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3 July 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Intensified Collection Program Targeted Against the
Logistics Network Used by North Vietnam to
Support Communist Activity in South Vietnam

1. The Problem. On 16 June 1969, you were given a joint CIA-DIA briefing outlining in considerable detail the Washington intelligence community's knowledge and analysis of the logistics network used by North Vietnam to support Communist activity in South Vietnam. At the close of that 16 June briefing, you asked me to inventory the US Government's present collection efforts in this sphere and submit a paper outlining steps that would improve the quantity and/or quality of intelligence collected on that topic. In particular, you requested a list of courses of action that could:

(1) Improve our detailed knowledge of the nature and quantities of supplies moving into II Corps and III Corps via the southward extension of the Laotian route complex -- the "Ho Chi Minh Trail" -- particularly from Route 922 (the cut-off to Ashau) through Base Area 701 and southward along the Cambodian border.

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(2) Improve our detailed knowledge of the nature and quantities of supplies sent to support the NVA/VC effort (particularly in IV Corps, III Corps and lower II Corps) via Cambodia -- i. e. , supplies that did not transit Laos but, instead, came into Cambodia by water transport (either through the port of Sihanoukville or over the beaches in the Gulf of Siam) and moved northeastward to their Communist end-users in South Vietnam via roads and trails located in Cambodian territory.

(3) Help clarify and quantify -- in both tonnage and percentage terms -- the respective or relative contribution made to the NVA/VC logistic support structure by "the Laotian route system" and "the Cambodian route system."

2. It was my understanding that the initial response to your request should include a list of technically feasible new collection activities or intensifications of current collection activities framed without inhibiting reference (in this initial cut) to cost factors, current political strictures on certain forms of activity and/or activities in certain areas, or questions of priority allocation of scarce, long lead time assets (e. g. , COMINT collection platforms).

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3. The Response. To comply with your request, I have convened an ad hoc task force whose membership includes representatives of the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the Defense Communications Planning Group, the Special Assistant to the Chairman, JCS for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA), the Director for Reconnaissance (JCS/J-3), the Director of Operations for the United States Air Force's Deputy Chief of Staff/Plans and Operations, and both the analysis and the collection components of this Agency. After we had carefully reviewed in joint discussion all aspects of the problem you posed, I asked each of my associates to submit in writing an analysis of new collection procedures or improvements in existing procedures that could be effected in those areas that fell within his office's primary jurisdiction or special technical competence.

4. This memorandum and its two annexes embodies a melding of all of these inputs, circulated in draft to all members of the task force and reviewed by us all in joint session. One of the two annexes to this memorandum inventories our current collection assets and procedures; the other outlines in some detail a series of action recommendations summarized in paragraph below. The tripartite package of this memorandum and its annexes reflects the unanimous concensus judgments of the entire task force.

5. General Considerations. Certain general considerations and certain aspects of the overall problem you posed have directly or indirectly affected all of our action recommendations and constitute, collectively, the context within which these recommendations were framed:

a. Proving Negatives. Part of the complexity of the problem of analyzing the current utilization of the Vietnamese Communists' total logistic structure -- and a good deal of the debate over the current relative roles of the Cambodian and the Laotian route systems -- derives from a lack of hard data on whether supplies are moving in any appreciable quantity, or moving at all, over certain portions of the Laos trail system below Route 922 or over certain portions of the Cambodian system opposite northern III Corps and southern II Corps. In Cambodia, for example, we have low level agent reports of supply movements over road and trail segments that photography indicates are impassable or not utilized by any traffic at all. In Laos, evidence we do have on the operations and utilization of some segments of the Laotian route network suggests the presumptive inference that supplies are moving over other segments of the Laotian route. We have little or no evidence of actual movement over these other segments, but this absence of evidence is hard to evaluate

since the segments over which there is little to no evidence of actual movement are ones receiving a degree of collection effort appreciably less than that devoted to the segments over which we do have evidence of movement. One of the principal tasks of an integrated, expanded collection effort will be to clarify and enhance our knowledge of which segments of both route systems are not now being used. Negatives, however, are hard and tricky things to prove, particularly in short time spans.

b. Seasonal Factors. The evidence we do have in hand and the evidentiary record developed over the past years demonstrates conclusively that the Communists' use pattern of their logistic system in both Laos and Cambodia shows a cyclic pattern keyed to the seasonal rhythms of Indochina's monsoonal climate. Throughout both systems, the dry season is the period of maximum use (i. e., supply movement); the wet season that of minimum use. Unfortunately, the early stages of any intensified collection effort now mounted are going to be out of phase with our adversaries' use cycle. The rains have come in both Cambodia and Laos, our increased efforts will hence come at a time of diminished enemy activity, a fact that is certain to affect adversely the conclusiveness of the early returns from any intensified collection program augmented in the near future.

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c. Technical vs Human Collection. Two general types of collection assets can be brought to bear on the problem here considered: technical (e.g., sensors, communications intercept platforms, and photography) and human (e.g., singleton agents, informant nets, roadwatch teams and raiding parties). Although the action program outlined below recommends an intensification of effort in both the human and the technical fields, we believe the weight of our immediate effort should be placed in the technical area. The portions of south Laos and northeastern Cambodia against which much of our augmented effort will be initially targetted constitute extremely hostile environment in which enemy presence is pervasive and in which the enemy reacts sharply and forcefully to any intrusion. In these sparsely populated regions, there is little indigenous population we can use for cover or through which we can work. Friendly personnel, teams or units inserted into these areas find movement difficult, must perforce devote much of their time and effort to simply staying alive, and can devote only a fraction of their attention to collecting meaningful intelligence. Because of these circumstances, the recruitment, training, insertion, support and exfiltration of such teams or units becomes a very elaborate, complex process. In short, the intelligence return on human collection in these areas is very small in terms of the effort investment required. Furthermore,

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road and trail watching teams (whose observations are inevitably sporadic and short in terms of time) are poor instruments for establishing or disproving the fact of a flow over selected trail and route systems. Technical collection procedures have their own complexities and problems, but the intelligence return on effort invested is considerably greater than is the case with human assets operating in a hostile environment. Sensors, for example, are by all odds the best method of establishing whether or not there is movement over particular route or trail segments and of pinpointing particular target areas sufficiently lucrative to warrant follow up investigation or attention by human assets.

d. Lead Times and Results. It will require from 60 to 90 days from the time the policy decision to proceed is made for the augmented collection program outlined below to get into full operation. The speed with which meaningful returns will begin to come in will vary among the various components of the program and will also be influenced by what is (or is not) learned. Sensors implanted along suspect route segments, for example, should begin producing meaningful data almost immediately if these route segments are in fact used for significant supply movements. On the other hand, if the route segments are not in use, it will take considerably longer for us to be confident that this "negative" has been satisfactorily proved. In any event,

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since much of the augmented program involves re-orienting, re-targetting activities already in operation, some evidence of value should begin to come in fairly soon after the augmented effort begins, even though it will take longer for the full effect of the new effort to be felt. Even under the best of circumstances, our augmented effort program will not definitively answer all of our outstanding questions, but it should help to clarify most of them.

(e) Intelligence Collection vs Reaction and Interdiction.

The primary object of the augmented collection program outlined below is to generate more and better intelligence on the Vietnamese Communists' logistic support system through which Hanoi aids and abets the Communist-directed struggle in South Vietnam. If successful, this collection program will not only produce strategic information on the totality of this logistic support system and the respective importance of the system's several components, it will also develop or identify lucrative tactical targets for allied interdiction and reaction strikes. Although the task force has devoted its efforts to developing a collection program, not an interdiction program, we believe the program adopted should consciously maximize interdiction possibilities and, further, that in certain contexts, controlled interdiction can be used as one effective means of producing additional intelligence. For example, in determining the mix of human and technical assets targetted against a given

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geographic area, it should be constantly borne in mind that the insertion of ground teams into that area either precludes the possibility of interdiction strikes or, at best, raises thorny, complex problems of coordination, clearance, and control. At the other end of the scale, if, say, a landline complex presumptively serving a particular route segment is identified, a strike on the landlines may force our adversaries to resort to interceptable radio communications.

6. Recommended Augmented Collection Program. We have framed two sets of recommendations for augmented collection efforts: One keyed to improving our knowledge of what does, or does not, move over the "Laos system" south of Route 922, the other keyed to improving our knowledge of what does, or does not, move over the "Cambodian system." Each of the two sets of recommendations is further broken down into the two spheres of technical and human collection. Our recommendations are summarized below and outlined in further detail in this memorandum's Annex II.

(a) South Laos - Northeastern Cambodia

(1) Technical Collection

(a) COMINT/ARDF: Deployment, on a trial basis, of a collection platform over southern Laos to cover areas along Routes 92/96 south of Route 922.

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(b) Sensors: More extensive sensor coverage of routes south of Route 922 is required if sensor detections are to yield accurate reflections of truck movements on these roads and in northeast Cambodia.

(c) Aerial Reconnaissance: An increase in the frequency of aerial high and low altitude reconnaissance suitable to yield enough interpretable photography to make judgements on probable levels of activity.

(d) Wire Tap Operations: Current plans for



there. Failing this, all land lines should be located and destroyed thereby ^{Cy} facing the use of radio communications.

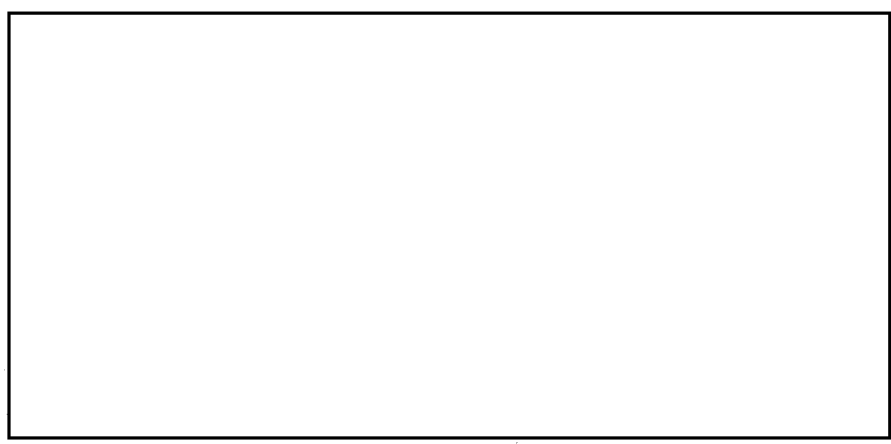
(2) Human Collection

(a) Roadwatch and Agent Operations: In Laos we visualize the launching of more roadwatch teams to high priority target areas when their chances of survivability are good. Additionally, we would attempt the expansion of our agent efforts in critical areas, and increase the use of recon-

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an expansion of our on-going operation to recruit additional unilateral agents should be attempted.



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(c) Visual Reconnaissance: An increase in night sorties, with appropriate night vision devices, flown in the Route 922 area to at least one-third that of the sorties now flown in the STEEL TIGER area of Laos is recommended. Also, an increase in the number of low-level missions should be programmed.

(d) Document Collection: It is recommended that a ground attack be mounted against one or several of the military way stations (Binh Tram) in Laos with a view to disrupting the system and collecting intelligence information in the form of documents.

(b) Cambodia

(1) Technical Collection

(a) COMINT: A greatly expanded COMINT collection program to include monitoring of suspected

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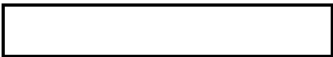


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(b) Sensor: Sensor strings should be placed in Cambodia contiguous to the South Vietnamese border to measure the activity level on routes off the main Cambodian supply roads leading toward South Vietnam.

(c) Aerial Photography: Existing aerial reconnaissance programs -- 

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 - should be expanded to insure 90 percent cloud free and interpretable photography of these target areas in order that meaningful judgments regarding the use and probable levels of activity of the logistical systems may be made.

(2) Human Collection

(a) Agent Operations: An expansion of the current agent operations against Cambodian involvement in the enemy logistical system to include information on official Cambodian complicity

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deliveries to and through Sihanoukville and information regarding Communist supply channels through Stung Treng and Ratanikiri Provinces.

(b) MACSOG: The

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assets should be directed toward long term monitoring and reporting on the enemy logistical system avoiding all contact except when it is deemed desirable to attempt to capture enemy logistical personnel.

7. Suggested Follow-Up Action. The recommendations outlined above constitute, in effect, a catalogue of technically or theoretically feasible actions that could be taken to improve our intelligence on the Vietnamese Communists' logistic support system. In their present form, they do not constitute an actual action program since, per our instructions, they were framed without reference to current policy restrictions on activities in certain areas (e.g. Cambodia) and without attempting to resolve problems of conflicting priorities competing for scarce, long lead time collection assets (e.g. COMINT platforms). Also, though the Air Staff, DCPCG and the CIA's Clandestine Services have already done a considerable amount of thorough, detailed planning, once the necessary policy decisions on ground rules and priorities are made, the list of approved actions will have to be translated into a specific series of operational plans -- a process that will require consultation with our military and civilian colleagues in the field who will have to handle the actual execution

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hoc task force can carry on the work reflected in this memorandum, devise a specific program, and pinpoint the policy decisions that will have to be made on rules of engagement, costs and asset allocation in light of overall collection priorities. Once the necessary policy guidance is obtained, we can then develop a schematic operational plan for field consideration and Washington approval.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachments:

- Annex I - Current Collection Operations
- Annex II -- Recommended Augmented Collection Program

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