

DOCUMENT WITHDRAWAL RECORD (NIXON PROJECT)

DOCUMENT NUMBER	DOCUMENT TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE OR CORRESPONDENTS	DATE	RESTRICTION
1	Memo w/attach	Kissinger to the President	June 8, 1971	B
2	Memo w/attach	Helms to Kissinger	9 April 1971	B
3	Memo w/attach	Helms to Kissinger	5 Mar 1971	B
4	Memo w/attach	Kissinger to the President DECLASSIFIED <i>per RUC 2006/06/13</i>	March 20, 1971	B
5	Memo w/attach	Robinson to Haig	April 21, 1971	D
6	Memo	Smith to Kissinger	n/d	B

FILE GROUP TITLE

National Security Council, Vietnam Subject Files

BOX NUMBER

82

Folder Title

VIETNAM Operations in Laos and Cambodia Vol. IV (Folder 1 of 2)

RESTRICTION CODES

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[02/4/4]

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~

INFORMATION
March 20, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

✓
THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...
A

SUBJECT: Lam Son

You will be asked for your assessment of the Lam Son operation. Thus far the effects of Lam Son have been viewed in the overly simplistic terms of whether trucks are moving on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. We know trucks are moving, though at a substantially reduced rate south of operational areas. Lam Son was never intended to stop the movement of trucks.

What is 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.

On these grounds, there are some rather striking conclusions to be drawn about the effects of Lam Son.

We assume that at the beginning of this year enemy supplies were low and that his supply effort last year roughly approximates the logistics flow that will be required to support a protracted war in 1971.

But we know that 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 merely to sustain a protracted war in 1971.

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13526, Section 3.5

Per RAC 2008/06/13
By NARA, Date 1980 11

(P. 1 of 7)

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

- (1) the loss of Sihanoukville,
- (2) new logistics demands for non-combat consumption to support the greatly enlarged force structure stationed in South Laos in fear of the kind of operation Lam Son has proved to be,
- (3) new demands for combat consumption by enemy troops defending the trail against Lam Son,
- (4) the tonnages of supplies in caches destroyed by Lam Son,
- (5) increased tonnage 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 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 arrive at the total tonnage necessary to feed the additional logistics and combat troops in South Laos, to supply the POL for trucks, etc.

When all of these new requirements are added together -- to offset Sihanoukville, direct consumption and destruction caused by Lam Son, etc. -- 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 must be about one-third more than last year's.

Yet, 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:

(p. 2-97)

-- Even a record enemy logistics effort through the rest of the dry season, starting today, 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.

Specialist attached

-- 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 that 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 him to launch 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 possibility of major offensives this year in MR 2 and MR 1 except across the DMZ where the enemy is not logistically constrained. Lam Son would appear to have preempted an MR 1 or MR 2 offensive this dry season by preventing the enemy from establishing forward-based stocks in northern South Vietnam and the adjoining Laos border areas.

While the logistics benefits to Lam Son are very important, another key result of the operation was that it made credible the threat Hanoi has maintained up to 30,000 combat forces in South Laos in 1970 to meet. Hanoi must maintain large forces in South Laos to protect its logistics corridor as long as friendly forces pose a credible threat to the Trail.

Thus, a key long range benefit to Lam Son is that the enemy will feel some compulsion to continue to maintain large combat forces in South

~~TOP SECRET~~

4

Laos. Therefore, these forces (a portion of which were formerly in South Vietnam) cannot be used to threaten Vietnamization in South Vietnam.

A near term benefit to Lam Son is that enemy units destined to conduct offensive activity in Cambodia and the highlands of South Vietnam have been held up to cope with ARVN. A possible four enemy regiments have been put out of combat commission by Lam Son. These results complement the logistics benefits to Lam Son in making it unlikely that the enemy will mount major offensive activities in MRs 1 or 2 of South Vietnam and in Cambodia, despite evidence that the enemy planned to mount such offensives.

The assumptions and calculations underlying the estimates in this memorandum are at Tab A.

~~TOP SECRET~~

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TAB A

~~TOP SECRET~~

Assumptions and Quantitative Estimates for
Assessing the Effects of Lam Son

Assumptions

1. The enemy's planned Trail input (plus Sihanoukville) for the 1969-70 dry season was intended to support the protracted war strategy he pursued in 1970.
2. Stockpiles remain unchanged. It is probably safe to say that stockpiles at the outset of the 1970-71 dry season were at minimum levels. Thus it is unlikely that the enemy could support combat activities in 1971 by running down his stockpiles. It is possible however that he could build up his stockpiles this year. Therefore, any conclusion we draw as to the level of combat activity the 1970-71 input could support would have to be qualified to recognize the possibility that he could elect to build up his stockpiles in 1971.
3. The enemy's South Laos logistics system, outside the variables identified above, is operating at about the same level of effectiveness this year as it was last year. In other words, whatever gains the enemy has obtained from expanding his road network have been offset by improvements in our bombing (outside the additional gunship losses explicitly accounted for in the model), by our SGU-type operations and by the increased throughput the expanded system must support -- i. e., the load factor is the same this year as last.
4. Other sources of supplies by sea and from commercial sources, are utilized by the enemy this year to the same extent as last year. We know the enemy has sharply increased his efforts to infiltrate supplies by trawler from North Vietnam and on at least one occasion has succeeded. His many failures have been well documented. Some small coastal supply efforts may have taken place from Thailand. Against this, however, must be weighed the decreased enemy access to South Vietnam's resources that has resulted from the continued expansion of GVN control of the rural population from 48% to 67% in the last year. It is probably safe to say the enemy has not been able to substantially increase sea-borne infiltration, although we should continue to insure that naval operations preclude this.

~~TOP SECRET~~

(P. 547)

5. We assume that the logistics requirement to offset the Sihanoukville increment is in part attributable to Lam Son in that were it not for the threat of ARVN attacks against the Trail, a threat made credible by Lam Son, the high (75% to 80%) proportion of non ordnance input (to sustain the enemy's forces in South Laos) relative to ordnance input would not be required.

Preliminary Quantitative Estimates

Preliminary quantitative estimates on the additional demands on the logistics system are:

-- Sihanoukville offset and non-combat supply requirements for added forces in South Laos (items 1 and 2 above): 21,000 tons of ordnance transited Sihanoukville from late 1966 through early 1969. Approximately 5,000 tons of this total arrived in a time frame that could be attributed to the inflow for 1970 activities. We know that 17% to 25% of the input onto the Trail consists of ordnance, the rest being POL and food for troops and transport on the Trail. To get 5,000 tons through this year would require an inflow of 20,000 tons if we use the conservative 25% ordnance figure. Another 5% or 1,000 tons should be added if we use CIA's conservative estimate of the supplies lost to bombing in South Laos. Total 21,000 tons.

-- Ammunition consumption by enemy troops coping with Lam Son is estimated by DIA to be 15 tons per day. Assuming 60 days of operations, 900 tons will be consumed to counter Lam Son.

-- As of March 16, 1971, 2,118 tons of supplies had been destroyed by the Lam Son operation.

-- 1970-71 additional losses to improved bombing are estimated on the basis that thus far this year truck losses are 62% above last year's (6,198 vs. 3,833). Applying this factor to last year's entire total, enemy truck losses this year will increase by 3,000 over last year. If this figure is multiplied by two tons (or 50%) of each truck load (DIA uses 3 tons), the additional input increment to offset this loss is 6,000 tons.

Total additional requirements for 1971 activities versus 1970 activities are:

21,000
900
2,118
6,000
<u>30,018</u>

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We know that about 60,000 tons were put into the Trail system last year to support the protracted war in 1970. We will take this figure and add to it estimates of the additional demands identified above to arrive at a total logistics input requirement for this dry season to sustain a protracted war in 1971.

If the total requirement exceeds our estimate of the capacity of the system, or more accurately what the enemy appears willing to pay the price to put through the system, then he would be unable to support a protracted war in 1971 at 1970's level of activity. Alternatively, even if he can reach the total requirement for protracted war, he would not be able to throughput the supplies to support higher levels of activity, and this in itself would be extremely important to us and a justification for Lam Son.

The total additional supplies over last year needed to meet all of these new 1970-71 dry season input requirements is 30,018 tons or half the enemy's 1969-70 input. This means, according to the conservative calculations spelled out above and still subject to refinement, the enemy will have to increase his logistics input by 50% or to 90,000 tons this dry season compared with 60,000 tons last year. to sustain logistically his protracted war effort.

Through March 9th, 41,301 tons had been put into the Trail. If we grant the enemy the highest capability he has demonstrated (400 tons per day input in January 1971), we conclude that if he sustains his logistics operations at this level through April 30th or for another 52 days he can input 20,800 additional tons into South Laos. A lower rate of input, at 200 tons per day through June 30th when the monsoon becomes unbearable, would add another 12,000 tons. This would bring his total tonnage to 74,101 for the dry season, significantly short of the 90,000 necessary to sustain a protracted war at 1970 supply input levels.

(P-767)

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

DATE 22 MAR 1971 CONTROL NO.

FROM: Kearney

TO:

	00	Admiral Moorner
✓	01	LtGeneral Knowles
✓	02	Captain Train
	04	Mr. Kearney
	03	LCdr Francis
✓	01A	RAdm Robinson
✓	01B	Colonel Davis
	01C	Captain Hilton
	01D	Colonel MacDonald
	01E	Colonel Wickham
	01F	Captain Valentine
	01G	Commander MacKercher
	05	LColonel Ratliff
	06	Major Salmon
	05A	Lt. Buckles
	03A	YNC Brown
	03B	YNC Kissel

attached 16 MAR
WHITE HOUSE talking
paper is good - but
dated

JR
Davis

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET

I hope the attached talking
paper will be of assistance
to you.

Herbert G. Klein

WH 5979

LAM SON 719 -- The South Vietnamese
Operation in Laos

Objectives

- This operation is "limited in time as well as in space, with the clear and unique objective of disrupting the supply and infiltration network of the Communist North Vietnamese troops lying in the Laotian territory, and which for many years was occupied by the Communist North Vietnamese and used to launch attacks against our country." (From a statement by President Nguyen Van Thieu - February 8, 1971)
- The operation is intended to reduce North Vietnamese capability to mount an offensive and to strengthen South Vietnam's ability to defend itself as U.S. forces are withdrawn under the Vietnamization program.
- U.S. supplementary air support has the objectives of helping to protect the lives of U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam and enhancing Vietnamization. (From a statement by a spokesman for the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Saigon, February 8, 1971)
- The operation is not an expansion of the war but rather an effort to end it sooner. It was never intended to occupy territory.

Timing

Prior to May 1970, the Ho Chi Minh Trail supplied the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces in the northern half of South Vietnam. In the past six years some 630,000 North Vietnamese troops and an estimated 200 million pounds of food, 400,000 weapons and over 100 million pounds of ammunition have been moved down the Trail network from North Vietnam. Communist military assaults in the Mekong Delta were supported primarily by supplies arriving through the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville. The change in Government in Phnom Penh, and the U.S. and South Vietnamese operations against the Cambodia sanctuaries, forced North Vietnam to switch to a total reliance on the Ho Chi Minh Trail which can only be used effectively in the dry season from November to May. The Lam Son operations have been launched at a time when the flow of supplies and manpower on the trail is at a critical peak.

Results to Date

- Route 9, a major east-west road providing access from the supply center of Tchepone into South Vietnam, has been severely disrupted. South Vietnamese forces have occupied parts of Route 9 and have also entered

and destroyed supplies in the North Vietnamese base area in the Tchepone area.

- Route 92, a major North-South road in the Ho Chi Minh Trail, has been closed also.
- Intense pressure has been placed upon Route 914, another Trail artery.
- The Fuel pipeline has been cut in a number of places by South Vietnamese forces and nearly 200,000 gallons of petroleum reported destroyed. Loss of this fuel supply means that vulnerable truck cargo destined for the South must carry fuel instead of ammunition and food.
- North Vietnamese attempts to shift traffic westward to the flat land on Route 23 is making their movement of supplies more vulnerable to air interdiction. Successful air interdiction efforts have destroyed large numbers of trucks in Southern Laos.
- Indicative of the disruption to enemy supply activities is the destruction of nearly 300 trucks and 2,000 bunkers and structures in the South Vietnamese area of operation.
- More than 8,500 of the enemy have been killed in actions as compared with South Vietnamese losses of approximately 750. Six enemy regiments in the area have suffered significant casualties. The enemy has lost nearly 100 tanks and many weapons on the battlefield. More than 3,800 individual and 1,100 crew-served weapons have been captured or destroyed.
- South Vietnamese units which have been hit hard have fought back and inflicted much heavier losses on the enemy.
- Fire bases built to protect South Vietnamese forces as they disrupt the supply network are being held only for the time needed in a particular area.
- The enemy has been unable to mount an offensive in South Vietnam. A serious threat to the security of northern South Vietnam is being blunted.
- Although the purpose of the operation was not aimed at seizing large caches of supplies, a considerable amount of enemy war materiel has been reported captured or destroyed: more than 3 million pounds of food, more than 500,000 rounds of ammunition, and nearly 100,000 pounds of miscellaneous equipment and supplies.

Impact of Lam Son 719

- The operation is disrupting the flow of supplies needed to sustain North Vietnamese offensives in South Vietnam.
- The North Vietnamese capability to continue attacks upon Laos and Cambodia is being hampered.
- Further time for supply, training and development of the economic, social and military aspects of Vietnamization is being gained.
- While the United States is providing air and logistics support, South Vietnamese ground forces are carrying out the operation in Laos without American ground forces or advisors, thus gaining experience and self-confidence.
- American and South Vietnamese lives are being safeguarded and the U.S. troop withdrawal timetable remains on schedule.
- The operation demonstrates that time is not on the side of North Vietnam and that meaningful negotiations at the conference table are a better path to peace than Hanoi's continued efforts to attack the nations of Indochina.
- The South Vietnamese are taking the initiative to thwart enemy plans for a dry season offensive.

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS PROJECT
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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 7, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: David Young *DY*

SUBJECT: Briefings on Laos and Cambodia
March 21 - 25, 1971

Attached are the briefings for each of the following days:

March 21 - Tab 21

March 22 - Tab 22

March 23 - Tab 23

March 24 - Tab 24

March 25 - Tab 25

*Ed
File*

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SECRET/SENSITIVE

March 29, 1971

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Henry A. Kissinger
Lt. General M. Zais
Lt. Colonel Robert Molinelli

DATE: Sunday, March 21, 1971 - 10:15 a. m.

PLACE: Mr. Kissinger's Office, the White House

Mr. Kissinger opened the meeting by asking Colonel Molinelli who had commanded an air cavalry squadron during the Lam Son operation and had just returned from the area, to describe the operation as he saw it. Molinelli explained that as Lam Son 719 had begun, four air cavalry troops of helicopters crossed into Laos on a 40-kilometer front charged with general support of the South Vietnamese units, flank support, and locating and destroying enemy anti-aircraft positions. The initial job was to find landing zones and to secure air passages from South Vietnam to the zones to insure continued access. The most difficult areas on the first day were the landing sites intended for the Ranger battalions. Because of the intensity of enemy antiaircraft fire, these zones had to be moved to the north and east from the planned locations.

Colonel Molinelli continued by explaining that although there were heavy helicopter losses initially, the pilots learned to survive the heavy anti-aircraft fire by varying their tactics. Some initial losses were due to tactical errors, but as time progressed they were able to operate more effectively with less losses. He explained that the first time they attacked a tank with a helicopter, they stopped three out of four with conventional ordnance. This was before they had received high-explosive antitank rockets. They found they were able to stop T-34 tanks but not necessarily destroy them. On another occasion, they stopped the movement of 14 tanks from the Tchepone area. A lead column of eight tanks was spotted, supported by ground troops, and there was no tactical air available. In 2-1/2 hours time, using only Cobras, they were able to stop both columns with high-explosive rockets. The rockets are heat-seeking and penetrate the tank so that one is unable to determine the internal damage from the outside. But it was significant that the helicopters were able to stop tanks. He added that they never found tanks unprotected, explaining that there were always antiaircraft

SECRET/SENSITIVE

guns and ground troops in the vicinity of the tanks. He also noted that they had never lost a helicopter to a tank.

Mr. Kissinger then asked Colonel Molinelli if he had observed the ARVN in action. Colonel Molinelli explained that he had and felt that the First Infantry Division was a very knowledgeable fighting unit which was used to working in large numbers. By way of contrast, the Airborne and Rangers were not used to working in larger elements and had some difficulty with coordination. They were also not quite as aggressive as the First Division. Mr. Kissinger commented that it was the First Division which had taken the heavy losses at fire support base Lo Lo. General Zais noted that the best battalion commander in the First Regiment had been killed at Lo Lo. He was an outstanding leader, although only 26 years old. General Zais observed that this indicated his battalion had had "just one hell of a fight."

Mr. Kissinger then asked whether the South Vietnamese had made themselves vulnerable by extending way out to the West. General Zais responded that he felt it had not made much difference and that a new division had been moved up to replace those elements which extended farther west. He noted that the enemy had intensive artillery support and attacked in kamikaze style. The South Vietnamese had caused heavy losses and it was obvious that there had been a "hell of a fight." He also noted that the extraction process, which was then in full swing, was a very complex military operation, and that the South Vietnamese were understandably having some difficulty with it which compounded their problems.

Mr. Kissinger then asked how the enemy knew where the South Vietnamese were going to go. General Zais answered that they intercepted a lot of the South Vietnamese messages. He explained that the First Division of the ARVN was well trained in U. S. intercept techniques and observed that, since we knew what the enemy was doing, it was logical to conclude that they probably also used similar techniques to learn what we were doing. In addition, they watched the direction of our helo operations with observers sitting in trees, and this helped them determine where we planned to go.

Mr. Kissinger then asked why fire support base Lo Lo had been established near Route 9. General Zais replied that he thought it was because the base overlooked Route 9. He explained that the battalion which had been hit hard was the one that had been down on Route 914. Mr. Kissinger asked why that battalion had come back up from 914 and General Zais answered that the new location provided better defensive terrain. Referring to the fire support base south of Route 9 Colonel Molinelli interjected that in friendly hands, the high terrain provided a relatively secure route for air traffic for the

assault on Tchepone. He further explained that toward the end of February the enemy had been deploying west of Tchepone and their anti-aircraft subsiding. Since their major forces were west of this high ground, it made the best defensive position for the move to Tchepone.

General Zais then commented on the fire support base concept, explaining that artillery pieces and a control center are located there, but that the remainder of the battalions assigned to the base operated in a range of up to 10 kilometers away. He noted that one should not focus on a dot on the map, since troops were located at various distances from the actual fire support base.

Mr. Kissinger then asked for a briefing on the air strikes which had been conducted the night before against SAM facilities in North Vietnam. General Zais showed him a map of target locations and noted that only preliminary results had been received. He reported that they had destroyed a SAM launcher at the Site which had shot down a Canberra aircraft in the recent past. He also noted that there was dense smoke and three SAM missiles had ignited and been observed skittering around the site location.

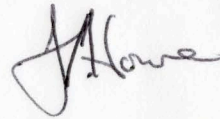
Mr. Kissinger then apologized that he had to run off and thanked the briefers, saying the meeting had been most helpful. However, as he was leaving his office, Mr. Kissinger asked Colonel Molinelli if there had been any panic observed among ARVN troops. Colonel Molinelli said that he felt there had been some panic by the Rangers when they were coming out of fire support bases 30 and 31. There was some panic when fire support base 31 was overrun by tanks. Unfortunately, they had not spotted the tanks soon enough to prevent the North Vietnamese tank assault and air support was hindered by bad weather.

Colonel Molinelli then explained that the morale of his helicopter squadron had gone up as they found they were having significant results against the enemy. Mr. Kissinger asked about the pilots on TV that have complained about the operation. General Zais answered that the newsmen loved to hang around desk officers in the war zone taking notes on anything they heard and looking for sensationalism. He did not believe that these reports gave a true picture. Colonel Molinelli added that the pilots who had complained were not his and were probably those who had seen only a small piece of the action.

Mr. Kissinger then asked Colonel Molinelli how the South Vietnamese would do when the North Vietnamese came into South Vietnam.

Molinelli responded that he felt the First Division would do very well, but that the Rangers and Airborne would not be quite as good. General Zais explained that the Airborne and Rangers were used to fire brigade-type operations and didn't have the staying power or expertise in coordinating support operations. These units had fought gallantly but they were not well coordinated and not as professional as the others. Mr. Kissinger then asked why the Airborne and Rangers had been selected for the operation. General Zais answered that it had to do with availability and that the Airborne normally served as reserve forces. They had traditionally been used for fire brigade-type operations such as Hue and had only been used as a full division twice in the past.

Mr. Kissinger again thanked the two officers for their comments and on this note the meeting ended.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Howe", is located in the lower right quadrant of the page.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing of March 22, 1971

PRESENT: Henry A. Kissinger
Lt General Zais
Brig. General Haig
Lt Colonel Martin (Briefer)
David R. Young (Notetaker) *my*

LAOS

Kissinger: It looks like they are at least successful at retrograde movements.

Martin: Well, they have done it in an orderly way. One good bit of news we have is that since Saturday noon, there have been about 1500 enemy KIA.

Kissinger: Do you really believe that?

Martin: Well, the weapons count is three bodies to every one weapon found, and usually that is a good ratio. So, the enemy KIA may be as high as 1500.

Zais: Another reason why it may be that high is that we are having very good close-in air support and the gunships are moving in on them as they are trying to hit the ARVN pulling out. They are definitely taking very heavy losses.

Haig: One of the things which we have found out is that the enemy is getting their men hopped up on booze -- a kind of a rice wine. We even found it in their canteens. They have got them so hopped up that they are suicidal.

Kissinger: That ought to make a great battle -- one army hopped up on drugs and the other army hopped up on booze. Seriously, when do you think they will all be out? You know, the President is going on TV tonight and he has to have some answer on this.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

Zais: We just don't know.

Kissinger: Could it be the end of this week?

Zais: Yes, it could be by the end of this week. The whole 1st Division is back now.

Kissinger: That's General Lam?

Zais: Yes.

Kissinger: Why do you think they are coming back now?

Zais: Well, I think it is a combination of a number of internal political-type reasons and some intrigue within the armed forces. I am sure that General Lam is furious at General Khan's remarks. Khan simply sat on the sidelines taking shots at Lam. To needle him, Khan even sent through a message denying a rumor that he was going to take over for Lam. There are definitely some hard feelings now between Lam and Khan. The fact that the marines are the ones that are staying in is a logical point. They are in a better position to stay in. They went into the least concentrated area and they have received the least pressure. And only 2 of the 3 marine brigades have been committed.

Kissinger: What about the airborne units?

Zais: They are really part of the armored task force along Route 9 and as such they can't be pulled out by themselves.

Kissinger: What then should I say to the President?

Zais: I really don't know.

Kissinger: Haig, what do you think I should say?

Haig: I think the President should know that they may be out within a week or 10 days but he should not say anything. He shouldn't let the enemy know to what degree we are anticipating a quick withdrawal.

Kissinger: How much more does the enemy have left?

Zais: Well, the enemy is building up and I would think that it is very likely they will attack from the north of Route 9. The battle is not going to be over just when we cross the Laotian border and get back into Vietnam. I would say that the situation is much as Abrams has told us and that our actions - the ARVN actions - will be in response to or related to the pressure that is put on them.

Kissinger: But if we have knocked out 6 of the 10 enemy regiments, how can they attack us with only 4? Will they attack with 4?

Zais: Yes, they could and it is somewhat misleading to say "knocked out". That cannot be taken literally. There is still some effectiveness left in those 6 regiments and they may be combined or cannibalized into another unit.

Kissinger: That means we are going to have a fairly rough April.

Zais: Yes. At least during the early stages. I think also that the NVA has been reading our press and that they to some degree are smelling victory and trying to capitalize and push on that. They are very hopped up. They have high morale right now and even though they are losing heavily and the troops find that their buddies are dying all around them they feel that they are on the path to a glorious victory.

Martin then showed Kissinger on the map the programmed B-52 strikes today. He also indicated one area in which a strike went in yesterday and according to an early report over a thousand bodies were found.

Kissinger to Zais: What in your own personal opinion went wrong?

Zais: That in part is a leading question because I don't really think that much went wrong. There are a number of factors in assessing the results - some good and some bad. For one, I think that when Abrams requested that the 2nd ARVN Division be brought in, it should have come in; that was a crucial point. If it had been followed, I think that they could have stayed much longer and the whole operation would have turned the other way.

But Thieu faces some very serious political problems and I have a feeling that in part there was some hysteria back in Saigon. The further away you get from the battle, the more rumors you have. I think that in Saigon they had a sense of extremely heavy casualties and a feeling that the relationship between Kahn and Lam was going sour.

On top of this Thieu is worrying about his reelection. The result was that he got a little bit edgy. It definitely was a presidential decision not to commit that second division. His thinking apparently was simply that we have done them some damage; the casualties are getting a bit too high; we will live to fight another day.

Ky's stepping out also presents a problem. Thieu has got to protect his flanks against Ky. You are right in that they came out sooner than we had expected. That in itself, however, doesn't mean a defeat. There has been substantial disruption but it has not been the crucial blow we had hoped for. Abrams has an unusual instinct for the jugular and if his advice had been followed, we could have come out differently.

Haig: Abe tried to get them to commit the second division on three different occasions. He tried first a week or so ago and then again on Tuesday and Wednesday. Thieu just would not do it.

Kissinger to Zais: Do you think Lam is any good?

Zais: Yes, he is both a political and a military leader. He is more of a combination than Tri and some of the other generals have been. They are more military only. He is sensitive and he has coped with the uprisings of the students, the Buddhists, and the veterans very well.

(Kissinger: Then the only trouble he has had is with the NVA!)

Zais: But his problem is that he doesn't have the instinct for the jugular which Abrams has.

Kissinger: Do you expect the NVA to launch a major offensive now?

Zais: Yes.

Martin: But we are bringing in U.S. tank reinforcements.

Zais: Yes, the 1st of the first is being relieved by the 1st of the 77th.

Kissinger: What do the sensors read today?

Martin: 92-C has some additional, but otherwise they are minimal.

914-B	914-C	99	9-D	92-C	922
29/75	21/25	22/41	-	13/13	19/18
92-E	23-I				
3/1	1/1				

CAMBODIA

Martin: They moved in the Chup Plantation and discovered 300 and some bodies. 180 were in fresh graves and 187 were still lying on the ground as the result of an Arc Light drop on top of the 95th C 25 additional were killed in a contact.

Kissinger: Do you really believe that they found that many?

Zais: Well, they are certainly less likely to exaggerate body claims when they are the result of air strikes.

Kissinger: How about the Snoul area?

Martin: They are still sitting there.

Kissinger: Who was it that Abe wanted to relieve?

Haig: It is this new commander.

Kissinger: Why have they broken contact again in the Chup? Were they just not being aggressive enough?

Haig: Tri ran his task forces himself. Minh has given the authority here to the division commanders and as a result they are being more cautious. They had a good fight going there on about 3 or 4 March but broke off contact. I can tell you that Abrams was extremely upset and told Thieu about it.

Martin: One good sign that we have now is that the enemy has brought its artillery back over north of the Chup Plantation.

Haig: We also have a number of reports saying that the enemy is running short of supplies in the Chup.

Zais: He has to. I don't see where else he can get his supplies in.

Haig: Snoul definitely has a disaster in the making and Abrams has accordingly told Thieu.

Kissinger to Zais: What do you think is the effect on the morale of the ARVN troops coming out of the Lam Son Operation?

Zais: I do not think it can be described in one general assessment. It is not all bad and it is not all good. One underlying fact is that they are not fighting in Hue - they are in a foreign country, the morale of the different units will depend on what action they have been in. War is a kaleidoscope. Some will come back exuberant having really whipped the enemy where they were. Others will come back semi-panicked. The regimental commanders in the first ARVN are very good. Col Chong is a soldier-scholar, a very tough man in combat. Col Bui Dhiem - they call him the one-meter colonel he is so short - is intelligent, hard-nosed and I think a very good commander. I don't think that they are demoralized. They are going to be very tough when they fight again. For one thing they are now back into Vietnam where they have their own dependents nearby. They were also in the top ten of all the provinces in pacification. They are the ones just over the DMZ who will have to block any advance by the NVA up there.

Haig: Even in the unit that had only 80 some men left, when they were taken out they had their weapons and they brought back their dead and wounded.

Zais: They really did very well.

NORTH VIETNAM

Martin then went over with Kissinger the points on the map where the bombing runs took place yesterday on North Vietnam. 72 sorties were run. The Navy could not get in at all. He also noted those that were programmed for today.

Zais then showed Kissinger photos on the weather reconnaissance.

Kissinger: Yesterday was then very good.

Zais: Yes it was.

Kissinger: But this sort of operation really doesn't do much damage.

Zais: It doesn't win the war but it certainly helps.

Kissinger: Where will the A-6's go in?

Zais: I asked about that before coming over, but at that time they could not tell me for sure. He then pointed to the place on the map where the 24 F-4s went in yesterday or will be going in again today.

[END OF BRIEFING]

DATE: March 23, 1971

SUBJECT: Laos Operation; Lam Son 719; Cambodian Operation;
Toan Thang 01/71

PRESENT: Henry A. Kissinger
General Haig
David R. Young (notetaker) *dy*

BRIEFER: Lt Colonel David Martin

Martin: The information we have this morning is that an ARVN unit has been ambushed on Route 9 inside Laos. 13 APC's were destroyed and 4 M-41 tanks; 12 ARVN were killed and about 75 wounded. They were ambushed a couple of miles inside Laos. Back further behind them on Route 9 there are about 30 enemy tanks proceeding east. 7 have been knocked out, 2 have been damaged.

Kissinger: What do you think this means? Do you think they have really knocked out that many and there are 30 still coming?

Martin: My conclusion is that there are less than 30.

Kissinger: What do you mean, our pilots can't even count?

Martin: No, they should be able to count them. The only units now remaining in Laos are the marines at Fire Support Base Delta.

Kissinger: I knew they would be out by Wednesday, isn't that what I told you last week.

Martin: Yes, you were right.

Fire Support Base Delta has been attacked during the night and for the last couple of days. The estimate is that over 600 enemy are dead and about 85 friendly. On B-52 strikes we have 7 attacks laid on for today.

Kissinger: How many troops are left in Laos now?

Martin: The early MFR had 11,200 but this has been now revised down to 4,400 as of this morning.

Khe Sanh was hit 5 times during the night by indirect fire. A force of about 40 sappers broke through the perimeter, about 18 or 20 were killed, one was captured; 3 U. S. were killed when they broke through and 8 aircraft were damaged. It is important to note that the NVA is re-positioning some of its units and they now have one to the north of Khe Sanh and two to the south.

Kissinger: What do you think this means?

Martin: I think it means that we are going to have a big fight there.

Kissinger: How can they attack if they are hurt as badly as you say? I thought that they couldn't move against our air. Do we know when they are moving?

Martin: We have a feel but we have not been able to pick them up precisely. When we have, that's when we have gotten our good kills like with the B-52 strikes southeast of Tchepone.

Kissinger: How is the planning going for the Muong Nong operation? With intensity I presume.

Martin: A lot is still to come in on that.

CAMBODIA

Martin: Task Force III has moved. They are now to the south/southeast of the Chup.

Kissinger: Why have they moved?

Martin: I do not know. They lost some M-41 tanks, 4 to be exact, in the exchange they had there the other day. They are only now reporting them. This is the first indication we have gotten that they had a battle there. The enemy regiment has moved back and is cleaning up.

Kissinger: What does the Task Force say they are doing outside the Chup?

Martin: They say they are resupplying, refitting, getting ready for future operations but I don't know what their future operations are going to be.

Kissinger: How are things going in Snoul?

Martin: They are moving back down along both roads but one good bit of news here is that a CP has been moved up in order to monitor their operations. I think this is a good sign.

Kissinger: What do you really think it means?

Martin: Well, at least it means they are putting the command up there close to Snoul to keep track of them. This may also result in better guidance. I don't know if I have ever gone into the history of this new regiment with you but the Colonel that was up there was a political Colonel. He was an Aide to Kahn and he got this unit as a political payoff. He was the commander of it until January when he was relieved. Then the Division commander had given him free reign to do what he wanted but since he really didn't want to do much, nothing was done. He was relieved in January but again not much has happened.

In another action a U.S. air cavalry unit engaged an enemy truck convoy north of the Chup and 31 enemy were killed in that oppression.

Kissinger: What about Task Force 225, are they doing anything yet?

Martin: No, it seems they are still milling around.

Martin to Haig: Did you get any feeling on this?

Haig: No, they are not doing anything?

Kissinger: It really seems that when we lost Tri, we really lost an awful lot here and that no one has done anything since.

END OF BRIEFING.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF BRIEFING

SUBJECT: Lam Son 719; Toan Thang 01/71

DATE: March 24, 1971

BRIEFER: Lt Colonel David Martin

PRESENT: Henry A. Kissinger
Brigadier General Haig
David R. Young (Notetaker) *DRY*

LAOS

Martin: Only one battalion of about 600-700 marines now remains in Laos. The rest are at Khe Sanh. Earlier today we had a report that about 3600 were still in Laos, but just before coming over I received word that the number dropped to 600 or 700. Eight tanks were knocked out yesterday on Route 9 and three more were knocked out by air right at the border. I think that their plan is to keep pursuing the ARVN just as long as they can. The name of the game now from their point of view is to hang on. We will have to move our marines to Khe Sanh; the 54th regiment is now at Don How, the corps reserve position.

Kissinger to Haig: Did you tell Pursley to make sure that the ARVN troops are at the border so that we don't bear the brunt of any attack across?

Haig: Yes I did, and I have talked to him about the other matter we discussed as well.

Martin: Another significant development is the fact that there have been no attacks by fire within the last 24 hours.

Kissinger: What do you think that means?

Martin: That either they are moving or they are conserving their ammo, or they may be doing both.

Kissinger: If we knocked out 8 of 13 regiments, what are they going to attack with?

Martin: I don't know the figures.

Kissinger: Well, even if it's 6 out of 10.

Martin: Well, they can still pursue with what they have left. They can also come up with some of the units which were not that heavily pressured or committed during the fighting. It's a matter of judgment on how many forces they want to forfeit. They could run suicide missions.

We also have intercepts that they have been using Routes 92, 9 and 914 to move supplies. The sensors yesterday do not show that much traffic.

Sensor Report

914-B	914-C	99	9-G	92-C	922	92-E	23-I
N/S	N/S	N/S	W/E	N/S	W/E	N/S	N/S
53/79	14/17	30/56	0	2/8	6/10	1/4	0/4

Kissinger to Haig: When do you think those extra gunships are going to get over there? Will you check on that today and be sure they are going?

Haig: Yes.

CAMBODIA

Martin: It looks like they are resupplying and preparing, but they are not doing anything.

Kissinger: Compared to Tri they just aren't moving at all. Don't they have an airborne unit?

Martin: No, but they do have the Rangers.

Kissinger: Well, how did Tri get up to Chhlong then?

Martin: They helo lifted them up.

Kissinger: You know in some ways this operation is more bothersome to me than the Lam Son one. At least in Lam Son they are fighting. Down here they aren't even fighting. How do you really think they spend their day?

Martin: Oh, they just patrol along the roads and send a few patrols along the side, but they don't do much at all.

Kissinger: How are things going in Snoul?

Martin: Again, they are also just moving along the roads. We had a U.S. Cobra shot down there yesterday.

Kissinger: By whom?

Martin: That's a good question. We don't know for sure. Both the crew were killed. They might have gotten hit from one of the NVA units just to the southeast of Snoul.

Kissinger: But other than that, nothing is going on?

Martin: That's it.

Kissinger: Do you think they are any better at defending than they are at running offensive missions?

Martin: No unit is better at defending. What they must do is get out and grab on and lock on and fight. My feeling is that they had ahold of them in the Chup operation there last week and they let go.

Kissinger: Who commands the task force?

Martin: General Tho. He's the division commander and he's really the one that calls the shots.

END OF BRIEFING.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

March 29, 1971

MEMORANDUM OF BRIEFING

PRESENT: Henry A. Kissinger
David R. Young (notetaker) *dy*

DATE: March 25, 1971

SUBJECT: Lam Son 719, Toan Thang 01/71

BRIEFER: Lt. Col. Martin

LAOS

Martin: All of ARVN is back except for 15 men who are at Korat. The ARVN marines are being placed in the front and will take the brunt of any attack. U.S. troops are behind them, except in one place a little to the north of Khe Sanh. Twelve U.S. were killed yesterday in various contacts. The enemy does not seem to be pressing in the last 24 hours.

CAMBODIA

Martin: Task Force 3 had a contact yesterday and killed 5 enemy. They are moving now to make contact with the 271st NVA Regiment which is in the northeast part of the Chup Plantation. The ARVN air force also killed about 15 enemy in an attack. Task Force 225 is being replaced with a new task force. The sensors are about the same - no major increase in the last 24 hours. On Muong Nong they are still thinking about it.

Kissinger: What would they be able to do it with?

Martin: The 54th. It is moving into Khe Sanh today and they can use it plus several marine battalions which have not been under very heavy pressure during the Lam Son operation. The original plan in this Muong Nong exercise called for 3 battalions and they will have 3 fresh battalions there to do it if they want to. One other matter which the

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

Chairman will fill you in on in more detail, is that we have an intercept saying that BinhTram 33 is to construct a POW camp. This may give them some added incentive for the Muong Nong operation. Some of the POWs may be American and there are 42 U. S. missing in the Lam Son operation.

Kissinger: Where exactly will they be building it? Do we know?

Martin: We do not know just where yet, but it will be off 914 somewhere near 234.

Kissinger: Have we been doing any air preparation for Muong Nong?

Martin: Not yet, but that will have to be done. It may also be better to first put the men in, then hit them with the air and then move. The average on B-52 strikes is staying the same at 12 a day.

End of Briefing.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

(PUBLIC AFFAIRS)

April 29, 1971

Memo for Mr. John Scali

Mr. Bob Houdek ✓

Dan asked me to send this on to you for your information.

Obviously, there have been some goofs but I think our guys are trying to be as helpful as they can. We are going to have problems--and these should be recognized--as we turn over more and more responsibilities to the South Vietnamese and as the level of U.S. combat participation declines.

Jerry W. Friedheim

Atch

Jerry W. Friedheim

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

75862

AIRCRAFT SUPPORTING THE 1ST ARVN DIV IS GOVERNED BY ARVN POLICY. COORDINATION IS EFFECTED BETWEEN THE 1ST ARVN DIV INFORMATION OFFICER AND THE SUPPORTING AIRCRAFT UNIT COMMANDER.

2. (C) AS A MATTER OF INTEREST, THE FOLLOWING SUPPORT WAS PROVIDED BY THE DIVISION IN THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS:

A. 23 APRIL -- UPI, A FREE LANCER FOR AP, AND REUTERS WERE TRANSPORTED TO A FIRE BASE AND WERE SCHEDULED TO OVERFLY THE A SHAU BUT THE AIRCRAFT WAS DIVERTED BECAUSE OF AIR STRIKES IN THE AREA. THE HELO FLEW THE PARTY TO LAVANG, FORWARD OP OF ARVN FORCES PARTICIPATING IN LAM SON 720.

B. 24 APRIL -- NY TIMES, LOOK AND A FREE LANCER TRANSPORTED TO A FIRE BASE.

C. 25 APRIL -- NY TIMES, LOOK AND NBC TRANSPORTED TO A FIRE BASE WHERE LOOK PHOTOGRAPHER SELECTED THREE SOLDIERS FOR PORTRAIT SERIES ON "FACES OF THE WAR." SOLDIERS WERE TRANSPORTED TO LOOK TEMPORARY STUDIO AT DIVISION HEADQUARTERS. NBC ACCOMPANIED A GROUND PATROL, NBC VISITED ANOTHER FIRE BASE WITH UPI CORRESPONDENT AND PHOTOGRAPHER, REUTERS AND TWO FREE LANCERS, REUTERS, UPI AND FREE LANCER TRANSPORTED TO LAVANG.

D. 26 APRIL -- NBC, UPI PHOTOGRAPHER AND CORRESPONDENT, REUTERS AND FREE LANCER COVERED GUNSHIP ACTIVITY FROM FORWARD FIRE BASE, ARTILLERY PREPARATION OF A LANDING ZONE AND ACCOMPANIED A COMBAT ASSAULT INTO THE LZ, TALKED TO BATTALION AND COMPANY COMMANDERS AND EM IN COURSE OF OPERATION.

E. 29 APRIL -- ABC REQUESTED A SECOND OVERFLY OF A SHAU, THE FIRST HAVING TAKEN PLACE ON 19 APRIL, TO SUPPLEMENT FOOTAGE OF PREVIOUS INTERVIEW WITH RANGER PAROL LEADER AND RANGER COMPANY COMMANDER WHO DISCUSSED CONDUCT OF A PATROL IN GENERAL TERMS AT A MINICONFERENCE. AS NO AIRCRAFT WERE AVAILABLE, ABC WITH ESCORT OFFICER WENT SPACE AVAILABLE TO A FORWARD AIRCRAFT REFUELING POINT BUT WERE UNABLE TO GET SPACE AVAILABLE FORWARD.

F. A FREE LANCER AND A STARS AND STRIPES REPORTER ACCOMPANIED A HOC BAO (ARVN) OPERATION IN THE LAM SON 720 AO ABOARD A 101ST ABN DIV AIRCRAFT ON A SPACE AVAILABLE BASIS. NO ESCORT REPORTEDLY WAS PROVIDED BY THE ARVN.

3. (C) THE DIVISION PLANS TO MOVE AVAILABLE PRESS OR, IF TOO MANY, A POOL TO COVER SIGNIFICANT OPERATIONS IN ITS AO. AS OF 28 APRIL, ONLY TWO FREE LANCERS WERE KNOWN TO BE IN THE DIVISION AO.

4. (C) ALL SIGNIFIANT INFORMATION ON OPERATION HAS BEEN RELEASED BY MACV OR THE DIVISION TO INCLUDE: SIGNIFICANT GUNSHIP ACTIONS, SUPPORT ROLE OF THE ARVN FOR THE 101ST MISSION OF THE CO-LOCATED US FACILITY AT LAVANG WHICH IS COORDINATING US SUPPORT OF THE ARVN, RE-

C O N F I D E N T I A L

75862

CONNAISSANCE ACTIVITY IN THE DIGSION AQ WITHOUT SPECIFYING LOCATIONS OF PATROLS, AND B22 MISSIONS IN THE AQ, RELEASE IS GOVERNED BY EXISTING POLICIES TO AVOID PROVIDING INFORMATION OF VALUE TO THE ENEMY. THE NATURE OF THE OPERATION PRECLUDES AN ADVANCE BRIEFING OF THE PRESS.

5. (C) THE NEED TO INFORM THE PRESS IS RECOGNIZED AND IS BEING MET. HOWEVER, THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF TROOPS AND THE NEED FOR PROTECTING SCHEMES OF MANEUVERS ARE GOVERNING FACTORS IN THE LOCAL COMMANDER'S DECISION TO IMPOSE TACTICAL RESTRICTIONS. THESE REQUIREMENTS TAKE PRECEDENT OVER GRANTING UNLIMITED ACCESS TO THE PRESS.

GR-4

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C O N F I D E N T I A L O I FOR OASDPA, AND FOR

CINCPAC (PAO)

SUBJ PRESS SUPPORT OF LAM SON 720

1. (C) PRESS SUPPORT FOR LAM SON 720, AN ON-GOING OPERATION, HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXISTING POLICIES AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF MILITARY SECURITY.

A. THE 101ST ABN DIV (AIRMOBILE) HAS DECLARED TACTICAL RESTRICTED AREAS AT TWO FIRE BASES SUPPORTING THE OPERATION; THIS WAS TAKEN TO INSURE THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF TROOPS INVOLVED IN FUTURE TACTICAL OPERATIONS. TACTICAL RESTRICTIONS WERE ANNOUNCED TO THE PRESS AT A BRIEFING BY THE DIVISION INFORMATION OFFICER.

B. IN ACCORDANCE WITH MACV AND DIVISION POLICY, NEWSMEN HAVE BEEN PROVIDED EVERY ASSISTANCE IN MOVING THROUGH THE REMAINDER OF THE DIVISION AREA OF OPERATIONS TO GATHER STORY MATERIAL.

C. DIVISION POLICY, AS AUTHORIZED BY MACV DIRECTIVE 360-1, IS THAT PRESS WILL BE ESCORTED IN ITS AO TO ASSIST CORRESPONDENTS IN GETTING THEIR STORIES AND TO INSURE THAT MILITARY SECURITY IS NOT COMPROMISED WITH ITS POSSIBLE IMPACT ON TROOP SAFETY. THERE IS NO RESTRICTION ON MOVEMENT OF ESCORTED PRESS ABOARD DIVISION AIRCRAFT PROVIDED THERE IS SPACE AVAILABLE AND THERE IS NO INTERFERENCE WITH THE MISSION. THE DIVISION HAS PROVIDED DEDICATED AIRCRAFT ON COUNTLESS OCCASIONS TO TRANSPORT THE PRESS TO POINTS WITHIN ITS AO.

D. MOVEMENT ON A SPACE AVAILABLE BASIS OF NEWSMEN ON DIVISION

PAGE 1

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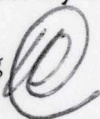
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 19, 1971

Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger

From:

Al Haig



Subject:

Lam Son Talking Points

Attached is a copy of the Lam Son 719 talking points which contains updated statistics. The changes which have been made are minor and reflect the most recent reporting of Lam Son 719 results.

- ARVN KIA's have been changed from 1400 to 1500 and wounded from 4700 to 5400.
- The killed ratio has been left at 5 to 1, as a conservative figure, although it still is 8.9 to 1 actually.
- The number of individual weapons captured/destroyed has been increased from 4900 to 5000.
- The number of enemy trucks destroyed has been increased from 300 to 400. (This actually reflects reporting of vehicles seized/destroyed.)

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 as anticipated 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, the ARVN forces fought extremely well. Because of the intensity of the fighting, these units did take some heavy

losses - now estimated at 1500 killed and 5400 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 5000 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 400 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.

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 major enemy offensive operations in South Vietnam during the current dry season. 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.

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 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 the 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 graphically, it should be pointed out

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.

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We conclude, therefore ...
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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 21, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*

SUBJECT: General Abrams' Remarks to the Press
on Lam Son 719

Ed

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...

In General Abrams' background briefing for the press on March 21, he made the following points:

-- With the exception of TET in 1968, "This certainly has been one of the biggest and toughest single battles since I've been here. I am quite satisfied with the way the ARVN performed."

-- "The ARVN are going to come out of this with higher confidence. They know that they fought top enemy units under the most critical circumstances and that they have done the job."

-- When the planning originally was done for Lam Son 719 it was divided into phases and this current withdrawal phase is one of them.

-- There was no fixed timetable for the operation; it was left flexible. The number of days the ARVN has been in Laos and the current timing of the operation is well within the original planning parameters. Lam Son 719 had to end before the rains came.

-- Some ARVN units were very good, others not so good in communicating with their air support. In future training, stress will be placed on improving communications and liaison between ARVN ground units and U. S. and South Vietnam air units.

HK - note

-- It is essential in an operation like Lam Son 719 to have a central control point at a forward base with full authority to commit all of the resources required in the operation. There was one for Lam Son 719, but it was not fully operational until the operation was under way for about two weeks.

-- Four of the twenty-two ARVN battalions in Laos are considered to be of questionable combat effectiveness as a result of the heavy fighting.

Once they receive replacements, a little rest and some training they will be back and will be strong.

-- Some weaker ARVN battalions with poor leadership did withdraw in the face of enemy pressure. The major ARVN units however performed well and did not retreat. They will come out of Lam Son 719 with higher confidence and morale. They have defeated some of the enemy's top units.

-- The poor condition of Route 9 in Laos, the marginal weather, the heavy anti-aircraft fire, and the enemy's capacity to move artillery were the major problems we had to work around.

-- The degree to which the enemy moved SAM's into the Lam Son 719 area and his commitment of T-54 tanks to the battle were not fully expected.

-- The enemy's entire focus is now on interfering with the withdrawal which he knows is under way.

MACV briefers who assisted General Abrams made the additional significant points:

-- "Lam Son 719 has succeeded in disrupting vital portions of the enemy's logistical system, capturing or destroying significant quantities of supplies and inflicting considerable damage on enemy units within the area of operation."

-- "The operation has compounded the enemy's already considerable logistic problem through loss of supplies and disruption of the logistical system in the Laotian panhandle."

-- "The enemy has lost over 11,000 killed. When compared to friendly forces the ratio is at least ten to one in favor of the friendly forces. The enemy has lost the equivalent of 13 of the 33 maneuver battalions organic to the 11 regiments committed."

-- "A significant long-term effect of the ongoing operation involves enemy casualties among experienced personnel in units that have been operating the logistical system. Loss of trained rear-service personnel will further degrade the enemy's capability to move supplies through the Laotian panhandle."

-- "The throughput of supplies into South Vietnam and Cambodia is quite low, only one-fifth of the throughput achieved at this time last year. With the dry season well over one-half gone the enemy will probably experience considerable difficulty in meeting his current logistic goals."

-- "A related form of supply loss is increased consumption. Deployment of additional enemy troops to resist allied interdiction activity resulted in greatly increased food requirements and ammunition expenditures by enemy units committed to the area."

-- "Lam Son 719 has caused the enemy to divert supplies intended for southern Indochina just to defend his lines of communication and has diluted his direct efforts to achieve his goals in the south. It has caused him to defend forces which he could have been using elsewhere in Cambodia and South Vietnam."

-- "The heavy personnel losses inflicted upon the enemy in Lam Son 719 has materially reduced his capability to conduct tactical operations on any significant scale within military region one in South Vietnam."

-- "By seizing the initiative in the Laotian panhandle and Cambodia the ARVN has pre-empted enemy plans for the winter-spring campaign."

-- "Lam Son 719 has been a milestone in the development of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam. For the first time the South Vietnamese have conducted a multi-division operation against a strong and determined enemy. The ARVN without U. S. advisors, penetrating into an area which had been controlled for years by the enemy, has faced their sternest test to date and acquitted themselves against an aggressive enemy."

-- Lam Son 719 was conducted at the same time a major ARVN operation was underway in Cambodia. In that operation (Operation Thuan Thang) the enemy has lost over 4,400 men killed. Nine battalions of the 27 under-strength maneuver battalions the enemy has committed to this action have thus been rendered ineffective for combat.

I will be sending you a retyped copy of the full transcript of the background briefing first thing on Monday morning.

GENERAL ABRAMS QUESTION AND ANSWER
SESSION FOLLOWING BACKGROUND BRIEFING IN SAIGON
SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 1971

QUES: I was wondering a couple of things. One, the general impression now is this, that the operations now closing and the withdrawal will be complete, and the implication is that they will be reequipped and refitted and might go back into. Without getting into future operations is there any sort of restrictions as to just what phase? Are we in the last stage of the operation? (Inaudible).

ANS: The most that you can say about this is that this is in the withdrawal phase and I think that that ought to be about as far as we go. It has no date in my mind and I don't believe any date in General Vien's mind when this phase will be concluded. I might say about that, too, when the planning was originally done for this particular operation it was divided then into phases and this is one of them. We talked at great length, the senior officers on the U. S. side and the senior officers on the Vietnamese side, as to what kind of timing we would come down to. The unknowns in here, in the planning part, were such that we felt from the outset that we were going to have to do this sort of week by week depending largely on the judgment of Gen. Lam and Gen. Sutherland as for the timing for shifting from one period to another. That's pretty much the way we have gone at it and that's why I wouldn't go beyond that now, saying that we are in the withdrawal stage and just leave it at that.

QUES: As far as timing is concerned here has this gone along pretty much the way as we envisioned it? In other words to what degree in general have you had to step up the timetable, if at all, as a result of what transpired or the unexpected?

ANS: Again, the only thing I'll say about that is we knew that this had to be concluded in all its phases by the arrival of the rainy season, you can't do these things in the rainy season. I am sure you know that even it is a little risky to come to a prescribed moment (inaudible), that's something that is variable and that's something you just don't have a good tight hold on. You can take on a 40 year average, that no year that I have been here, has that been worth much, because on a specific year it just doesn't come out that way. When you want to talk about the monsoons there is a technical definition of the monsoons among the weather experts and technicians. When they decide that it has shifted you can now make the statement that it's shifted, they are prepared to say that about two weeks after it occurs. But, it also means their technical definition of the monsoon doesn't really have much application in the tactical environment. Once you get all the way into the monsoon and everybody can see it even a non-weather guy can see it, that means it's something you can count on, but it's in a transitional stage. Now this operation as it was discussed in the planning part, the total number of days jointly discussed by us, varied in wide limits, and I think I can say that

we didn't have an agreed timetable, not timetable, but period, that was as long as the time they had been there now, if you are talking about total time for the operation.

QUES: So what you are saying, sir, is that as far as the general characteristics, the timing does not in any way contradict what you envisioned?

ANS: No.

QUES: In the course of this operation, the ARVN has held on to certain areas and have been driven off certain hills; we have had several instances where ARVN troops have been killed by air, we have some conflict in communications. What have we learned from this operation that we can apply in the future in terms of Vietnamization and in terms of improving the ARVN and in terms of taking care of this thing if it might arise in the future?

ANS: The use of communications, I'm not only talking about just radios, but the ability to communicate intelligently to the FACS and supporting aircraft and then the techniques involved in there in directing them to where you want them to hit, through the use of smoke, there is a variety of techniques. Greater stress is going to have to be put on that in the future in their training programs and more skill developed, more practice with it. As you probably also know there are some of these units with the 1st Division that are pretty good at it. So it's a mixed bag, but it's an area that is going to require more. In the planning part, we tried to overcome this by just about all of the FACS that work for the ARVN units up there, have a VNAF who speaks English riding in the FAC aircraft. It's not true in every case, but that was the aim, and sometimes in the daily shuffle of things didn't work out that way, that would overcome the language problem and that sort of thing. I think another thing that has come out of this is that you just got to have a central point forward, where all the authorities are there for the commitment of resources, of all kinds -- TAC air, B-52, targetting, gunships, medevac, lift, artillery, the whole works. So, that in an operation like this there has to be someone at that point, first of all that has all of General Lam's authority on this, and all of General Sutherland's, and then there has got to be people in there, like Gen Berry, Gen Myer, and Gen. Jackson, and that group that know how to pull things together.

QUES: Sir, were you implying by that last statement perhaps that there has not been a central point (inaudible)?

ANS: I think we got it in about the 13th, 14th of February. It was fully operational (inaudible).

QUES: (Inaudible)

ANS: They had a set up like that; they were all there. They had a central authority for helicopters; they had a central authority for artillery, and so on. My point is that the people that can do that have all got to be at a point where General Lam's authority and General Sutherland's authority is physically located, present and operating. When Lam wasn't there then Colonel Vinh had it and they've got to be in the same installation. They can't be in different bunkers in that geography in Khe Sanh.

QUES: What did you find out about VNAF to support the ARVN ground forces in operation?

ANS: In the Lamson operation it's been fairly limited, although in Cambodia it's been very extensive. I think what it means is that when they take their total assets, of course, they (inaudible). They haven't got the capacity to do all of these things that we've got going now simultaneously, there are just not that many aircraft (inaudible).

QUES: Can you give us a handle on how many ARVN (inaudible) group of that they'll need (inaudible) operation how long it might take to (inaudible)?

ANS: We feel as of the last report we had that there were about four that had got to the point in terms of requiring the replacement, the fittings, that we could consider questionably combat effective. I think that the 39th Rangers is an example of one of these. You have heard the story about what the 39th Rangers did. I might add that a week and a half ago the 39th Rangers had been refitted, rehab and were back in that particular operation again. The other three to four battalions are in the process now of being refitted.

QUES: You have four battalions out -- how many are committed there so we can get some sort of picture?

ANS: Twenty-two across border.

QUES: (Inaudible)?

ANS: No, I'm not. I think this probably has been one of the biggest and toughest battles since I've been here, as a single battle. Tet in '68 was worse, it ran from one end to the country to the other, and everybody was in it. This was certainly the toughest and I think the biggest and I'm quite satisfied with the way they've performed.

QUES: The reports you hear about the retreat, being routed, what is your reply to that?

ANS: It's true that this has happened to certainly the airborne battalion up there at 30 -- which we say -- also the Vietnamese. It's a weak battalion but turns out to be weak when it started, and it still is. The battalion commander left it apparently, in the course of the battle, and the military let it down -- an unforgiveable sin -- you can't say that. In my opinion it would be a mistake to extrapolate that into the 1st Airborne Division, or the Marine. They're going to come out of this with higher confidence. They know that they look at it (inaudible) under the most critical circumstances and they've done the job. I think that's the way they're going to be next month, the month after and so on. So I think that's the way it'll turn out. Since the First Battalion of the Third (inaudible), and they took a lot of losses to what they say at the moment; they've had something like 110 or 140 defectors (inaudible) they haven't had their replacements in either, and he thinks their morale is higher than any he knows of in the operation.

In a thing like this it's not so much the facts, it's what they believe. They believe that they can feel, that they will handle the regiment and I don't know whether they did or not. But that's the way those people in that battalion are going to feel forever. When they get some replacements, a little rest, and a chance to get some training together, it'll be back and it'll be strong.

QUES: What does the enemy believe about this operation? What do they think?

ANS: I don't know. All we have to go by is what he is putting out on the Radio in Hanoi.

QUES: Was there anything the enemy did that was unexpected?

ANS: Condition of Route 9 was a surprise. One of those things we thought where ditches were 25, 30 feet deep. The anti-aircraft everybody had worked on that plan noticed that that was one of the toughest problems we had. We know he had the capacity to move the artillery over there. We already had some tanks there -- we knew he had some more just above the DMZ. (inaudible) the weather -- those were the problems, and we've had to work around it.

QUES: Did the enemy show any strength, exceptional strength, or exceptional weaknesses (inaudible)?

ANS: I think I should say the SAMS, the degree with which he's moved SAMS down there, is certainly more than I expected. I personally was surprised to see him move T-54 tanks in there.

QUES: (Inaudible) or things that you would like to have done if you were (inaudible)?

ANS: With the forces that it was possible to make available for this operation, I think you would have to say that I was satisfied.

QUES: What do you think he's doing now?

ANS: He's made every effort and he's guarding his units to interfere with this withdrawal. He knows this withdrawal is going on. His whole focus now is to interfere with getting that done.

- END _

TEXT OF MACV BACKGROUNDER

MARCH 21, 1971

This background briefing can only be attributed to military sources.

The presentation will be in three parts. It will be led off by the J-2 briefer, who will give an update from the J-2 point of view. He will be followed by Assistant Deputy J-3, giving a more complete view of the Lamson operation. Following this there will be some opportunities for questions and answers.

J-2 Briefer: Gentlemen, the purpose of this briefing is to provide you with an update on the progress of Operation Lamson 719 and Operation Thuan Thang 0171, and a summary of enemy reactions to date. According to all indications, Operation Lamson 719 has succeeded in disrupting vital portions of the enemy's logistical system, capturing or destroying significant quantities of supplies and inflicting considerable damage on enemy units within the area of operation.

At the beginning of February, the enemy was primarily concerned with maintaining the flow of supplies through the Lao Panhandle. Enemy endeavors were particularly concentrated on moving goods through Tchepone -- Ban Dong and southward on Route 92. Despite these attempts, enemy input of supplies to Laos in early February, were substantially behind last year's record, and throughput into the RVN and Cambodia was minimal. This condition can be attributed to allied air interdiction, harrassments of LOCS and increased consumption by enemy administrative units and screening forces of the Lao Panhandle.

To prevent loss of the vital link in his only remaining line of communication, the enemy reacted strongly in an attempt to counter Operation Lamson 719. The enemy significantly increased the strength of combat forces in the Lamson 719 area of operations. The current force comprises elements of 11 regiments. The reported enemy losses during the operation to date are over 11,000 killed. When compared to friendly losses, the ratio is at least 10 to 1 in favor of the friendly forces. In terms of units, it is estimated that at least 8 regiments have suffered casualties equivalent to one or more of these battalions. The enemy has lost the equivalent of 13 of the 33 maneuver battalions organic to the 11 regiments committed.

The ongoing operation has compounded the enemy's already considerable logistical problem through loss of supplies and disruption of the logistical system in the Lao Panhandle. The following list of supplies are examples of those captured or destroyed during Lamson 719, and highlight the impact of the enemy losses to date:

In terms of food, some 1,550 short tons (primarily of rice)
 More than 4,400 individual weapons
 Better than 1,600 crew served weapons
 Over 780 short tons of ammo
 55 confirmed tanks

A related form of supply loss is increased consumption. Deployment of additional enemy troops to resist allied interdiction activity resulted in greatly increased food requirements and ammo expenditures by VC and NVA units committed to the area. These losses while considerable, do not clearly reveal the extent to which Lamson 719 has disrupted the enemy's logistical campaign. Even more serious for the enemy is the reduction of his capability to move supplies through the Tchepone and Ban Dong area and southward along Route 92, which has been interdicted by friendly forces. No traffic has been noted on Route 92 through Ban Dong, since 10 February.

The enemy has tried to compensate by using Route 914 and 920, but he has periodically encountered interference here as well, both from ARVN forces and allied interdiction. Traffic on this bypass road has continued at a reduced rate. The enemy has diverted some trucks to Route 23. This road, however, is not developed, passes through more open terrain and would require deployment of additional forces for adequate protection for convoys and installations.

Another significant long-term effect of the ongoing operation involves enemy casualties among experienced personnel in units that have been operating those logistical systems in previous years. Loss of trained rear service personnel will further degrade the enemy's capability to move supplies through the Lao Panhandle. Current analysis indicates that operation Lamson 719 has seriously disrupted enemy supplies. Throughput for RVN and Cambodia is quite low, only 1/5 of the throughput achieved at this time last year. With the dry season, well over half gone, the enemy will probably experience considerable difficulty in meeting his current logistical goals.

To the South, in Cambodia, ARVN forces initiated Operation Thuan Thang 0171 on 4 February. The operation encompasses three principle areas in Chup/Dambe, Snuol and the Parrots Beak area. Prior to the initiation of the operation the Chup/Dambe and Snuol areas comprised the southern terminus of the enemy's Mekong supply corridor. This complex served as a transshipment point for movement of supplies west and south in Cambodia, and east into the COSVN portion of Vietnam. In addition, the area straddled known enemy infiltration routes into South Vietnam.

In January, enemy forces deployed in base areas along the border had the mission of interdicting LOCS which supported ARVN operations in Cambodia and of conducting harrassment attacks in western MR 3, RVN, in an effort to discourage the ARVN from expanding ground operations into Cambodia. The enemy's reaction to Thoan Thang 0171 indicates the seriousness with which he viewed the operation. In recent months he avoided significant contacts with ARVN forces in Cambodia. For example, ARVN intervention to assist FANK in clearing Route 7 in December and Route 4 in January met only token resistance by the enemy.

At the onset of the current operation, however, enemy reaction was strong and determined. The scope of his reaction in Thoan Thang has included both battalion sized ground attacks and intense stand-off attacks by fire.

In the Chup/Dambe area the level of combat was relatively high in February, but has slackened since early March. The enemy has deployed his forces in an attempt to meet and block ARVN moves. In February, he moved three regiments to the vicinity of Dambe on Route 75. Of major significance in Operation Thoan Thank 0171, is the enemy personnel losses. The enemy has lost about 4,400 men killed in action to date. When compared to friendly losses to date, the loss ration is about 11 to one in favor of allied forces. As a result of repeated and heavy contact with ARVN forces, it is estimated that the equivalent of 9 battalions of the 27 under strength maneuver battalions that constitute the 9 committed regiments have been rendered ineffective for combat.

It is too soon to accurately assess the impact of OP Lamson and Thoan Thang on the enemy's capability. It was several months after the allied cross border operations in May and June of 1970 before the complete picture of his predicament became clear. There are several facets of the current operations that would indicate that the enemy's plans have been disrupted. The enemy's short term objectives are to wage protracted warfare in Cambodia, RVN, while attempting to reconstitute and expand his sole remaining line of communication in the Panhandle and in North Eastern Cambodia.

Operation Lamson has caused the enemy to divert supplies intended for southern Indo China just to defend its LOC, and has dilluted his direct efforts to achieve his goal in the South. Heavy commitment of enemy units in the Lamson 719 and Thoan Thang 0171 areas resulted in diversion of forces which the enemy could have been using elsewhere in Cambodia and RVN. Furthermore, the heavy personnel losses inflicted upon the enemy in Lamson 719 has materially reduced his capability to conduct tactical operations on any significant scale within MR 1 in RVN. This has always been the area of his greatest force density.

In Cambodia, Operation Thoan Thang 01/71 caused the enemy to shift from protracted warfare tactics to main force activities. The resulting personnel losses have been much higher than in recent months and probably represent an unplanned for degradation of his future tactical capability.

In conclusion, by seizing the initiative in the Lao Panhandle and Cambodia, ARVN has disrupted enemy logistical operations during the current dry season and preempted enemy plans for the winter/spring campaign. Disruption of enemy logistical activities and erosion of his combat strength in his base areas will materially affect the enemy's future capabilities to conduct offensive operations in both Cambodia and the RVN. While at the same time enhancing the Vietnamization program providing additional time for the development and improvement of FANK forces and permitting continued withdrawal of American forces from the RVN.

(End of J-2 Briefing).

J-3 Assessment: The purpose of this briefing is to describe some of the key aspects of the current operation and situation. Highlights will be the interdiction program; Operation Lamson 719; Operation Thoan Thang 01/71; the Mekong River Convoys, and helicopter support.

Interdiction Program: An extremely effective interdiction campaign has been under way to isolate enemy forces in the RVN from outside support. This campaign is being waged by air force conducting strikes in Laos, Cambodia and the border regions of Vietnam; naval forces in coastal waters, including border areas, and ARVN ground forces conducting cross border operations in Cambodia and most recently in Laos.

The Naval interdiction campaign and the denial of the port Kompong Som to the enemy on 18 March 1970, has made the enemy totally dependent on the overland lines of communication through Laos. After an intensive terrain study, four choke points in the Laos lines of communications were selected as the most difficult to by-pass. Heavy concentration of both B-52 and TAC air sorties have been placed in these choke points, resulting in considerable reduction in the amount of supplies being shuttled into the RVN and Cambodia. As an example of the effect of the interdiction program, nearly 14,000 trucks have been destroyed or damaged since October of last year.

There have been three major operations since last July -- Operation Cuu Long 4402, Lamson 719, and Thoan Thang 01/71. The Cuu Long Operation was terminated 25 February. The latter two operations Lamson 719 and Thoan Thang 01/71 are still in progress. Lamson has been one of the three major RVNAF cross border operations and has been a milestone in the development of the RVNAF. For the first time he conducted a multi-division operation against a strong and determined enemy and is an indication of the SVN's concern over the enemy's use of border sanctuaries in the Laos operation. He

has maintained a daily average of 22 maneuver battalions in Laos to insure disruption of the enemy's base system.

The enemy's massive use of AAA and artillery has been a significant factor of the operation. Of great significance also in the operation is that the RVNAF is penetrating an area which had been controlled for years by the enemy. There has been significant gains from this operation. The RVNAF, without U. S. advisors, faced their sternest test to date and acquitted themselves against an aggressive enemy.

The estimates of enemy killed exceed 11,000. Large amounts of supplies have been destroyed or captured, major damage has been inflicted on his LOC and his timetable for offensive operations has been set back for a considerable period. Collaterally, the RVNAF success has had impact on the NVA by effectively demonstrating that the RVNAF is capable of mounting a multi-division operation, attacking the enemy in strongly held positions and destroying a considerable portion of his caches in the area.

Insofar as the Vietnamization program is concerned, Lamson has enhanced security, provided a greater chance for rural development and community defense to succeed, and has improved the environment for orderly Vietnamization and continued U. S. troops withdrawals.

The objective of Operation Thoan Thang 01/71 in Cambodia is the destruction of enemy forces primarily in the Chup Plantation area which is known to be a base area for a large number of enemy troops. It is near the southern terminus of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and is used for storage areas and distribution points for supplies going into the Cosvn area and (inaudible) area of Cambodia. This operation is a logical followon to Thoan Thang 70/2 which was conducted from July 1970 to February of this year. This kept Route 1 open between Vietnam and Leak Nuong, disrupted the free flow of enemy personnel and supplies bound from the plantation area, north of Route 7 and resulted in over 2,000 enemy being killed in the 6-1/2 months operation. Thoan Thang 01/71 is characterized by heavy fighting and heavy casualties particularly in the Chup/Dambe area. The operation is progressing generally according to plan. Although the U. S. is supporting the operation with air assets, a larger share is being carried by RVNAF. For example, the VNAF has flown considerably more TAC air sorties and helo sorties than has the U. S.

In the sixth weeks of current operations, Route 7 has been open from the Vietnam border west to Tong Le Bot and is being secured with FANK assistance. The enemy's traditional como liaison route, traffict to Kratie, Chhlong, Komgang Trabek, has been severely disrupted. The enemy has been forced to retain major elements of two divisions north of Route 7, thus reducing the threat to Kompang Chamand other areas west of the Mekong and MR 3 and

MR 4. Most significantly, heavy casualties have been inflicted on the enemy. As the J-2 has pointed out, the numbers of 4,400 enemy killed in action, while the ARVN has sustained less than 400 KIA and 2,000 WIA.

In regard to Mekong river convoys, to maintain supplies in Phnom Penh and to thwart the enemy's desire to cut off this city, a joint combined Mekong River Convoy operation is being carried out by Cambodian and Vietnamese Naval and ground forces, supported by U.S. and Vietnamese air forces. Since its inception 17 January, there have been 10 convoys. Although the enemy has attempted to halt the operation only one vessel of the 44 cargo ships has been sunk. The convoys have successfully supplied Phnom Penh with 2,800 tons of military equipment and 16,000 tons POL. It is planned to increase the convoy rate shortly to allow for stockpiling.

Helo operations in Laos have provided the mobility necessary for success while facing exceptionally concentrated AAA weapons. One example of successful large scale air mobile operation took place on 7 March 1971, when 2 battalions were inserted into a LZ in 37 minute period by a total of over 150 lift helos and gunship escorts, with only one helo receiving damage from enemy fire. Units engaged in supporting Lamson 719 have flown 57,900 hours and 145,700 sorties during the period 29 January to 11 March. A total of 135,200 passengers and 26,200 tons of cargo were carried and gunships were credited with 1,500 (KBA) killed by air.

During this operation it's been our experience that 67% of the damaged helos are returned to service within 48 hours; 17% are expected to be operational within 30 days and 12% are expected to take more than 30 days to repair. The status of additional 4% has not been determined.

In summary, the interdiction campaign, Operation Lamson, Operation Thuan Thang, the Mekong River Convoys, and helo support, are major elements of the current combined efforts to produce a more secure environment for Vietnamization and for orderly redeployment of U.S. forces.

(End J-3 Assessment)

J-3 Briefer: To report on the operation as it looks right now, I would like to show you a few slides, here.

This shows the U.S. troop disposition. As you know, these troops have been deployed in the Quang Tri Province for the purpose of providing the rear area support that was the basis for the ARVN cross border operation (inaudible). We have approximately 21 battalions of all types assisting the ARVN. By way of orientation, Dong Ha, up in the upper right hand corner, Route 9 is the heavy black cutting cross to the southwest (inaudible). Khe Sahn is very

faintly seen down below and just to the right of the range portion of the border. We have infantry units, engineering units, artillery units in support. Notice the artillery units at the extreme western end of Route 9 that are within our authority to provide artillery support into Laos. These are assembled at the black dot. (inaudible). This particular portion of the operation we feel is vital one that has been characterized by small yet sharp (inaudible) contact. It seems to be aimed at cutting Route 9 with the LOCS up to Khe Sanh and farther along the border. There has been significant attacks by fire also as you know against a few support area (inaudible) and Khe Sanh.

Insofar as the RVNAF side of the operation is concerned. We are now in Laos, Route 9 again moving right across the center from east to west. Sepone on the left of this chart. The First Division operating just a bit west and the airborne division and elements of the various armored task force operating just to the north of the First Division area. These are the battalions that were in there yesterday. Since that time there has been several battalions withdrawn--the 1st of the 3rd, and the regimental headquarters that is associated with that, 2nd regimental headquarters, have both been withdrawn as of today. One battalion of the airborne, plus a brigade headquarters of the airborne has been withdrawn to Khe Sanh as of today. Remaining in Laos we have 16 battalions as of now, that includes 4 armored battalions; 4 airborne battalions; 2 infantry battalions and 6 Vietnamese battalions.

The contacts in this area are characterized I would say as larger than they are within RVN. Our spot reports that are coming in from the field indicate large casualty figures on both the enemy side and reasonably heavy casualties on the ARVN side. The weapons count that we are picking up are proportionately indicative of the fact that the body count is reasonably accurate insofar as the enemy is concerned. The enemy is obviously closing with the ARVN units that are on fire support bases, a favorite tactic of his, heavy attacks by fire, mortar and artillery, and the ARVN are using their own weapons, their own artillery and our air to return the fire.

Currently, the units that are being withdrawn from Laos are moving to Khe Sanh for refitting rehabilitation. The first one has been moved farther on to the east. Some of you may have seen them at Dong Ha, possibly at Quang Tri, and areas northeast in Quang Tri province.

- END -

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

TOP SECRET

ACTION
March 20, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: K. Wayne Smith *KWS*

SUBJECT: Lam Son

Attached is the memorandum for the President on Lam Son you requested. Attached at Tab A to the President's memorandum are two pages on the assumptions and quantitative estimates that underly the final calculations in this memorandum.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memorandum for the President at Tab A.

*Nancy —
pouched to
Pres.*

TOP SECRET

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

✓ Ed
THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....
A

TOP SECRET-SENSITIVE

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

April 16, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

HENRY A. KISSINGER HK

SUBJECT:

Lam Son 719 Final Report

Laos (Lam Son 719)

Cumulative Totals

Individual weapons	5,100	
Crew-served weapons	2,000	
Small arms ammunition (rounds)	580,600	
Other assorted ammo (pounds)	40,002,200	
Food (pounds)	2,565,000	
Vehicles	530	
Tanks	80	
Petroleum (gallons)	218,000	
Structures destroyed	1,300	
Bunkers destroyed	1,330	
Medical supplies (pounds)	8,000	
Miscellaneous equipment & supplies (pounds)	80,000	
Enemy KIA	13,650	includes 4,400 KBA
U.S. KIA	180	
ARVN KIA	1,550	

TOP SECRET-SENSITIVE

In a final report on Operation Lam Son 719, MACV makes the following observations on the effects of the operation:

- The enemy's aggressive reaction caused his forces to mass and they were thus exposed to Allied ground and air fire power.
- The operation has shown the enemy that his sanctuaries are vulnerable. Thus, an offshoot of the operation will be fixing of significant enemy forces.
- Fixing the enemy forces will assist in keeping them distant from the population of South Vietnam.
- If there were any who still believed that this was a South Vietnamese "civil war", the reports and pictures of the elaborate network of roads, trails and streams that link enemy activity from North Vietnam to the RVN should expose that fiction.
- Detailed ground reconnaissance developed many lucrative target locations during the operation. This information is being used to refine the accuracy of continued air strikes against the enemy's logistic system in Laos.
- The experience gained in command and control of large combat formations, coordination of combined arms efforts and logistical support of large-scale operations will enhance RVNAF combat effectiveness.
- The operation has underlined the progress which has been made in Vietnamization.
- Lam Son 719 may be over for the RVNAF, but for the enemy it is still going on as B-52s, tac air and gunships continue to attack targets developed during February and March.
- The operation appears to have widespread popular support in RVN.
- Although Lam Son 719 was an important operation, it was only part of the total effort designed to disrupt the entire enemy system. Understandably, the total effect of this operation is difficult to quantify completely at this time, and all the results will not be known for many months.
- Although it is too early to make a final judgment, Lam Son 719 may well prove to have been a pivotal point in the Indochina conflict.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 14, 1971

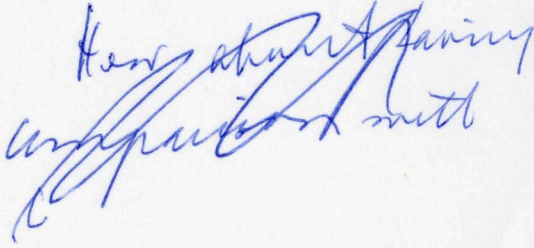


MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Jim Fazio



Per your request at Tab B. Recommend that you sign memorandum for the President at Tab A.



MEMORANDUM

file

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 14, 1971

*Make for Pres.
but round out
figures*

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

MEMORANDUM FOR:

HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM:

SITUATION ROOM *[Signature]*

SUBJECT:

LAMSON 719 FINAL REPORT

Laos (Lamson 719)

Cumulative totals

Individual weapons
Crew-served weapons

5,066
1,935

Small arms ammunition (rounds)
Other assorted ammo (pounds)

480,566
40,002,160

Food (pounds)

2,564,720

Vehicles
Tanks
Petroleum (gallons)
Structures destroyed
Bunkers destroyed

528
75-80
217,710
1,270
1,328

Medical supplies (pounds)
Miscellaneous equipment &
supplies (pounds)

7,900
80,000

Enemy KIA
U.S. KIA
ARVN KIA

13,642 includes 4,364 killed by air
176
1,531

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

In a final report on Operation Lam Son 719, (MACV) makes the following observations on the effects of the operation.

- A. The enemy's aggressive reaction caused his forces to mass and they were thus exposed to allied ground and air fire power.
- B. The operation has shown the enemy that his sanctuaries are vulnerable. Thus an offshoot of the operation will be fixing of significant enemy forces.
- C. Fixing the enemy forces will assist in keeping them distant from the population of South Vietnam.
- D. If there were any who still believed that this was a South Vietnamese "civil war", the reports and pictures of the elaborate network of roads, trails, and streams that link enemy activity from North Vietnam to the RVN should expose that fiction.
- E. Detailed ground reconnaissance developed many lucrative target locations during the operation. This information is being used to refine the accuracy of continued air strikes against the enemy's logistic system in Laos.
- F. The experience gained in command and control of large combat formations, coordination of combined arms efforts, and logistical support of large scale operations will enhance RVNAF combat effectiveness.
- G. The operation has underlined the progress which has been made in Vietnamization.
- H. Lam Son 719 may be over for the RVNAF, but for the enemy it is still going on as B-52's, tac air, and gunships continue to attack targets developed during February and March.
- I. The operation appears to have widespread popular support in RVN.
- J. Although Lam Son 719 was an important operation, it was only part of the total effort designed to disrupt the entire enemy system. Understandably, the total effect of this operation is difficult to quantify completely at this time, and all the results will not be known for many months.
- K. Although it is too early to make a final judgement, Lam Son 719 may well prove to have been a pivotal point in the Indochina conflict.