MEMORANDUM FOR THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT.

Attached is a first (rough) cut of the Joint Chiefs of Staff concept of possible targets in North Korea which might be struck in retaliation for the shoot down of our ECM aircraft. General Wheeler realizes this by no means represents a completed tactical command plan.

I have discussed our planned approach with the President this evening and he has approved our moving three carriers north from Vietnam. These will start tonight and are seventy-two hours away.

For tomorrow, General Wheeler will give in very broad terms to the NSC, the various options as we see them. After the NSC, we will be prepared to discuss with the President, Bill Rogers and you specific details and recommendations.

[Signature]

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS

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See Def Cont Nr. X-
Talking paper for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on an item to be discussed at the National Security Council meeting, 15 April 1969.

Subject: Air Strikes Against North Korean Targets

BACKGROUND - The Assistant for National Security Affairs has requested that an appraisal of an air strike against a North Korean target in response to destruction of the US EC-121 be prepared for consideration by the President on 15 April 1969.

DISCUSSION - An air strike against a North Korean target in response to the shootdown of the US EC-121 could be conducted by either land-based aircraft, carrier aircraft or a combination thereof. Each offers certain advantages/disadvantages. The following plans provide for separate land-based or carrier-based aircraft attacks.

a. Plan for Carrier-based Air Attack

(1) Targets Recommended:

(a) Wonsan AF (39-09N - 127-29E) - 6,600'/4,000' concrete runways. Main structures: control, 2 hangars, 3 admin, 8 maint, 8 warehouses, 14 storages, 50 support, 120 barracks, 3 P0L tanks. Jet light bomber/fighter capability. One of three major fighter bases on east coast of North Korea. Southernmost fighter base on the East Coast. 2NM E of Wonsan.

(b) Son Dong NF (Sondok AF) (39-44N - 127-28E) - 6,600' concrete runway. Main structures: control, 5 admin, maint, 14 barracks, 37 support, 19 P0L tanks. Jet light bomber/fighter capability. Only fighter base in Hungnam area. 34 NM N of Wonsan.

1. Objective. The objective of conducting air strikes against selected significant military targets in North Korea would be to disrupt the military posture of North Korea and to impose a penalty on the communist leadership for its act of aggression against the United States.

2. Advantages:

a. Air strikes against significant military targets in North Korea will indicate to the Communist Bloc that the United States will not tolerate acts of aggression against US forces in international waters and airspace.

b. Positive and deliberate response by the United States to an act of aggression will indicate the resolve of the United States to take measured punitive action against an aggressor.

c. Targets are of a military nature and their destruction would reduce the military capabilities of North Korea to support military operations against US and ROK forces in South Korea.

d. The sudden and sharp impact of air strikes permits a measured response without prolonged engagement with the enemy and emphasizes the punitive nature of the act.

3. Disadvantages - US air strikes against selected military targets in North Korea will be a deliberate act of war. North Korea may respond by launching attacks against US/ROK forces.
A. West Coast targets not selected because:
   a. Concentration of NK SAMs are on west coast.
   b. Higher risk of confrontation with CHICOMS if we operate from Yellow Sea.
   c. Task Force operations from Sea of Japan would require undesirable overflight of South Korea.

(2) Forces available:
   (a) USS ENTERPRISE (CVAN-65)
       26 F4J
       12 A6A
       30 A7B
   (b) USS KITTY HAWK (CVA-61)
       26 F4B
       29 A7A
       15 A6A/B
   (c) USS RANGER (CVA-61)
       23 F4J
       14 A7A
       15 A6A
       13 A4F
   (d) USS HORNET (CVS-12)
       17 S2E
       17 SH3A
   (e) Equivalent surface combat and support ships.

(3) Reaction Time:
   (a) USS KITTY HAWK - 48 hours
   (b) USS ENTERPRISE - 72 hours
   (c) USS RANGER - 72 hours
   (d) USS HORNET - 72 hours
   (e) Surface combat ships will react with CVA's as Attack Carrier Task Force.

(4) Concept of Operations - Move 3 CVA's to position 35-00N 130-30E in Sea of Japan.

(a) Following Courses of Action are keyed to reaction time of naval forces:

1. 48 hours - (Navy only) - Night attack against Wonsan AP with 9 A6A/B from KITTY HAWK.

2. 48 hours - Combined tactical USN/USAF day and night strike against Wonsan AP and Sondok AP for 12 hours.

3. 72 hours - Combined tactical USN/USAF day and night strikes against Wonsan AP and Sondok AP for 12 hours.
4. If single strike preferred, recommend single
night Navy strike against Wonsan AF.

5. If maximum destruction is preferred, recommend
combined tactical USN/USAF day and night strikes against Wonsan AF
and Sondok AF for 12 hour period.

(5) Effect on SEA Operations - Redeployment of 3 CVA to
a northern position will have minimal immediate effect on SEA
operations.

b. Plan for Land-based Air Attack

(1) Target - Sondok AF - Description and objectives same as b (1) (a) and (b) 2. above.

(2) Advantages:
(a) Away from any major population center
(b) Significant NK base
(c) Lower SAM/AAA defenses than in western NK
(d) On coast: allows low level, over water attack
(e) Further north than Wonsan

(3) Plan of Attack - Alternate I

(a) Alternate I

1. Use 60 tactical fighter aircraft (12 F-105; 48
F-4) on a hi-lo-hi attack mounted from Kadena AB, Okinawa right after
first light. Recovery at Okinawa.

2. Requires 15 KC-135 tankers for pre-strike and
emergency post-strike support.

3. Forces generated from 12 F-105 at Okinawa; 35
F-4s from Yokota and Misawa; 9 F-4s from Taegu and 4 P-40s from Osan.
Replace 13 F-4s from Korea with F-102/F-106s from Okinawa on a one-
for-one basis.

1. Requires 36 hours to prepare and reposition
forces prior to launch. Enroute time would be 2 1/2 hours.

(b) Alternate II

1. Use 24-48 B-52 aircraft on hi-lo-hi mission
mounted from Guam just prior to first light. Recovery at Guam.

2. Requires one tanker per B-52 for pre-strike
refueling support drawn from SEA tanker resources at U-Tapao.

3. Requires 48 hours preparation time prior to
launch. Enroute time would be approximately 5 1/2 hours.

(4) Military judgment of effect on SEA Operations:

(a) Alternate I: Except for minimal degradation of
tanker support for air operations in BARRELL ROLL/STEEL TIGER,
no effect on SEA air operations.

(b) Alternate II: At least 24-48 B-52 ARC LIGHT sorties
in SEA for a 24-hour period. At least
(2) Advantages:
   (a) Away from any major population center
   (b) Significant NK base
   (c) Lower SAM/AAA defenses than in western NK
   (d) On coast: allows low level, over water approach

(3) Disadvantages:
   (a) Less tactical surprise due to northern latitude
   (b) Longer exposure to hostile threat
   (c) SAR more difficult
   (d) Increased refueling requirements
   (e) Closer to US
   (f) Less strategic target than Sandok or Won
   (g) Not recommended for B-52s because of local
   (h) Not recommended for carriers because of local
5 Protective Measures in Event of NK Retaliation Against ROK:

(a) All US/ROK forces in ROK to be placed on alert, including covert attainment of DEFCON 3 at launch of strike force and overt DEFCON one at TOT.

(b) Maintain SIOP alert throughout WESTPAC.

(c) Place AF forces in Japan and Okinawa on DEFCON 3 at TOT.

- A North Korean response, ranging from retaliatory strike against launch carriers/airfields to reopening of hostilities along the DMZ, can be anticipated. The most likely responses are:

  a. Vigorous defense measures against US attack and possible submarine, air and guided missile boat attacks against US surface units.

  b. Attacks against South Korean airfields.

  c. Intense actions along the DMZ.

- No direct Chinese Communist interference is expected, but prompt political attacks on the United States are likely.

- Soviet air and naval forces can be expected to maintain close surveillance of US operations. Prompt propaganda attacks against US actions are also likely. Soviet material support to North Korea would probably be increased.

- US forces must be prepared to take protective measures against retaliatory North Korea strikes. The organic air defense capability of the carrier force is adequate for protection of that force. All US forces in Korea should be placed in readiness for defense against North Korean reopening of hostilities along the DMZ and/or retaliatory attacks against ROK airfields.

RECOMMENDATION - It is recommended that the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, use the foregoing in discussing this subject before the National Security Council as appropriate.

Opinion as to Recommendation: 

Approved by __________________ Director, J-3

Director, Joint Staff __________________ (Concur) (Nonconcur)

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