

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence (17 March 1966 version)  
SUBJECT : Comments on ONE Staff Memorandum 11-66, Probable Reactions to a Postulated Program for Bombing North Vietnam

General Comment

A. The ONE draft of subject memorandum (copy attached) is to be reviewed by the Board at 1400 today. The draft generally focuses on the major questions raised by the Secretary of Defense when he requested the report. We believe, however, that he would prefer a more detailed exposition of the sequence of events and alternative courses of action being considered by the drafters. Moreover, the draft would be stronger if the estimators presented a more specific accounting of the precise reasons they hold certain estimates, rather than presenting them without elaboration.

Specific Comments

Para. 1. The language is unclear as to why the postulated program would be a "dangerous step" and by whom specifically it would be regarded as such. World reaction to the program will depend on many factors among which are (a) statements by US policy-makers defining the purposes and the limitations of the program; and (b) the manner in which the air attacks are carried out.

The combination of these two factors should make it clear that the program is militarily justifiable and is patently not a program designed or leading to a campaign to devastate North Vietnam or its people.

Para. 2. The casualties resulting from the program will patently be in excess of the pre-strike JCS estimates. The likelihood of their reaching "opinion-shocking" levels is remote principally because of the DRV programs of evacuation and shelter; and the methods of executing the attack. Moreover, those injured by the attacks will for the most part be principally workers engaged fairly directly in war supporting activities -- e.g., transport and government services.

The ideas of Paragraph 2 are expressed much better in Paragraph 18. We would propose incorporating some of the last sentence in Paragraph 18 into Paragraph 2.

Para 3. -- line 7 -- delete "especially," There is, in view of known patterns of Soviet and Chinese aid, no reason to ascribe any particular importance to the Chinese participation.

Para. 4 and 5. Paragraph 4 sets up a couple of strawmen. The sending of large numbers of PAVN forces for a "quick defeat" of Allied forces is really impractical. The DRV knows and says it is in for a long war. Para. 5 states the practical consideration much better. We suggest a deletion of Para. 4.

Para. 9. This paragraph needs to be redrafted to express the thought that Peking must face up to several hard decisions. It must not only make a hard judgment in whether to provide air defense of North Vietnam. It must assess its practical capabilities to do this effectively in view of its inferior aircraft and the limits of conventional AAA. Peking must also decide how willing and at what rate it is to bear sustained aircraft losses.

Para. 10. This paragraph needs to elaborate the scenario to show the method of escalation.

- (a) US destroys high-priority targets
- (b) DRV commits its aircraft
- (c) US attacks DRV aircraft
- (d) China provides more aircraft, ~~will~~<sup>will</sup>
- (e) US attacks DRV airfields

The paragraph must then estimate if the Chinese will commit more aircraft. They would be reluctant to do this if the loss-rate were high in view of the odds in taking on advanced US aircraft.

Paragraph 11. This paragraph should examine the question of how many Chinese the DRV are willing to allow. Moreover, in view of the interdiction campaign the paragraph should not state Peking would ~~ff~~ . . . increase ~~the~~ shipment of military material. Last sentence should read: Peking probably will increase its efforts to maintain the flow of essential military and logistic materials to North Vietnam although movement of these goods would become increasingly difficult and costly.

Para. 13. This paragraph glosses over the probability of Chinese allowing use of their airfields, and the sequence should be spelled out.

On the basis of US reactions in the Korean War and our stated limited objectives in this war the Chinese could feel safe in using their airfields. This would depend also on the losses they could expect and be willing to sustain. If the US then attacked the Chinese airfields then the Chinese would have to make a decision to back off or to continue. If they continued at this point, then the last sentence would be correct.

Para. 14. Penultimate sentence: delete "by almost imperceptible increments."

Paragraph should spell out Peking's and Hanoi reasons.

- Para. 16 - spell out reasons for Soviet reluctance to continue support.
- Para. 17 - Delete Soviet attempt to break the port closure for contradicts statement in paragraph 16 that mines can't be neutralized.
- Spell out the nature of the "offensive weapons."
- Para. 18 - Change language to indicate that protests of maritime powers would not be sufficient to impair their relations with the U.S.