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FROM WALT ROSTOW  
TO THE PRESIDENT  
CITE CAP80675

~~TOP SECRET~~

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SATURDAY

MARCH 16, 1968

FOR THE PRESIDENT

SO THAT YOU CAN STARE AT IT, I HAVE TRANSLATED THE ACHESON IDEA INTO THE FOLLOWING DRAFT DIRECTIVE FOR THE TEAM LEADER.

A KEY QUESTION IS: WHO SHOULD HEAD THE GROUP?

PERHAPS THE BEST CHOICE WOULD BE CY VANCE. BUT HIS BEING ABOUT WASHINGTON WOULD LEAD TO LEAKS. HIS QUALITY IS SUCH THAT IT MIGHT WELL BE WORTH TAKING THAT RISK OR EVEN LETTING IT BE KNOWN THAT HE IS DOING A VIETNAM REVIEW JOB.

OTHER POSSIBLE CANDIDATES: MAX TAYLOR, DEAN ACHESON.

DRAFT INSTRUCTION

I WISH YOU TO DIRECT A STUDY WHICH WILL LOOK BACK TO THE PAST AND FORWARD TO THE FUTURE WITH RESPECT TO OUR VIETNAM POLICY. THE STUDY SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY MAY 15, 1968.

THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS WHICH I SHOULD LIKE ANSWERED FROM ALL THE DATA WE NOW HAVE AVAILABLE AND CAN PROMPTLY GENERATE:

1. WHAT PROGRESS DID WE MAKE -- AND FAIL TO MAKE -- IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN MID-1965 AND TET 1968?
2. WHAT ELEMENTS OF FEAR AND HOPE, WEAKNESS AND STRENGTH, LED HANOI TO MOUNT THE WINTER-SPRING OFFENSIVE?
3. WHERE DOES HANOI STAND WITH RESPECT TO ITS OBJECTIVES, AS OF THE TIME THIS STUDY IS COMPLETED? WHAT ARE ITS OPTIONS AS YOU THINK HANOI SEES THEM? TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THEY DEPENDENT ON WHAT THE UNITED STATES SAYS AND DOES IN THE TIME AHEAD? WHICH OPTION DO YOU BELIEVE HANOI WILL CHOOSE?
4. WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM AND ITS ARMED FORCES WITH RESPECT TO: UNITY; EXECUTIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE ENERGY; SCALE, MODERNIZATION AND EFFECTIVENESS IN COMBAT DURING THE BALANCE OF CALENDAR YEAR 1968? 1969?

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5. WHAT INCREMENTS OF MILITARY FORCE CAN WE EXPECT -- OR, REALISTICALLY, INDUCE -- FROM OUR PRESENT FIGHTING ALLIES? COULD THAT CIRCLE BE WIDENED?

6. WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR INHIBITING OR BLOCKING THE FLOW OF NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES TO THE SOUTH IN THE LIGHT OF OUR EXPERIENCE WITH BOMBING NORTH VIETNAM; WITH THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE SO-CALLED BARRIER; AND WITH THE USE OF AIR AND GROUND FORCES AGAINST NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES?

7. WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES? WHAT REGULAR RESERVES ARE AVAILABLE FOR DISPATCH TO THE SOUTH? WHAT IS THEIR DEMONSTRATED AND POTENTIAL CAPACITY TO PROVIDE REPLACEMENTS IN BOTH QUANTITY AND QUALITY?

8. WHAT IS THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CONTROL OVER THE POPULATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS? WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR THE BALANCE OF 1968? 1969?

9. IN THE LIGHT OF YOUR ANALYSIS AND JUDGMENT, CAN WE ENVISAGE AS REALISTIC A POLICY OF GRADUAL REDUCTION OF U.S. FORCES IN VIETNAM: IN THE BALANCE OF 1968; 1969; 1970?

10. AT WHAT MOMENT -- IF ANY -- COULD YOU ENVISAGE AS POTENTIALLY EFFECTIVE A U.S. OR GVN NEGOTIATING INITIATIVE? WHAT SHOULD BE THE CHARACTER OF THAT INITIATIVE?

YOU SHOULD FEEL FREE TO POSE AND ANSWER OTHER QUESTIONS YOU JUDGE RELEVANT TO PAST OR FUTURE POLICY IN VIETNAM.

IN DEVELOPING YOUR REPORT, YOU SHOULD ASSEMBLE A TEAM OF THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE AND ABLE VIETNAM EXPERTS IN THE GOVERNMENT; FOR EXAMPLE, GEORGE CARVER, WILLIAM DE PUY, PHILIP HABIB, WILLIAM JORDEN, ROY WEHRLE. (A DOD REPRESENTATIVE IS NEEDED. THE OBVIOUS CHOICE IS RICHARD STEADMAN. HE FEELS STRONGLY THAT VIETNAM IS HOPELESS. BUT, MORE IMPORTANT, I CANNOT RECOMMEND HIM UNTIL IT IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED THAT HE WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES LEAK.) THEY SHOULD, IF NECESSARY, WORK VIRTUALLY FULL-TIME ON THE PROJECT.

YOU SHOULD FEEL FREE, OF COURSE, TO CONSULT WITH OTHER OFFICIALS IN THE GOVERNMENT AND, ON A DISCREET BASIS, WITH OUTSIDE EXPERTS AS WELL.

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