

Secretary of Defence
Military Advisors Report
Operation Vietnam
December 1961

Current situation

Khrushchev of the USSR has declared support for the wars of national liberation in Asia, Africa and South America. We must prevail in Vietnam to show that we are not weak and to ensure the support of new emerging nations such as Thailand and the Philippines.

The President is not prepared to negotiate a political settlement in Vietnam after recent events in Laos, and has sanctioned the use of US-piloted helicopters and US military advisers to engage with Vietnamese insurgents (codename Vietcong).

In January of this year, the Green Berets took 400 US Special Forces to Vietnam along with 700 military advisers. However we are concerned that mounting insurgent attacks threaten to overrun the Mekong Delta - see CIA report extract below:

<p>Central Intelligence Agency – Report VIA169</p> <p>Mekong Delta Insurgency</p>
<p>September 1961</p> <p>Threat report</p> <p>c.16,000 armed insurgents</p> <p>US weapons acquired from ARVN forces</p>

Our response?

Option 1

Vice-President Lyndon Johnson went on a fact finding mission in April and has recommended that:

'Better management of the US military aid programme and an increase of US\$50 million in military and economic assistance to build up the ARVN to over 100'000 in strength would be sufficient to sustain Diem's regime. US combat troops are neither required nor desirable. If introduced, they would revive anti-colonial emotions, to Diem's detriment.'

Option 2

On 18th October General Maxwell Taylor and the Chair of the State Planning Department Policy Committee, Walt Rostow, reported back on Vietnam. An extract from the Taylor-Rostow Report's recommendations is shown below:

- Greater use of helicopters for counterinsurgency missions
- Strategic bombing of parts of North Vietnam
- Increased use of the US combat troops to counter the activities of the Vietcong and to act as a morale boost for the South Vietnamese people and their government

The problems

Recent reviews of both reports and other external information from varied sources has suggested:

- The Taylor-Rostow report shows nothing but contempt for the communists, and underestimates the strength of the Vietminh who successfully defeated the French.
- An assumption has been made that the people of South Vietnam share the same aims as the Government of Diem – there has been evidence of growing discontent with Diem and his administration among the peasantry.
- The insurgency in the South is activated by the North – Vietminh forces are sending people South to fight against the government.

At the beginning of this month, President Kennedy sent a letter to Ngo Dinh Diem after a request for additional help. The President stated:

'In accordance with the declaration made by Eisenhower to support the people of South Vietnam in 1954, and in response to your request, we are prepared to help the Republic of Vietnam to protect its people and to preserve its independence. We shall promptly increase our assistance to your defence effort as well as help relieve the destruction of the floods that you describe.'

It is now up to the committee to examine the evidence provided and make clear proposals to the President as to what action must be taken in order to assist South Vietnam; increased support for their own forces or an increase in US troops to the region?

Briefing - committee one

You are among those who believe it **is essential to continue providing aid and assistance to South Vietnam**. You fully support the recommendations of Vice-President Johnson and believe that the US should not become militarily committed to the conflict between the ARVN and Vietcong/PAVN.

Task

Prepare a proposal which **justifies** the continuation of aid and assistance to South Vietnam and include **recommendations** for how President Kennedy could distribute the aid to encourage the support of the South Vietnamese and assist the ARVN in their struggles.

You should create a poster to present this information.

You could find your own maps and create your own diagrams to explain what you plan to do in Vietnam (e.g. where money/food would be sent).

Be prepared to present your findings to the rest of the group.

Briefing - committee two

You are among those who believe it is **essential to increase the number of troops in Vietnam**. You fully support the findings of the Taylor-Rostow report and know that if South Vietnam was lost, President Kennedy and his administration will be accused of not giving enough aid to US allies in South-East Asia.

Task

Prepare a proposal which **justifies** the suggestions of the Taylor-Rostow report, and include **recommendations** for how President Kennedy should proceed in becoming more militarily involved in Vietnam.

You should create a poster to present this information.

You could find your own maps and create your own diagrams to explain what you plan to do in Vietnam (bombing locations etc.)

Be prepared to present your findings to the rest of the group.