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ASSESSMENT OF CHINESE COMMUNIST ACTIONS
AND U.S. COUNTER-COURSES

Summary.

Peking's overriding objective will be to keep North Vietnam from giving in, and to this end it will provide material assistance of a military and economic nature, and possibly use political pressures on Hanoi to keep it in the war. However, unless Communist China concludes that North Vietnam's survival is being threatened, her instincts probably will be to continue her past policy of staying in the background and acting as Hanoi's "reliable rear". From the standpoint both of ideology and national security she probably will want to avoid a direct confrontation with the U.S., particularly in view of the problems along the Sino-Soviet border and her troubled internal circumstances. Politically and diplomatically she will try to help Hanoi to focus world attention on the changed circumstances in Vietnam, and will carry out a campaign of vilification against the U.S. Since nothing short of a serious Soviet confrontation with the U.S. as a result of our quarantine would satisfy Peking, we believe that there will not be a warm-up in Sino-Soviet relations, but rather an intensification of Peking's anti-Soviet stance if, as the odds would favor, the USSR's reactions fall short of a full-scale confrontation. Militarily, Peking will offer increased material assistance to Hanoi, and possibly a return of the engineer and anti-aircraft units which have been withdrawn, surfacing them as "volunteers" if Hanoi so desires. She might also attempt to step up the actions of Peking-influenced guerrillas in other parts of Southeast Asia in hopes of drawing off U.S. strength, and will continue to provide Hanoi with the use of Chinese airfields in Yunnan and Kwangsi as a haven for DRV aircraft. She will open ports in South China to shipping, including Soviet shipping, diverted from North Vietnam, and offer Chinese trucks and freight cars to carry supplies into North Vietnam from Chinese ports.

Our reaction will be essentially the same as it has been in the past with respect to Peking's role in the Vietnam war. We will pass the word to Peking that our actions are not directed against China. We will watch China closely, however, and undertake contingency planning to counter stepped-up Chinese pressures off Taiwan and in areas of Southeast Asia other than Vietnam.

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We do not anticipate that Peking will attempt to deter Hanoi from moving toward a genuine compromise settlement of the war should Hanoi decide to do so. Despite the undesirable aspects of such a settlement from Peking's standpoint, Peking's rationale for avoiding a direct conflict with the U.S. will probably prevail.

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POSSIBLE CHINESE COMMUNIST ACTIONS
AND
US RESPONSES

<u>CHINA</u>	<u>US</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
1. <u>In Area</u> Step up flow of military and economic aid	Hit at NVN LOC's between NVN and China	
Return military contingents of engineer, service and AAA troops of types formerly in NVN	Continue planned operations without regard for nature of opposition	Strength of Chinese units would probably not go much above previous level of 45-55,000 men
Offer pilots as "volunteers" to fly aircraft with DRV markings	Same as above	
Offer Chinese airfields in Yunnan and Kwangsi as sanctuaries for DRV aircraft	Break off hot pursuit of aircraft flying into China short of frontier	Chinese will probably not authorize direct attacks on US aircraft or ships from Chinese airfields (this was the case during previous bombing)
2. <u>Elsewhere</u> Offer South Chinese ports to shipping diverted from NVN, provide Chinese trucks and freight cars	Periodically, hit LOC's in NVN between NVN and China	
Cooperate with Soviets in setting up airlift into NVN across China	Periodically hit NVN airfields	

CHINA

Step up activities of Chinese-influenced guerrillas elsewhere in SEA

US

Activate contingency plans, increase military aid where needed

REMARKS

Burma is a vulnerable area; contingency planning may be needed

3. Political (representative)
Surface Chinese "volunteers" in NVN, thus threatening Korea-type war

Keep cool, continue planned sequence of operations, point out past history of Chinese involvement

Chinese unlikely to vary pattern of involvement significantly from that already established

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Discussion.

Communist China's overriding objective will be to keep Hanoi from succumbing to our operations, and to this end it will offer material assistance of both a military and an economic nature, and exhortation (perhaps combined with a degree of political pressure) for Hanoi to keep going on the basis of a protracted "peoples war". At the same time, short of a level of action which Peking would take as a U. S. intention to destroy North Vietnam as a viable Communist state, Communist China's every instinct will probably be to stay out of direct military involvement. On ideological grounds it believes that "people's war" must be won by the people themselves with only material assistance provided by the "proletarian internationalists"; hence the overt introduction of Chinese forces would tend to vitiate this "revolutionary" principle. In addition, the Chinese are thoroughly conscious of the strategic imbalance between their forces and those of the U. S. and would seek to avoid a direct confrontation. Peking's problems in facing the U. S. are compounded by its internal dislocations and by its border dispute with the USSR. Peking's rationale in avoiding a confrontation in favor of acting as Hanoi's strong rear area has guided it from 1965 on, and would probably continue in effect even under circumstances in which the Vietnam war went into dimensions never reached before. In this respect Peking might take the line that our attacks represented an act of desperation, and indicated that victory was in sight for Hanoi if it could hold out long enough.

We can probably anticipate as well that there will be no warm-up in Sino-Soviet relations. The only level of Soviet response which would satisfy Peking would be a full acceptance of the U. S. challenge with all its implications; anything less would be regarded as "collusion" with the U. S. by in effect acquiescing in the changed circumstances of the war. As was the case when the U. S. carried the war to the North in 1965 and Moscow failed to respond, the new situation would then bring with it a heightening of the Sino-Soviet polemic. This would not preclude limited arrangements between Peking and Moscow in assuring the flow of aid to Hanoi, however.

Specific Chinese Communist responses are as follows:

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1. Peking will certainly attempt to exploit the situation and politically to undercut Soviet influence in Hanoi, using the "I told you so" approach, and charging also that Hanoi's predicament was brought about by U. S. and Soviet "collusion". Peking will urge "protracted war" until a military victory is achieved, and to this end may offer increased material assistance. A step-up in China's world-wide campaign against U. S. "imperialism" and Soviet "social-imperialism" can also be expected, possibly to include diplomatic efforts on Peking's part to induce Afro-Asian states in which it has some influence to condemn the U. S. and the USSR. Concurrently, Peking would "freeze" any U. S. approaches to improve relations.

2. The Chinese probably will reintroduce their engineer, service, and AAA units into North Vietnam on the same terms as before, i. e., quietly and without calling them "volunteers". In view of Hanoi's manpower problems and heightened need to keep land communications open, the Chinese forces could serve a highly useful purpose. In sending troops into North Vietnam, China will also be serving an internal political purpose of showing its people that it is living up ^{to} the promise first made at the time of the Tonkin Gulf crisis that it would not stand idly by in the event of a U. S. attack on North Vietnam.

At the peak of Chinese participation, Peking's forces consisted of three anti-aircraft divisions, about 12,000 men, engineer construction and railroad engineer units numbering 22,000-30,000 men, and miscellaneous service forces of 6,000-8,000 men, for an aggregate of 40,000-50,000 troops. These were positioned mainly along the highway and rail links running northeast and northwest from Hanoi to the Chinese border, and are believed to have assumed the primary role in keeping these links open. It may take some time to reposition the Chinese forces, however, since the units involved have been dispersed and assigned to other tasks. Some are in Northern Laos.

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If Hanoi and Peking decide jointly to surface the Chinese forces, a new dimension will be added to the war by involving Peking directly and threatening a wider, Korean-type war. Although such a move would have some psychological value, it would not change the actual circumstances too much. U. S. and world opinion have long known of the Chinese role in Vietnam. And Peking would still be Hanoi's "reliable rear", since the forces involved would in all probability not be committed to combat but would serve in the same supporting capacity as before.

3. China will in addition open its South China ports of Canton and Fort Bayard to shipping diverted from North Vietnamese ports. Whatever additional military aid which China might provide and which North Vietnam might use would be offered by Peking, including diversion of Chinese trucks and freight cars from domestic needs to help maintain the flow of supplies into North Vietnam. The Chinese would also continue to provide use of Chinese airfields in Yunnan and Kwangsi for non-operational activities. Conceivably, the Chinese might offer MTBs or "Komar-Osa"-class PTGs to the North Vietnamese, as well as MIG-19s. This would probably be the limit of Chinese help under the circumstances envisaged given China's own internal difficulties, both political and economic, its need to keep increased forces along the Sino-Soviet border, and its realistic-cum-ideological stand that "people's war" must be won by the concerned people themselves with only material assistance to be proffered by the "socialist" countries.
4. As evidently occurred in 1965, Peking might try to intensify the activities of Peking-influenced guerrillas in Northern Thailand, Laos, and Burma in an effort to divert us from Vietnam. Peking's assets in Thailand among the non-Thai Meo have been sufficient to hold off Thai forces from mountainous areas of Northern Thailand, and it is developing ties with anti-Government ethnic groups in Burma. There could be a step-up of Chinese roadbuilding in Laos. Such

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moves would be intended to show that the war "had no boundaries", and possibly divert U.S. resources from Vietnam. A move to increase tensions in the Taiwan Strait is possible for the same reason, but not too likely in view of the risk of direct confrontation with the U. S.

U. S. Counter-Responses

On the political and diplomatic front, Peking's efforts should not create undue difficulties. Peking's isolation from much of the world and its troubled internal situation leave it without much leverage, and the shrillness of its vituperation over the years can hardly be stepped-up further. We should, however, approach Peking's representative at an appropriate spot to convey the message that our attacks are not directed against China.

Militarily, our main requirement will be to avoid provoking China but to maintain U. S. reconnaissance and intelligence activities directed toward the China mainland to detect troop movements and other indications of hostile intent. It will be important to avoid creating the impression that we ourselves are considering carrying the war to China. (As noted above, we will have passed the word via diplomatic contacts to Peking that we were not directing our attacks toward the Chinese.) Elsewhere, we will want to step up our surveillance of areas such as Laos, Northern Thailand and Burma to detect possible Chinese Communist efforts to create diversionary pressures. A heightened alert posture throughout East Asia will be ordered.

If Sino-Soviet tensions should in fact increase through Chinese criticism of the Soviet role, China's military resources could be in part diverted away from Vietnam in favor of the Sino-Soviet border areas.

As a final consideration on Communist China, we doubt that Peking would interpose itself directly between Hanoi and a genuine compromise settlement when -- and if -- Hanoi should decide to accept one. Peking's rationale against direct involvement has already been described, and should remain in effect even under the changed circumstances after our operations. The alternative for Peking would be to assume the role of a

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principle protagonist in a war in which the balance of military power would not be on Peking's side, quite apart from the doctrinal embarrassment China would suffer through contradicting its own basic principle. The Chinese are fully capable of twisting their call for a military victory into acceptance of, and support for, the kind of protracted political struggle which would emerge in South Vietnam.

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