

TOP SECRET

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

Mr. President:

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

*Free file*

W. W. Rostow

TOP SECRET

WWRostow:rln

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)  
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983  
By mg, NARA, Date 11-6-91

4094  
~~TOP SECRET~~  
54a

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.

*R. McN*  
Robert S. McNamara

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

Sec Def Cont Nbr. E. 6625



~~TOP SECRET~~

4094

546

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

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.  
Copy        of 35 Copies each  
of 2 pages series "A"

~~TOP SECRET~~

GROUP 3  
Downgrad. to 12 year  
Intervals;         
automatically declassified

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NLJ 96-329

By sis, NARA Date 6-23-97

Sec Def Cont Nr. X-

6523

COPY LBJ LIBRARY

~~TOP SECRET~~

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*

EARLE G. WHEELER  
Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Attachment

~~TOP SECRET~~

APPENDIX

DRAFT

54c  
DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NLJ 96-359

By is, NARA Date 6-23-97

ACTION	AMEMB SAIGON CINCPAC	PRIORITY
INFO	JCS COMUSMACV AMEMB VIENTIANE	PRIORITY PRIORITY PRIORITY

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.  We agree that there is no military justification for 1  
a cease-fire or standdown of military operations during holiday 2  
periods. We are convinced that the political and psychological 3  
value of our proposing or agreeing to a standdown for Christmas, 4  
Tet, or any other holiday, is not worth the heavy price that 5  
must be paid. Our experience is that the communists have 6  
flagrantly exploited previous cease-fire periods and US/RVN/FWMA 7  
forces have suffered greater casualties as a result. 8

2.  Under any circumstances, we see a commitment to a 9  
total freeze on all movements of military personnel and materiel 10  
in both NVN and SVN as being of far greater disadvantage to 11  
us than to the enemy. He can conceal his logistical activities; 12  
we cannot. He would surely realize that we cannot stand a 13  
logistical freeze of any appreciable length and would probably 14  
call for an extended freeze for the political value to be 15  
gained from our having to reject it. He would know that we 16  
would have difficulty obtaining release from such a commitment 17  
even though he violated it. We are convinced that it would be 18

~~TOP SECRET~~  
JCSM 567-67

~~TOP SECRET~~

extremely disadvantageous for us to support a total freeze 1  
on logistics and force repositioning by both sides. 2

3. (T) Our intention not to standdown military operations 3  
for Christmas, Tet, or any other holiday season, and the 4  
overriding military necessity therefor, should be made 5  
known before any proposals for such standdowns are made by 6  
Hanoi, the NLF, or anyone else. Accordingly, President 7  
Thieu should be consulted along these lines at an early 8  
opportunity. If he agrees, announcement should be made in 9  
Saigon. Please send proposed text as far in advance of 10  
announcement as possible. It is assumed here that GVN will 11  
coordinate with our other allies in Saigon. GP-3. 12

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~