

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

URGENT INFORMATION

May 19, 1971

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MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: K. Wayne Smith *KWS*

SUBJECT: Secretary Laird's Memo on RVNAF Improvements

at Feb A
Secretary Laird has sent the President a memorandum on RVNAF improvement and modernization that could serve as the epitaph for Vietnamization. On the other hand, because the Secretary's memorandum contains the basic elements of the MR analysis, it provides you with an opportunity to mold the Secretary's thinking.

The problem at this juncture is that the Secretary does not understand the analysis in his own memorandum. If he understood it, as his own analysts who wrote it understand it, he would be far less sanguine about the prospects for 1972 and might even be willing to contemplate making the changes the situation demands. Your problem is to move the Secretary to dig deeper into the analysis.

Secretary Laird's General Conclusions

The Secretary's general conclusions are scary and have no foundation in the analysis in his own memorandum.

These conclusions are:

OSD and JCS reviews completed

-- The RVNAF I&M program has given the GVN the capacity. Whether they cope with the threat depends on their national will.

-- Only minor adjustments are needed. [The Secretary's own analysis is evidence that ARVN needs to add a division in MR 1 in addition to the reserve forces that could be sent to MR 1 in the event of a major offensive.]

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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-- The "ultimate" reduction of the RVNAF force structure is "essential." I cannot get worked up over this Nutter/Pursley rhetoric. Laird used it last year. The issue is when and Laird does not seem to be saying now. We are suffering from a plague of DOD economists.

-- "The risk of negotiating a date for total U.S. withdrawals in exchange for actual return of POWs now appears acceptable." How the Secretary reaches this conclusion is beyond me. What date? What withdrawals? If this gets in the press it will be a bombshell.

The Analysis

Page 3 of the Secretary's attachment contains the analysis which the Secretary has not fully understood.

I strongly urge you to go over it with him and encourage him to understand it fully.

The points I make below have been fully checked with the OSD/SA analyst (Lt. Col. Eddins) who put the table together. He has worked closely with us in the MR studies. Unfortunately ISA has filtered his analysis to Laird and ISA does not understand it fully.

(1) The analysis is based on the following assumptions:

-- The most probable threat to South Vietnam in 1972 is an MR 1 offensive. This is what is termed by Laird "CIA's estimate which we consider maximizes both the size and supportability of possible VC/NVA offensive operations."

-- 50,000 U.S. forces in South Vietnam at mid-72.

-- ROK's remain in MR 2 until FY 73.

-- A "desired" main force ratio (MFR) of 1.1 for MR 1 and 2.5 for MR 2 would maintain the main force balance in these areas with the risk of only slight control losses.

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-- There is no requirement for the permanent stationing of RVNAF forces in Cambodia or for operations against South Laos of long duration, i. e. ARVN forces would be withdrawn from Cambodia.

These assumptions are reasonable. In combination they represent a best probable outcome. Most and worst probable outcomes need to be estimated as well.

But even accepting Laird's best probable assumptions, the RVNAF improvements called for by the analysis far exceed what in the Secretary's view are required. For example, there is a 44 battalion deficit in MR 1 that can only be filled in part with ARVN's present 31 battalions of mobile forces (marines, paratroopers, and the 9th Division). Thus another division must be added in MR 1.

Other assumptions would considerably magnify the task of restructuring RVNAF to meet the 1972 threat. I state below the key assumptions in the best, worst, and most probable variants.

Threat	<u>Best (Laird)</u> MR 1 Offensive	<u>Most Probable</u> MR 1 and 2	<u>Worst</u> MR 1/Cambodia
Desired MFR			
MR 1	1.1	1.5	2.0
MR 2	2.5	3.0	3.0
Main force requirements for Laos and Cambodia	0 bns	10 bns	15 bns

All cases would assume the ROKs remain in MR 2 and the U.S. force level is 50,000 in mid-1972.

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Recommendation

That you urge the Secretary to examine best, worst, and most probable cases before arriving at a final judgment.

Points you could make to convince him of this are:

-- His analysis assumes there will be no requirement for RVNAF forces in Cambodia or Laos in 1972. Ask him if this assumption is consistent with the findings of the DOD team.

-- The CIA and JCS/DIA analysis of the threat make it probable that the enemy can exceed an MR 1 offensive in 1972. More likely is a MR 1 and 2 offensive. Worst probable but within Hanoi's capability is a MR 1/Cambodia offensive.

-- The MFR's used in the analysis for MRs 1 and 2 are below what to date have been considered necessary to maintain the main force balance. In the most probable case they should be increased from 1.1 to 1.5 for MR 1 and from 2.5 to 3.0 for MR 2. You can illustrate this by asking the Secretary if he believes the GVN will be able to take 8 battalions (almost a division) from MR 2 in 1972 as the analysis indicates.

If these modifications are made in the Secretary's analysis, all within the best, worst and most probable framework, the country-side RVNAF 4 battalion surplus will vanish and the fixes required will become of a greater and more realistic magnitude.

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