

State Dept, OSD, NSA,
ARMY, and USAF
reviews completed

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

May 26, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

(Signed) HK

SUBJECT: Vietnam

MORI/CDF
C05423638

Attached is a report from General Haig based on recent conversations in Saigon. The following points are of particular significance:

- General Abrams believes that the major threat in South Vietnam in the foreseeable future is concentrated in I Corps. Some modifications from present withdrawal priorities may be required.
- General Haig cautions that even with the benefits of the Cambodian operation, the present deadline for withdrawal of 150,000 should be extended from May 1 to July 1, 1971. However, withdrawal of 50,000 by October 15, 1970 is satisfactory.
- General Haig also warns that existing plans for reduction of tactical air and B-52 sorties after July 1 are dangerous in light of military requirements. He recommends continuance of current levels through September 30, 1970, and believes General Abrams also shares this view.
- Ambassadors Bunker and Berger and General Abrams agree that President Thieu's post June 30 plans are completely compatible with US guidelines, with the exception of Thieu's plan to keep the water route to Phnom Penh open, and possibly a road route as well. In light of overall objectives, Thieu's plan is considered to be desirable.
- Two recent strikes against COSVN apparently were successful and may have hit COSVN solidly.

General Haig has also suggested a number of topics for the Sunday meeting, and these will be incorporated into your Talking Points.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

15-HK-1023263

EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE 261025Z May 70 VIA CAS CHANNELS

FROM: GENERAL HAIG, SAIGON 661

TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY DR. KISSINGER

Following meeting with Ambassador Bunker and President Thieu this a. m. , met with General Abrams, Ambassador Bunker and Ambassador Berger at 2:30 p. m. local this afternoon. Gen. Abrams showed me message on May 31 meeting. I believe meeting will be most constructive if it is used to clearly enunciate President's views on several key questions facing us. I will list these later in this message.

Meeting was designed to discuss mutual problems and to coordinate subjects to be discussed by Abrams and Bunker preliminary to 6:00 p. m. meeting by both with Thieu this p. m.

As mentioned in earlier message, Ambassador had requested this meeting with Thieu to convey guidance received in from Washington on GVN operations in Cambodia after June 30. We reviewed results of our meeting with Thieu this a. m. and all agreed Thieu's own plans were completely compatible with U. S. guidelines except for continuing plan to keep water route and perhaps road route to Phnom Penh thru Parrot's Beak open. All assumed this post-June 30 objective compatible with guidelines. I believe this is desirable and General Abrams stated U. S. and GVN are training 900 - 1,000 additional Khmers to assist Cambodians to keep road open.

General Abrams also confirmed he had just received authority for air operation in Eastern Cambodia with appropriate safeguards. He was obviously pleased.

General Abrams reviewed situation on ground in SVN and noted that major threat in foreseeable future was concentrated in I Corps where some 14 enemy regiments could be employed. He now believes some modification in his withdrawal priorities may be required and intends to discuss this problem with Thieu so he will be armed with Thieu's thinking prior to Sunday's meeting. Abrams' current planning is based on his latest instructions from White House on that subject. Guidance provides for:

1. Redeployment of 150,000 by May 1, 1971.
2. Reduction of levels from 434,000 to 384,000 by Oct. 15, 1970.
3. In meeting 1 and 2 above Abrams now plans to withdraw 2 Army brigades from II Corps and one Marine RLT from I Corps by 15 Oct. with their standdown from operations about 1 Sept. By Jan. 1, 1971, one additional RLT from Marines in I Corps and by May 1 additional 90,000 including 4th Division Americal and 1st Cav. Airmobile plus remainder of Marines in I Corps.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE / EYES ONLY

2

Emphasize above thinking is tentative but in my view is too fast even after benefits of Cambodian operations are fully felt. I believe we can live with 50,000 drawdown by Oct. 15 but still consider balance of 100,000 should be stretched out until July 1. I recognize desirability of early impact withdrawal in wake of Cambodian operation and agree it is both politically and militarily desirable not only to confirm wisdom of decision but also to rein in any residual GVN ambitions for greater commitment on their part in Cambodia. This will tend to focus their attention on need to progress in South Vietnam.

General Abrams also reports his planning reduction for air operations will be:

1. Reduction from 20,000 tac air sorties to 13,000 by July 1.
2. Reduction from 1,400 B-52 sorties to 1,000 over same period.

Both of these cutbacks strike me as foolish and dangerous in view of increased need to interdict trail conduct operations in Cambodia and postured to react to real danger of major enemy attack in I Corps or against Phnom Penh. I can see no political gain in this action, only fiscal savings. As I mentioned earlier, President should direct maintenance of current tac air and B-52 levels thru 1st quarter of FY71. I am sure General Abrams shares this view.

General Abrams also informed me that his system tried twice now on targetting B-52's against COSVN have apparently been successful. After these two strikes, knowledge of which was given to only 5 officers, COSVN went off air for 13 hours. Since that time, they have displaced erratically with a totally inconsistent pattern. Abrams believed he probably hit COSVN solidly or as a minimum has deprived them of early warning, reported by prisoner taken this month.

Recommend you prepare positions on following topics prior to Sunday meeting:

1. US/GVN reaction to major NVA attack on Cambodia with or without request for help and with fall of Phnom Penh imminent.
2. Diplomatic initiatives needed to obtain support of Asian states for Lon Nol government.
3. Character of U. S. presence in Phnom Penh. (I will discuss this problem with you personally, but believe drastic changes are needed as soon as possible to include Ambassador of special qualifications -- senior military

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE / EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/ EYES ONLY

3

advisor with small and highly qualified staff -- expanded communications, and balanced CAS role.)

4. Character of direct U. S. military assistance to include immediate survey to determine needs within established guidelines scope will involve: up to 30,000 small arms automatic weapons and individual equipment, communications, transportation.

25X1

6. Possible GVN operations in tri-border area after June 30 designed to inhibit enemy use of trail and alternative routes which may be developed.

7. Level of sorties for U. S. air in conjunction with above.

8. Withdrawal schedules for U. S. forces and deployment and stationing planes in light of Cambodian situation and threat in I Corps.

9. Objectives for size and character of Cambodian armed forces.

10. Availability of U. S. equipment as between SVN and Cambodia, resulting from U. S. troop withdrawals.

11. Possible negotiating initiatives in Paris or in other forums.

12. Economic situation in SVN. Augmentation of Embassy staff.

13. Long term status of Cambodia among Asian states.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY