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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NLJ 94-362

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By CB, NARA, Date 4-18-95

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Pres file

Wednesday, September 20, 1967 -- 8:20 a.m.

Mr. President:

These two cables from Gen. Westmoreland and Adm. Sharp -- of September 16 and 19 -- foreshadow problems and possible controversy of which you should be aware. On Westy's part they reflect significant tactical difficulties with proceeding with the barrier program in the eastern part of the DMZ on schedule due to enemy artillery strength and weather -- the northeast monsoon lasting at its full strength through November and tapering off in December and January.

The underlying resistance of Adm. Sharp to the whole concept comes through clearly in his following cable of comment. You will note his flat statement at the top of page 2.

I would think it possible that we are going to have a quite open debate on the question: Is the barrier a proper use or a misuse of scarce military resources?

W. W. Rostow

30673 MACCCC, 16 Sept 1967
CINCPAC 180740Z, 19 Sept 1967

WWRostow:rlh

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6
NLJ 98-183
By ing, NARA Date 9-11-96

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Text of cable from Admiral Sharp (CINCPAC 180740Z) 19 Sept. 1967

1. I concur with General Westmoreland that design for the implacement of the Strong Point Obstacle System must be changed in view of the situation in the vicinity of the DMZ.

2. The heavy concentration of enemy artillery, rocket and mortar capability in and north of the DMZ, coupled with his knowledge of the nature of the Strong Point Obstacle System could result in extremely heavy and unacceptable casualties if the Strong Point Obstacle System were installed as planned. In the last four months the casualties, both killed and wounded, in I Corps have been higher than in all other corps zones combined. A significant proportion of these casualties have resulted from artillery, rocket and mortar fire.

3. Additionally, the heaviest rains in the eastern part of Quang Tri province are in the period September, October, and November, tapering off in December and January. These rains have begun, making transport difficult.

4. Dong Ma can no longer be depended upon as a logistic base. The LST landing area at Cua Viet could become untenable, thus requiring LST unloading at Hue, a facility that is not yet completed. Road upgrading in I Corps is badly needed. Heavy demand on construction troops has delayed necessary road work. Recent and continuing rains will result in further deterioration of the roads. There have been numerous bridge interdictions by the Viet Cong. Cincpac has directed that the "Seabee" battalion on Okinawa be deployed to I Corps as soon as possible.

5. I concur with General Westmoreland's appraisal that the situation in Quang Nam and Quang Tin provinces requires all forces now stationed there. Consequently, four Marine battalions could not be moved north for the purpose of providing security and cover for those forces which would be engaged in construction along the trace unless I Corps was reinforced.

6. I believe arc light and heavy tactical air support as well as our artillery and naval gunfire are causing the enemy heavy casualties in the north of DMZ. However, his artillery is well dug in and difficult to knock out. It is particularly important that our heavy air effort in North Viet Nam continue without any let-up in intensity. A 7-day stand-down as suggested by Pres. Thieu would be disastrous.

7. While the Marines have their hands full in I Corps, they are inflicting serious losses on the enemy and preventing him from gaining any tactical advantage.

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The installation of the Strong Point Obstacle System (SPOS) as originally planned is not now feasible, nor would it be useful under present circumstances. I believe there has been too much emphasis on the November date for the Dye Marker operation, so that it has to some degree been taking priority over more important operations. Westmoreland's plan, as outlined, in his message, provides for a realistic approach to countering enemy activity in I Corps under the prevailing tactical situation, and permits orderly planning to cope with future developments.

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