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28 May 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Communist Reactions to the Entry into Cambodia of Troops from South Korea, Indonesia, or Nationalist China

1. Availability of Such Forces. The South Koreans have already indicated general interest in sending troops to Cambodia and would be prepared to do so provided the US paid the costs and then some -- as in South Vietnam. The Indonesian position is ambiguous. Top active-duty generals strongly desire the US weapons and equipment they assume would accrue from any Indonesian troop commitment to Cambodia. But Foreign Minister Malik and others are against any such commitment except as part of some international peacekeeping force acceptable to the other side, or at least to the Soviets. They give high priority to the maintenance of some vestige of "neutrality" for Indonesia in order to continue dealing on a reasonably friendly basis with the European Communists and the left-leaning Arabs and Africans, and to avoid forfeiting any Asian support for their regional leadership ambitions. President Suharto is the focus of these opposing tendencies; he appears to lean toward Malik's view

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25X1

though he may be telling President Nixon something else. The Nationalist Chinese continue to feel that the US, in opposing the Asian Communists in Indochina, has been fighting the wrong opponent in the wrong way in the wrong place. Taipei has not been eager to join the fray, but would see great political advantage -- and considerable military arms fallout -- in responding to a US request to send troops to Cambodia.

2. Communist Reactions. South Korean forces are already heavily committed in South Vietnam and a shift of some ROK units to the Cambodian front would represent no radical alteration of the balance of forces in Indochina and would probably engender little tangible response from the Communist side. The dispatch of large additional ROK forces from South Korea itself would greatly concern Hanoi, which probably considers ROK units to be effective fighting forces. Hanoi would probably feel compelled to improve its own military position, including reinforcement of its units, in those areas of Cambodia viewed as essential to Communist prosecution of the war in South Vietnam -- e.g., the northeastern provinces. Hanoi would probably not call for Chinese troop assistance; it would not wish to forfeit its own predominance in the area or risk a larger war in which

- 2 -

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25X1

SECRET

25X1

North Vietnamese interests were subordinated to those of Peking. In any case, Hanoi would expect, and would probably receive, a negative response from a generally cautious Peking. Hanoi would call upon the brethren in Pyongyang to re-open their 1967-68 campaign of sporadic armed harassment of South Korea in hope of deterring further ROK troop movements into Indochina; and the North Koreans might oblige.

3. The entry of Indonesian combat contingent would not cause much concern in Hanoi in the first instance. Judging them unlikely to be effective against experienced VC/NVA units, the Communists would see little reason to respond militarily in any significant way. And while Hanoi, Peking, and even Moscow would fulminate against the Suharto government, the Indonesians are out of reach, unless one counts the few armed Communist dissidents languishing in remote regions of Borneo. Of course, if <sup>and</sup> the Indonesians proved aggressive/effective in the field, Hanoi would feel compelled to counter the buildup as in the South Korean case.

4. The dispatch of Nationalist Chinese troops to Cambodia would generate the greatest immediate apprehension in Communist capitals. In addition to concern over any military impact they

- 3 -

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SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

might in time develop, the Nationalist forces would be viewed as evidence of US willingness to move ever more boldly in Indochina, accepting the risk of a sharp Communist Chinese reaction in pursuit of its objectives.

5. Whether or not Thai, South Korean, Indonesian troops had preceded the Chinese Nationalists into Cambodia, Hanoi would fear that the US was building toward a massive coalition of anti-Communist armies designed to secure Cambodia and use it as a stepping-stone to Communist-held areas further north -- in Laos and, perhaps, North Vietnam itself. Hanoi would deem it necessary to deter any further buildup of GRC or other third-country forces, preferably without wholesale expenditures of its own manpower. To this end, and in cooperation with Peking, Hanoi would seek to raise the spectre of a Chinese Communist military response. At a minimum, the presence of Chicom forces in northwestern Laos would be publicized. Numbers of Chinese "volunteers" might appear in a combat role in northern Laos or even in southern Laos and Cambodia. Again, Hanoi would probably not press for any larger influx of Chinese lest this add to the very escalation of Allied effort it had hoped to deter.

- 4 -

SECRET

25X1

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6. For Peking, the Nationalist deployment into Cambodia would also signal a possible buildup for US moves further north in Indochina. Peking might even see it as heralding an attack on southern China itself by GRC forces in concert with the US. Certainly, it would be viewed in Peking as confirmation of an inalterable US hostility toward the mainland regime. The Chinese Communists would believe it essential to respond with more than propaganda. This feeling would be reinforced by a desire to appear resolute in the eyes of other Communist countries and of the world at large.

7. Peking's actions would be those which held some promise of deterring a further GRC buildup in Cambodia and discouraging any US-GRC plans for ground movement toward Laos, North Vietnam, or China itself. Yet they would be those which Peking believed carried the least risk of precipitating a direct confrontation with the US. Such actions might include: overt troop and aircraft deployments to coastal areas opposite Taiwan; harassment of GRC air and sea units in the Taiwan Strait area; and shelling of the Offshore Islands. The Chinese Communists would certainly reinforce their forces along the Laos border and might add to the contingent presently in northwestern Laos. They might think it

- 5 -

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useful to go so far as to announce the dispatch of "volunteers" to areas further south in order to make their signals ~~clearer~~ clearer to the US. In any event, with Taipei directly involved in the Indochina conflict, Peking would become even more opposed than before to a negotiated settlement.

8. The primary Soviet concern in the event of a Chinat deployment into Cambodia would be that the situation was evolving into one in which Moscow could exercise little or no influence. The Soviets would also perceive the likelihood of further losses in their competition with Peking for influence in Hanoi. The enhanced possibility of a direct Sino-US confrontation would generate mixed feelings. While delighted at the vanishing chances of a Sino-US rapprochement, the USSR would be apprehensive concerning its own chances of avoiding involvement in any all-out Sino-US war.

9. ~~Regarding~~ Regarding "Token" Forces. If the troop input of any or all of these three countries is in the form of token contributions of manpower for some politically useful international force, the Communist reactions herein discussed would be substantially muted. Certainly, if third-country elements are too small to have military impact, Hanoi will

- 6 -

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25X1

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feel no need to respond in kind. Moreover, if South Koreans or Indonesians, however numerous, confined themselves to static defense duties in government-held zones, Hanoi would still, in all likelihood, see no compelling reason to modify its overall strategy in Cambodia. We do not believe that Hanoi's plans require the overthrow of the Lon Nol regime or seizure of all Cambodian territory at some early date. But the entry of the Nationalists in large numbers, however deployed, would result in genuine alarm in Hanoi and Peking, and lead to the reactions noted earlier.

- 7 -

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25X1