

UNITED STATES POLICY OPTIONS IN VIETNAM: A SYNOPSIS

The United States must soon adopt one, or a combination, of four approaches to the problem in Vietnam:

1. Punitive/Interdictory bombardment of installations and activities in North Vietnam/Laos. This would not seriously adversely affect the Viet Cong/DRV effort, it would solidify opinion against us; its failure would seriously lower morale in Vietnam and the U.S., and lead either to the commitment of ground forces or negotiated withdrawal.
2. Ground force intervention to:
 - a. Establish a cordon sanitaire; using U.S., and SEATO conventional forces.
 - b. Harass and throw off-balance the Viet Cong, by the employment of a limited number of international volunteers--footborne Flying Tigers; or
 - c. Assault the North by surprise, employing airborne forces, principally U.S., and a major psychological--"Liberation"--effort; and follow this up with sound political-economic counter-insurgency efforts. The first of these would be as futile as bombardment, and would entail U.S. assumption of command in Vietnam, a sure way to lose that war. The second would be dramatic and useful, but would be endangered by tacit and explicit internal opposition. The third would be effective, given greater ability, understanding and determination than we have yet exhibited in our efforts/in Vietnam.
3. Negotiated withdrawal: This would be recognized by our enemies and friends alike as total, ignominious, political and military defeat; a cowardly betrayal of our allies; and an abandonment of any American claim to honor or morality.
4. A positive, politically-oriented, integrated program. Essentially an expression of belief that the traditional "American way" can triumph, this would be a rejuvenated, redirected effort to establish stable, popular, effective government on a sound political and economic base. Success is assured, if the effort is guided by advisors with proven experience in such wars who are backed by the very top; failure, no worse and less costly than the other positive courses would entail, is probable if the effort does not have such guidance and backing.

Only the last course of action offers real hope of an outcome consonant with United States national objectives, principles, and honor.