

19 April 1964

INFORMAL MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Task Force - Vietnam

Introduction:

In Washington the Vietnam Task Force coordinates and focusses available resources of all agencies on the problems of Vietnam. In Vietnam today there is no comparable mechanism for coordinating and seeking maximum effectiveness of US knowledge, planning, and action. The missions, composition, and function of an appropriate instrumentality, which might be called TF-Vn (Task Force - Vietnam) are briefly presented in this memorandum.

Tasks:

The essential tasks of Task Force - Vietnam are:

- a. To formulate a concept for achieving victory by means politically, economically, and militarily acceptable;
- b. To formulate an overall strategic policy consonant with this concept; and
- c. Secure approval from appropriate authorities of the concept and the policy. Then
- d. Issue, on a continuing basis, guidelines for the implementation of this policy, and recommendations for actions.
- e. Continuously review the progress, effectiveness, and compliance with policy of the efforts of all agencies; recommend further actions, or modifications of ongoing programs to increase their effectiveness.
- f. Receive from each agency advance information of

proposed plans, major actions, or actions which might involve modification or violation of policy.

g. Consent by silence to such proposals, or protest them within 32 hours.

h. Maintain constant intimate liaison with parent agencies, GVN counterpart agencies, and special advisors to key GVN officials.

Although the above enumerated tasks represent rather more than full duty, two others which might well be added are:

a. Supervision of the recommended independent information group.

b. Review and reconciliation of such inter-agency reports as the "Weeks", or equivalent.

Forces:

The success or failure of the proposed task force can be predicted by observing the selection of its personnel. Each major component of the U.S. effort in Vietnam should be represented by a senior officer, probably a special assistant to the chief of component. The permanent task force group should include:

a. Ambassador's representative, as director of TF-Vn.

b. MAC-V representative(s) - probably two, one representing the advisors to RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, and one representing the sector advisors. (This last is extremely important, and will be facilitated if, as is rumored and as is greatly to be desired, the sector advisors are removed from the Corps-Division advisory chain of command.) Possibly a third military member should be added, to represent Special Forces and GCD.

c. CIA representative -- specializing in political and psychological operations.

d. USIA representative -- representing both the PAO and the Hayden Committee -- and, desirably, USOM Commedia.

e. USOM (AID) representative(s). A representative of Rural Affairs is obviously essential; a representative for the so-called technical divisions (including RDD) might be desired.

In addition, TF-Vn should have a full-time secretariat, including, as a minimum:

a. Administrative officer - component not material.

b. Two intelligence officers, one from CIA, one from MAC-V J-2. TF-Vn must be kept fully informed of both enemy and friendly plans and activities.

c. Political officer - from Embassy political section.

d. Two secretaries.

For special studies or projects, or to meet emerging requirements, TF-Vn should be authorized to secure additional assistance, as required.

Operations:

TF-Vn will require from each member four principal activities:

a. Learning all operational plans and policies of his parent organization, and his chief;

b. Learning, through TF-Vn, the activities of the other elements of the US effort, and relaying to his chief such of this information as the latter may desire;

c. Considering, in conjunction with his fellow-members, how each element of the effort may best contribute, and in what

specific ways, to the joint effort; and

d. Securing the appropriate participation (or the reasons of his chief for non-concurrence) of his parent agency.

For TF-Vn and its members to perform their roles properly it is anticipated that daily meetings (possibly excepting Sundays) will be necessary. (From 0900 to 1230 might be appropriate hours.) At these meetings the actions and developments since the last meeting will be discussed, briefing on plans or programs received, usually from those proposing or directing them, and plans for future actions (including recommendations) discussed and agreed. Normally these actions would include apportionment and explanation of recommended actions to the respective agencies; exceptionally they will be the referral of disagreements to the Ambassador, or, through existing channels, to Washington.

Although the office should be manned during all duty hours, at least, TF-Vn members may expect to spend the rest of each day with their parent organizations, seeking approval and implementation of recommendations, and finding out what their organizations are doing or proposing to do which might affect the overall effort. Further, they should be performing, or assisting in the performance of the same duties with counterpart agencies, seeking to secure their conformance with policy, and helping them to do so.

Conclusion:

The proposed coordinating group will actually strengthen the positions of the chiefs of component agencies, for it will insure that their policy decisions are made on the basis of the thorough and informed discussions of their joint "country staff"

as well as of their own staffs. This will insure to them that all factors bearing on the problem, and significant in terms of the national objectives, have been considered. It will facilitate the taking of decisions for mutually supporting actions based on their intrinsic merit, rather than the interests and practices of any one agency. For success in Vietnam, for achieving maximum effect with the least waste of men, time, and material, a coordinating group of this nature is the only acceptable alternative to the creation of a unified command.

It cannot be over-emphasized that TF-Vn, if it is to be effective, must be composed of men of unusual ability, with sound knowledge of counter-insurgency, as well as of the capabilities and limitations of the organizations they represent. Each member must be kept fully informed of the goals, and proposed paths to them, of his own outfit, yet must be able and willing to subject these to impartial analyses, and open discussions, in terms of their value to the overall effort.

In his plea for such an organization as discussed here, one senior advisor wrote that we can no longer afford the luxury of unrelated programs and strategies, of having "our resources... absorbed in the sands of obscured objectives and individual aims". Now that the mistakes of the past are so apparent; now that the government with which we work is so clearly weak and ill-equipped; now that we are about to finish fielding a new team of chiefs -- should we not now establish a mechanism for developing clear realistic policies, continuously attuned to changing conditions, and for coordinating their execution? The need is critical, and is not being met today.

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