

42

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Friday, January 19, 1968 -- 10:15 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith the argumentation which led Gen. Westmoreland and Gen. Vien to recommend a 36 hour rather than 48 hour standdown. As you can see (page 3), the argument has JCS support.

These points could be made as follows:

-- Present rules of engagement permit strikes against "abnormally great resupply activities" during a standdown. These rules are meant to protect against the kind of resupply our people in Saigon fear. The argument in the attached paper is really for no truce rather than a 12-hour reduction.

-- There is a strong case for excluding the Khe Sanh area from the truce. It is relatively unpopulated. Given the evidence that the North Vietnamese are assembling forces for a massive attack, I believe it would be unwise for us to give them even 36 hours of free moment of forces and supplies in the Khe Sanh area.

With the Khe Sanh exception and the freedom of action Westy already has to deal with abnormal supply movements, I don't think the 12 hours matter much one way or the other.

W. W. Rostow

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Authority NLJ-CBS-19
By ics, NARS, Date 6-22-84

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DIA ESTIMATE

In any standdown period in North Vietnam a major logistic effort takes place. This effort involves truck and waterborne logistic craft (WBLC). WBLC come into prominence whenever the length of the ceasefire period is sufficient to allow this relatively slow transportation a round trip opportunity. Pre-arms truce periods which involved WBLC to any significant degree were 48 hours or more in length. The WBLC activity starts as far north as Thanh Hoa (19° 45' N) and usually has a southern terminus near Dong Hoi (17° 30' N). The larger and faster craft can make the maximum distance round trip in about 48 hours while smaller and slower boats can make the delivery and then achieve dispersed positions to avoid attacks when hostilities recommence.

During the 48 hour Christmas truce in 1966, US forces observed a 20 fold increase over daily average craft sightings along the southern coastal areas of NVN. During the 96 hour Tet truce in 1967 WBLC moved about 20,000 tons southward indicating a capability to move about 10,000 tons during a 48 hour period. This past Christmas and New Years ceasefire periods of 24 and 36 hours duration respectively exhibited no significant WBLC activity although the 36 hour period was more active than the 24 hour pause.

Truck Activity.

During the most recent Christmas and New Years truce periods, truck activity in NVN was eight to ten times normal daily estimates. It would appear that about 2,200 tons of material was moving southward in NVN during an average 24 hour period. This amount of material was estimated to be destined for southern NVN, the DMZ, Laos and SVN. Should the total 2,200 tons be delivered to SVN, it would represent about a 95 to 120 day supply of external requirements provided by NVN to Viet Cong-NVA forces in SVN. In other terms 2,200 tons represents approximately a 22 day supply of material to a NVA division in moderate combat conditions.

Summary.

It can be estimated that the logistic difference to the North Vietnamese between a 36 hour and 48 hour ceasefire period could be as much as 10,000 tons of material. This difference being represented by the ability or lack of ability to employ WBLCs to any great degree.

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By as NARS, Date 12-7-83