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Chapter 21

PLANNING FOR DEPLOYMENT - MARCH-JUNE 1965

Important decisions had been made and significant actions taken by the President in the first quarter of 1965. In these months he had ordered the bombing of NVN and had removed the restrictions on the use of US planes and pilots in combat against the VC in the RVN. It had become increasingly apparent that, unless there were sudden and drastic improvements in the military situation, the growing national resolve, symbolic in these actions, could logically culminate in sending US ground forces to fight alongside the RVNAF. The planning and recommendations for deployment of US forces that had taken place during March, while predicated on the need for protecting US forces and installations, had strongly reflected such a realization.

When the President, responding to the advice of his military advisors, authorized in early April the commitment of US ground troops to combat against the enemy, deployment took on a new significance and urgency.

In the first weeks following this decision, specific authorities to deploy US forces were evolutionary and slower in coming than the JCS believed advisable. The authority to send units, especially major units, met resistance within government councils. Exact statements of authority were difficult to pin down since these were sometimes expressed in very broad terms as approvals "for planning purposes" and "in principle", developed over a period of time in discussions of various officials without a definite decision being identified. This procedure led occasionally to moments of misunderstanding concerning just what units, or how many men, had actually been approved for shipment as of a specific date. The need for forces was not always clearly understood nor was there, apparently, enough appreciation of the timing problem. In some cases the JCS had either to assume that authority had been granted, or that it would soon be granted, in order to get under way the very complicated and time-consuming arrangements necessary to take a unit from garrison, ready it for shipment, and place it in RVN, when it was needed, in combat ready condition. Of course, no movements were actually directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff until the authority had been clearly established, but had they waited for the final

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word before directing preliminary preparations, delays in arrival would have been considerably greater than they were.

During the spring of 1965 the decisions concerning deployments were affected by a number of inhibiting considerations. First was the possible adverse effect on the attitudes of the South Vietnamese and their government of a too large and rapid influx of troops. Such an influx might also stimulate the communist bloc to undesirable action. The drain on strategic reserves in CONUS and the possible effects on US commitments to NATO and on certain contingency plans had to be considered. Important too was the concern for logistics--that deployments should not outrun support capabilities. Finally, there was the fear that too-swift deployment would place US forces in exposed and dangerous positions and lead to increased casualty rates.

In later months other factors would become important. The effect of large deployments on the RVN economy would be particularly troublesome. Call-up of reserves, extension of active duty tours, and the general questions of force levels and the national military posture would all be considered in connection with deployments to SVN. However, by mid-1965 much had been accomplished in creating a wider understanding of the need for deployments and in smoothing out the detailed processes of planning, recommendations, and actions.

The Decision to Commit US Forces to Combat

At a NSC meeting at the White House on the night of 1 April, the question of the scale of deployment of US combat forces and the role to be played by those forces came to a head. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had assumed that the President's approval of General Johnson's 21 recommendations two weeks earlier had opened the way for more direct and effective actions in RVN but this assumption was not shared by all Presidential advisors. The discussions centered around a paper prepared within the Department of State and revised by members of the White House staff, setting forth proposed courses of action. This paper rejected deployment of the three-division force, assigned the Marines an "offensive enclave-quick reaction mission," and in other respects failed to reflect the expressed views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, objected, recalling for the President that on 15 March, it had been agreed that the United States was losing in the RVN and had to do something about it. What had to be done

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was to establish military control of selected critical areas in the country and the only way to do it was to go ahead and introduce three divisions. The consensus of other principals at this meeting opposed immediate introduction of these three divisions. Nevertheless, the President did approve modifying the mission of the Marines to permit their more active use under conditions to be established and approved by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff interpreted this to mean their employment in "counterinsurgency combat operations." To support the Marines already ashore the President approved sending to Da Nang and Phu Bai two additional BLTs, one Marine F-4 squadron and command and control elements.¹

PP The President also approved sending the logistic and support units and personnel requested by CINCPAC, totalling 18,000-20,000 men and officers, to support US forces already in RVN, to prepare a logistics base, and to support the possible deployment of up to three US/Allied division forces. Although the President did not approve the deployment of this three-division force, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 2 April instructed the Joint Staff to draw up plans for such deployment on the basis that approval would probably be given for deployment of a full MEF, an Army division, and a ROK division.

At this same time the President directed that delivery of aircraft and helicopter reinforcements be expedited. In extension of his earlier efforts to stimulate other nations to send forces to RVN, President Johnson instructed the Secretary of State to see what could be done to induce the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand to deploy rapidly "significant combat elements" to RVN "in parallel" with the deployment of US Marines. These decisions were made on the evening of 1 April, although a proforma NSC meeting on the next morning covered the same ground.

On 5 April, the Secretary of Defense asked the JCS for a schedule setting forth in detail the actions necessary to

1. (TS) Msg, Wheeler to Westmoreland and Sharp, unnumbered, 3 Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, April 65. (TS) NSAM 328 to SecState et al., 6 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (6 Apr 65) sec 1. Other instructions and approvals by the President contained in this NSAM will be covered in appropriate sections.

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introduce a two- or three-division force into RVN "at the earliest practicable date."²

In terms of numbers of men, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had thus far recommended the deployment to the RVN, "when needed," of 39,000 Marines to increase the MEB to an MEF; an Army Airmobile division of 26,000; and a Korean division force of 21,000. They had also "concurred" in the introduction of one Australian infantry battalion with supporting units; one New Zealand artillery battery; one New Zealand tank troop; and other New Zealand supporting units. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had also recommended deployment of a brigade from the 25th Infantry Division to Thailand.³

Beyond these, the cumulative recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made within the last two months, for deployment of Air Force units to Southeast Asia and WESTPAC constituted 5 TFS to Ubon, Kadena, Kung Kuan, and Takhlī; 4 TCS to Clark and Kadena; 2 RTF to Clark/Tan Son Nhut and Kadena; 5 EC-121 to Taiwan; 1 TFS to Itazuke and 2 TFS to Taiwan.⁴

CINCPAC Deployment Conference - 9 April

Underlying all of their considerations for deployment of combat troops was the recognition by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, heightened by General Meyer's and General Johnson's reports, of the logistic weaknesses in the RVN. Reflected in their planning and in their recommendations on deployment of forces in the next weeks and months was the determination of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that combat forces would not be sent in at a rate that would exceed the capability of the logistics base. It was first necessary therefore to determine just what this base must be. At the same time, in coordination with field commanders and Services, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had to work out the priorities for troop deployment and the optimum employment plans.

2. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 5 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 1.

3. (TS) Terms of Reference for Honolulu Conference, 7 Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 65.

4. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8528 to CINCPAC, 6 Apr 65.

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PP [In order to develop answers to these matters, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that a deployment conference be held at CINCPAC's headquarters starting on 9 April. Officers from the Joint Staff, the Services, the major commands, and the Defense Transportation Agency attended.

The Director, Joint Staff, General Burchinal, sent a message to Admiral Sharp on 6 April communicating the sense of urgency that the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt about deployments and over the need for sound but swift planning to accomplish them. "There is real concern," he said, "that the situation in I and II Corps may fall apart faster than we have taken cognizance of in our current preliminary planning." Citing the Secretary of Defense's call for a detailed plan to get US forces into RVN "at the earliest practicable date," Burchinal told CINCPAC, "We want to ram these log units in as rapidly as MACV wants them and we can send them. All here recognize the distinct possibility that we may have to send in the Marine and US Army division forces plus the balance of the air to meet a suddenly developing situation in SVN whether or not what we would like to have as a prepared logistic base has been established."⁵ The terms of reference furnished by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the deployment conference stipulated that plans be developed under two alternative movement schedules; 1) maximum feasible use of resources within present DOD authorities and; 2) the National Emergency level of transport capability. They also stated that priority attention should be given to the plans and movement schedules for the logistical and supporting units required by CINCPAC for; 1) support of personnel and forces already in or approved for deployment to RVN; 2) receipt and support in RVN of a three-division force; and 3) receipt and support of other US forces.⁶ J-4

CINCPAC had been told just before the conference that the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted the "expedited preparation" of a feasible time-phased deployment schedule for the 2,100-man Army Logistic Command, the 2,400-man Engineer Construction Group and other supporting logistic units amounting to between 13,500-15,500 men--all of which would support the current operations, three division forces, and the remaining Army and Air Force deployments approved or under consideration. Deployment of logistic forces, CINCPAC was assured, was not

5. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 8507 to CINCPAC, 6 Apr 65.

6. (TS) Terms of Reference for Honolulu Conference, 7 Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 65.

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contingent upon approval to deploy combat forces but the planning for combat forces must go on concurrently with the planning for logistic force deployments. These deployments might be concurrent and CINCPAC was therefore enjoined to maintain maximum flexibility in the availability of air-lift.⁷

The conference at Honolulu from 8-10 April 1965 resulted in a CINCPAC deployment plan for logistic and combat forces to Southeast Asia, which was forwarded to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 10 April. Pointing to the capabilities of the VC, the NVN, and Communist China to seize all or parts of the RVN, the plan presented a deployment concept to meet the threat, to improve US posture to deter overt aggression, and to provide a capability for countering aggression should it occur. Generally the current situation required the stationing of US and allied ground forces in critically threatened areas of RVN and a small combatant ground force in Thailand, as well as additional air units in RVN, Thailand, and WESTPAC. With respect to US ground forces, the plan proposed that they be assigned initially to base security missions, and, once bases were secure, phase into counterinsurgency missions in coordination with the RVNAF. Operations would be mounted from secure, logistically supportable bases in a campaign of increasing strength against the VC. Deployments would be made in progressive increments which could be so controlled that if certain forces were obviously not needed they could be cancelled. The progressive deployments would fall into four phases: Phase I - Increase security of vital US installations and secure US enclaves in coastal areas. Occupy and improve coastal enclaves and support RVNAF operations from them; Phase 2 - Conduct operations from enclaves; Phase 3 - Secure US inland bases and areas; Phase 4 - Occupy and improve US inland bases and conduct operations from them.⁸

Initial deployments would take place through the coastal enclaves. Major units and supporting forces and the enclaves through which they would be introduced were listed. The plan was given to the Director, J-4, for consideration in

7. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8528 to CINCPAC, 6 Apr 65.

8. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC Deployment Plan for Logistic and Combat Forces to Southeast Asia--Deployment Planning Conference, HQ PACOM, 8-10 Apr 65, 10 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 64) sec 1.

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connection with the overall deployment planning study desired by the Secretary of Defense.

The 173d Airborne Brigade

General Westmoreland doubted that deployment of division sized forces was "in the immediate offing," even though preparations for their deployment were being pressed with some urgency. He recommended on 11 April, therefore, that the 173d Airborne Brigade be deployed from Okinawa into Bien Hoa/Vung Tau. He said that its deployment was as much a military necessity as the deployment of the Marines to Da Nang/Phu Bai. He cited the threat from strong VC main force units in the eastern III CTZ, which could attack the eastern flank of the Hop Tac area and major US and GVN installations in the area. The Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area contained two major US bases essential for current operations and for the safety of US personnel in the Saigon area. Bien Hoa, for example, was the major USAF and VNAF fighter base. All A-1Es were based there. The B-57s at Bien Hoa carried out over 75 percent of the in-country jet support of the RVNAF. An Army brigade stationed in the area would not only strengthen its security but could be flown quickly to the highlands area in event of a VC attack there.⁹

CINCPAC agreed with COMUSMACV, and recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the 173d Airborne Brigade be sent at once. However, he asked that action also be taken at the same time to replace the brigade in RVN as soon as possible with a US Army brigade from the CONUS so that the 173d might be sent back to Okinawa as PACOM reserve.¹⁰

The JCS Deployment Plan

Meeting on 12 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff addressed themselves to the preliminary recommendations of the J-4 on the deployment study and directed certain changes and gave some specific guidance. They directed that the deployment

9. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MACJ 11682 to CINCPAC, 11 Apr 65, JCS IN 11366.

10. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 132235Z Apr 65, JCS IN 14207.

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concept, based on that of the CINCPAC plan, be expanded into a three division/nine squadron deployment plan and time schedule. The plan should consider creating some kind of combined tactical headquarters in northern RVN to coordinate counterinsurgency operations near the I and II Corps enclaves. It should counter major attacks by NVN forces, either from across the DMZ or from in-country assembly areas. General Westmoreland's bid for the early deployment of the 173d Airborne Brigade to Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area should be given special attention. The J-4 should plan on deploying the Air Mobile division, recommended by the Chief of Staff, Army, and should plan on having the first RCT of the ROK division in RVN in 180 days. The deployment plan should also provide for the deployment of the 18,000-20,000-man logistic force approved by the President to establish the base for the three-division forces--which would be landed in enclaves in the Hue/Phu Bai-Da Nang area, the Chu Lai/Qui Nhon/Nha Trang area, and the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area.¹¹

On 13 April the Secretary of Defense approved, subject to country clearance, the deployment of the 173d Airborne Brigade to the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area from Okinawa.¹²

The Joint Chiefs of Staff assigned responsibility for deployment of CONUS Army and Air Force units to CINCSRIKE/USCINCMERFSA on 14 April. After the troop lists had been finalized and authority granted for deployment, and after the Chief of Staff, Army, and/or Chief of Staff, Air Force, had determined units to be combat ready, they would transfer operational command of these units to CINCSRIKE/USCINCMERFSA.¹³

On 17 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to Secretary McNamara the plan for deployment about which he had inquired on 5 April. The concept, based essentially on that developed in the CINCPAC plan and earlier advocated by the Commandant, Marine Corps, called for the establishment of secure bases along the coast of RVN into which US forces

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11. (TS) Note to Control Div, "J-4 5-65/J-3 TP 19-65," 12 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 2.
 12. (TS-GP 4) JCS 2343/564-4, 14 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 2.
 13. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 9375 to CSA et al., 19 Apr 65.

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would be introduced and from which they would conduct "combat counterinsurgency operations" against the VC. It would be necessary, in order to improve the logistic base needed to support combat elements, to send in some logistic forces first. Other US ground forces, with their support elements, would be needed in Thailand to "add deterrent strength," and to have forces in the area in the event of an attack by NVN or Communist China. Air Force units would be needed in forward areas of the Western Pacific to deter aggression, to strengthen operational forces engaged in Laos, NVN, and in RVN, and to improve reconnaissance and airlift capabilities.¹⁴

The concept of operations given the Secretary of Defense paralleled that of the CINCPAC plan and provided for the same four phases. Initial locations for the first units would be: 1) III MEF - Hue/Da Nang/Chu Lai; 2) US Airmobile Division - Qui Nhon/Nha Trang; 3) ROK Division Force - Quang Ngai/Chu Lai; 4) 173d Airborne Brigade - Bien Hoa/Vung Tau.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff foresaw that in order to deploy the logistical forces into the enclaves, combat forces would have to provide security for the initial and subsequent deployments, and for construction and maintenance operations. The III MEF would secure airfields, conduct combat counterinsurgency operations, and be prepared to repel any overt NVN/CHICOM attacks in the area of its responsibility. The Army Airmobile Division, from its bases in the coastal area, would also conduct operations against the VC "as directed by COMUSMACV in the highlands or elsewhere as required by the situation," but only when "logistically feasible." The division would stay ready to defend in the central highlands in case of a NVN/CHICOM attack, and would help keep friendly control of coastal communications. The ROK division would be deployed into the Quang Ngai/Chu Lai area only after the Marines had secured the area initially; once ashore, it would expand to the Tam Ky area. It would conduct base security and counterinsurgency operations. The 173d Airborne Brigade, scheduled to provide security and to conduct counterinsurgency operations in the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area, would be replaced by another brigade from the CONUS as soon as practicable in order to return to Okinawa. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, anticipating

¹⁴. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-288-65 to SecDef, 17 Apr 65 (derived from JCS 2343/564-5), JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 3.

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the possible need for a higher echelon field command, also informed the Secretary of Defense that a tailored-down US Army Corps headquarters and minimal corps troops would be sent to RVN when and if required.

The deployments that the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended supported the deployment troop list proposed by CINCPAC. Movement schedules could not be put into final form until the Secretary had made final decisions, and the priority of movement and method of travel would depend on CINCPAC's requests. The initial proposed deployments included 17,100 men from the logistic forces authorized, as well as 14,000 Marines for the MEF and the 4,000-man Airborne Brigade. If necessary decisions and country clearances were forthcoming, the United States would have more than 35,000 men in RVN by 15 July. In addition a brigade of the 25th Infantry Division would be deployed to Thailand where it would be charged with providing security and stability in northeast Thailand.

Forty percent of MATS capability would be reserved to insure movement of essential resupply, channel, and special mission traffic, and to provide a reasonable degree of flexibility to meet emergency situations which might arise. Air and sealift requirements for movement of resupply and replacements would increase proportionately in Southeast Asia as these deployments took place. Of necessity only the most urgently needed personnel and items of supply would be airlifted. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Secretary of Defense approve their plan as a basis for further planning.¹⁵

Ambassador Taylor's Objections

During the development of the 17 April deployment plan, Ambassador Taylor had raised objections to further deployment. While they did not share the Ambassador's views, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were nevertheless obliged to take them into consideration as an important factor that could inhibit deployment if not satisfactorily answered.

Ambassador Taylor had taken an active part in NSC discussions at which the President had decided to send more US

15. Ibid.

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troops and to commit some US forces to combat. In some respects he supported this change in policy, but in other respects he was less than enthusiastic. As Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, in 1964, General Taylor had opposed the introduction of US combat forces into RVN and had repeated this opposition in February 1965. Although now convinced by the worsening situation that some modification of this stand was necessary, he still doubted that the situation called for the introduction of large numbers of US fighting men and counseled a moderate approach.

Ambassador Taylor agreed that the 18,000-20,000-man logistic buildup was needed and he urged its rapid implementation. He believed that "... engineers can be very useful in SVN whether or not we ever introduce additional divisions."16

Ambassador Taylor did not believe that US divisions were needed urgently. He did not fear, for example, that I and II Corps areas were "about to fall apart." And in any event, if a debacle were going to occur in the next few months the United States could not possibly prepare logistically in time. That Taylor was not privy to the planning taking place in Washington was evident from his "understanding" that "... if the Marines demonstrate effectiveness in operating out of Da Nang in an offensive counterinsurgency role, other offensive enclaves may be established along the coast and garrisoned with brigade-size contingents for employment similar to the Marines." He recommended that logistic preparations be started at once to establish support at Bien Hoa/Vung Tau and at Qui Nhon for US brigades. This would allow later introduction of larger forces if necessary. He wanted this done rapidly enough to make a contribution "to the situation which is now unfolding."17

The Joint Chiefs of Staff notified CINCPAC on 14 April that at the "earliest feasible" time after receipt of country clearance, he should deploy the 173d Airborne Brigade and necessary supporting elements to the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area and expand its mission to include counterinsurgency combat operations.18

16. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3332 to State, 12 Apr 65, JCS IN 11893.

17. Ibid.

18. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 9012 to CINCPAC et al., 14 Apr 65.

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When Ambassador Taylor saw the JCS instructions to CINCPAC he was apparently puzzled. He cabled Washington, also on 14 April, saying, "This comes as a complete surprise in view of the understanding reached in Washington that we would experiment with the Marines in a counterinsurgency role before bringing in other U.S. contingents." He recommended that the deployment of the 173d be held up "until we can sort out all matters relating to it."¹⁹

Ambassador Taylor was even more surprised and displeased by the landing of Marine Forces at Da Nang with 155mm and 8" howitzers and with tanks. He cabled Secretary Rusk that "This action is highly embarrassing to me and contravenes the decisions bearing on the Marine deployments taken in Washington during my recent visit as I understand them." He pointed out that the inclusion of heavy weapons in the Marine armament was inappropriate to counterinsurgency operations and would encourage critics of US policy who charged that the United States was more interested in fighting Red China than the VC. Ambassador Taylor was particularly concerned about Prime Minister Quat's possible reaction. He did not feel it would be wise now to take the weapons out, however, since that would only compound the mistake by drawing attention to it. "I shall try to explain this affair to Quat in such a way as not to encourage the suspicion that we are slipping units into SVN without his knowledge."²⁰

The Ambassador was disturbed by the pace of recent actions to introduce US ground forces into RVN. He charged that this created an impression of eagerness in some quarters that he found difficult to understand. "I should think," he said, "that for both military and political reasons we should be most reluctant to tie down Army/Marine units in this country and would do so only after the presentation of the most convincing evidence of the necessity."

Before the introduction of the initial Marine units into the Da Nang area, there had been, Ambassador Taylor asserted, four reasons for so doing. One of these, the need to convince the GVN of US determination to stand by them, had already been

19. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3373 to State, 14 Apr 65, JCS IN 14875.

20. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3374 to State, 14 Apr 65, JCS IN 14792.

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accomplished by the original deployment. Three other possible reasons remained: 1) the need to take care of military tasks which the RVNAF could not handle; 2) the need to take care of military tasks faster than the RVNAF could do without assistance; 3) the desirability of providing forces to meet possible future crises and contingencies.²¹

Ambassador Taylor pointed out that these three arguments could be used to justify almost unlimited deployments of US ground forces. He also warned that the mounting number of US troops could sap RVN initiative and turn the counterinsurgency into a US war against the VC. The Chinese could use these deployments as an excuse for pressing military reinforcements on Hanoi. Frictions would grow between the GVN and its allies and it would become increasingly difficult to keep GVN and US policies on parallel lines.

A consideration of the disadvantages convinces me that; while logistic preparations should be made now to be able to receive additional forces, the forces themselves should be held outside of SVN just as long as possible and until their need is uncontroversial. From a purely military point of view, it is essentially wasteful of the specialized mobility of Marines and airborne troops to commit them prematurely to restricted land areas. Politically, it is undesirable to seek authority for their introduction until a clear and specific need exists which assures them an unreserved welcome from their GVN hosts.²²

Prompted by Ambassador Taylor's objections, the Joint Chiefs of Staff clarified further their position on deployment to the Secretary of Defense. In effect, their views, forwarded to Secretary McNamara in a memorandum on 15 April, constituted a rationale for actions already taken and those planned. With respect to the Ambassador's recommendation that the deployment of the 173d Airborne Brigade be delayed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the security of major US air operational and logistic installations in the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area was judged to be in a precarious state. ARVN forces could not be counted on to protect these facilities without overstressing their own counterinsurgency

21. (S) Msg, Saigon 3384 to State, 14 Apr 65,
JCS IN 14992.
22. Ibid.

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capabilities. The deployment of the Airborne Brigade, recommended and desired both by General Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp, was in keeping with approved contingency plans. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore supported the earliest possible deployment of this unit both for a security mission and to take part in counterinsurgency combat operations when ready.²³

Ambassador Taylor's strong objection to bringing in combat forces additional to the Marines already ashore was answered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the grounds that the situation in SVN clearly required the deployment of more Marine and Army troops. There were not sufficient troops to provide security for the approved base developments at Chu Lai and to provide at the same time the maneuver units for the approved counterinsurgency operations against the VC. The planned expansion of the logistics base in the Qui Nhon/Nha Trang area called for combat troops to protect the base areas, and this deployment, a brigade of two battalions, should be completed during April and May. The Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that they were confident the Ambassador could induce Prime Minister Quat to approve acceptance of these forces.²⁴

The surprise and embarrassment caused the Ambassador by the landing of armor and artillery with the Marines was outweighed by the military necessity. The equipment with which the Marines had landed was standard equipment. "At no time had the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed that these units be landed in South Vietnam in any configuration other than fully combat-equipped and combat-ready . . ." the Joint Chiefs of Staff said.²⁵

Ambassador Taylor's objections to accelerated deployment elicited a strong response from another quarter when Mr. McGeorge Bundy, the President's Assistant, informed him on the same day that the President was all in favor of further troop deployments. The President believed that additional US troops "are important if not decisive reinforcement." The President had not seen any negative results from the deployments to date. He did not, the Ambassador was informed, "wish to wait any longer than is essential for genuine GVN agreement." The

23. (TS-GF 3) JCSM-281-65 to SecDef, 15 Apr 65, (derived from JCS 2343/575), JMF 9155.3 (14 Apr 65).

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

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President had always intended, however, that before any deployment would be made, Ambassador Taylor would review it with Prime Minister Quat first, Bundy stated, adding, "we regret any contrary impression given by our messages in recent days."²⁶

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Deployment of Additional Forces

Prompted possibly by the differing views that were being expressed on deployments by various responsible officials and by the necessity to examine the JCS deployment plan in face-to-face meeting with the commanders responsible in the RVN, Secretary McNamara called for a deployment planning conference to be held in Honolulu on 19-20 April. In addition to himself, those attending the conference were Ambassador Taylor, General Wheeler, Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland, Mr. William Bundy, and Mr. McNaughton. Just prior to this conference the Joint Chiefs of Staff had, on 17 April, sent to CINCPAC a message informing him that the deployment of about 5,000 Marines had been approved for planning purposes "at the highest level." General Wheeler learned of this message at a preconference briefing in Honolulu. He immediately cabled General Goodpaster in Washington stating that he was unaware of any such approval for sending additional Marines to the RVN and asking for an explanation.²⁷

On the next day General Goodpaster replied to the Chairman, saying that the assumption that approval had been granted for 5,000 additional Marines had arisen out of a meeting with the President. Subsequent to this meeting the Joint Chiefs of Staff had, in the absence of the Chairman, "compared their recollections of discussion of additional Marines with the President." The consensus was that the Commandant, Marine Corps, had advised the President that more than the 9,000 Marines then in RVN would be needed if Marines were to conduct counterinsurgency combat operations. The present MEB would be unable to do much beyond local security. He had suggested putting in the remainder of the Marine Division (MEF), amounting to about 22,000 men. The President had stated that this was

26. (TS) Msg, State 2332 to Saigon, 15 Apr 65, JCS IN 08968.

27. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9310 to CINCPAC, 17 Apr 65; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 192319Z Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 65; (TS) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 21 Apr 65, OCJCS File 337, Honolulu Conference, Apr 65.

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beyond what he could do. But he had said, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had agreed (although their discussion of the matter had been "diffuse"), that he "would agree to go up to 5,000." This discussion at the White House had been coupled with a discussion of having US and ARVN battalions operate as teams in combined operations.²⁸

"Although not all of these points were recalled with the same clarity by all of the Chiefs," General Goodpaster told General Wheeler, "they did put this together as their understanding of the matter." General Greene now suggested that the matter of the composition and concept for employment of the additional Marines be discussed at the Honolulu conference. Presidential advisor Bundy, who had been present during the meeting with the President, did not recall any particular size of Marine force as having received any specific endorsement and believed that the matter should be resolved at Honolulu.²⁹

The deployment of additional Marines to Chu Lai came under discussion at the Honolulu Conference, but as part of the broader question of overall deployments. The Secretary of Defense apparently believed that the "three division" deployment plan proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 17 April called for too many forces. After considerable discussion the conferees decided to reduce considerably the scale of deployment from that recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at least initially. On 21 April the Secretary of Defense, in a memorandum to the President, reported, "all recommend" that, in addition to the 2,000 ROK and 33,500 US troops already in-country, forces be deployed to RVN on the following schedule: 1 US Army brigade space (4,000) at Bien Hoa/Vung Tau, closing 1 May; 3 US Marine air squadrons and 3 Marine battalions (6,200) at Chu Lai, closing 5 May; 1 Australian battalion (1,250) at Vung Tau, closing 21 May; 1 US Army brigade (4,000) at Qui Nhon/Nha Trang, closing 15 June; 1 Korean RCT (4,000) at Quang Ngai, closing 15 June. Adding to these forces those augmentation and logistic troops already approved and the logistics troops not yet approved, the Secretary derived a total force in RVN of 82,000 US and 7,250 third country troops.

²⁸. (TS) Msg, Exec to CJCS 201641Z to CJCS, Apr 65.
OCJCS File 337, Honolulu Conference, Apr 65.

²⁹. Ibid.

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"Possible later deployments, not recommended now," the Secretary of Defense informed the President, "include a US Airmobile division (9 bns-15,800) to Pleiku/Kontum, and I Corps Hq (1,200) to Nha Trang; and even later, the remainder of the Korean division (6 bns-14,500) to Quang Ngai, and the remainder of the Marine Expeditionary Force (3 bns-24,800) to DaNang."³⁰

The Secretary of Defense also recommended to the President that he inform the "Congressional leadership" of the contemplated deployments and of the changed mission for US forces in RVN.³¹

Upon returning from Honolulu, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with the President, the Secretary of State and others at the White House on the morning of 22 April to discuss the deployment recommendations developed at Honolulu. No decisions on deployments were forthcoming at this meeting. General Wheeler pointed out that the adverse developments some had feared if US troops were introduced and other actions taken (such as increased use of US planes in the RVN) had not come about. The VNAF had increased its own efforts and the people had not risen in revolt against entry of US troops. Also discussed at the meeting were the role of Australian forces and command arrangements.

On the basis of the deployment recommendations made at the Honolulu meeting, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a memorandum on 30 April, provided the Secretary of Defense with a "program including a concept and force composition for deployment" of the forces that the President had been advised should be deployed.³²

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The JCS Plan, 30 April

Based generally on the same concept the Joint Chiefs of Staff had presented to the Secretary of Defense on 17 April,

30. (TS) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 21 Apr 65, OCJCS File 337, Honolulu Conference, Apr 65.

31. Ibid.

32 (TS-GP 1) JCSM-321-65 to SecDef, 30 Apr 65, (derived from JCS 2343/564-7), JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 3.

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this latest deployment plan provided for the deployment of the two US Army brigades, a MEB, a ROK RCT, an ANZAC battalion force, and logistic and augmentation forces of about 32,000 men and officers. Although forces had been reduced from the original plan, Marine, Army, and ROK units were still to enter and secure the enclaves as originally proposed. The ANZAC battalion would deploy to the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area with the US Airborne Brigade.³³

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also listed the possible later deployments to RVN that might be required, giving desired closing dates. These would entail deploying the Army air mobile division and the Army Corps Headquarters, to RVN by 1 August, with the remainder of a ROK division and the MEF deploying by 1 October.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that Secretary McNamara approve for implementation the deployments proposed and that he authorize the deployments of the I MEF from the west coast of the United States to constitute a reserve force for the Marines in WESTPAC, replacing the III MEF as it was deployed into RVN.

The Secretary of Defense did not approve the JCS plan until two weeks later. But in the interim, part of the deployment recommended in the plan were carried out.

At a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 28 April, during discussions leading to a decision on the deployment plan forwarded two days later, the Chairman had instructed the Joint Staff to draft a message to CINCPAC authorizing a "go ahead" on the introduction of the 173d Airborne Brigade into the Bien Hao/Vung Tau area and 3 Marine battalions and 3 air squadrons into Chu Lai in early May. This message would be "surfaced" only after the Secretary of Defense approved these deployments. The GVN had already granted clearance for entry of these forces.³⁴

33. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-321-65 to SecDef, 30 Apr 65 (derived from JCS 2343/564-7), JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 3.

34. (TS) Note to Control Div "Deployment of Forces to South Vietnam (U)," 20 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 4. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3511 to State, 27 Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 65.

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The President approved this cable on the morning of 30 April. The Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the movements carried out, sending the execute message to CINCPAC on the same day it was approved.³⁵

With the deployment of the second MEB, the III MEF would have ashore seven of its nine battalions. Upon completion of an airstrip seven squadrons of Marine aircraft would be deployed in RVN. The Marine Corps therefore asked to deploy to Da Nang a reduced strength Force/Division/Wing headquarters to include two Major Generals, one commanding the division and the other commanding the wing. General Westmoreland had no objections to this arrangement, but he wanted to be sure, since the press would undoubtedly report that a Marine division had been deployed, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff fully understood and approved such a deployment.³⁶

On 5 May COMUSMACV informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that, at a meeting of the US Mission Council, concern had been expressed over the use of the term Marine Expeditionary Force. The sensitive word was "Expeditionary" which was reminiscent to the Vietnamese of the French Expeditionary Force (Corps Expeditionnaire Francais en Extreme Orient), an organization infamous in Vietnamese history. Westmoreland therefore suggested that the name of the III MEF be changed.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on the same day that they had no objection to the deployment of the Division/Wing headquarters to include the general officers. This deployment would not be identified as the III MEF, but as the III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF). Other Marine organizations deploying to RVN in the future would have their titles modified to replace "expeditionary" with "amphibious" when appropriate.³⁷

The III MAF was established at Da Nang on 6 May. Additional Marines landed at Chu Lai on the next day. The 173d Airborne Brigade arrived in the RVN at the same date.³⁸

35. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 1141 to CINCPAC, 30 Apr 65.
36. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 14432 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 2 May 65, JCS IN 40071.
37. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 1510 to CINCPAC, 5 May 65.
38. (S) Marine Corps, Commandant's Vietnam Chronology, 1965, p. 174.

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The Secretary of Defense, on 15 May, approved for planning purposes the deployments that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended on 30 April. In addition, he authorized the "continuation of the preparation cycle" for the deployment of the Army brigade to Qui Nhon, and the deployment of individual personnel augmentations. These two actions would bring the total manpower authorization for US forces in RVN to over 69,000. He also approved deployment of elements of the I MEF from the CONUS to WESTPAC to replace elements of the III MEF sent to RVN. He informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that approval for the deployment of the ANZAC battalion force and the ROK RCT already existed.³⁹

"The other deployments described," the Secretary of Defense concluded, "will be considered in conjunction with continuing high-level deliberations on the Southeast Asian situation and as further requested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff."⁴⁰

Experimental Programs

During the Conference at Honolulu, the problems associated with an experimental program, part of which had been based on ideas originating with the President, were examined and discussed by Secretary McNamara and the other top officials. This program of specific and unusual actions had been sent to Ambassador Taylor, Admiral Sharp, and General Westmoreland in a joint State-Defense message approved by the President on 15 April. According to the cable, the President believed the situation in RVN to be deteriorating to the extent that not only actions against NVN but an entirely new approach in the South must be added to achieve victory. The Ambassador and the field commanders were told that "we believe" that experimental steps must be taken to that end. The first such step would be the "experimental encadrement" of RVNAF units with US forces. General Westmoreland was told to develop two plans, one to integrate about 50 US soldiers into each of several ARVN battalions, the other involving the combined operations of about three US battalions with three or more RVN combat battalions. More orthodox, and already part of the concept developed in Washington, was the instruction to plan for

³⁹. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to JCS, 15 May 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 4.

⁴⁰. Ibid.

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stationing a "brigade force" in the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area and for introducing a battalion or multi-battalion force in such coastal locations as Qui Nhon ". . . to experiment further with US forces in a counter-insurgency role. . . ." A total of nine US battalions would be involved.⁴¹

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At the same time COMUSMACV was directed to work with GVN officials to make detailed plans for a substantial expansion of the Vietnamese recruiting campaign, making full use of US experts and methods. Further, the Surgeon General of the US Army had been instructed to work with General Westmoreland in developing an experimental program for providing expanded medical services to the countryside, using mobile dispensaries. COMUSMACV was also to set up a plan for introducing US Army Civil Affairs personnel into the structure of provincial governments in one or two provinces, hopefully to help create stable government in these provinces and to start and maintain much-needed political, economic, and security programs. A further experiment called for the provision and direct distribution of food to regular and paramilitary personnel of the RVN and their families.

The Ambassador was instructed to discuss all these experimental programs urgently with Prime Minister Quat. General Westmoreland was to be prepared to discuss his plans for the military programs with General Wheeler at the conferences in Honolulu during the next week.⁴²

On the same day Mr. McGeorge Bundy informed Ambassador Taylor that the President himself had been the inspiration for the encadrement idea and for the use of US Civil Affairs teams.⁴³

During the Honolulu discussions of these proposals, General Westmoreland came out strongly against individual encadrement of ARVN units. He stated, however, that he did plan to assign ARVN liaison personnel to each independent US platoon and to "brigade" US forces with ARVN troops in counterinsurgency actions. Furthermore, he proposed to set

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41. (TS-GP 1) Msg, DEF 9164 to Saigon et al., 15 Apr 65.

42. Ibid.

43. (TS) Msg, State 2332 to Saigon, 15 Apr 65,
JCS IN 08968.

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up an International Mobile Security Task Force which would contain third-country as well as ARVN and US forces.⁴⁴

In the matter of recruiting, both Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland stated that no additional US recruiting "expertise" was needed in RVN. The bottlenecks were not techniques to get recruits, but in such areas as training facilities, trainers, and leadership. These problems, they said, were being surmounted, and they expected an increase of 127,000 men in the RVNAF, paramilitary forces and police in the next 12 months.⁴⁵

The expansion of medical services in the countryside, with the assistance of the Surgeon General, US Army, was welcomed by Ambassador Taylor. It was decided that a representative of the Surgeon General would come to the RVN at once to work with COMUSMACV and USOM in developing a detailed program.⁴⁶

It was also agreed that an experimental program would be begun in three provinces, introducing US Army civil affairs personnel or similarly qualified personnel into the provincial government structure. The experimental food program that had been proposed was not considered necessary by the Ambassador or COMUSMACV. Both agreed that there was no evidence of any food shortage among the families of the RVNAF or paramilitary personnel. They would, however, begin a study to improve the "fringe benefits" for the forces and their families.⁴⁷

The Secretary of Defense reported these views on the experimental program to the President in his memorandum of 21 April.

Expansion of the Logistics Base

In mid-April the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended other logistic actions beyond the deployment of the logistic forces. They considered that the ports of Quang Ngai, Qui Nhon,

44. (TS) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 21 Apr 65, OCJCS File 337, Honolulu Conference, Apr 65.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

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Da Nang and Nha Trang should be developed to support the expected input of men and supplies. They recommended "minimum essential base development" in the enclave areas, and the improvement of airfield facilities, including those at Tam Ky, for light aviation. They recommended also the development of Chu Lai with emphasis on the immediate installation of a Short Expeditionary Landing Field (SELF). The prepositioning of US Army lighterage at selected ports had already been approved and was being implemented.⁴⁸

POL facilities that would have to be constructed comprised unloading and storage facilities at Da Nang, Quang Ngai, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Vung Tau, and storage facilities at Saigon, Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut and Pleiku. The Army Engineer Construction Group would commence work on high priority projects for COMUSMACV. Expansion of the construction capability would take place as the follow-on construction units were approved for deployment. Navy Mobile Construction units attached to the III MEF would accomplish the SELF installation. Additional airfield construction requirements might mean that as many as two or more construction battalions would be needed in RVN.

To increase the logistic capability of the United States in the Southeast Asia area, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended broader actions outside RVN. Among these were: 1) expediting country-to-country agreements for the acquisition of real estate; 2) increasing POL and ammo storage capacity at Subic Bay, Philippine Islands; 3) preparing and improving LST ramps at Iwakuni, Japan; 4) improving pier and beach-outload facilities at Okinawa; 5) providing facilities for aerial port detachment at King Kuan; 6) suspending gold flow restrictions in the PACOM area in order that necessary supplies and services might be procured offshore to facilitate preparation for receipt of additional forces in RVN; 7) increasing the capability of Okinawa and the Philippine Islands as offshore supporting bases.

Also in April, Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland had been deeply involved in determining how and to what extent the US logistic base in RVN should be expanded to support the commitment of US and third-country troops and how to coordinate such an expansion with the RVNAF. The

⁴⁸. Ibid. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-288-65 to SecDef, 17 Apr 65 (derived from JCS 2343/564-5), JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 3.

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central problem was to choose the best of the several options in current logistic procedures and the possible combined use of physical logistic facilities already in existence. In this connection, the Army had expressed "considerable doubt" as to the feasibility or desirability of combined use of logistic facilities.⁴⁹

In order to make easier the stockage of common-user consumable items of Classes II, III, IV and V supply, the Joint Chiefs of Staff undertook consideration of a procedure in which the United States would retain title to such stores until "convenient point of issue of item in country to recipient." This would, of course, raise problems in relationships between the RVNAF and US logistic personnel.

On 7 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out to CINCPAC that the United States might share RVNAF depot or supply facilities. They also suggested that the title to stocks might even revert to the United States. "US personnel could take over management and essentially, if not actually, combined command or coordination of mutually occupied logistic facilities if major stockages were of common user consumables," the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted. This course would have the advantage of allowing rapid availability to the United States of existing facilities, although some might not be capable of expansion. It would simplify programming for the Services for all consumables and would allow establishment of in-country stock levels on the basis of gross consumption forecasts, for the combined totals for all forces. On the other hand substantial opposition from the RVNAF High Command could certainly be expected. Admiral Sharp was asked to comment on these procedures.⁵⁰

In reply, CINCPAC informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that his current planning counted on the optimum use of those facilities already existing and in operation. However, just how much the United States could control these facilities would have to be determined at the time of need and on a case-by-case basis. He seriously doubted that the RVNAF would agree to turning over their logistic support facilities to the United States any more than the United States would agree to turning over command of its combat forces to the GVN. Moreover, RVNAF facilities were already overcrowded or

49. (S-NOFORN) Msg, JCS 8654 to CINCPAC, 7 Apr 65.

50. Ibid.

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too small, and many of them were wrongly located for support of US forces as envisioned under current deployment plans. He also pointed out that access to the base depot area near Saigon was "less than fully secure."51

CINCPAC believed that the best way to expand the US logistic system in RVN would be to establish as rapidly as possible a framework so conceived that it could be expanded to support any US effort. This would require a base complex at a deep-water port easily accessible from the sea, centrally located and under US control. He stated that the only feasible location for such a facility would be at Cam Ranh Bay. When the base depot became operational, a central control point for all supplies would be set up and all supplies coming into RVN would be controlled by a central stock record office and transceiver point. The office would control the flow of all critical MAP equipment and the common user consumables for all deployed forces. "Issue to the RVNAF of these items could be managed in such a manner as to best serve US interests and apply the required logistical leverage," CINCPAC stated. If a high degree of common user commodities, such as ammunition, were involved, selected supply lines could be completely integrated and the system expanded as necessary so that key items might be controlled without physically sending all supply through the base depot. J-4

By leaving the present RVNAF depot system intact, but collocating US facilities at these installations, when such action were feasible and in the best interests of the United States, the RVNAF objections to US take-over of the logistic system could be overcome. CINCPAC pointed out that development of a base at Cam Ranh Bay would be expensive and would call for "significant construction effort" because of the lack of even minimum essential facilities there at the present time. The Services would have to fund pipelining, and control MAP equipment, including common user consumables and depot stocks. Sizeable combat forces would be tied down in providing security for the complex. Distribution from the depot to field depots would mainly be done by coastal shipping in LSTs.

51. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 152046Z May 65, JCS IN 62873.

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"In summary," he said, "I believe it is essential to begin establishment of a base depot complex at a deep-water port (Cam Ranh Bay) to support US forces initially. The depot activity and control would be capable of expansion."52

Development of Cam Ranh Bay

In April and May, as more and more troops began arriving in RVN and as the tonnage of supplies and equipments mushroomed, it became apparent that Saigon logistic facilities would very soon be inadequate. With the prospect of an even greater flow of men and supplies, in the months just ahead, the need for an additional deep-water port, more centrally located with respect to the forces and contemplated operations, grew to near-crisis proportions. The most suitable location for such a port was at Cam Ranh Bay. Cam Ranh Bay was an ideal location with all the necessary attributes for a major military port. US officials had been considering construction of such a port at Cam Ranh since 1964, even before the present urgency had arisen.

On 19 May 1965 the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) asked that the Joint Staff evaluate the requirement for a logistic base at Cam Ranh Bay on two assumptions: 1) that the additional deployments then being considered would be authorized and; 2) that no further major deployment would be made. On 21 May, General Wheeler informed Secretary McNamara that "a requirement for a US installation at Cam Ranh Bay exists under either of the assumptions" Under the first assumption the base would be expanded to accommodate the additional troops being deployed, including those for OPLAN 32-64, and under the second assumption a requirement for base facilities on a reduced scale would still exist. A supplemental appropriation already contained provision for \$7 million for ammunition and port facilities at Cam Ranh Bay. CINCPAC was planning to consolidate some of the logistic facilities programmed for Qui Nhon and Nha Trang at Cam Ranh Bay. This was being done because General Westmoreland had determined recently that Cam Ranh Bay could be secured against the VC by the forces then being planned for the Qui Nhon and Nha Trang enclaves. Admiral Sharp was in the process of preparing an outline base development plan for Cam Ranh Bay. "Under these circumstances," General Wheeler told the Secretary of

52. Ibid.

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Defense, "it is believed appropriate for the Ambassador to initiate discussions with the Prime Minister to advise him of the US intent to establish a deep water port and ammunition storage facilities at Cam Ranh Bay; as well as the possibility of the expansion of these facilities to provide other logistic services to the United States, Republic of Vietnam, and third country forces."53

Secretary McNamara had suggested the building of a logistic and combat airfield in connection with Cam Rahn Bay development. CINCPAC was also conducting therefore a preliminary engineer survey for such an airfield in the northern end of the Cam Ranh Peninsula.54

On 30 May CINCPAC submitted a detailed statement and review of the need for Cam Ranh Bay development with recommendations for a logistics complex, a jet-capable combat/logistics airfield, and deployment of the additional forces that would be needed or that could be stationed there. The logistic objective would be to establish a US base with central control of common-user items for all deployed forces, including key items for the RVNAF. Through this deep-water port, shipments could be received directly from the CONUS, Okinawa and other Pacific bases. Supplies would be moved from Cam Ranh Bay by coastal shipping and by air and land LOCs throughout the year. The United States, using MAP funds, had already constructed a large deep-water pier for its own use. Because of the natural contour of the beach, dry ramp beaching of LSTs was also possible.55

The estimated cost for all development except the airfield was \$19 million, of which \$7 million had already been programmed and \$9.6 million, originally programmed in the Army MCP, was being shifted from the logistic and support facilities initially scheduled at Vung Tau. Additional funds to meet the cost of development, CINCPAC anticipated, could be taken from other facilities currently programmed for other locations but which "more appropriately should be constructed at Cam Ranh Bay."

53. (S) CM-634-65 to SecDef, 21 May 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 65.

54. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2627 to CINCPAC, 21 May 65.

55. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 300520Z May 65, JCS IN 83302.

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Admiral Sharp then recommended: 1) approval of planning to develop the Cam Ranh Bay area as the major US port and logistics complex to support the war in RVN; 2) construction and development on an emergency basis of a jet-capable combat and logistics airfield at Cam Ranh Bay; 3) authorization to divert to Cam Ranh Bay some of the logistics forces previously approved for Qui Nhon/Nha Trang and other areas as required; 4) immediate diversion to Cam Ranh Bay of one infantry battalion to provide security; 5) requesting the GVN for approval of the logistics complex and for clearance of the necessary US combat forces.⁵⁶

On 8 June 1965 the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC that the Secretary of Defense had approved all of the recommendations he had made with reference to development of Cam Ranh Bay. The necessary clearances had been obtained from the GVN. They did not believe that any additional authorizations were needed to move approved units from one location in RVN to another. However, they did need a revised troop list as soon as possible. They asked that the base development outline plan for Cam Ranh Bay be furnished them not later than 15 June in order to make maximum use of FY 1965 fiscal resources.⁵⁷

The Secretary of Defense informed General Wheeler on 9 June that he was anxious to proceed as rapidly as possible with the development of the base at Cam Ranh Bay. And on the same day two battalions of combat engineers landed at Cam Ranh Bay and construction began. Within approximately 90 days, Cam Ranh Bay would be transformed from an area of sand dunes and sparse vegetation to a major port/logistical complex with a continued high rate of construction planned for 1966.⁵⁸

56. Ibid.

57. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 3545 to CINCPAC, 8 Jun 65.

58. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, no subj, 9 Jun 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 65. (S) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 108; (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, p. 533.

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