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Saturday, September 23, 1967
3:00 p. m.

Pres. file

Mr. President:

I am, of course, keeping my
mind open on mining Haiphong.

I thought you might like to read
this well-balanced argument for mining
(plus an earlier paper) by Bob Ginsburgh.

W. W. Rostow

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WWRostow:rlh

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
By h4, NARA, Date 10-10-91

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

22 September 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROSTOW

SUBJECT: Mining

In June, I concluded that although there is a wide range of uncertainty involved, there is a reasonable possibility that interdiction of ports and land LOCs could be decisive (Tab A).

That equation has now been modified by the following elements:

- CINCPAC has estimated the 1967 rate of imports at 8,300 tons per day instead of 5,000. In terms of the rationale of the previous analysis, this would mean that mining would have a greater impact than previously estimated.
- We have mounted an expanded effort to interdict NVN's land LOCs. It is obvious that this has caused NVN considerable difficulty, but we have no good estimate of how seriously NVN is hurting. We don't know really whether mining would now be more or less effective.
- The bad weather has begun to set in. This means (1) decreasing effectiveness in interdicting the land LOC alternates to the ports and (2) decreased effectiveness in hindering NVN attempts to overcome mining by lightering over the beach. However, bad weather -- involving high seas -- could hinder an NVN lightering effort almost as much as it would hinder our efforts to destroy the lighters.

On balance, I conclude that mining now would be somewhat less effective than it would have been had we begun in June. There is still, in my personal opinion, a reasonable possibility that mining would be decisive.

There are several other factors in addition to the absolute impact on the enemy's capability which ought to be considered and evaluated. I merely offer these as points to be considered, rather than using them as arguments for mining now.

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By CB, NARA, Date 9-19-95

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- Mining would probably be the best way of keeping pressure on NVN during the forthcoming bad weather when our bombing campaign is forced to slow down.

- Mining prior to a bombing pause would keep the pressure on Hanoi even during a bombing pause.

- Mining might have an important impact on Hanoi's evaluation of U.S. determination and persistence. Hanoi's estimate that the U.S. will change course is, in my opinion, the single most important factor in prolonging the war. If mining -- or any other action -- could disabuse Hanoi of that notion, it should receive the closest consideration.

- The present capability of an NVN lightering effort -- even without U.S. attempts to hinder the operation -- might put an upper limit on NVN's ability to compensate for mining.

- It is often argued that mining would be very risky but not very meaningful militarily. It is possible that if the mining were not meaningful militarily it would not really be very risky.

In all of the above, I have, obviously, not addressed the risks involved. An analysis of the risks would not be necessary unless the mining appeared to be productive. Thus, my point is simply that the mining seems to be a sufficiently worthwhile venture to require the most objective possible analysis of the attendant risks.

In the meantime, I recommend that we press on with our attacks on targets in the Haiphong area. There is still a possibility that a vigorous campaign to isolate Haiphong could make mining irrelevant.

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ROBERT N. GINSBURGH

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13 June 1967

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The Impact of Interdicting North Vietnam's Imports

At the present time, North Vietnam has a capacity to handle substantially more imports than are required to prosecute the war at the current level.

North Vietnam is currently importing at the rate of 5,000 tons per day (Tab A) against a capacity of 13,900 (Tab B). If we consider exports of 3,000 tons/day, NVN still has an excess import capacity of 5,900 tons a day.

Therefore, some people have concluded that closing the ports and interdicting road and rail lines would not be militarily effective because of the existence of this excess capacity.

Some proceed to argue that even if capacity could be drastically reduced, North Vietnam could tighten its belt and by curtailing non-essential military and civil consumption could continue to prosecute the war at the current level.

The attached analyses cast considerable doubt on these propositions.

In fact, they indicate that there is a reasonable possibility that interdiction of ports and land LOCs could be decisive. (Some unspecified amount of time would elapse while NVN lived off its stockpiles, however, unless the leadership chose to note the handwriting on the wall.)

There is, however, a wide range of uncertainty involved.

Estimates of minimum essential imports vary from 2,000 tons per day to 7,900 tons per day. Estimates of interdicted capacity vary from 3,900 to 4,100 per day, and higher capacities could undoubtedly be argued.

If NVN needs only 2,000 or 3,000 tons/day, an interdiction campaign would obviously not be decisive. It would be painful since imports of 3,000 tons/day would represent a reduction of 40% from current rate -- which already seems to cause an observable degree of pain.

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On the other hand, if minimum requirements were as high as 7,900 tons/day, an interdiction campaign which left the ports open might even be decisive. If the ports were not closed, import capacity would be 9,050 tons/day. Import requirements of 7,900 plus current exports of 3,030 would equal 10,930 -- and would exceed total capacity. However, if NVN ceased all exports, she would have a margin of 1,150 tons/day of excess capacity. It ought to be possible to reduce this margin at least to zero by interdicting supplies as they leave the port areas for distribution within NVN.

A more likely estimate of minimum requirements is 5,300 tons/day. This is only 6% greater than the current rate of imports. As indicated in Tab A this seems to be conservative despite the fact that it is considerably higher than previous estimates. If either of the estimated interdicted import capacities (3,900 - 4,100) are valid, an interdiction campaign would have a significant impact:

- Exports would cease (current rate 3,030).
- Imports would be 1,200 - 1,400 tons/day below the minimum essential.
- At the same time, additional minimum essential requirements would be generated as a result of the destruction caused by the interdiction campaign -- resulting in an even greater squeeze on NVN.
- It ought to affect the NVN leadership's calculation of their prospects -- and, hence, their will to persist.

R.N. Ginsburgh/13 Jun 67

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North Vietnam's Minimum Essential
Import Requirements

This analysis concludes that in order to maintain its war effort and carry on essential economic activities North Vietnam will have to import at least at the rate of 5,300 metric tons per day.

There is a wide range of estimates, however, on North Vietnam's minimum essential import requirements as indicated in the table below --

- The "low base" uses the lowest annual rate in each category during the period 1964-7.

- The "1967 base" projects minimum imports at the rate for the first quarter of 1967.

- The "high base" adds to the 1967 rates the imports required to replace losses in production caused by destruction of the Haiphong cement plant and possible losses from destruction of fertilizer plants and miscellaneous facilities.

- The "CIA estimate" is that carried in intelligence memorandum 0649/67.

- The "revised" figures are derived as shown in succeeding paragraphs.

	<u>Thousands of Metric Tons</u>				
	<u>Low Base</u>	<u>1967 Base</u>	<u>High Base</u>	<u>CIA</u>	<u>Revised</u>
Petroleum	142	320	320	150	200
Fertilizer	140	292	620	-	391
Food	78	284	378	-	284
Timber	14	28	28	--	14
Cement	0	0	470	90	235
Military	200	200	200	200	200
Miscellaneous	162	432 (by sea) 252 (land)	866	330	600
Total	736	1,808	2,882	1,100	1,924
Tons/day	2,000	5,000	7,900	3,000	5,300

Tab A

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For all practical purposes, the "low base" can be discarded on grounds that it is ancient history. A somewhat more valid argument can be made for the "high base" in that it represents the level of imports necessary if North Vietnam were to compensate for production losses. However, it tends toward the pessimistic side from NVN's point of view. A still better argument can be made for the 1967 base on grounds that under current conditions NVN would be importing only what is really necessary. However, this does not consider what NVN might be able to do if they really tightened their belts. The CIA estimate attempts to do just that. The CIA estimate, however, seems excessively optimistic about NVN's belt-tightening capability -- especially in terms of petroleum, food and fertilizer, cement, and miscellaneous imports.

It may be very significant that the "revised" estimate -- based on "requirements" rather than "supply" -- is within 6% of the current rate of imports.

Petroleum. The CIA estimate of 150 is excessively low. It is only 5% above 1964 imports. It is 10% below 1965 imports -- before the POL bombing campaign. Even the 1966 imports of 201 do not take full account of the bombing campaign which began in mid-1966. On the other hand, the 1967 rate may well be more than the minimum because NVN may be trying to build up its stocks in anticipation of possible U.S. attempts to interdict POL imports. An average of the 1966 rate (201) and the 1967 rate (320) would be 260. Based on an estimated current consumption of 18 thousand tons per month, annual requirements would be 216. Conceivably, this consumption rate could be decreased somewhat. Fragmentary reports on restrictive use of POL in NVN, however, would indicate that a reduction of as much as one-third in consumption would have a significant effect on NVN. Furthermore, this consumption rate does not take into account POL supplies which are destroyed by bombing, nor does it consider the additional POL requirements which would be generated by an intensified campaign against the land LOCs. Therefore, it seems conservative to estimate the minimum petroleum import requirement of 200.

Fertilizer. In 1966, NVN imported fertilizer in the amount of 227 thousand metric tons. In spite of these fertilizer imports, food production in 1966 was 300 thousand tons short. By 1967 the rate of fertilizer imports had reached 292. At present, NVN produces

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328 thousand tons of fertilizer. If this productive capacity were destroyed, NVN's requirement would be 555 to 620. If food is imported to make up the food deficit, the 1966 fertilizer import rate of 227 rather than 292 would seem to be a reasonable base point. If only half of NVN's fertilizer capacity were destroyed (164) and added to the 1966 rate (227), we would get a minimum fertilizer import requirement of 391.

Food. In 1966, NVN imported 78 thousand tons of food. In 1966, there was an estimated harvest short-fall of 300 thousand tons. This would generate an import requirement for 378. For the first quarter of 1967, however, food was only being imported at the rate of 284. If we are to be conservative, therefore, we should use 284 rather than 378. It should be noted, however, that this "conservative" estimate establishes a food and fertilizer requirement of 675, whereas the CIA combined requirement is only 330. If we assume a bumper rice crop, the CIA estimate would be reasonable. However, there are some indications that this year's harvest will be worse than last. Finally, although food is not at present "critical," NVN already seems to be operating at a subsistence level of food. Thus, it seems conservative to estimate the minimum food import requirement at 284.

Timber. Timber imports have varied from 14 to 32 with the current rate of 28. Arbitrarily, we use the lowest figure to get a minimum timber import requirement of 14.

Cement. Normally, NVN has exported cement. In 1966, NVN exported 99 thousand tons of an estimated production of 600. The Haiphong cement plant accounted for 95% of this capacity or 570. If this plant stays out of production, NVN would have to import 471 to maintain the 1966 rate of cement consumption. Undoubtedly, consumption could be reduced. If consumption were reduced 50%, NVN's minimum cement import requirement would be 235.

Military. We have used across the board the CIA estimate of 200. Increased attrition of military goods might well raise this requirement. Nevertheless, we estimate the minimum military goods requirement at 200.

Miscellaneous Economic Goods. In the first quarter of 1967, miscellaneous economic goods were being imported through the ports at the rate of 432 thousand tons. (In 1964, it was 162;

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in 1966 it was 406.) Total imports through the ports were estimated at the rate of 1,356. If the ports accounted for 75% of imports, 452 would have been imported by land LOC. If the requirements for military goods (200) were transported by land, the import rate by land LOC would be 252. Thus, total miscellaneous economic goods at the first quarter rate would equal 684. The CIA estimated requirement is less than half -- 330. The "high base," however, estimated 866 (1967 rate of 684 plus an additional 182 to replace losses from attacks on production facilities other than cement). If we average the 1967 rate of 684 with 1966 miscellaneous economic goods of 516, we get a minimum miscellaneous economic goods requirement of 600.

Tab A

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Transport Capacity of Major
Import Routes to Vietnam

	Annual Average ^a as of Apr 1967	CIA Estimate Interdicted Capacity	Revised Interdicted Capacity
Major Ports	5,500 ^b	0 ^c	550 ^d
Haiphong	4,500		450
Hon Gai & Cam Phu	1,000		100
Routes fm Kwangsi & Kwangtung ^e	5,000	2,300	2,000
Dong Dang Hanoi RR	3,000	800	600
Roads	2,000	1,500	1,400
Routes fm Yunnan ^e	3,400	1,600	1,550
Lao-Cai Hanoi RR ^f	700	700	560
Roads	1,200	900	840
Red River	1,500	0	150 ^d
<u>Total</u>	<u>13,900</u>	<u>3,900</u>	<u>4,100</u>

a Intelligence Memorandum 0649/67.

b The theoretical dry-cargo handling capacity at the docks and assuming that no exports would be handled. However, for the first quarter of 1967 dry cargo seaborne imports were running at the rate of 2,870 tons/day and exports at the rate of 3,030 tons/day for a total dry cargo rate of 5,900. In addition, petroleum was being imported at the rate of 900 tons/day. Thus, total imports and exports were 6,800 tons/day.
seaborne

c The CIA "estimate" simply assumed for purposes of analysis that actions to close the ports were 100% effective.

d The revised estimate arbitrarily assumes that actions to close the ports and the Red River would be "90% effective."

e The CIA estimate is based on an interdicted road capacity 25% less than uninterdicted capacity. The revised estimate assumes a reduction of 30%. The CIA estimates a reduction of 75% in uninterdicted rail capacity. The revised estimate assumes a reduction of 80%.

f Original capacity of the Lao Cai-Hanoi RR was estimated at 2,800. It is currently estimated at 700 (a 75% reduction).

Tab B

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