

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 263

TO: Secretary of State
Secretary of Defense
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT: South Vietnam

At a meeting on October 5, 1963, the President considered the recommendations contained in the report of Secretary McNamara and General Taylor on their mission to South Vietnam.

The President approved the military recommendations contained in Section I B (1 -3) of the report, but directed that no formal announcement be made of the implementation of plans to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963.

After discussion of the remaining recommendations of the report, the President approved the instruction to Ambassador Lodge which is set forth in State Department telegram No. 534 to Saigon. McGeorge Bundy
Copy furnished: Director of Central Intelligence
Administrator, Agency for International Development
11/21/63

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The President has reviewed the discussions of South Vietnam which occurred in Honolulu, and has discussed the matter further with Ambassador Lodge. He directs that the following guidance be issued to all concerned:

1. It remains the central object of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy. The test of all decisions and U.S. actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contributions to this purpose.
2. The objectives of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel remain as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963.
3. It is a major interest of the United States Government that the present provisional government of South Vietnam should be assisted in consolidating itself in holding and developing increased public support. All U.S. officers should conduct themselves with this objective in view.
4. It is of the highest importance that the United States Government avoid either the appearance or the reality of public recrimination from one part of it against another, and the President expects that all senior officers of the

Government will take energetic steps to insure that they and their subordinate go out of their way to maintain and to defend the unity of the United States Government both here and in the field. More specifically, the President approves the following lines of action developed in the discussions of the Honolulu meeting of November 20. The office or offices of the Government to which central responsibility is assigned is indicated in each case.

5. We should concentrate our own efforts, and insofar as possible we should persuade the government of South Vietnam to concentrate its efforts, on the critical situation in the Mekong Delta. This concentration should include not only military but political, economic, social, educational and informational efforts. We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle but of belief, and we should seek to increase not only our control of land but the productivity of this area whenever the proceeds can be held for the advantage of anti-Communist forces. (Action: The whole country team under the direct supervision of the Ambassador.)

6. Programs of military and economic assistance should be maintained at such levels that their magnitude and effectiveness in the eyes of the Vietnamese Government do not fall below the levels sustained by the United States in the time of the Diem Government. This does not exclude arrangements for economy on the MAP accounting for ammunition and any other readjustments which are possible as between MAP and other U.S. defense sources. Special attention should be given to the expansion of the import distribution and effective use of fertilizer for the Delta. (Action: AID and DOD as appropriate.)

7. With respect to action against North Vietnam, there should be a detailed plan for the development of additional Government of Vietnam resources, especially for sea-going activity, and such planning should indicate the time and investment necessary to achieve a wholly new level of effectiveness in this field of action. (Action: DOD and CIA)

8. With respect to Laos, a plan should be developed for military operations up to a line up to 50 kilometers inside Laos, together with political plans for minimizing the international hazards of such an enterprise. Since it is agreed that operational responsibility for such undertakings should pass from CAS to MACV, this plan should provide an alternative method of political liaison for such operations, since their timing and character can have an intimate relation to the fluctuating situation in Laos. (Action: State, DOD and CIA.)

9. It was agreed in Honolulu that the situation in Cambodia is of the first importance for South Vietnam, and it is therefore urgent that we should lose no opportunity to exercise a favorable influence upon that country. In particular, measures should be undertaken to satisfy ourselves completely that recent charges from Cambodia are groundless, and we should put ourselves in a position to offer to the Cambodians a full opportunity to satisfy themselves on this same point. (Action: State.)

10. In connection with paragraphs 7 and 8 above, it is desired that we should develop as strong and persuasive a case as possible to demonstrate to the world the degree to which the Viet Cong is controlled, sustained and supplied from Hanoi, through Laos and other channels. In short, we need a more contemporary version of the Jordan Report, as powerful and complete as possible. (Action: Department of State with other agencies as necessary,.)

McGeorge Bundy