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TS# 185786-a

Copy No. 1

21 November 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Comment on the (Bundy) Vietnam Working Group Papers

1. In our view, the intelligence judgments of these papers appear generally sound, untrammelled by policy wish, and consistent with recent SNIE's.

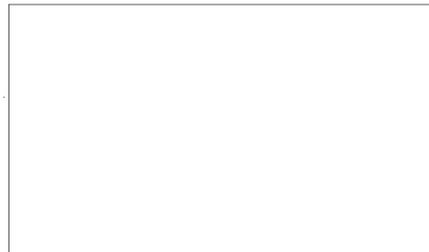
2. The papers represent a careful and sophisticated exposition of the problems of the US and Vietnam. We have certain problems of shading and emphasis with the Working Group papers, but concur in their underlying judgment that new US courses are necessary, if the eventful collapse of South Vietnam is to be avoided, and the US is to have a chance of achieving at least reasonably acceptable objectives there.

3. This memorandum represents the agreed views of Ray Cline, Bill Colby, Abbot Smith, and myself.



Harold P. Ford  
CIA Member,  
Vietnam Working Group

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TS# 185786-b

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21 November 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Critique of the (Bundy) Vietnam Working Group Papers

We confine our remarks to certain key issues raised by the problem of the US and Vietnam, and do not address specific sections of the Working Group's many papers. These issues, embodied in the following questions, deserve particular attention before the US makes any definite decision to embark on the recommended Option C.

1. Is the rationale of the recommended Option C sound?

Comment: The rationale of Option C is that it might make the DRV slacken its support of the VC. And we agree -- it might. Once the slackening occurred, there would be two possibilities:

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This memorandum has been prepared with the assistance of Messrs. Cline, Colby, Abbot Smith, and R. J. Smith. They do not necessarily concur in all of its judgments.

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(a) that we really do firm up South Vietnam for the long run, or  
(b) that we negotiate ourselves out with a modicum of grace.  
Given the total circumstances of the problem, however, the US  
cannot be very sanguine, in embarking on Option C, that (a) above  
will result. Also, a beefed-up Option A deserves more examina-  
tion, as a possible US alternative course, than the Working Group  
papers presently give it.

2. What should the US do in the event that selected  
Option C measures do not cause the DRV to yield, and the situ-  
ation bogs down in ambiguous result?

Comment: We consider such result a likely outcome of  
Option C measures. Would the US really be prepared at such junc-  
ture to attempt to stave off defeat by marching on up the list  
of the severe sanctions proposed, in search of elusive victory?

3. What should the US do in the event that hostilities  
escalate seriously and the DRV (and Communist Chinese) leaders  
still do not yield?

Comment: Though such a contingency is perhaps unlikely,  
more attention should be given to this problem than the Working  
Group papers do at present.

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4. In the event that the US should decide, once embarked on Option C, that its measures were not likely to gain present US objectives, how firm a settlement would the US expect to be able to negotiate?

Comment: We feel that the Working Group papers are somewhat vague, and perhaps over-optimistic, with respect to what might be structured in such event. We do agree with the papers (Section II), however, that in any case short of outright US withdrawal, the US position in the Far East would not necessarily be undermined crucially.

5. What about the main business at hand, back at the ranch in South Vietnam?

a. In the course of taking Option C measures. Comment: There is considerable chance that the South Vietnamese position might collapse from under us, in the event either that the VC reacted quickly and forcefully, or that US Option C measures did not soon visably ameliorate the situation in South Vietnam. The papers raise this, but do not give it sufficient weight.

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b. Subsequent to Option C measures. Comment: The papers do not give sufficient attention to the price and problems of success. Assuming that Option C were successful and brought South Vietnam respite, considerable military and political progress would be mandatory if South Vietnam were to have hope of surviving against almost certain renewed Communist attempts to subvert it. Is the US prepared to give South Vietnam massive support over the long run, if need be? Or, are we in danger of thinking that Option C (or B) can give us success there on the cheap?

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Harold P. Ford  
CIA Member,  
Vietnam Working Group

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