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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDANT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20315

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22 January 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

I met with General Eisenhower for 2 hours at Palm Desert on Thursday. He is in excellent health and spirits, and was most appreciative of being brought up to date. After a brief report on the war, I covered the recent "peace feelers". His principal observations and comments are contained in the last 4 paragraphs of the attached Memorandum for Record.

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A. J. GOODPASTER
Lieutenant General, USA

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22 January 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with General Eisenhower, Palm Desert,
18 January

I met with General Eisenhower for two hours at his office and his home at Palm Desert on 18 January.

I began with a report on the progress of the war. In recent weeks, the VC and NVA have been making an unusual military effort, and taking very heavy losses--3,000 and 2,200 in the last two weeks. Documents have been captured which call for an immediate or "final" effort by all units. The general pattern continues to show Communist losses more than 5 times as great as the losses to U.S., Allied and ARVN forces combined.

Next I gave a resume in some detail of the principal US/ARVN operational efforts now going on and envisaged for the near future, including ground/air operations in SVN (by Corps area), ground activities relating to Laos and Cambodia, naval operations in the Vietnam area, B-52 operations, Air operations against NVN, Air operations in Laos, the anti-infiltration system, and revolutionary development operations in SVN.

Next I covered a few points of special note. There is an enemy concentration which may total 3 NVA divisions in the Khe Sanh area which is being closely watched. Also there is enemy preparation for possible renewed action in the Dak To area. Next, I reported recently obtained VC reports that in Quang Tri and Quang Nam, the Communist organization is being "stunted" by US/SVN military operations, and that in areas of Phu Yen, cadre and infrastructure are disintegrating; also an NVN report indicates that North Vietnam is hurting from the bombing attacks and suffering losses, some of which are irreplaceable.

I then passed on a report that the NVN had conducted a remarkably well coordinated supply operation during Christmas week. Trucks observed in Route Package 1, other than Christmas Day, ranged

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from 3 to 95 (averaging 44) and waterborne logistic craft from 0 to 43 (averaging 17); on Christmas Day 547 trucks and 325 waterborne logistic craft were sighted. On the same day between Thanh Hoa and Dong Hoi 900 trucks were sighted, 888 moving south (carrying an estimated 4,000 tons). General Eisenhower thought these were extremely significant figures and asked why these figures are not better known. I told him that figures like these had been made public, and there had been some press coverage, although not with the emphasis he had in mind. (I indicated that I could not speak about TV coverage.) He said he thought that photographs should be taken and publicized in case of any future suspension. I told him this has been done in the past, and that in the discussions I have heard concerning possible future bombing halts there was strong insistence on the need to provide photo reconnaissance.

I next reported on Chieu Hoi returnees in 1967. The number--some 27,000--was less than had been estimated when the year began, but was 34% over 1966. Of the 27,000, some 17,000 were military, the equivalent of 2 Communist divisions or about one-fifth of the total VC/NVA killed or captured in 1967 (91,000). Political returnees numbered nearly 8,000 of whom 4,700 were infrastructure or party organizers. General Eisenhower asked whether some of these may be VC agents. I told him that they are screened, and that in fact some of the returnees are used with patrols that seek out, propagandize, and call in air and artillery strikes on the units from which they came.

General Eisenhower commented that the TV coverage of our bases that are hit by mortar fire is damaging to our people's understanding of the war. The presentations are highly dramatic and shocking in their effect. I told him that a great deal of patrolling, which is often successful, goes into protecting our bases against mortar fire, and that some attacking groups have been detected and attacked by air and artillery. This, of course, cannot be shown as graphically on TV and in the press as the attacks on our bases.

I next reported upon the widespread SVN concern over "coalition", as the background for General Thieu's recent statement. Ambassador Bunker had reported rising concern in SVN that the U.S. might be shifting to favor coalition, and had suggested that this should be scotched. Also, Mr. Rostow told me that there was a great deal of talk and worry about this in SVN, much of which seemed to be starting with the VC. The latter, according to captured documents,

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is pushing the coalition issue in its propaganda (and linking the U.S. to the idea) while calling for a special round of combat effort. I said Mr. Rostow had told me that our government does not favor coalition; this is simply VC propaganda. General Eisenhower said that a coalition would be undesirable and dangerous and we should oppose it. I also mentioned that Mr. Rostow believes there is some evidence of a shift in the view the Communists have held that time is on their side. General Eisenhower thought such a shift would be highly significant.

Next I took up the status of the possible NVN "peace feeler" involved in the shift from "could" to "will", covering points provided to me by General Wheeler. We do not know what the NVN objective may be--whether they are serious, want a respite, seek a psychological coup, etc., or whether their shift on "permanent" cessation is somehow an indirect assurance they will not take advantage of a bombing halt.

During discussion, General Eisenhower cited his experience first with the Italian surrender and later with the German surrender. He advised not to rely on "iffy" favorable interpretations, but to insist upon more frank and clear-cut statements (which may, of course, be made privately). Even then, he said, we must not put ourselves in the position of depending upon belief in what a Communist says. Whatever is worked out must be self-enforcing. I told him that these questions, and others like them, are being very carefully studied within the government, and that a great deal of thought is being given to them. There seems to be considerable recognition that the key issue is whether the NVN is ready, or can be led, to give up its efforts at take-over of SVN by force. Also, that if bombing is stopped, it could prove very difficult to start up again. This underlies the cautious and careful approach that is being made.

Next he said that if the NVN is in fact weakening its position, now is the time to hit them harder. He mentioned B-52 attacks on enemy forces and bases in SVN, and I told him that an expansion of effort is envisaged currently. Also, he thought we should hit the enemy with our ground forces, and should encourage the SVN to go after him with special aggressiveness at this time. The enemy might, as suggested, be making a great military effort in order to impose losses on us, and advance his advantages in going into negotiations. We should do much the same.

He said he hoped that we could get an effective armistice. To that end, now may be the time to increase our combat effort. He

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commented that this will be a partisan and political year, but that there is nothing partisan in his views when the lives of U. S. military men are involved. He said he wants to see the President win the war.


A. J. GOODPASTER
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army

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