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Thursday, October 26, 1967
6:40 p.m.

from file

Mr. President:

Herewith Sec. McNamara files a statement of JCS opposition to any holiday standdown of military operations in Vietnam in the time ahead.

W. W. Rostow

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WWRostow:rln

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)

White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983

By MLG, NARA, Date 11-6-91

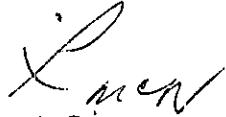
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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

25 October 1967

MEMO FOR The President

In the attached memorandum, the Joint Chiefs of Staff request that you be made aware of their opposition to any holiday standdown of military operations in Vietnam.

I will consult with the Secretary of State and submit my recommendations to you.


Robert S. McNamara

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6
NLJ 96. 329
By iss, NARA Date 6-23-97

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See Doc Cont No. X-6625



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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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546
JCSM-567-67

23 October 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Holiday Standdowns in Vietnam (U)

1. ~~(TS)~~ Reference is made to:

a. American Embassy Saigon message to the Department of State, 8432/130935Z October 1967 (JCS 42411), in which the US Ambassador to South Vietnam submitted a recommended US position for a holiday military posture for Christmas, New Year's, and Tet 1967-68.

b. CINCPAC message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC 200132Z October 1967 (JCS 54974), in which CINCPAC strongly recommends no cease-fire or standdown of military operations during any holiday period.

c. JCSM-25-67, dated 18 January 1967, subject: "US Policy for TET 1967 (U)," and previous memorandums in which the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed the Tet and other standdowns because of the high military cost to US, Republic of Vietnam, and allied forces resulting from the relaxation of military pressures on the enemy.

2. ~~(TS)~~ The Joint Chiefs of Staff are opposed to any stand-down during Christmas, New Year's or the Tet period.

3. ~~(TS)~~ Past experience with holiday standdowns supports the judgment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that a heavy price must be paid for any psychological or political advantages which might accrue to the Free World. In the past, these standdowns have resulted in increased casualties to US and allied forces. Similarly, increased casualties can be expected to result from a future standdown. These casualties cannot be justified on the basis of the value attached to traditional or religious observances.

4.
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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NLJ 96-329

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4. ~~(TS)~~ A standdown of any kind in our operations for even so much as 24 hours is disadvantageous to our forces; longer standdowns are substantially more advantageous to the enemy, whose ability to exploit them is greatly increased as the respite afforded him is prolonged. In this regard, we are particularly concerned with the military implications of the total freeze recommended by Ambassador Bunker. The enemy has already demonstrated that his logistic and replacement activities can be accomplished clandestinely, whereas our forces require an uninterrupted flow of logistic support and personnel which cannot be concealed. A total freeze on logistics, force repositioning, and rotation and replacement of personnel would place the US/GVN/FWMA forces in an untenable position if, for any reason, the standdown were extended.

5. ~~(TS)~~ Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that the United States urge the Republic of Vietnam and its allies to announce, as soon as possible, their intention not to standdown for Christmas, New Year's, or Tet, or any other holiday period.

6. ~~(S)~~ The Joint Chiefs of Staff request that their views be made known to the President, and they recommend that the proposed joint State/Defense message attached as the Appendix hereto, which reflects their views, be passed to the Department of State for concurrence and dispatch.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:



EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Attachment

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APPENDIX

DRAFT

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NLJ 96-329

By us, NARA Date 6-23-97

ACTION AMEMB SAIGON
CINCPAC
INFO JCS
COMUSMACV
AMEMB VIENTIANE

PRIORITY

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130935Z is
JCS IN 42411
200132Z is
JCS IN 54974

STATE

LIMDIS

JOINT STATE/DEFENSE MESSAGE

Subj: Holiday Cease-Fire (U)

Refs: a. AMEMB SAIGON 8432/130935Z Oct 67.

b. CINCPAC 200132Z Oct 67.

1. (S) We agree that there is no military justification for
a cease-fire or standdown of military operations during holiday
periods. We are convinced that the political and psychological
value of our proposing or agreeing to a standdown for Christmas,
Tet, or any other holiday, is not worth the heavy price that
must be paid. Our experience is that the communists have
flagrantly exploited previous cease-fire periods and US/RVN/FWMA
forces have suffered greater casualties as a result.
2. (S) Under any circumstances, we see a commitment to a
total freeze on all movements of military personnel and materiel
in both NVN and SVN as being of far greater disadvantage to
us than to the enemy. He can conceal his logistical activities;
we cannot. He would surely realize that we cannot stand a
logistical freeze of any appreciable length and would probably
call for an extended freeze for the political value to be
gained from our having to reject it. He would know that we
would have difficulty obtaining release from such a commitment
even though he violated it. We are convinced that it would be

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JCSM 567-67

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extremely disadvantageous for us to support a total freeze
on logistics and force repositioning by both sides.

3. ~~(T)~~ Our intention not to standdown military operations
for Christmas, Tet, or any other holiday season, and the
overriding military necessity therefor, should be made
known before any proposals for such standdowns are made by
Hanoi, the NLF, or anyone else. Accordingly, President
Thieu should be consulted along these lines at an early
opportunity. If he agrees, announcement should be made in
Saigon. Please send proposed text as far in advance of
announcement as possible. It is assumed here that GVN will
coordinate with our other allies in Saigon. GP-3.

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