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~~TOP SECRET~~

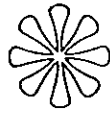
ITEMS SPECIFIED IN THE SPECIAL APPENDIX  
FILED ON JUNE 21, 1971 WITH THE  
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE SECOND CIRCUIT

- I. Portions of Exhibits 7 and 7A the disclosure of which would present increased risks to the safety of U.S. forces

VOL. IW. C. 4, pages vii, xii, 14, 17 and 20;  
VOL. IW. C. 5, page 9 - Exposes two major military operational plans which had been used in 1964 and in 1965 for planning of emergency deployments of United States ground combat forces into Southeast Asia. These planned deployments were to be used by the Commander in Chief, Pacific, to meet any military offensive moves against the United States by the armed forces of the

People's Republic of China. Although these particular operational plans are no longer in use, the discussions relating to these plans do reveal possible total force commitments and planned areas of operation which appear valid for future operations. Such information, if disclosed to an enemy planner, presumably would, if combined with other intelligence generally held by the intelligence communities of foreign countries, seriously compromise current war planning for Southeast Asia.

*Section 1, Item 4*



# UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

## 1945 - 1967

IV. C. 4.

EVOLUTION OF THE WAR

MARINE COMBAT UNITS GO TO DA NANG

MARCH 1965

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT OR DOCUMENT</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
30 Nov 64	"Alternatives to Air Actions on North Vietnam"	(State Dept) A proposal to use ground troops "in support of diplomacy": deploy them to prove U.S. resolve, then launch a major diplomatic offensive. This paper was considered by the NSC Working Group, but went no further.
1 Dec 64	Presidential Decision	President Johnson approved the recommendation of Ambassador Taylor and NSC principals to implement the Working Group's "Course of Action A"; after about a month and after GVN progress in certain areas, Course C -- a program "principally of progressively more serious air strikes" against NVN would be initiated. Again, ground troop commitment was not discussed.
1 Jan 65	OPLAN 32-64	The "alert" or first phase of the plan in effect. (MACV Command History shows planning had begun for the dispatch of U.S. ground troops into South Vietnam in connection with this and other contingency plans.)
Jan and Feb 1965	MACV Monthly Evaluation Reports; CIA Situation Reports	General Westmoreland said recently initiated "Flaming Dart" air campaign against the North was beneficial for morale in South Vietnam. He called GVN social and political institutions "remarkably intact" despite the "disintegrating blows" of political upheaval. (Huong's government fell in January; Premier Quat's regime was shaky.) But enemy gains continued. The Viet Cong struck Pleiku and other bases in early February; 12 battalions (6000 men) had reportedly moved into the I Corps. Westmoreland hoped air attacks in North and South Vietnam would be enough to reverse the trend.  CIA assessments were more pessimistic. In February Binh Dinh Province was said to be just about lost to the enemy. Intelligence indicated the Viet Cong might try to take Kontum Province and split the GVN through II Corps during the rainy season.

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		However, because Westmoreland was so concerned about Da Nang's safety and because Taylor felt security was a legitimate mission for U.S. troops although he objected to it, the Ambassador would support MACV's recommendation for one BLT. He suggested GVN approval be sought prior to the Marine deployment.
22 Feb 65	MACV Message to JCS	Claimed the Marine deployment to Da Nang would free four Regional Force companies, one tank platoon and another RF battalion then being formed for active anti-VC operations. (The March MACV Evaluation Report showed only two RF companies had been released.)
24 Feb 65	CINCPAC Message to JCS	Recommended immediate deployment of two BLTs; recommended one squadron of F-4s be sent to Da Nang for close air support of the troops and "for other missions along with the primary mission." The tone was urgent: deploy now "before the tragedy" of a Viet Cong attack.  CINCPAC disagreed with Taylor; called attention to the Marine Corps' distinguished record in counterinsurgency operations; claimed U.S. presence would free ARVN for mobile patrol operations and make Da Nang a tougher target for enemy forces.
24 Feb 65	JCSM 130-65	Forwarded and supported CINCPAC's recommendations.
26 Feb 65	DEPTEL 1840	Approved the deployment; said the Marines were on their way and instructed Taylor to secure GVN approval.
28 Feb 65	EMBTEL 2789	Taylor agreed to seek GVN concurrence to the deployment -- and planned an approach designed to stress U.S. reluctance to deploy any men even temporarily, emphasize the limited mission of the Marines and discourage GVN hopes for further commitments. Taylor would open by

A glance at some of the commentary of early March 1965 in newspapers and periodicals gives clear indication that the landing of the two Marine BATT's was seen as an event of major significance. Analysis of the import of the event varies, as would be expected, from writer to writer, but almost without exception they read more into the deployment than was made explicit by the brief Defense Department press release. By-lines from Saigon, where reporters had ready access to "reliable sources" in the U.S. Mission, give clear indication that there had been a major shift in attitude as regards the use of U.S. ground forces in Asia. Ted Sell, a Los Angeles Times staff writer, wrote on 10 March 1965. "The landing of the two infantry battalions is in its own way a far more significant act than were earlier attacks by U.S. airplanes, even though those attacks were directed against a country -- North Vietnam -- ostensibly not taking part in the direct war." Speaking after the Marines were ordered in, one high official said of the no-ground-troops-in-Asia shibboleth, "Sure, it's undesirable. But that doesn't mean we won't do it." 33/ It is especially significant that among the writers attempting to gauge the extent of U.S. resolve in the Vietnamese situation, the deployment of ground forces was somehow seen as a much more positive and credible indication of U.S. determination than any of the steps, including the air strikes on the DRV, previously taken.

tinuing reprisal, but he did not even mention the question of U.S. installation security nor did he mention the possibility of committing U.S. ground forces.

#### 4. *Contemporary Accounts*

Contemporary accounts of the situation in South Vietnam from the non-official viewpoint are unanimous in their recognition of the continuing decay in the political and military capacity of the GVN to resist. The prospect for success if the U.S. did not change its approach to the war was nil. The Viet Cong were clearly winning. To writers like Halberstam and Mecklin, the choice for the U.S. boiled down to two alternatives; either get out or commit land forces to stem the tide. Neither of these writers was likely to view the arrival of the Marines as anything else but indication of a decision to take the second course. Shaplen treated the landing of the Marines as an isolated incident, but he did not accept the rationale that they were in Vietnam for strictly defensive reasons. In commenting on the subsequent arrival of more Marines and the concomitant expansion of their mission to include offensive patrol work, he says: ". . . and sooner or later, it was surmised, they would tangle directly with the Viet Cong; in fact, it was obvious from the outset that in an emergency they would be airlifted to other areas away from their base."

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### D. THE DEVELOPING DEBATE ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF U.S. FORCES

#### 1. *Proposals for Actions Before the National Security Council Working Group, Late 1964*

Events in the late 1964—early 1965 period moved at such a rapid pace as almost to defy isolated analysis. On 3 November 1964, just two days after the Viet Cong successfully attacked the U.S. air base and billeting at Bien Hoa, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy convened the newly established NSC Working Group on SVN/SEA. Membership in the group included the State Department, OSD/

ISA, the JCS, and CIA. Debate within the group centered around three proposed courses of action, none of which contained a major U.S. ground troop commitment to SVN. Ground troop commitment was addressed in draft papers circulated within the group by the principals, but it does not appear that anyone was thinking in terms of a major U.S. effort on the ground in counterinsurgency operations. William Bundy's own papers mentioned CINCPAC OPLAN 32-64 and CINCPAC OPLAN 39-65, both of which contingency plans provided for the input of US ground combat forces into SEA in response to Chicom or DRV aggression or a combination of the two. In a draft dated 13 November 1964, Bundy discussed ground troop commitment and said in part that he did "not envisage the introduction of substantial ground forces into South Vietnam or Thailand in conjunction with these initial actions." The initial actions to which he referred were the three basic options under consideration at the time by the Working Group. Bundy went on in the same draft memorandum to state that the question of ground troop involvement needed further consideration, including the possibility of the introduction of a multilateral force into the northern provinces of South Vietnam. In discussing the pros and cons of ground troops, Bundy did not mention the security of bases but he did suggest that the presence of troops in South Vietnam might invite Viet Cong activity against them.

Other drafts circulated in the NSC Working Group dealt with ground forces. In a memorandum to the Working Group dated 30 November 1964, and entitled "Alternative to Air Attacks on North Vietnam: Proposals for the Use of U.S. Ground Forces in Support of Diplomacy in Vietnam," Messrs. Johnson and Kattenburg of the State Department proposed the introduction of a token ground force to provide proof of our resolve as a prelude to a major diplomatic offensive. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also made a proposal for the introduction of ground troops in their 23 November 1964 memo to the Secretary of Defense. In that JCSM, which was principally concerned with analysis of various courses of action to increase pressure on the DRV, the JCS recommended the collateral deployment of Marine units to Da Nang and other units from Okinawa to Ton Son Nhut Air Base for purposes of security and deterrence in accordance with CINCPAC OPLANS. There is no documentary evidence, however, that these drafts were in any way included in the memo sent to the President.

On 1 December 1964, the President approved the recommendations of Ambassador Taylor and the NSC Principals to proceed with the implementation of the Working Group's Course of Action A and, after 30 days or more and with some GVN progress along specified lines, to enter a second phase program consisting "principally of progressively more serious air strikes," as in Option C. Again, the U.S. focus was on the air war, not on the ground.

#### 2. *The Focus of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

In forwarding on 11 February 1965 their proposed program for the first eight weeks of military actions against North Vietnam, the JCS told the Secretary of Defense that their plan called primarily for airstrikes but also included the collateral deployment of a MEB to Da Nang and an Army Brigade to Thailand. Neither of these deployments were for purposes of counterinsurgency but rather were intended to deter any overt DRV/Chicom retaliation and to put us in a better posture in case the deterrent failed. The JCS forwarded this proposal to the Secretary again on 4 March 1965, still without mention of the possibility of ground combat action against the Viet Cong. The first proposal from the JCS that U.S. troop units be sent to SVN for active operations against the Viet Cong

## B. The Focus of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

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General Johnson, Chief of Staff of the Army, was in Vietnam from the 5th through the 12th of March 1965. He was given a thorough briefing on the situation by General Westmoreland and other members of the United States mission, and he brought back to Washington detailed situation reports prepared by MACV and the Ambassador. The view from Saigon, as reflected in those reports, was very grave indeed. A succinct summation of the views of the entire U.S. Mission Council in Saigon appeared in the Ambassador's Sitrep forwarded to the State Department on 11 March 1965:

"Unless (and this is primary), NVN support is checked, GVN military and paramilitary resources increased, pacification goals and concepts refined, administrative efficiency improved, and an adequate political-psychological base created, there is little likelihood of stemming the tide of the VC insurgency. Only U.S. resources can provide the pressures on NVN necessary to check Hanoi's support, although some measure of SVN armed forces participation will be required for psychological reasons; the other measures and programs required to stem the tide of VC insurgency

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There is little doubt that General Johnson was impressed by the gravity of the situation in SVN as presented to him at the very time the Marines were landing at Da Nang. The report which he submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 14 March contains specific proposals, including some for deployment of additional U.S. ground combat forces, which Johnson felt should be implemented if the U.S. was to realize its objectives in SVN. Those objectives as seen by Johnson were: (1) to persuade the DRV to abandon its support and direction of the insurgency, (2) to defeat the Viet Cong insurgents, and (3) to create a stable GVN. In accord with the Ambassador, General Johnson called for U.S. action because "what the situation requires may exceed what the Vietnamese can be expected to do." To arrest the current deterioration Johnson presented a list of 21 specific actions to be taken. The upshot of these 21 points was greater U.S. involvement in terms of money, ships, aircraft, advisors, and assorted hardware, but no ground combat units were involved. They meant essentially more of the same, and all 21 points were approved by the President on 1 April 1965. There was more to the Johnson recommendations, however. To release RVNAF for offensive action, he proposed deploying a U.S. division either to defend the Bien Hoa/Ton Son Nhut airfield complex plus some coastal enclaves or to defend the

highland provinces of Kontum, Pleiku and Darlac. Johnson obviously preferred the latter alternative because the enemy in the Montagnard populated highlands would be more easily identified by U.S. forces. The Secretary of Defense in commenting on the proposed deployment also preferred the second alternative although he thought neither afforded an efficient return in terms of RVNAF forces released per U.S. force input (alternative 1 called for 23,000 U.S. forces to release 5,000 ARVN; alternative 2 ratio was 15,000 U.S. to 6,000 ARVN). Secretary McNamara directed the JCS to consider the 2d alternative while emphasizing that he preferred an ROK division to one of our own. The culmination of General Johnson's report was his recommendation that the SEATO treaty be invoked to get allied participation in a four division force counter-infiltration cordon to be placed across the DMZ and the Laotian panhandle from the South China Sea to the Mekong River. In closing his report, General Johnson observed:

In order for the USG to evaluate his [COMUSMACV's] requests properly when submitted, a policy determination must be made in the very near future that will assure the question: What should the Vietnamese be expected to do for themselves and how much more must the U.S. contribute directly to the security of South Vietnam?

In reference to this observation Secretary McNamara wrote that the "Policy is: anything that will strengthen the position of the GVN will be sent . . ."

### 3. *Attitudes West of CONUS*

Both CINCPAC and General Westmoreland were very much concerned during early 1965 with the possible implementation of existing contingency plans, at least two of which as already mentioned, called for the input into Southeast Asia of U.S. troop units. The alert (Phase I) of OPLAN 32-64 was in effect as of 1 January 1965. CINCPAC clearly indicated that his thinking was geared to contingency plans in his cabled objections to the proposed deployment of the 173rd Airborne *vice* the Marines into Da Nang. All of his OPLANs had buildup predicated on the Marines' use of Da Nang as a base. CINCPAC is equally clear in his cable traffic of this period, however, that he is not immediately thinking in terms of the commitment of U.S. ground forces in operations against the Viet Cong. In a cable to Chairman Wheeler on 5 March 1965 he said that "the single most important thing we can do quickly to improve the security situation in SVN is to make full use of our air power." He went on in the same cable to say that the MEB should be deployed to Da Nang as soon as possible for security and also to give the GVN a boost and the Viet Cong a warning.

General Westmoreland and his staff had been concerned with planning for the input of U.S. ground troops into South Vietnam in conjunction with the aforementioned CINCPAC contingency plans since late 1964. In view of the enemy's capabilities and the obvious deficiencies of the ARVN, both of which were all too apparent to observers in Vietnam (by early 1965), it is hard to see how the military planners in MACV could have disassociated the deployment of the Marines from further troop input. In the MACV Command History for 1965 there are several statements which would tend to confirm sequential thinking in the MACV staff. On the day the Marines were landing at Da Nang it is said in the History that "thus step one in the buildup of forces had been taken and subsequent steps appeared to be assured." The History also states that "the Phase II, RVN, por-



tions of OPLAN 32-64 were essentially implemented by the U.S. buildup during 1965, although on a larger scale than planned." On 27 March 1965, General Westmoreland forwarded to CINCPAC his estimate of the situation in Vietnam and his recommendation for U.S. troop input for offensive action against the Viet Cong. In that cable COMUSMACV states that his staff commenced preparation of the estimate and troop recommendations on 13 March, five days after the Marines went into Da Nang, and the day after the Army Chief of Staff's departure from Saigon.

Ambassador Taylor was not enthusiastic about any continuation of troop buildup after the landing of the Marines. He had already stated his reasons in the lengthy cable of 22 February contained herein. On 3 March, in response to a Department of State query regarding the possible employment of an international force, Taylor conveyed the text of a conversation about the MLF between Ambassador Johnson and the Australian envoy to South Vietnam. The Australian had voiced fears similar to Taylor's in that he foresaw an increased manifestation of Vietnamese xenophobia with the input into South Vietnam of foreign troops, and he feared such a move would cause the GVN "to shuck off greater responsibility onto USG." Taylor told the Secretary of State in another cable on the same day that he had no idea what the GVN attitude toward a MLF might be and that there were many problems involved with such a move that had yet to be ironed out. The MLF was clearly only in the talking stage, while the Marine BLT's were a fact. The discussion of the MLF is included to illustrate that the Ambassador was consistent in looking beyond the immediate tactical need to support a faltering GVN—a need which Taylor saw just as clearly as did MACV—to analyze the long-term ramifications of the introduction into Vietnam of foreign combat troops. Taylor's warnings in this regard were, in light of the present situation in SVN, prophetic indeed.

#### E. FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

There seems to be sufficient evidence to conclude that General Westmoreland and his staff saw in the deployment of the Marines the beginning of greater things to come. The 1965 Command History says as much, and the rapidity with which the staff followed on the Marine BLT's with more proposals would tend to back up such a conclusion. It hardly seems a coincidence that General Johnson, immediately following his briefings by MACV, returned to Washington and recommended, among other things, that a U.S. division be deployed to SVN. CINCPAC, although obviously concerned with OPLANs and their focus on troop deployments, comes out clearly in his cable traffic for reliance on air power for the moment and for troop commitment to secure bases only. The JCS, because they had yet to address the overall question of U.S. ground force deployments, necessarily saw the Marine deployments as a stopgap measure to insure the security of U.S. lives and property in case of a partial or total GVN collapse. Traffic between the Embassy and the Department of State indicated that further ground force deployments as a deterrent to NVN invasion were in the thinking but were not yet in the proposal stage, and the Ambassador clearly had serious objections to further troop input. It appears that for the moment, with the possible exception of General Westmoreland, his staff, and perhaps an important ally in the person of General Johnson in Washington, the Marine deployment was taken at face value and that the official Washington hopes were pinned on early NVN response to the Rolling Thunder pressure, then just in its beginning stages.

#### F. ANALYSIS

This paper has raised basically two analytical questions. First, what was the significance of the landing of the two Marine battalions rather than other units, such as the 173rd Airborne? Second, what was the mix of objectives behind the deployment, and did the deployment meet these objectives?

The significance of putting the Marines into Da Nang turns on whether this deployment was intended or was viewed (1) as the first elements in a phased build-up of U.S. ground combat forces, or (2) as a one-shot response to a peculiar security need at Da Nang. There is evidence for both propositions.

There are two pieces of evidence in support of the phased build-up proposition. First, no less than seven CINCPAC contingency plans treated Da Nang as a base for U.S. Marine Corps activity, and at least two of those plans provided for major Marine ground forces in the I Corps tactical zone of South Vietnam. Except for Phase II of OPLAN 32-64, however, contingency plan build-ups of force were predicated on overt DRV or Chinese Communist action. At the time of the initial landings, such overt action was anticipated in the OPLAN but had not yet occurred. It was a fact, on the other hand, that some sort of action was needed in the South to halt the course of the insurgency there, and that two Marine BLT's would not do the trick.

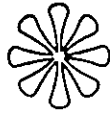
The second piece of evidence was the last minute attempt by Ass't Secretary of Defense McNaughton to substitute the 173rd Airborne for the Marines, and CINCPAC's strong reaction against this attempt. The only apparent rationale for the McNaughton move is as a blocking measure against expected pressures for further build-ups as embodied in the contingency plans. The substitution would have created planning tangles for the Chiefs and CINCPAC and, therefore, would have delayed pressures for further deployment pending the development of new plans. CINCPAC's vigorous response, based on administrative and logistic arguments, coupled with concern for the loss of an airmobile reserve force, persuaded Washington and thwarted the McNaughton effort. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that McNaughton, at least on the record, did not receive any support for his attempt. Conceivably, Ambassador Taylor, who had expressed serious reservations about the implications of the ground force deployment, could have joined forces with McNaughton. Taylor's failure to do so was probably based on the fact that he did not believe the pressures could be significantly thwarted by the substitution, and that, therefore, it made much more military sense to proceed as planned.

The evidence against the phased build-up proposition and for the one-shot-security hypothesis rests on one major document, and paradoxically, on the absence of other documents. The major document is the McGeorge Bundy Memorandum for the President of February 7, 1965. In this memorandum, Bundy reviews the entire situation in Vietnam without any reference to future ground force deployment—even though the request for the Marine BLT's was only two weeks away. Moreover, the usual flood of documentation preceding a decision of significance is not to be found. In other words, it appears that the key decision-makers in Washington are not focusing hard on the importance of the deployment. The attention-getter, as the Bundy memo indicates, was the impending air war against North Vietnam.

The significance of the Marine BLT deployment must also be measured up to

V. Expectations

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# UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

## 1945 - 1967

IV. C. 5.

PHASE I IN THE BUILD-UP OF U.S. FORCES

THE DEBATE

MARCH - JULY 1965

points are identified and the expectations of decision-making principals involved are analyzed. Ancillary reasons for advancing proposals are identified as such and discussed. The position of each of the principals is described only as clearly as it emerges from the files of the Secretary of Defense. Thus, the JCS are treated as a monolith, although it is common knowledge that there is always considerable dissension and debate amongst the Chiefs themselves. While they might have been unanimous in their recognition that U.S. bases needed securing, the Chiefs did not see eye to eye during ensuing debates over enclave or search and destroy. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Commandant of the Marine Corps were known proponents of the enclave concept, but the Chairman of the JCS and the Chief of Staff of the Army were equally determined to see the deployment of several divisions of troops for unlimited combat operations. The record of their debate, interesting though it may be, remains in the JCS files.

Through all of the strategy debate in early 1965 ran a common thread -- the concern with possible intervention in the conflict by elements of the North Vietnamese Army or the Communist Chinese Army or a combination of both. A variety of CINCPAC contingency plans were in existence at the time which addressed the problem and called for various deployments, some of them pre-emptive, to deal with it. The JCS consistently mentioned the problem as an additional justification for deployments they were advocating, but the National Intelligence Board just as consistently discounted the possibility of such intervention. Covert infiltration of elements of the North Vietnamese Army, however, was another matter. It was recognized early in the debate as something to be reckoned with even though the real extent of the infiltration was not confirmed for some time. In any case, contingency deployments were not intended to deal with the latter type of provocation.

## V. Issues

In conclusion, it seems clear that the debate over ground commitments and accompanying strategy followed closely the course of expectations about the Rolling Thunder bombing program and the development of the situation in South Vietnam itself. The strategy of security was eclipsed because Rolling Thunder was taking too long. The enclave strategy was never unanimously endorsed and it never got off the ground. It was based on the assumption that victory could be denied to the enemy in the South while Rolling Thunder punished him in the North. Eventually, the U.S. would achieve its objectives because the enemy in frustration would give up. The whole enclave idea was conceived in a period of relative quiet, and certainly the experimentation aspect of it pre-supposed a relatively stable situation. In the heat of the summer months, it was a moot question whether or not a negative approach like the enclave strategy could deny victory, and more important, whether or not there would be an RVNAF left to shore up.