

TOP SECRET

Saturday, October 14, 1967  
9:45 a.m.

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*Prex file*

Mr. President:

Herewith Bunker and Westy file  
their case for minimum holiday stand-  
downs: Christmas, New Years, Tet.

This assumes, of course, no  
response either to your San Antonio  
formula or other decision about a  
bombing pause by highest authority.

W. W. Rostow

Saigon 8432

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WWRostow:rln

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)  
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983  
By tg, NARA, Date 10-29-91

October 13, 1967

Copy of SAIGON 843.

Subject: Holiday Cease-fire Refs: A. State 168637 (Apr. 3, 1967)  
B. JCS 3879

1. In anticipation that proposals will be forthcoming shortly for military stand-downs over the Christmas, New Year's, and Tet holidays, General Westmoreland and I have discussed and agreed upon a recommended U. S. position for a holiday military posture. We agree also that the official U. S. position should be determined earliest, and no later than the end of October. The basis for urgency in this matter hinges upon the critical significance of not being pre-empted by either Hanoi or the National Liberation Front, and thus placed in the adverse political/psychological position of countering their proposals.

2. It is essential that all concerned be positively apprised of the risks attending a military stand-down, however brief it might be. The record clearly attests to the fraudulent manner in which the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army have executed past cease-fire accords. As a result of more than 1,000 enemy-initiated incidents during the three stand-downs last year, US forces suffered 30 casualties at Christmas, 41 over New Year's, and 176 during Tet. The enemy used the stand-down to prepare assaults on U. S. and allied positions. One such attack following Christmas inflicted 92 casualties (27 of them killed in action) in one single U. S. unit. The most enduring aspect of those cease-fires stemmed from the massive logistics resupply activities of the enemy. With truck and sea traffic running 25 times the pre-cease-fire rate, the North Vietnamese Army moved 23,000 tons of material into the DMZ area and Laos during the Tet stand-down; enough to sustain one division in combat for nearly 3 months. An estimated 10,000 tons was similarly positioned during the shorter Christmas stand-down. Just how much of this material was used in the recent rain of fire on our Marines in the North is open to conjecture.

3. We have no reason to presume that the enemy will approach future holiday cease-fires with any greater integrity than he has in the past. General Westmoreland and I both agree that militarily it is obviously preferable that there should be no cease-fire periods during the forthcoming holidays. We realize, also, however, that precedent and current public pressures may well make some action with respect to the Christmas and Tet holidays necessary. In this event we recommend the following as the maximum acceptable schedule for holiday cease-fires:

A. For Christmas, a 24-hour period with justification based on religious considerations.

B. There is no adequate justification for a New Year's cease-fire. If nevertheless imposed, it should not exceed 24 hours.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 34

NY 94-417

By Cb NARA Date 1-20-95

C. For Tet, a 48-hour cease-fire is recommended, with a maximum fallback position of 72 hours.

4. Rules governing cease-fire period military operations during the three holidays last year proved to be inadequate with respect to prescription of enemy resupply activities. As a result, State and JC3 extended our prerogatives by references A and B to respond to substantial military resupply activity detected in North Viet Nam south of 20° north latitude during the Buddha's birthday stand-down on 23 May. We conclude that we should make future rules even more binding. Future agreements, if such become necessary, should impose a total freeze on logistics and force repositioning on both sides. This prohibition would be applied to all movements of military personnel and materiel regardless of where they might occur either in-country or into country in both North and South Viet Nam and their contiguous waters. Violations observed by an intensive reconnaissance program would be subject to immediate military response. With minimal pre-stocking, we can live with these terms for at least 48 hours, and perhaps as long as 72 hours.

5. All remaining military provisions detailed in reference B are considered to provide sufficient latitude for security purposes. We do propose, however, to apply up to 50% of our normal airstrike effort in North Viet Nam against targets along the Laos transhipment routes.

6. We believe it important that a 30 October deadline on the establishment of a U. S. position be met in order that it might be coordinated with the Government of Viet Nam and permit appropriate announcements by the two governments in advance of any public offers from the opposition.

BUNKER

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