The pre-attack preparations will be as heavy as we can make them, all in the interest of holding casualties in the attack to the minimum.

6. Best regards.

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