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FM GEN EARLE G. WHEELER, CJCS

TO GEN W. C. WESTMORELAND, COMUSMACV

GEN H. K. JOHNSON, CSA, SAIGON

INFO ADM U.S.G. SHARP, CINCPAC

DELIVER DURING WAKING HOURS

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NHJ 94-189

By 1-15-96, NARA, Date

1. We are becoming increasingly concerned with news media and Congressional attitudes regarding the progress of the war. There have been a number of news stories recently which characterize the war as being "a stalemate"; this same belief has been expressed by prominent members of the Congress who have hitherto been supporters of the war effort. As a sample of the reporting a Senator recently wrote the following to Secretary McNamara:

"...it is beginning to appear that we are doing most of the fighting. According to a recent weekly casualty report, twice as many American soldiers were killed as South Vietnamese soldiers. Also, according to another report I have seen, in the six months ending in May, American casualties exceeded the number of Vietnamese drafted. It is most difficult to understand why we should exert a greater effort than South Vietnam. How can we explain to the parents of our men in Vietnam, why their sons are there being shot at and killed while reports tell of young South Vietnamese men enjoying life in Saigon and elsewhere?"

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PP#2

2. Manifold examples similar to the foregoing <sup>have</sup> ~~has~~ led to the thought that we might prepare a precise, factual, non-generalized case to explain why we think we are making progress rather than facing a stalemate in Vietnam. The proposal visualizes a province-by-province narrative based on province reports showing:

- a. The VC manpower problem.
- b. The decrease in Communist operational capabilities

and

c. Threat to the VC as shown by VC concentrations against Revolutionary Development activities.

I am not sure that a province-by-province approach is possible ~~against~~ but certainly a Corps tactical zone presentation <sup>should be,</sup> ~~feasible.~~

3. Reflecting on the above, it occurs to me that you might have a briefing of the above type prepared which you yourself would give to the Saigon press. To the subject matter outlined above, I would add such military items as the number of base areas neutralized and/or entered in each corps tactical zone, the opening of roads, railroads, waterways, etc. I think it would be good for you to brief the press yourself because such action would insure maximum impact on the <sup>Saigon</sup> press and, <sup>hopefully,</sup> ~~forwarded~~ helpful stories forwarded by them to their editors. Of course, before you gave such a briefing we would like to have the text in our hands back here so that we could insure being in step with you in answering questions from the Washington press and from editorial sources.

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4. I would appreciate soonest your assessment of the feasibility and the desirability of undertaking a project of this sort.

5. For General Johnson: I am sure that you will be faced with a press conference soon after you return from South Vietnam. In fact, I surmise that you may be requested to report to the President and, thereafter, meet with the press. Forewarned is forearmed!

6. For CINCPAC: I would appreciate any comments you may wish to offer, either on this specific project or more generally as to how we can improve the tenor of press reporting on the war. Warm regards to all.

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