

DOCUMENT WITHDRAWAL RECORD [NIXON PROJECT]

DOCUMENT NUMBER	DOCUMENT TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE OR CORRESPONDENTS	DATE	RESTRICTION
1	TELEGRAM W/ATTACH	KENNEDY TO HAIG EIA 711	3/28/71	B
2	TELEGRAM	KENNEDY TO HAIG EIA 713	3/28/71	B
3	TELEGRAM	KENNEDY TO HAIG EIA 720	3/28/71	B

FILE GROUP TITLE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL FILES VIETNAM SUBJECT FILES	BOX NUMBER 80
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FOLDER TITLE
LAOS OPERATIONS

RESTRICTION CODES

- | | |
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| A. Release would violate a Federal statute or Agency Policy. | E. Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information. |
| B. National security classified information. | F. Release would disclose investigatory information compiled for law enforcement purposes. |
| C. Pending or approved claim that release would violate an individual's rights. | G. Withdrawn and return private and personal material. |
| D. Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy or a libel of a living person. | H. Withdrawn and returned non-historical material. |

TALKING POINTS ON LAM SON 719

The Situation

1. The South Vietnamese entered Southern Laos in early February in order to disrupt the operation of the Ho Chi Minh trail and the southward flow of enemy supplies bound for Cambodia and South Vietnam. Hanoi's response to this operation is an important factor in assessing the outcome. If, for example, the North Vietnamese had chosen to evade South Vietnamese forces, then there would have been relatively little fighting and the operation would have been assessed more in terms of supplies destroyed or bottled up. But for several good reasons, such as the importance of the area, the short supply lines to North Vietnam and the availability of reserve forces in southern North Vietnam -- the North Vietnamese undertook a major counter attack. They reinforced the area strongly with some of their best divisions, not only to defend the trail system but in an attempt to inflict a major defeat on the South Vietnamese as well. As a result, the most intensive fighting since 1968 developed.

Immediately Measurable Results

2. In terms of immediately measurable results, the weight of evidence is that South Vietnamese forces acquitted themselves very well in the six weeks of fighting which followed the initial incursion into Laos. Many of the ARVN units involved fought without respite for 40 days and, in the judgment of our field commanders, 18 out of the 22 battalions involved fought extremely well. Because of the intensity of the fighting, these units

did take some heavy losses - an estimated 1400 killed and 4700 wounded. But respective enemy losses were more than 13,000 killed and many were wounded. In terms of combat effectiveness, we estimate that the equivalent of 13 enemy maneuver battalions were rendered ineffective in the course of the fighting whereas only 4 ARVN battalions were put out of combat. Exaggerated reports of enemy losses in Vietnam have not been numerous, but this time the figure may be low. The enemy acted more aggressively than he had in several years with the result that he exposed himself to concentrated allied firepower and air attack. Thus, we believe the ratio of enemy to friendly losses was at least 10 to 1, a very high price for Hanoi to pay.

Impact on the North Vietnamese Logistics System

3. It is too early to be precise about the impact of Lam Son 719 on the enemy's logistical system, although some perspective can be provided. The North Vietnamese had to move more supplies South to Cambodia and South Vietnam this year than last in order to make up for the loss of three major means of supply: the Port of Sihanoukville; purchases in Cambodia, and food obtained from areas which had previously been under Viet Cong control in South Vietnam but which are now firmly under the authority of the government. Moreover, he had suffered great losses in the Cambodian sanctuaries last year. Thus, the Ho Chi Minh Trail has become a more vital element in Hanoi's overall strategy than it

was in the past. But we are reasonably certain that the enemy was well behind last year's pace even before the Lam Son operation began.

The Lam Son operation clearly compounded Hanoi's problem. It disrupted the Ho Chi Minh trail complex, physically blocking various branches of the trail. South Vietnamese forces found or destroyed, or called in U.S. air power to destroy, some 4900 individual weapons, 1900 crew served weapons and pounds of tons of ammunition and other supplies. This was in addition to the vast quantity of supplies, ammunition and equipment which was consumed by the North Vietnamese in Laos instead of continuing down the trail to be used in South Vietnam or Cambodia. Moreover, when the North Vietnamese were obliged to engage ARVN forces in a fixed battle position, their units massed and became targets for concentrated Vietnamese firepower and U.S. air power which destroyed over 100 tanks and many artillery pieces, some 300 enemy trucks were destroyed directly in the operation and 4300 more were destroyed by air interdiction while the operation was in progress. Finally, because North Vietnamese logistics units were engaged in the fighting and were badly damaged, their resiliency in restoring the flow of supplies southward has been degraded. We estimate that some 3500 enemy rear service personnel vital to the operation of the trail logistics system were killed.

All these considerations must be viewed against the fact that the Ho Chi Minh trail complex is useful as a logistics system only during the dry season, which began later this year than usual. Therefore, when the rains come in the next four or five weeks, the Communists will have little time in which to attempt to make up all the weeks that have been lost to them in the Lam Son operation.

Forestalling Anticipated Enemy Offensive Activity in South Vietnam

4. A significant measure of Lam Son's achievements will be the degree it succeeds in forestalling enemy offensive activity. Viewed in conjunction with ARVN operations conducted simultaneously in Cambodia, these two efforts have precluded enemy offensive operations in South Vietnam during the current dry season. We believe that if Lam Son had not been undertaken, the North Vietnamese would have had the real option of launching major attacks against ARVN and U.S. forces located in the northern provinces of South Vietnam. Looking to the future, we believe that the short-fall in their supply efforts will prevent them from mounting major offensives in South Vietnam in this dry season and will delay any offensives they might have planned over the next dry season because it will take them that much longer to rebuild their stocks.

The combined military operations also have had the effect of engaging the enemy and keeping his forces distant from the population of South Vietnam. To illustrate this graphically, it should be pointed out that the Toan Thang operation North of Route 7 inside Cambodia is being fought against the First, Fifth, Seventh and Ninth North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Divisions, the same units which, at this time of the year in 1968, were operating inside the city limits of Saigon and the surrounding metropolitan area. As for the enemy units engaged in Lam Son -- the 304th, 308th, 320th and 324-B divisions -- in February and March of 1968, succeeded in capturing control of the city of Hue, entering the defenses of Danang, and generally harassing the population in the coastal regions. All of these enemy units were engaged this year away from population centers and, in fact, outside of South Vietnam itself.

Lam Son's Bearing on Vietnamization

5. Lam Son has underlined the progress which has been made in Vietnamization. Three years ago, ARVN units were engaged against enemy units in and close to South Vietnam's own population centers. Now ARVN units have shown themselves able to deal with the enemy threat in sanctuary areas without the support of U.S. ground combat forces or advisors while keeping their own territory pacified as well. They have demonstrated the ability to mount a complex multi-division operation in conditions of difficult and unfamiliar terrain, adverse weather, and against a well-prepared enemy. Moreover, this is being achieved with a U.S. presence

To illustrate this point further, it should be recognized that February and March are the months of the year in which the Communists traditionally mount the most extensive military operations in all regions of South Vietnam. This year they were given an additional incentive to do this because of that fact that such actions would harass the rear areas of ARVN operations in Laos and Cambodia and would distract attention from those two actions. Despite exhortations to their cadre to undertake such action within South Vietnam, they have been unable to date to mount anything which can even be considered a major successful high point. In fact, the situation within South Vietnam has been extraordinarily calm during the entire month of February and March with the exception of an action being taken by ARVN forces against Communist strongholds in the U Minh forest of Military Region IV.

The ability of the South Vietnamese forces to sustain security after the departure of United States forces will, in the long run, be measured by the balance of strength which exists between North and South Vietnamese forces. Our assessment is that the balance in the Indochina peninsula has swung in favor of the South Vietnamese. As Ambassador Bunker has reported, the operation has created confidence among the South Vietnamese in the ability of ARVN and pride in its accomplishments. There has been satisfaction in the fact that the fighting has/taken outside the borders of South Vietnam and that ARVN has been able to inflict for heavier casualties on the enemy.

We conclude, therefore, that the foundation for Vietnamization in South Vietnam is sound and that the process has been enhanced by the disruptions Lam Son has caused the enemy and by the increased confidence it has given the South Vietnamese in meeting their own defense needs.

The Current psychological atmosphere is in some ways reminiscent of the 1968 Tet offensive. Hanoi extracted maximum political advantage in the short run, it was only as time passed that the real physical results began to tell. This time, we must benefit from that lesson and not let ourselves be misled by surface appearances or by exaggerated stories.

The operation has achieved its primary objective of carrying the fight to the enemy's sanctuaries and destroying his principal lines of communications and should buy the South Vietnamese additional time in which to strengthen their armed forces while permitting continued withdrawal of U.S. combat forces.

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Immediately Measurable Results

2. In terms of immediately measurable results, the weight of evidence is that South Vietnamese forces acquitted themselves very well in the six weeks of fighting which followed the initial incursion into Laos. Many of the ARVN units involved fought without respite for 40 days and, in the judgment of our field commanders, the ARVN forces fought extremely well. Because of the intensity of the fighting, these units did take some heavy

losses - now estimated at 1400 killed and 4700 wounded. But reported enemy losses were more than 13,000 killed and many more were wounded. In terms of combat effectiveness, we estimate that the equivalent of 13 enemy maneuver battalions were rendered ineffective in the course of the fighting whereas only 4 out of the 22 ARVN battalions were put out of combat. Some reports of enemy losses in Vietnam in the past may have been exaggerated, but this time the estimate may be low. The enemy acted more aggressively than he had in several years with the result that he exposed himself to concentrated allied firepower and air attack. Thus, we believe the ratio of enemy to friendly losses was at least 5 to 1, a very high price for Hanoi to pay.

Impact on the North Vietnamese Logistics System

3. It is too early to be precise about the impact of Lam Son 719 on the enemy's logistical system, although some perspective can be provided. The North Vietnamese had to move more supplies South to Cambodia and South Vietnam this year than last in order to make up for the loss of three major means of supply: the Port of Sihanoukville, purchases in Cambodia; and food obtained from areas which had previously been under Viet Cong control in South Vietnam but which are now under the authority of the government. Moreover, he comments he had suffered great losses in the Cambodian sanctuaries last year. Thus, the Ho Chi Minh Trail has become an even more vital element

in Hanoi's overall strategy than it was in the past. But we are reasonably certain that the enemy supply movement was well behind last year's pace even before the Lam Son operation began.

The Lam Son operation clearly compounded Hanoi's problem. It disrupted the Ho Chi Minh trail complex, physically blocking various branches of the trail. South Vietnamese forces found or destroyed, or called in U.S. air power to destroy, some 4900 individual weapons, 1900 crew served weapons and thousands of tons of ammunition and other supplies. This was in addition to the vast quantity of supplies, ammunition and equipment which was consumed by the North Vietnamese in Laos instead of continuing down the trail to be used in South Vietnam or Cambodia. Moreover, when the North Vietnamese were obliged to engage ARVN forces in a fixed battle position, their units massed and became targets for concentrated Vietnamese firepower and U.S. air power which destroyed over 100 tanks and many artillery pieces, some 300 enemy trucks were destroyed directly in the operation and 4300 more were destroyed by air interdiction while the operations were in progress. Finally, because North Vietnamese logistics units were engaged in the fighting and were badly damaged, their resiliency in restoring the flow of supplies southward has been degraded. An estimated 3500 enemy rear service personnel vital to the operation of the trail logistics system were killed.

All these considerations must be viewed against the fact that the Ho Chi Minh trail complex is useful as a logistics system only during the dry season, which began later this year than usual. Therefore, when the rains come in the next four or five weeks, the Communists will have little time in which to attempt to make up all the weeks that have been lost to them in the Lam Son operation.

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Hanoi will, of course, want to mask the extent to which its capabilities have been impaired and will therefore endeavor to act as

if it is playing from strength. To project this image, the Communists may be willing to spend additional manpower capital in the days immediately ahead by trying to mount a sharp flurry of attacks in the northern part of South Vietnam, and elsewhere if they can get such attacks off the ground. Such attacks may be specifically directed against U.S. units in an endeavor to increase American casualties, whatever the cost to Hanoi. Nonetheless, the Communists probably have lost the ability to mount sustained major offensives and the overall record of Communist activity over the next few months can be expected to support this contention.

The combined military operations also have had the effect of engaging the enemy and keeping his forces distant from the population of South Vietnam. To illustrate this graphically, it should be pointed out that the Toan Thang operation North of Route 7 inside Cambodia is being fought against the First, Fifth, Seventh and Ninth North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Divisions, the same units which, at this time of the year in 1968, were operating inside the city limits of Saigon and the surrounding metropolitan area. As for the enemy units engaged in Lam Son -- the North Vietnamese 304th, 308th, 320th and 324-B Divisions -- in February and March of 1968, fought for two weeks in the city of Hue, entered the defenses of Danang, and generally harassed the population in the coastal regions. All of these

enemy units were engaged this year away from population centers and, in fact, outside of South Vietnam itself.

Lam Son's Bearing on Vietnamization

5. Lam Son has underlined the progress which has been made in Vietnamization. Three years ago, ARVN units were engaged against enemy units in and close to South Vietnam's own population centers. Now ARVN units have shown themselves able to deal with the enemy threat in sanctuary areas without the support of U.S. ground combat forces or advisors while keeping their own territory pacified as well. They have demonstrated the ability to mount a complex multi-division operation in conditions of difficult and unfamiliar terrain, adverse weather, and against a well-prepared enemy. Moreover, this is being achieved with a U.S. presence which has diminished by some 260,000 men since 1969.

To illustrate this point further, it should be recognized that February and March are the months of the year in which the Communists traditionally mount the most extensive military operations in all regions of South Vietnam. This year they were given an additional incentive to do this because of the fact that such actions would harass the rear areas of ARVN operations in Laos and Cambodia and would distract attention from those two actions. Despite exhortations to their cadre to undertake

such action within South Vietnam, they have been unable to date to mount anything which can even be considered a major successful high point. In fact, the situation within South Vietnam has been extraordinarily calm during the entire month of February and March with the exception of an action being taken by ARVN forces against Communist strongholds in the U Minh forest of Military Region IV.

The ability of the South Vietnamese forces to sustain security after the departure of United States forces will, in the long run, be measured by the balance of strength which exists between North and South Vietnamese forces. Our assessment is that the balance in the Indochina peninsula has swung in favor of the South Vietnamese. As Ambassador Bunker has reported, the operation has created confidence among the South Vietnamese in the ability of ARVN and pride in its accomplishments. There has been satisfaction in the fact that the fighting has been taken outside the borders of South Vietnam and that ARVN has been able to inflict far heavier casualties on the enemy.

We conclude, therefore, that the foundation for Vietnamization in South Vietnam is sound and that the process has been enhanced by the disruptions Lam Son has caused the enemy and by the increased confidence it has given the South Vietnamese in meeting their own defense needs.

The current psychological atmosphere is in some ways reminiscent of the 1968 Tet offensive. Hanoi extracted maximum political advantage in the short run, it was only as time passed that the real physical results began to tell. This time, we must benefit from that lesson and not let ourselves be misled by surface appearances or by exaggerated stories.

The operation has achieved its primary objective of carrying the fight to the enemy's sanctuaries and disrupting his principal lines of communications and should buy the South Vietnamese additional time in which to strengthen their armed forces while permitting continued withdrawal of U. S. combat forces.

TOP SECRET

LAMSON 719

As of 200800Z Mar 71

	<u>KIA (A/C)</u>	<u>WIA (A/C)</u>	<u>MIA</u>
US	3/105 (0/37)	19/581(0/129)	0/34(0/28)
RVNAF	57/948	218/3461	2/169
ENEMY	422/11,314	364Z	43

TOTAL US/VNAF HELO SORTIES TO DATE 117,269/1832

RATIO US HELO LOSSES TOTAL SORTIES 71/1000

TOT US/VNAF TAC AIR SORTIES TO DATE 6821/170

% AIR EFFORT (US/VNAF)	<u>TAC</u>	<u>HCPTR</u>
	98/2	99/1

A/C LOSSES (*ADJUSTED)

AHIG (COBRA)	1/24*
UH-1H (HUEY)	0/43*
OH-6 (CAYUSE)	0/8*
OH-58 (KIOWA)	0/4
CH-47 (CHINOOK)	0/3
CH-53 (SEA STALLION)	0/2*
UH-1H (RVN HUEYS)	0/6
CH-34 (RVN)	0/2
F-4	0/3
A-1	0/1
	1/95

A/C LANDING IN LAOS 525

16 US PERSONNEL ON GND

49 A/C HIT 45 NON FLYABLE/1 DESTROYED

US IN OPERATION 10,000

RVN IN OPERATION 20,000 (14 519 in Laos)

EN IN OPN AREA 22,000

TOP SECRET

LAMSON 719

	<u>KIA (A/C)</u>	<u>WIA (A/C)</u>	<u>MIA</u>
US	0/105 (0/37)	21/606 (12/141)	4/38 (4/32)
RVNAF	98/989	573/3816	0/169
ENEMY	485/11,805	3656 KBA	43 DET
TOTAL US/VNAF HELO SORTIES TO DATE	120,039/1840		
RATIO: US HELO LOSSES/TOTAL SORTIES	.75/1000		
TOT. US/VNAF TAC AIR SORTIES TO DATE	6940/210		
% AIR EFFORT (US/VNAF)	<u>TAC</u>	<u>HCPTR</u>	

A/C LOSSES

AHIG (COBRA)	0/23
UH-1H (HUEY)	7/50
OH-6 (CAYUSE)	0/8
OH-58 (KIOWA)	0/4
CH-47 (CHINOOK)	0/3
CH-53 (SEA STALLION)	0/2
UH-1H (RVN HUEYS)	0/6
CH-34 (RVN)	0/2
F-4	0/3
A-1	0/1
	<u>7/102</u>

A/C LANDING IN LAOS: 520 on 20 March
66 US PERSONNEL ON GND (4MIA)

50 A/C HIT 29 NON FLYABLE/7 DESTROYED
US IN OPERATION 10,000
RVN IN OPERATION 20,000 (13,370 in LAOS)
EN IN OPN AREA: 22,000

*Winston -
No one else
has copy -
please let
me know
J*

TO: WINSTON LORD
FROM: JOHN D. NEGROPONTE *Jan*
SUBJECT: Lam Son Talking Points

Per our conversation, following are State's comments on draft Lam Son talking points as best they can reconstruct them. (Ambassador Johnson has the sole copy of their written comments in his possession, has left his office, and is apparently prepared to discuss them when he gets to San Clemente.) Comments are keyed to pages of draft which General Haig already has.

Page 1: lines 8 through 10, delete phrase beginning with "such as" and ending with "Southern North Vietnam." (Reason for this suggestion is to eliminate any implication that we were surprised.)

Same page, second line from bottom: delete "18 out of the 22 battalions involved". (State believes this avoids invidious reference to ARVN performance. On the other hand, to retain this reference would be consistent with what the President himself has said and enhances the overall credibility of the talking points.)

Page 2: lines 6 and 7, they would delete entire sentence which begins "Exaggerated reports".

Page 3: 7th line from bottom, they would substitute phrase "over 10 times that number" for "4300 more". (This apparently relates to degree of confidence one places in reported truck kills.)

Page 5: 9th line, before "304th" insert "North Vietnamese".

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(1) The Lamson operation should be viewed in conjunction with the Toan Thang operation in Cambodia. Both actions, taken together, had the effect of striking at the North Vietnamese, pulling them off balance, and precluding enemy offensive operations in South Viet-Nam during the current dry season. Moreover the Lamson operation probably preempts the possibility of successful enemy offensives in the northern provinces of South Viet-Nam during the summer of 1971 when it will be dry on the eastern side of the Annamite mountains.

Seen in this light the combined military operations have the effect of engaging the enemy and keeping his forces distant from the population of South Viet-Nam. To illustrate this graphically it should be pointed out that the Toan Thang operation north of Route 7 inside Cambodia is being fought against the First, Fifth, Seventh, and Ninth North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Divisions which are the same enemy units which, at this time of the year in 1968, were operating inside the city limits of Saigon, Cholon, and in the Capital Military District. Similarly, the North Vietnamese units which were engaged in Lamson --- the 304th, 308th, 320th, and 324-B Divisions -- were the same ones which, in February and March of 1968, succeeded in capturing control of the city of Hue, entering the defenses of Danang, and generally harassing the population in the coastal regions. It is important to note that both Toan Thang and Lamson are being fought in areas that are either very sparsely populated or not populated at all by civilians, and moreover, that both of them are being fought outside the territory of South Viet-Nam.

(2) If one is to view the Lamson operation in terms of the effectiveness of Vietnamization a look at the situation inside South Viet-Nam is instructive. February and March are the months of the year in which the communists traditionally mount their most extensive military operations in all regions of South Viet-Nam. This year they were given an additional incentive to do this because of the fact that such actions would harass the rear areas of the Toan Thang and Lamson operations and would distract attention from those two actions. Despite exhortation to their cadres to undertake such action within South Viet-Nam they have been unable to date to mount anything

which can even be considered a successful high point. In fact, the situation within South Viet-Nam has been extraordinarily calm during the entire months of February and March with the exception of the action being undertaken by ARVN forces against communist strongholds in the U Minh Forest of Military Region IV.

These observations suggest that the foundation for Vietnamization in South Viet-Nam is sound and that the Vietnamese security forces are capable of maintaining the situation in their home areas even while the bulk of South Viet-Nam's mobile forces are committed to expeditionary actions outside the country.

(3) The ability of the South Vietnamese forces to sustain security after the departure of United States forces will, in the long run, be measured by the balance of strength which exists between the RVNAF and the North Vietnamese forces. Our general assessment is that the balance in the Indochina peninsula, given the continuing presence of United States air power, has swung in favor of the South Vietnamese forces.

Substantial support for this conclusion comes from the North Vietnamese themselves. It seems quite clear that, in the months of February and early March, the North Vietnamese were genuinely concerned about the prospect of an invasion of North Viet-Nam by South Vietnamese forces supported by United States air power. It should be noted that these concerns were at their peak at the moment when the North Vietnamese knew South Viet-Nam was heavily engaged in both the Toan Thang and Lamson operations.

North Viet-Nam's concern can be measured not only in terms of its barrage of statements and charges that were made during this period, but most particularly by its call upon Communist China. The statements which Xuan Thuy made in Paris concerning possible Peking actions went well beyond anything Peking itself had uttered, and had a quality of "my big brother can lick your big brother" about them. Going even beyond this indication of nervousness, the North Vietnamese swallowed their patriotic pride and asked Chou En-lai to come to Hanoi in order to give substance to their threats.

system in the form of the AC-130 aircraft and a significantly higher toll of trucks in the performance of the U.S. air interdiction effort.

(5) Finally, some perspective should be given to the Lamson operation in relationship to the total continuing South Vietnamese military effort. The South Vietnamese forces which entered Laos in the Lamson operation constituted less than two per cent of the RVNAF effectives. It is not, therefore, a question of a major military offensive having been undertaken by major portions of the Vietnamese military establishment. It is true that the units which were employed in this action were among the very best of the South Vietnamese regular forces. At the same time it is also true that the North Vietnamese units which they encountered were among the very best of the regular North Vietnamese forces. From the casualty tolls it is clear that severe battles were fought in this operation and that in these battles the South Vietnamese exacted a higher toll from the enemy than they suffered themselves. It is also clear that, despite the major North Vietnamese military effort and despite certain isolated instances of panic, the South Vietnamese withdrew from their salient in very good order. None of their forces were cut off and entrapped inside Laos, although the North Vietnamese made a decisive effort to do just that. Instead the major South Vietnamese units which have been withdrawn, although they suffered significant casualties, have preserved their integrity, their fire power, and their military capabilities. The amount of equipment which had to be destroyed or abandoned before withdrawal was minuscule compared to the amount which was evacuated in good order. The number of men taken prisoner in the entire operation was similarly a tiny fraction of those who were actually engaged. In short, it was a very complex military maneuver mounted by numerically inferior forces deep into terrain that had long been held by the enemy, which inflicted extremely heavy casualties and was terminated in deliberate and orderly fashion.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20520

MEMO

3/26/71

TO: WH - Col. Kennedy
FROM: EA - W.H. Sullivan

This is the amended version
of paragraph 4 which in-
corporates some thoughts and
statements taken from the
President's interview with
Howard K. Smith.

EA:WHSullivan:ms

71 MAR 26 PM 6:51

SITUATION

(4) It should not be concluded that, because Lamson has been terminated, the North Vietnamese can quickly and effectively repair all the disruption that has taken place and achieve their logistics goal on throughputs. The disruptions in the Trail complex resulted not only from the physical blocking of various branches of the Trail, but more importantly from other considerations. First of all, the South Vietnamese forces found and destroyed, or called in U.S. air to destroy, very significant caches of supplies and weapons in the areas which they occupied. Secondly, the North Vietnamese military units which came into the Trail area to meet the South Vietnamese thrust consumed vast quantities of supplies, ammunition, and equipment which otherwise would have constituted part of the logistics throughput in the Trail structure. Additionally, when these units massed and became targets for U.S. air, many important weapons such as tanks, artillery pieces, etc., were destroyed in the air attacks. Finally, because North Vietnamese logistics units were engaged in the fighting and were badly decimated, their resiliency in establishing the logistics throughput has been degraded.

All these considerations must be viewed against the fact that the Trail structure is useful as a logistics :

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-2-

system only during the dry season and that the dry season began very late this year. Therefore, assuming the rains come within the next few weeks, the communists will have very little time in which to attempt to make up all the weeks that have been lost to them in the Lamson operation. It should be remembered, moreover, that they will be attempting to do this under constant United States air harassment, which includes a significantly improved weapon system in the form of the AC-130 aircraft and a significantly higher toll of trucks in the performance of the U.S. air interdiction effort.

We expect these factors to have as their consequence a reduction in the future level of enemy activity in South Viet-Nam. This anticipated reduction in the enemy effort, coupled with the steady improvement in the effectiveness and confidence of South Viet-Nam's armed forces, will have a direct bearing on the rate of withdrawal of United States armed forces from South Viet-Nam. It will also mean an improved security situation for those United States forces which remain in South Viet-Nam. And, finally, of course, it will enhance the ability of the South Vietnamese to defend themselves after United States forces have left.

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(2) If one is to view the Lamson operation in terms of the effectiveness of Vietnamization a look at the situation inside South Viet-Nam is instructive. February and March are the months of the year in which the communists traditionally mount their most extensive military operations in all regions of South Viet-Nam. This year they were given an additional incentive to do this because of the fact that such actions would harass the rear areas of the Toan Thang and Lamson operations and would distract attention from those two actions. Despite exhortation to their cadres to undertake such action within South Viet-Nam they have been unable to date to mount anything

which can even be considered a successful high point. In fact, the situation within South Viet-Nam has been extraordinarily calm during the entire months of February and March with the exception of the action being undertaken by ARVN forces against communist strongholds in the U Minh Forest of Military Region IV.

These observations suggest that the foundation for Vietnamization in South Viet-Nam is sound and that the Vietnamese security forces are capable of maintaining the situation in their home areas even while the bulk of South Viet-Nam's mobile forces are committed to expeditionary actions outside the country.

(3) The ability of the South Vietnamese forces to sustain security after the departure of United States forces will, in the long run, be measured by the balance of strength which exists between the RVNAF and the North Vietnamese forces. Our general assessment is that the balance in the Indochina peninsula, given the continuing presence of United States air power, has swung in favor of the South Vietnamese forces.

Substantial support for this conclusion comes from the North Vietnamese themselves. It seems quite clear that, in the months of February and early March, the North Vietnamese were genuinely concerned about the prospect of an invasion of North Viet-Nam by South Vietnamese forces supported by United States air power. It should be noted that these concerns were at their peak at the moment when the North Vietnamese knew South Viet-Nam was heavily engaged in both the Toan Thang and Lamson operations.

North Viet-Nam's concern can be measured not only in terms of its barrage of statements and charges that were made during this period, but most particularly by its call upon Communist China. The statements which Xuan Thuy made in Paris concerning possible Peking actions went well beyond anything Peking itself had uttered, and had a quality of "my big brother can lick your big brother" about them. Going even beyond this indication of nervousness, the North Vietnamese swallowed their patriotic pride and asked Chou En-lai to come to Hanoi in order to give substance to their threats.

system in the form of the AC-130 aircraft and a significantly higher toll of trucks in the performance of the U.S. air interdiction effort.

(5) Finally, some perspective should be given to the Lamson operation in relationship to the total continuing South Vietnamese military effort. The South Vietnamese forces which entered Laos in the Lamson operation constituted less than two per cent of the RVNAF effectives. It is not, therefore, a question of a major military offensive having been undertaken by major portions of the Vietnamese military establishment. It is true that the units which were employed in this action were among the very best of the South Vietnamese regular forces. At the same time it is also true that the North Vietnamese units which they encountered were among the very best of the regular North Vietnamese forces. From the casualty tolls it is clear that severe battles were fought in this operation and that in these battles the South Vietnamese exacted a higher toll from the enemy than they suffered themselves. It is also clear that, despite the major North Vietnamese military effort and despite certain isolated instances of panic, the South Vietnamese withdrew from their salient in very good order. None of their forces were cut off and entrapped inside Laos, although the North Vietnamese made a decisive effort to do just that. Instead the major South Vietnamese units which have been withdrawn, although they suffered significant casualties, have preserved their integrity, their fire power, and their military capabilities. The amount of equipment which had to be destroyed or abandoned before withdrawal was minuscule compared to the amount which was evacuated in good order. The number of men taken prisoner in the entire operation was similarly a tiny fraction of those who were actually engaged. In short, it was a very complex military maneuver mounted by numerically inferior forces deep into terrain that had long been held by the enemy, which inflicted extremely heavy casualties and was terminated in deliberate and orderly fashion.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20520

MEMO

3/26/71

TO: WH - Col. Kennedy
FROM: EA - W.H. Sullivan

This is the amended version of paragraph 4 which incorporates some thoughts and statements taken from the President's interview with Howard K. Smith.

EA:WHSullivan:ms

71 MAR 26 PM 6:51

WHITE HOUSE
SITUATION ROOM

(4) It should not be concluded that, because Lamson has been terminated, the North Vietnamese can quickly and effectively repair all the disruption that has taken place and achieve their logistics goal on throughputs. The disruptions in the Trail complex resulted not only from the physical blocking of various branches of the Trail, but more importantly from other considerations. First of all, the South Vietnamese forces found and destroyed, or called in U.S. air to destroy, very significant caches of supplies and weapons in the areas which they occupied. Secondly, the North Vietnamese military units which came into the Trail area to meet the South Vietnamese thrust consumed vast quantities of supplies, ammunition, and equipment which otherwise would have constituted part of the logistics throughput in the Trail structure. Additionally, when these units massed and became targets for U.S. air, many important weapons such as tanks, artillery pieces, etc., were destroyed in the air attacks. Finally, because North Vietnamese logistics units were engaged in the fighting and were badly decimated, their resiliency in establishing the logistics throughput has been degraded.

All these considerations must be viewed against the fact that the Trail structure is useful as a logistics

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system only during the dry season and that the dry season began very late this year. Therefore, assuming the rains come within the next few weeks, the communists will have very little time in which to attempt to make up all the weeks that have been lost to them in the Lamson operation. It should be remembered, moreover, that they will be attempting to do this under constant United States air harassment, which includes a significantly improved weapon system in the form of the AC-130 aircraft and a significantly higher toll of trucks in the performance of the U.S. air interdiction effort.

We expect these factors to have as their consequence a reduction in the future level of enemy activity in South Viet-Nam. This anticipated reduction in the enemy effort, coupled with the steady improvement in the effectiveness and confidence of South Viet-Nam's armed forces, will have a direct bearing on the rate of withdrawal of United States armed forces from South Viet-Nam. It will also mean an improved security situation for those United States forces which remain in South Viet-Nam. And, finally, of course, it will enhance the ability of the South Vietnamese to defend themselves after United States forces have left.

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BACKCHANNEL

TO AMB ELLSWORTH USPERMREP NATO BRUSSELS

FROM HENRY A. KISSINGER THE WHITE HOUSE

Henry J. Kissinger

(PER-0100)
In reply to your telegram asking for material to give Brosio about the Laos incursion, you may find the following helpful:

The South Vietnamese entered southern Laos in early February in order to disrupt the operation of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the southward flow of enemy supplies bound for Cambodia and South Vietnam. Hanoi's response to this operation, of course, is an important factor in assessing the outcome. If, for example, the North Vietnamese had chosen to evade the ARVN and to harass from a distance, then there would have been relatively little fighting and the operation would have been assessed more in terms of supplies destroyed or bottled up. But for several good reasons such as the importance of the area, the short supply lines to North Vietnam and the availability of reserve forces in southern North Vietnam -- the North Vietnamese undertook a major counterattack. They reinforced the area strongly with some of their best line divisions, not only to defend the trail system but to inflict a major defeat upon the ARVN as well. As a result, the most intensive fighting since 1968 developed.

An assessment of the operation consequently must begin with some judgments on the heavy fighting that ensued. In this respect, the ARVN acquitted itself rather well. It took some heavy losses -- about 1,000

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killed and 4,000 wounded. But enemy losses are reported at over 13,000 killed plus an unknown number of wounded. The equivalent of 13 enemy maneuver battalions are now considered ineffective and some 3,500 rear service personnel were estimated killed. Exaggerated reports of enemy losses have not been uncommon in Vietnam, but this time the figure may be low. It is important to remember that the enemy acted with the sort of aggressiveness he has not shown for several years and this meant considerable concentration with exposure to allied firepower. At the same time, the ARVN was supported by massive allied air strikes, including more than 1,200 B-52 sorties. Thus we believe that the ratio of enemy to friendly losses was at least 10 to 1, a very high price for Hanoi to pay. In short, we view the physical results of the fighting as a plus.

We also feel that a number of the North Vietnamese units stationed in southern Laos were intended for attacks against the northern part of South Vietnam. By engaging them in Laos, we have pre-empted enemy plans for the winter-spring campaign and avoided what could have been some very nasty engagements in South Vietnam.

It is too early to be precise about the impact on the enemy's logistical system, although some perspective can be provided. First of all, it seems clear that the North Vietnamese have to move more supplies south to Cambodia and South Vietnam this year than last in order to make up for

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the loss of three alternate means of supply: the Port of Sihanoukville; purchases on the Cambodian black market; and food obtained from areas under Viet Cong control in South Vietnam. We are reasonably certain, moreover, that the enemy was well behind last year's pace even before the Lam Son operation began.

Under these circumstances, the operation clearly has compounded Hanoi's problem. The southward flow of supplies was disrupted during the operation. For example, we have received reports indicating that the flow of supplies into South Vietnam and Cambodia is 75% below last year's estimate. In addition, the South Vietnamese reportedly captured or destroyed 4,900 individual weapons, 1,900 crew served weapons, 14,000 tons of ammunition (about 8 times the amount captured in Cambodia last year), and some 100 tanks. Nearly 300 trucks and vehicles were destroyed in direct support of the operation as well as some 4,600 others due to air interdiction efforts during this period. The fuel pipeline was cut in a number of places and many gallons of fuel destroyed. A related form of supply loss was the highly increased consumption of supplies by enemy units heavily engaged in the Lam Son area. Another potentially significant factor will be Hanoi's ability to compensate for the loss of trained rear service personnel who have been operating the trail system for years.

We should have a better idea of the overall logistical effects as the year progresses. We think that the short-fall in supplies will prevent the Communists from mounting any major offenses in South Vietnam

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during this dry season and will delay any offensive they might have planned over next dry season because it will take them that much longer to rebuild their stocks.

Despite the physical achievements of the operation, psychological aspects are equally important and we face some problems on this score. First, Hanoi is mounting its usual effective propaganda campaign by claiming total victory. We know, for example, that enemy units were under orders to launch all-out attacks on ARVN units when they began to withdraw. While this is a good military tactic, it is especially helpful to one's propaganda effort. Second, by concentrating on ARVN units withdrawing from Laos, our press reporting can only lead public opinion in the wrong direction; there are no compensatory reports on decimated or demoralized enemy units.

Until now, the South Vietnamese public has been optimistic about the operation, but the combination of Communist propaganda, public reactions in the U.S., and a few war stories could lead to a drop in South Vietnamese morale. The current psychological atmosphere is in some ways reminiscent of the 1968 Tet offensive. Hanoi extracted maximum political advantage in the short run; it was only a's time passed that the real physical results began to tell. This time, we must benefit from that lesson and not let ourselves be misled by surface appearances or by exaggerated stories.

It is also worth reflecting on how the initiative and the trend of battle in Vietnam have been reversed. Three years ago the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong had the initiative. They attacked into all the cities and they stood at the gates of the U. S. Embassy during the Tet offensive. This year the South Vietnamese attacked the most important Hanoi supply line. And this reversal has occurred over a time when one half of all American forces have been withdrawn from Vietnam.

The South Vietnamese operated without U. S. advisers and without the reassurance that U. S. ground units could enter Laos to render assistance if needed. The operation was conducted concurrently with a major operation in Cambodia and the South Vietnamese demonstrated the ability to mount a complex multi-division operation in conditions of difficult and unfamiliar terrain, adverse weather and against a well prepared opponent. The South Vietnamese forces acquitted themselves well militarily achieved the objectives they set for themselves and did so in the face of determined opposition. Although some units will require a period of rest and refitting, before they are again ready to enter combat, other units left Laos with high morale and a feeling they could handle whatever the North Vietnamese could throw against them. The operation has achieved its primary objective of carrying the fight to the enemy's sanctuaries and

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destroying his principal lines of communications and should buy the South Vietnamese additional time in which to strengthen their armed forces while permitting continued withdrawal of U. S. combat forces.

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TALKING POINTS ON LAM SON 719

The Situation

1. The South Vietnamese entered Southern Laos in early February in order to disrupt the operation of the Ho Chi Minh trail and the southward flow of enemy supplies bound for Cambodia and South Vietnam. Hanoi's response to this operation is an important factor in assessing the outcome. If, for example, the North Vietnamese had chosen to evade South Vietnamese forces, then there would have been relatively little fighting and the operation would have been assessed more in terms of supplies destroyed or bottled up. But for several good reasons, such as the importance of the area, the short supply lines to North Vietnam and the availability of reserve forces in southern North Vietnam -- the North Vietnamese undertook a major counter attack. They reinforced the area strongly with some of their best divisions, not only to defend the trail system but in an attempt to inflict a major defeat on the South Vietnamese as well. As a result, the most intensive fighting since 1968 developed.

Immediately Measurable Results

2. In terms of immediately measurable results, the weight of evidence is that South Vietnamese forces acquitted themselves very well in the six weeks of fighting which followed the initial incursion into Laos. Many of the ARVN units involved fought without respite for 40 days and, in the judgment of our field commanders, 18 out of the 22 battalions involved fought extremely well. Because of the intensity of the fighting, these units

did take some heavy losses - an estimated 1400 killed and 4700 wounded. But respective enemy losses were more than 13,000 killed and many were wounded. In terms of combat effectiveness, we estimate that the equivalent of 13 enemy maneuver battalions were rendered ineffective in the course of the fighting whereas only 4 ARVN battalions were put out of combat. Exaggerated reports of enemy losses in Vietnam have been numerous, but this time the figure may be low. The enemy acted more aggressively than he had in several years with the result that he exposed himself to concentrated allied firepower and air attack. Thus, we believe the ratio of enemy to friendly losses was at least 5 to 1, a very high price for Hanoi to pay.

Impact on the North Vietnamese Logistics System

3. It is too early to be precise about the impact of Lam Son 719 on the enemy's logistical system, although some perspective can be provided. The North Vietnamese had to move more supplies South to Cambodia and South Vietnam this year than last in order to make up for the loss of three major means of supply: the Port of Sihanoukville; purchases in Cambodia; and food obtained from areas which had previously been under Viet Cong control in South Vietnam but which are now firmly under the authority of the government. Moreover, he had suffered great losses in the Cambodian sanctuaries last year. Thus, the Ho Chi Minh Trail has become a more vital element in Hanoi's overall strategy than it

was in the past. But we are reasonably certain that the enemy was well behind last year's pace even before the Lam Son operation began.

The Lam Son operation clearly compounded Hanoi's problem. It disrupted the Ho Chi Minh trail complex, physically blocking various branches of the trail. South Vietnamese forces found or destroyed, or called in U.S. air power to destroy, some 4900 individual weapons, 1900 crew served weapons and thousands of tons of ammunition and other supplies. This was in addition to the vast quantity of supplies, ammunition and equipment which was consumed by the North Vietnamese in Laos instead of continuing down the trail to be used in South Vietnam or Cambodia. Moreover, when the North Vietnamese were obliged to engage ARVN forces in a fixed battle position, their units massed and became targets for concentrated Vietnamese firepower and U.S. air power which destroyed over 100 tanks and many artillery pieces, some 300 enemy trucks were destroyed directly in the operation and 4300 more were destroyed by air interdiction while the operations was in progress. Finally, because North Vietnamese logistics units were engaged in the fighting and were badly damaged, their resiliency in restoring the flow of supplies southward has been degraded. We estimate that some 3500 enemy rear service personnel vital to the operation of the trail logistics system were killed.

All these considerations must be viewed against the fact that the Ho Chi Minh trail complex is useful as a logistics system only during the dry season, which began later this year than usual. Therefore, when the rains come in the next four or five weeks, the Communists will have little time in which to attempt to make up all the weeks that have been lost to them in the Lam Son operation.

Forestalling Anticipated Enemy Offensive Activity in South Vietnam

4. A significant measure of Lam Son's achievements will be the degree it succeeds in forestalling enemy offensive activity. Viewed in conjunction with ARVN operations conducted simultaneously in Cambodia, these two efforts have precluded enemy offensive operations in South Vietnam during the current dry season. We believe that if Lam Son had not been undertaken, the North Vietnamese would have had the real option of launching major attacks against ARVN and U.S. forces located in the northern provinces of South Vietnam. Looking to the future, we believe that the short-fall in their supply efforts will prevent them from mounting major offensives in South Vietnam in this dry season and will delay any offensives they might have planned over the next dry season because it will take them that much longer to rebuild their stocks.

The combined military operations also have had the effect of engaging the enemy and keeping his forces distant from the population of South Vietnam. To illustrate this graphically, it should be pointed out that the Toan Thang operation North of Route 7 inside Cambodia is being fought against the First, Fifth, Seventh and Ninth North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Divisions, the same units which, at this time of the year in 1968, were operating inside the city limits of Saigon and the surrounding metropolitan area. As for the enemy units engaged in Lam Son -- the 304th, 308th, 320th and 324-B divisions -- in February and March of 1968, succeeded in capturing control of the city of Hue, entering the defenses of Danang, and generally harassing the population in the coastal regions. All of these enemy units were engaged this year away from population centers and, in fact, outside of South Vietnam itself.

Lam Son's Bearing on Vietnamization

5. Lam Son has underlined the progress which has been made in Vietnamization. Three years ago, ARVN units were engaged against enemy units in and close to South Vietnam's own population centers. Now ARVN units have shown themselves able to deal with the enemy threat in sanctuary areas without the support of U.S. ground combat forces or advisors while keeping their own territory pacified as well. They have demonstrated the ability to mount a complex multi-division operation in conditions of difficult and unfamiliar terrain, adverse weather, and against a well-prepared enemy. Moreover, this is being achieved with a U.S. presence which has diminished by some 260,000 men since 1969.

To illustrate this point further, it should be recognized that February and March are the months of the year in which the Communists traditionally mount the most extensive military operations in all regions of South Vietnam. This year they were given an additional incentive to do this because of that fact that such actions would harass the rear areas of ARVN operations in Laos and Cambodia and would distract attention from those two actions. Despite exhortations to their cadre to undertake such action within South Vietnam, they have been unable to date to mount anything which can even be considered a major successful high point. In fact, the situation within South Vietnam has been extraordinarily calm during the entire month of February and March with the exception of an action being taken by ARVN forces against Communist strongholds in the U Minh forest of Military Region IV.

The ability of the South Vietnamese forces to sustain security after the departure of United States forces will, in the long run, be measured by the balance of strength which exists between North and South Vietnamese forces. Our assessment is that the balance in the Indochina peninsula has swung in favor of the South Vietnamese. As Ambassador Bunker has reported, the operation has created confidence among the South Vietnamese in the ability of ARVN and pride in its accomplishments. There has been satisfaction in the fact that the fighting has/taken outside the borders of South Vietnam and that ARVN has been able to inflict for heavier casualties on the enemy.

We conclude, therefore, that the foundation for Vietnamization in South Vietnam is sound and that the process has been enhanced by the disruptions Lam Son has caused the enemy and by the increased confidence it has given the South Vietnamese in meeting their own defense needs.

The Current psychological atmosphere is in some ways reminiscent of the 1968 Tet offensive. Hanoi extracted maximum political advantage in the short run; it was only as time passed that the real physical results began to tell. This time, we must benefit from that lesson and not let ourselves be misled by surface appearances or by exaggerated stories.

The operation has achieved its primary objective of carrying the fight to the enemy's sanctuaries and destroying his principal lines of communications and should buy the South Vietnamese additional time in which to strengthen their armed forces while permitting continued withdrawal of U.S. combat forces.

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BACKCHANNEL

TO AMB ELLSWORTH USPERMREP NATO BRUSSELS

FROM HENRY A. KISSINGER THE WHITE HOUSE

Aug 70

(PER-0308)
In reply to your telegram asking for material to give Brosio about the Laos incursion, you may find the following helpful:

The South Vietnamese entered southern Laos in early February in order to disrupt the operation of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the southward flow of enemy supplies bound for Cambodia and South Vietnam. Hanoi's response to this operation, of course, is an important factor in assessing the outcome. If, for example, the North Vietnamese had chosen to evade the ARVN and to harass from a distance, then there would have been relatively little fighting and the operation would have been assessed more in terms of supplies destroyed or bottled up. But for several good reasons such as the importance of the area, the short supply lines to North Vietnam and the availability of reserve forces in southern North Vietnam -- the North Vietnamese undertook a major counterattack. They reinforced the area strongly with some of their best line divisions, not only to defend the trail system but to inflict a major defeat upon the ARVN as well. As a result, the most intensive fighting since 1968 developed.

An assessment of the operation consequently must begin with some judgments on the heavy fighting that ensued. In this respect, the ARVN acquitted itself rather well. It took some heavy losses -- about 1,000

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killed and 4,000 wounded. But enemy losses are reported at over 13,000 killed plus an unknown number of wounded. The equivalent of 13 enemy maneuver battalions are now considered ineffective and some 3,500 rear service personnel were estimated killed. Exaggerated reports of enemy losses have not been uncommon in Vietnam, but this time the figure may be low. It is important to remember that the enemy acted with the sort of aggressiveness he has not shown for several years and this meant considerable concentration with exposure to allied firepower. At the same time, the ARVN was supported by massive allied air strikes, including more than 1,200 B-52 sorties. Thus we believe that the ratio of enemy to friendly losses was at least 10 to 1, a very high price for Hanoi to pay. In short, we view the physical results of the fighting as a plus.

We also feel that a number of the North Vietnamese units stationed in southern Laos were intended for attacks against the northern part of South Vietnam. By engaging them in Laos, we have pre-empted enemy plans for the winter-spring campaign and avoided what could have been some very nasty engagements in South Vietnam.

It is too early to be precise about the impact on the enemy's logistical system, although some perspective can be provided. First of all, it seems clear that the North Vietnamese have to move more supplies south to Cambodia and South Vietnam this year than last in order to make up for

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the loss of three alternate means of supply: the Port of Sihanoukville; purchases on the Cambodian black market; and food obtained from areas under Viet Cong control in South Vietnam. We are reasonably certain, moreover, that the enemy was well behind last year's pace even before the Lam Son operation began.

Under these circumstances, the operation clearly has compounded Hanoi's problem. The southward flow of supplies was disrupted during the operation. For example, we have received reports indicating that the flow of supplies into South Vietnam and Cambodia is 75% below last year's estimate. In addition, the South Vietnamese reportedly captured or destroyed 4,900 individual weapons, 1,900 crew served weapons, 14,000 tons of ammunition (about 8 times the amount captured in Cambodia last year), and some 100 tanks. Nearly 300 trucks and vehicles were destroyed in direct support of the operation as well as some 4,600 others due to air interdiction efforts during this period. The fuel pipeline was cut in a number of places and many gallons of fuel destroyed. A related form of supply loss was the highly increased consumption of supplies by enemy units heavily engaged in the Lam Son area. Another potentially significant factor will be Hanoi's ability to compensate for the loss of trained rear service personnel who have been operating the trail system for years.

We should have a better idea of the overall logistical effects as the year progresses. We think that the short-fall in supplies will prevent the Communists from mounting any major offenses in South Vietnam

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during this dry season and will delay any offensive they might have planned over next dry season because it will take them that much longer to rebuild their stocks.

Despite the physical achievements of the operation, psychological aspects are equally important and we face some problems on this score. First, Hanoi is mounting its usual effective propaganda campaign by claiming total victory. We know, for example, that enemy units were under orders to launch all-out attacks on ARVN units when they began to withdraw. While this is a good military tactic, it is especially helpful to one's propaganda effort. Second, by concentrating on ARVN units withdrawing from Laos, our press reporting can only lead public opinion in the wrong direction; there are no compensatory reports on decimated or demoralized enemy units.

Until now, the South Vietnamese public has been optimistic about the operation, but the combination of Communist propaganda, public reactions in the U. S. , and a few war stories could lead to a drop in South Vietnamese morale. The current psychological atmosphere is in some ways reminiscent of the 1968 Tet offensive. Hanoi extracted maximum political advantage in the short run; it was only as time passed that the real physical results began to tell. This time, we must benefit from that lesson and not let ourselves be misled by surface appearances or by exaggerated stories.

It is also worth reflecting on how the initiative and the trend of battle in Vietnam have been reversed. Three years ago the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong had the initiative. They attacked into all the cities and they stood at the gates of the U. S. Embassy during the Tet offensive. This year the South Vietnamese attacked the most important Hanoi supply line. And this reversal has occurred over a time when one half of all American forces have been withdrawn from Vietnam.

The South Vietnamese operated without U. S. advisers and without the reassurance that U. S. ground units could enter Laos to render assistance if needed. The operation was conducted concurrently with a major operation in Cambodia and the South Vietnamese demonstrated the ability to mount a complex multi-division operation in conditions of difficult and unfamiliar terrain, adverse weather and against a well prepared opponent. The South Vietnamese forces acquitted themselves well militarily achieved the objectives they set for themselves and did so in the face of determined opposition. Although some units will require a period of rest and refitting, before they are again ready to enter combat, other units left Laos with high morale and a feeling they could handle whatever the North Vietnamese could throw against them. The operation has achieved its primary objective of carrying the fight to the enemy's sanctuaries and

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destroying his principal lines of communications and should buy the South Vietnamese additional time in which to strengthen their armed forces while permitting continued withdrawal of U. S. combat forces.

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(1) The Lamson operation should be viewed in conjunction with the Toan Thang operation in Cambodia. Both actions, taken together, had the effect of striking at the North Vietnamese, pulling them off balance, and precluding enemy offensive operations in South Viet-Nam during the current dry season. Moreover the Lamson operation probably preempts the possibility of successful enemy offensives in the northern provinces of South Viet-Nam during the summer of 1971 when it will be dry on the eastern side of the Annamite mountains.

Seen in this light the combined military operations have the effect of engaging the enemy and keeping his forces distant from the population of South Viet-Nam. To illustrate this graphically it should be pointed out that the Toan Thang operation north of Route 7 inside Cambodia is being fought against the First, Fifth, Seventh, and Ninth North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Divisions which are the same enemy units which, at this time of the year in 1968, were operating inside the city limits of Saigon, Cholon, and in the Capital Military District. Similarly, the North Vietnamese units which were engaged in Lamson -- the 304th, 308th, 320th, and 324-B Divisions -- were the same ones which, in February and March of 1968, succeeded in capturing control of the city of Hue, entering the defenses of Danang, and generally harassing the population in the coastal regions. It is important to note that both Toan Thang and Lamson are being fought in areas that are either very sparsely populated or not populated at all by civilians, and moreover, that both of them are being fought outside the territory of South Viet-Nam.

(2) If one is to view the Lamson operation in terms of the effectiveness of Vietnamization a look at the situation inside South Viet-Nam is instructive. February and March are the months of the year in which the communists traditionally mount their most extensive military operations in all regions of South Viet-Nam. This year they were given an additional incentive to do this because of the fact that such actions would harass the rear areas of the Toan Thang and Lamson operations and would distract attention from those two actions. Despite exhortation to their cadres to undertake such action within South Viet-Nam they have been unable to date to mount anything

which can even be considered a successful high point. In fact, the situation within South Viet-Nam has been extraordinarily calm during the entire months of February and March with the exception of the action being undertaken by ARVN forces against communist strongholds in the U Minh Forest of Military Region IV.

These observations suggest that the foundation for Vietnamization in South Viet-Nam is sound and that the Vietnamese security forces are capable of maintaining the situation in their home areas even while the bulk of South Viet-Nam's mobile forces are committed to expeditionary actions outside the country.

(3) The ability of the South Vietnamese forces to sustain security after the departure of United States forces will, in the long run, be measured by the balance of strength which exists between the RVNAF and the North Vietnamese forces. Our general assessment is that the balance in the Indochina peninsula, given the continuing presence of United States air power, has swung in favor of the South Vietnamese forces.

Substantial support for this conclusion comes from the North Vietnamese themselves. It seems quite clear that, in the months of February and early March, the North Vietnamese were genuinely concerned about the prospect of an invasion of North Viet-Nam by South Vietnamese forces supported by United States air power. It should be noted that these concerns were at their peak at the moment when the North Vietnamese knew South Viet-Nam was heavily engaged in both the Toan Thang and Lamson operations.

North Viet-Nam's concern can be measured not only in terms of its barrage of statements and charges that were made during this period, but most particularly by its call upon Communist China. The statements which Xuan Thuy made in Paris concerning possible Peking actions went well beyond anything Peking itself had uttered, and had a quality of "my big brother can lick your big brother" about them. Going even beyond this indication of nervousness, the North Vietnamese swallowed their patriotic pride and asked Chou En-lai to come to Hanoi in order to give substance to their threats.

system in the form of the AC-130 aircraft and a significantly higher toll of trucks in the performance of the U.S. air interdiction effort.

(5) Finally, some perspective should be given to the Lamson operation in relationship to the total continuing South Vietnamese military effort. The South Vietnamese forces which entered Laos in the Lamson operation constituted less than two per cent of the RVNAF effectives. It is not, therefore, a question of a major military offensive having been undertaken by major portions of the Vietnamese military establishment. It is true that the units which were employed in this action were among the very best of the South Vietnamese regular forces. At the same time it is also true that the North Vietnamese units which they encountered were among the very best of the regular North Vietnamese forces. From the casualty tolls it is clear that severe battles were fought in this operation and that in these battles the South Vietnamese exacted a higher toll from the enemy than they suffered themselves. It is also clear that, despite the major North Vietnamese military effort and despite certain isolated instances of panic, the South Vietnamese withdrew from their salient in very good order. None of their forces were cut off and entrapped inside Laos, although the North Vietnamese made a decisive effort to do just that. Instead the major South Vietnamese units which have been withdrawn, although they suffered significant casualties, have preserved their integrity, their fire power, and their military capabilities. The amount of equipment which had to be destroyed or abandoned before withdrawal was minuscule compared to the amount which was evacuated in good order. The number of men taken prisoner in the entire operation was similarly a tiny fraction of those who were actually engaged. In short, it was a very complex military maneuver mounted by numerically inferior forces deep into terrain that had long been held by the enemy, which inflicted extremely heavy casualties and was terminated in deliberate and orderly fashion.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20520

MEMO

3/26/71

TO: WH - Col. Kennedy
FROM: EA - W.H. Sullivan

This is the amended version of paragraph 4 which incorporates some thoughts and statements taken from the President's interview with Howard K. Smith.

EA:WHSullivan:ms

71 MAR 26 PM 6:51

WHITE HOUSE
SITUATION ROOM

(4) It should not be concluded that, because Lamson has been terminated, the North Vietnamese can quickly and effectively repair all the disruption that has taken place and achieve their logistics goal on throughputs. The disruptions in the Trail complex resulted not only from the physical blocking of various branches of the Trail, but more importantly from other considerations. First of all, the South Vietnamese forces found and destroyed, or called in U.S. air to destroy, very significant caches of supplies and weapons in the areas which they occupied. Secondly, the North Vietnamese military units which came into the Trail area to meet the South Vietnamese thrust consumed vast quantities of supplies, ammunition, and equipment which otherwise would have constituted part of the logistics throughput in the Trail structure. Additionally, when these units massed and became targets for U.S. air, many important weapons such as tanks, artillery pieces, etc., were destroyed in the air attacks. Finally, because North Vietnamese logistics units were engaged in the fighting and were badly decimated, their resiliency in establishing the logistics throughput has been degraded.

All these considerations must be viewed against the fact that the Trail structure is useful as a logistics

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system only during the dry season and that the dry season began very late this year. Therefore, assuming the rains come within the next few weeks, the communists will have very little time in which to attempt to make up all the weeks that have been lost to them in the Lamson operation. It should be remembered, moreover, that they will be attempting to do this under constant United States air harassment, which includes a significantly improved weapon system in the form of the AC-130 aircraft and a significantly higher toll of trucks in the performance of the U.S. air interdiction effort.

We expect these factors to have as their consequence a reduction in the future level of enemy activity in South Viet-Nam. This anticipated reduction in the enemy effort, coupled with the steady improvement in the effectiveness and confidence of South Viet-Nam's armed forces, will have a direct bearing on the rate of withdrawal of United States armed forces from South Viet-Nam. It will also mean an improved security situation for those United States forces which remain in South Viet-Nam. And, finally, of course, it will enhance the ability of the South Vietnamese to defend themselves after United States forces have left.

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BACKCHANNEL

TO AMB ELLSWORTH USPERMREP NATO BRUSSELS

FROM HENRY A. KISSINGER THE WHITE HOUSE

Henry J. Kissinger

(SECRET)
In reply to your telegram asking for material to give Brosio about the Laos incursion, you may find the following helpful:

The South Vietnamese entered southern Laos in early February in order to disrupt the operation of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the southward flow of enemy supplies bound for Cambodia and South Vietnam. Hanoi's response to this operation, of course, is an important factor in assessing the outcome. If, for example, the North Vietnamese had chosen to evade the ARVN and to harass from a distance, then there would have been relatively little fighting and the operation would have been assessed more in terms of supplies destroyed or bottled up. But for several good reasons such as the importance of the area, the short supply lines to North Vietnam and the availability of reserve forces in southern North Vietnam -- the North Vietnamese undertook a major counterattack. They reinforced the area strongly with some of their best line divisions, not only to defend the trail system but to inflict a major defeat upon the ARVN as well. As a result, the most intensive fighting since 1968 developed.

An assessment of the operation consequently must begin with some judgments on the heavy fighting that ensued. In this respect, the ARVN acquitted itself rather well. It took some heavy losses -- about 1,000

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killed and 4,000 wounded. But enemy losses are reported at over 13,000 killed plus an unknown number of wounded. The equivalent of 13 enemy maneuver battalions are now considered ineffective and some 3,500 rear service personnel were estimated killed. Exaggerated reports of enemy losses have not been uncommon in Vietnam, but this time the figure may be low. It is important to remember that the enemy acted with the sort of aggressiveness he has not shown for several years and this meant considerable concentration with exposure to allied firepower. At the same time, the ARVN was supported by massive allied air strikes, including more than 1,200 B-52 sorties. Thus we believe that the ratio of enemy to friendly losses was at least 10 to 1, a very high price for Hanoi to pay. In short, we view the physical results of the fighting as a plus.

We also feel that a number of the North Vietnamese units stationed in southern Laos were intended for attacks against the northern part of South Vietnam. By engaging them in Laos, we have pre-empted enemy plans for the winter-spring campaign and avoided what could have been some very nasty engagements in South Vietnam.

It is too early to be precise about the impact on the enemy's logistical system, although some perspective can be provided. First of all, it seems clear that the North Vietnamese have to move more supplies south to Cambodia and South Vietnam this year than last in order to make up for

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the loss of three alternate means of supply: the Port of Sihanoukville; purchases on the Cambodian black market; and food obtained from areas under Viet Cong control in South Vietnam. We are reasonably certain, moreover, that the enemy was well behind last year's pace even before the Lam Son operation began.

Under these circumstances, the operation clearly has compounded Hanoi's problem. The southward flow of supplies was disrupted during the operation. For example, we have received reports indicating that the flow of supplies into South Vietnam and Cambodia is 75% below last year's estimate. In addition, the South Vietnamese reportedly captured or destroyed 4,900 individual weapons, 1,900 crew served weapons, 14,000 tons of ammunition (about 8 times the amount captured in Cambodia last year), and some 100 tanks. Nearly 300 trucks and vehicles were destroyed in direct support of the operation as well as some 4,600 others due to air interdiction efforts during this period. The fuel pipeline was cut in a number of places and many gallons of fuel destroyed. A related form of supply loss was the highly increased consumption of supplies by enemy units heavily engaged in the Lam Son area. Another potentially significant factor will be Hanoi's ability to compensate for the loss of trained rear service personnel who have been operating the trail system for years.

We should have a better idea of the overall logistical effects as the year progresses. We think that the short-fall in supplies will prevent the Communists from mounting any major offenses in South Vietnam

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during this dry season and will delay any offensive they might have planned over next dry season because it will take them that much longer to rebuild their stocks.

Despite the physical achievements of the operation, psychological aspects are equally important and we face some problems on this score. First, Hanoi is mounting its usual effective propaganda campaign by claiming total victory. We know, for example, that enemy units were under orders to launch all-out attacks on ARVN units when they began to withdraw. While this is a good military tactic, it is especially helpful to one's propaganda effort. Second, by concentrating on ARVN units withdrawing from Laos, our press reporting can only lead public opinion in the wrong direction; there are no compensatory reports on decimated or demoralized enemy units.

Until now, the South Vietnamese public has been optimistic about the operation, but the combination of Communist propaganda, public reactions in the U.S., and a few war stories could lead to a drop in South Vietnamese morale. The current psychological atmosphere is in some ways reminiscent of the 1968 Tet offensive. Hanoi extracted maximum political advantage in the short run; it was only a's time passed that the real physical results began to tell. This time, we must benefit from that lesson and not let ourselves be misled by surface appearances or by exaggerated stories.

It is also worth reflecting on how the initiative and the trend of battle in Vietnam have been reversed. Three years ago the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong had the initiative. They attacked into all the cities and they stood at the gates of the U. S. Embassy during the Tet offensive. This year the South Vietnamese attacked the most important Hanoi supply line. And this reversal has occurred over a time when one half of all American forces have been withdrawn from Vietnam.

The South Vietnamese operated without U. S. advisers and without the reassurance that U. S. ground units could enter Laos to render assistance if needed. The operation was conducted concurrently with a major operation in Cambodia and the South Vietnamese demonstrated the ability to mount a complex multi-division operation in conditions of difficult and unfamiliar terrain, adverse weather and against a well prepared opponent. The South Vietnamese forces acquitted themselves well militarily achieved the objectives they set for themselves and did so in the face of determined opposition. Although some units will require a period of rest and refitting, before they are again ready to enter combat, other units left Laos with high morale and a feeling they could handle whatever the North Vietnamese could throw against them. The operation has achieved its primary objective of carrying the fight to the enemy's sanctuaries and

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destroying his principal lines of communications and should buy the South Vietnamese additional time in which to strengthen their armed forces while permitting continued withdrawal of U.S. combat forces.

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JACKSON 3-28 WA

1ST ADD JACKSON WASHINGTON 207A XXX SYSTEM.

"MY IMMEDIATE CONCERN," JACKSON SAID IN HIS PREPARED SENATE STATEMENT, "... IS THAT THE PACE OF EVENTS MAY OVERTAKE OUR EFFORTS TO CONCLUDE A SALT AGREEMENT COVERING THE WHOLE RANGE OF SYSTEMS UNDER CONSIDERATION. OUR PAST EXPERIENCE IN ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS DOES NOT ENCOURAGE THE VIEW THAT WE HAVE THE TIME IN WHICH TO RESOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS THAT SHOULD BE

DISCUSSED

208A

JACKSON 3-28 WA

1ST ADD JACKSON WASHINGTON 207A V SYFTZM.

"MY IMMEDIATE CONCERN," JACKSON SAID IN HIS PREPARED SENATE MEMORANDUM

MM

208A

HANOI 3-28 NX

NIGHT LD

WITH INDOCHINA

TOKYO (UPI)--NORTH VIETNAM SAID SUNDAY THAT 15,400 SOUTH VIETNAMESE DIED IN THE LAOS INCURSION, NEARLY THREE TIMES THE TOTAL CASUALTIES REPORTED BY SAIGON.

IN A BROADCAST MONITORED IN TOKYO, HANOI'S VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY SAID THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE DRIVE WAS "COMPLETELY SMASHED" BY "LIBERATION FORCES".

SOUTH VIETNAM HAS SAID IT ACCOMPLISHED ITS MISSION OF DISRUPTING COMMUNIST TRAFFIC ON THE HO CHI MINH SUPPLY TRAIL AND THAT ITS TOTAL CASUALTIES WERE 5,642 DEAD, WOUNDED OR MISSING.

THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ALSO SAID THERE WERE ABOUT 24,000 GOVERNMENT TROOPS IN THE INCURSION. HANOI SAID THE FIGURE WAS 45,000.

THE NORTH VIETNAMESE BROADCAST SAID "LIBERATION FORCES" CAPTURED 1,000 MEN IN ADDITION TO THOSE KILLED AND "WIPED OUT TWO PARATROOPS BRIGADES .. DECIMATED AN INFANTRY REGIMENT ... WIPED OUT EIGHT ARTILLERY BATTALIONS AND BADLY MAULED FIVE OTHERS."

THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH VIETNAM LOST 496 PLANES, 586 MILITARY VEHICLES INCLUDING 318 TANKS AND ARMORED CARS, AND 144 ARTILLERY PIECES, THE BROADCAST SAID IN ITS REPORT ON THE INCURSION.

"BY MARCH 23, THE WHOLE OPERATION WAS COMPLETELY SMASHED," THE REPORT SAID. "THE ENEMY'S TACTICS IN THIS OPERATION CONSISTED IN USING HELICOPTERS AS THE MAIN MEANS OF MOBILITY, ARMORED CARS AS THE STRIKE FORCE AND ARTILLERY AS SUPPORT. ALL THIS WAS MASSIVELY SUPPORTED BY AIRCRAFT.

"THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE U.S. PUPPETS INITIALLY TOTALED MORE THAN 30,000 MEN SUPPORTED BY MORE THAN 300 TANKS AND ARMORED CARS AND OVER 250 ARTILLERY PIECES.

"WHEN THE OPERATION GOT BOGGED DOWN, THE ENEMY SENT REINFORCEMENTS FROM CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM. THE TOTAL FORCE INVOLVED WAS IN THE AREA OF 45,000 MEN AT THE PEAK OF THE OPERATION."

THE ALLIED FORCES, HANOI SAID, "INITIALLY PLANNED TO CARRY ON THE OPERATION UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF THE RAINY SEASON ... (BUT) HARDLY HAD THE OPERATION BEGUN THAN THE U.S. AND PUPPETS ALREADY RAN INTO BIG DIFFICULTIES IN THE DEPLOYMENT OF THEIR TROOPS AS WELL AS IN THE TRANSPORTATION OF WAR SUPPLIES."

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JACKSON 3-28 WA

URGENT

WASHINGTON (UPI) --SEN. HENRY M. JACKSON PROPOSED SUNDAY THAT THE UNITED STATES NEGOTIATE WITH THE SOVIET UNION AN INTERIM ONE-YEAR ARMS CONTROL PACT TO GIVE THE TWO SUPERPOWERS TIME TO REACH A LASTING SETTLEMENT AT THE STRATEGIC ARMS CONTROL TALKS (SALT) IN VIENNA.

THE WASHINGTON DEMOCRAT, WHO SAID HE WOULD MAKE HIS PROPOSAL ON THE SENATE FLOOR MONDAY, ARGUED THAT THE SHORT-TERM AGREEMENT WAS NECESSARY TO OFFSET MAJOR RUSSIAN ADVANCES BEING MADE IN OFFENSIVE MISSILES.

IF CONTINUED, JACKSON SAID, THESE ADVANCES COULD OVERSHADOW THE U. S. ABILITY TO RETALIATE WITH A SECOND STRIKE SHOULD THE SOVIET UNION DECIDE TO LAUNCH A NUCLEAR ATTACK AGAINST THE UNITED STATES.

JACKSON DISCLOSED PLANS TO MAKE HIS PROPOSAL TO THE SENATE DURING AN INTERVIEW ON ABC'S ISSUES AND ANSWERS TELEVISION PROGRAM.

HE ALSO RELEASED TO THE PRESS THE PREPARED STATEMENT HE WILL MAKE TO THE SENATE MONDAY.

JACKSON SAID HE WOULD PROPOSE THAT THE UNITED STATES SEEK TO SIGN WITH RUSSIA A FOUR-POINT, ONE-YEAR PACT CALLING FOR:

--THE UNITED STATES TO IMMEDIATELY HALT THE DEPLOYMENT OF MINUTEMAN III MISSILES WITH THEIR MIRV (MULTIPLE INDEPENDENTLY TARGETABLE RE-ENTRY) WARHEADS.

--THE SOVIETS TO HALT IMMEDIATELY THE DEPLOYMENT OF NEW INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILES, INCLUDING THOSE NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

--BOTH NATIONS TO RETAIN THE RIGHT TO PROTECT THEIR LAND-BASED FORCES SO LONG AS THEY DO NOT ADD TO THEIR OFFENSIVE POTENTIAL.

--NEITHER SIDE BE PERMITTED TO DEPLOY A POPULATION-DEFENDING ANTIBALLISTIC MISSILE SYSTEM

--NEITHER SIDE BE PERMITTED TO DEPLOY

--NEITHER SIDE BE PERMITTED TO DEPLOY A POPULATION-DEFENDING ANTIBALLISTIC MISSILE SYSTEM.

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JACKSON 3-28 WA

1ST ADD JACKSON WASHINGTON 207A XXX SYSTEM.

"MY IMMEDIATE CONCERN," JACKSON SAID IN HIS PREPARED SENATE STATEMENT, "... IS THAT THE PACE OF EVENTS MAY OVERTAKE OUR EFFORTS TO CONCLUDE A SALT AGREEMENT COVERING THE WHOLE RANGE OF SIZES UNDER CONSIDERATION

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BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L SPECAT EXCLUSIVE FOR MOORER INFO
MCCAIN FROM WEYAND (CORDS)
SUBJ: RVN RALLIES IN SUPPORT OF LAM SONG 719 (U)
ON 26 MARCH DURING LAND TO TILLER CEREMONIES, PRESIDENT
THIEU INFORMED AMBASSADOR BUNKER THAT THERE WOULD BE COUNTRY-
WIDE RALLIES ON SUNDAY 28 MARCH IN ORDER TO LET THE PEOPLE
DEMONSTRATE THEIR SUPPORT OF LAM SON 719. INITIAL REPORTS
OF THESE ACTIVITIES ARE SUMMARIZED BELOW. ANY FURTHER INFORMATION
OF SIGNIFICANCE WILL BE PROVIDED AS AVAILABLE.
MR 1: NO DEMONSTRATIONS/RALLIES REPORTED.
MR 2: TUYEN DUC PROVINCE: IN DALAT CITY, 2000 TO 3000
SCHOOL CHILDREN ATTENDED A RALLY IN THE MARKET SQUARE BETWEEN 0930
AND 1145 HRS IN SUPPORT OF OUT-COUNTRY OPERATIONS. IN PHU YEN
PROVINCE, TUY HOA (CITY), 1000 PEOPLE ATTENDED A SIMILAR RALLY IN
THE LOCAL THEATER.
MR 3: GIA DINH PROVINCE HELD A RALLY 0930 HRS TO 1040 HRS
ATTENDED BY AN ESTIMATED 3000 PEOPLE. THE RALLY WAS CHAIRED BY THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE GIA DINH PROVINCE COUNCIL. SPEECHES WERE MADE
SUPPORTING THE GVN OPERATIONS IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA.
MR 4: RALLIES WERE HELD IN SIX PROVINCES: DINH TUONG, GO CONG,
KIEN HOA, VINH LONG, AN XUYEN, KIEN PHONG. ALL HAD NATIONALISTIC
THEMES AND LASTED FROM ONE TO TWO HOURS. THESE RALLIES WERE
SPONSORED BY PROVINCE OFFICIALS AND ATTENDANCE VARIED FROM 100 TO
3000 PEOPLE. A RALLY IS SCHEDULED ALSO FOR PHONG DINH PROVINCE ON
29 MARCH 71.
SAIGON: AT 0800 HRS 28 MARCH, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SAIGON CITY
COUNCIL LED A DEMONSTRATION IN FRONT OF THE CITY HALL, IN SUPPORT OF
OPERATIONS IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA. NUMEROUS SPEECHES WERE DELIVERED
REMINDING THE PEOPLE OF THEIR OBLIGATION TO SUPPORT THE FIGHTING MEN

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AND DENOUNCING THOSE AGAINST THE OUT-COUNTRY OPERATIONS. BANNERS WERE DISPLAYED DENOUNCING MR. NGO CONG DUC AND MR. HO NGHOC NHUAN, MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AS "HENCHMEN OF COMMUNISM" AND URGING "DOWN WITH THE POLITICAL LEADERS STABBING THE COMBATANTS IN THE BACK" AND "STRIKE TO DEATH THE TWO UNDERGROUND COMMUNISTS." THE PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION ENDED AT ABOUT 0900 HRS. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, 6 PEOPLE ON 3 HONDAS THREW MOLOTOV COCKTAILS AT THE TIN SANG NEWSPAPER OFFICE, OWNED BY THE SAME MR. NGO CONG DUC, RESULTING IN MINOR DAMAGE. LEAFLETS WERE ALSO DISTRIBUTED IN THE AREA WITH THE SAME STATEMENTS AS ON THE BANNERS. GP-4

BT

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ANNOTES

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TOP SECRET

Impact of the Lam Son Operation

Thus far the effects of Lam Son have been viewed in the overly simplistic terms of whether trucks continued moving on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. We know trucks were moving, though at a substantially reduced rate in the operational areas. Lam Son was never intended to stop the movement of all trucks. Fundamental to an assessment of Lam Son, however, is what the ultimate effectiveness of the movement of these trucks is in terms of the enemy's ability to continue or escalate the war in South Vietnam and Cambodia. If the trucks are supplying troops in South Laos, then they cannot be moving supplies to troops in South Vietnam or Cambodia.

the most useful way to assess the results of Lam Son 719 is in terms of enemy requirements

On these grounds, there are some rather striking conclusions to be drawn about the effects of Lam Son. At the beginning of this year enemy supplies were low and one might assume that matching last year's logistics effort would meet this year's requirements, at least for sustaining a protracted war effort. However, in 1971 the enemy must meet a long list of new demands on his logistics system in addition to the output he achieved last year. These new demands must be met in 1971 merely to sustain a protracted war.

The new demands are the supply increases necessary to compensate for:

- (1) the loss of Sihanoukville,
- (2) logistics demands for support of the greatly enlarged force structure stationed in South Laos in anticipation of a South Vietnamese incursion,
- (3) heavy demands of combat consumption by enemy troops defending the trail against the South Vietnamese operation,
- (4) the tonnanges of supplies in caches destroyed by Lam Son,
- (5) increased tonnages destroyed by bombing in the 1970-71 dry season versus the 1969-70 dry season.

The loss of Sihanoukville alone placed an enormous additional logistics burden on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. At least one-third and possibly one-half

TOP SECRET

of the enemy's supply requirement for South Vietnam was met by shipments through Sihanoukville and purchases on the Cambodian economy. If the tonnages formerly shipped through Sihanoukville go down the Trail they must be multiplied by a factor of four to five to sustain the same output because of consumption and losses to interdiction along the Trail.

When all of these new requirements are added together, they indicate that the enemy must increase his trail input effort by at least 50% this year merely to come out where he did last year. His trail output to Cambodia and South Vietnam must be about one-third more than last year's.

To date we are reasonably confident that output from the trail into South Vietnam and Cambodia is only one-third last year's output. It is too early to say what the final results will be, but we do know that:

- Even a record enemy logistics effort through the rest of the dry season is likely to leave the enemy significantly short of the supplies he needs in 1971 to conduct a protracted war effort. This means major offensives of country-wide impact are unlikely. It means the Vietnamese government will have the opportunity in 1971 to continue to achieve pacification gains against a low level of enemy activity.
- Supplies will arrive too late for offensive activity in the 1971 dry season, the usual time of enemy highpoint activity. Thus far in 1971 enemy activity in Cambodia and South Vietnam has fallen below the level of similar periods in past years.
- The enemy will have fewer options in 1972. Because it takes several months of the dry season to attain a logistics outflow rate to Cambodia and South Vietnam, the failure of the enemy to build up large stockpiles in 1971 will mean that it will be late in the dry season (the dry season ends about May 15) or into the wet season in 1972 before his logistics capabilities would permit a major offensive. This, of course, assumes the enemy can successfully solve the logistics problems in 1972 he was unable to solve in 1971.
- Local supply shortages minimize the possibility of major offensives this year in MR 2 and MR 1 except across the DMZ where the enemy

is less logistically constrained. Lam Son would appear to have preempted an offensive this dry season in MR I or MR 2 by preventing the enemy from establishing forward-based stocks in northern South Vietnam and the adjoining Laos border areas.

While the logistics impact of the Lam Son operation is very important, it also means that Hanoi must maintain large forces in South Laos to protect its logistics corridor since the credibility of the South Vietnamese threat is now even greater. Therefore, these forces (a portion of which were formerly in South Vietnam) cannot be used to threaten Vietnamization in South Vietnam. Another near-term benefit of the operation is that enemy units destined to conduct offensive activity in Cambodia and the highlands of South Vietnam were held in Laos to cope with ARVN. A possible four enemy regiments were put out of commission by the combat.

The combination of enemy manpower and logistics setbacks resulting from the Lam Son operation make it unlikely that the enemy will mount major offensive activities in South Vietnam or in Cambodia, despite evidence that the enemy planned to mount such offensives.