

TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The following list of important questions is based upon our examination of the Vietnam alternative course of action to date. While the list is certainly not complete, we should have a very good idea of the answers to these questions before adoption of such an action. The questions are presented in the general order in which they would occur if we proceeded with the course.

a. General.

1. What are the prospects of success for this course of action? How would we measure it? What are the consequences -- favorable and unfavorable -- of our succeeding in this manner? Of our failing in this manner?

2. How hard hitting should we make the first phase? Should the second and subsequent phases be tailored for roughly equal impact, or should they be stepped up in over-all impact? To what limit of force should we be prepared to go in order to spur meaningful negotiations? Should we be prepared to use nuclear weapons?

3. Should we make any major readjustments in our current military posture?

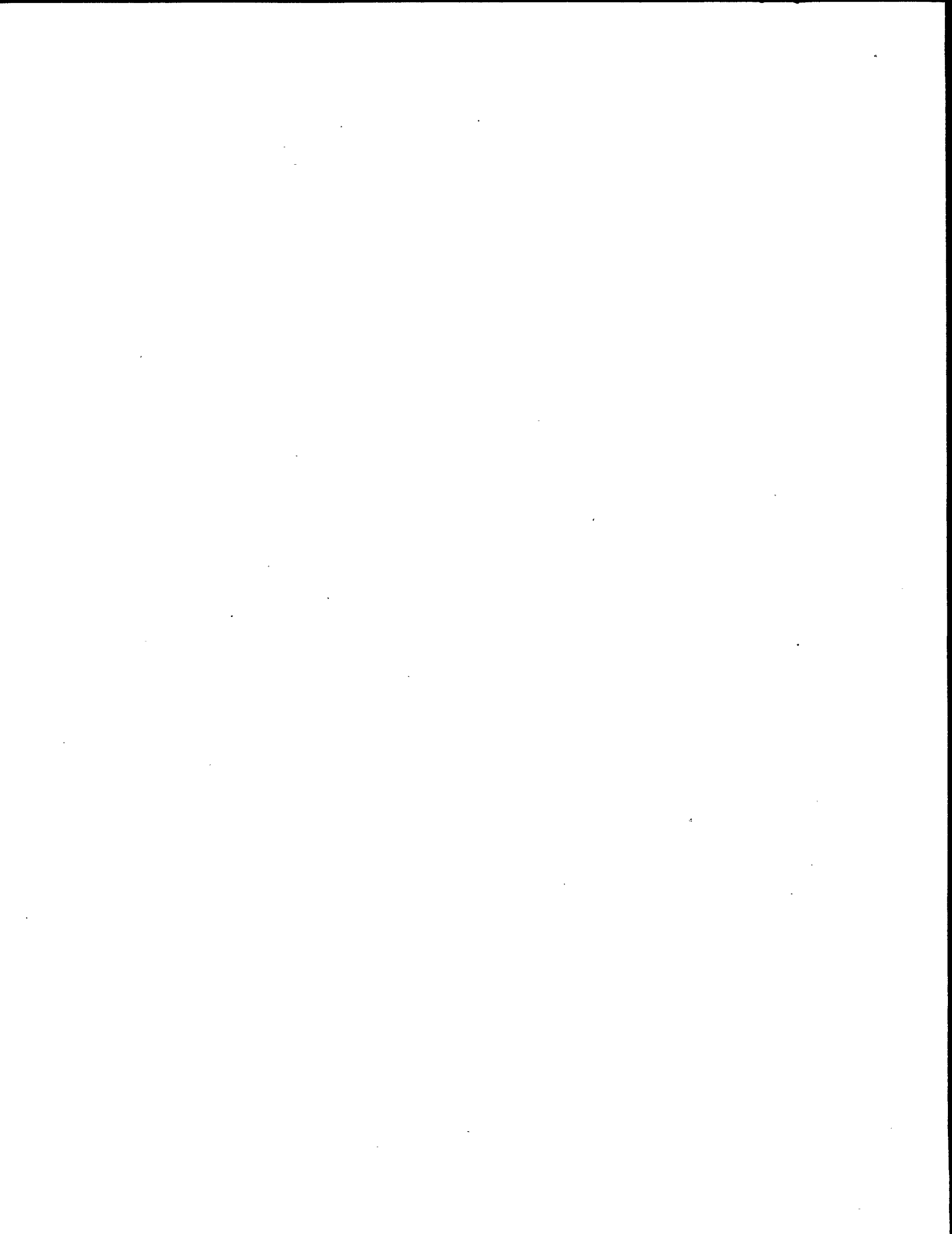
b. In the Period Before the First Phase.

1. What should be the nature, channel, and timing of warnings to Hanoi? How would Hanoi, Moscow, and others react to warnings? Would warnings affect military operations through loss of surprise? Should we undertake warning actions, such as increasing certain reconnaissance flights or early readying of forces?

2. What should be our diplomatic stance during this period? Should we offer more -- perhaps only to build the record further -- or would this be a sign of weakness or duplicity?

3. What signals or actions by the other side would persuade us not to proceed?

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4. How would we relate the decision to proceed and the many political and diplomatic actions with the vagaries of the weather?

5. To what extent should we consult with our allies? When should we do it?

c. During the First Phase.

1. How should we determine how long the phase should last? Will we be able to measure the attack effectiveness as we proceed? If not, how will this affect the operation?

2. What would be the likelihood and consequences of military failure? What can be done to compensate for unexpected eventualities, such as a long period of bad weather? Can we achieve a minimum desired effectiveness by alternative means?

3. What actions by Hanoi would be sufficient to merit our halting the attack before it is completed?

4. What military actions should we undertake concurrently, e. g., should we alert our strategic and/or the various theater forces? What reinforcing actions would be appropriate in SVN, recognizing that there would be a substantial reduction of tactical air support available in country?

5. How would we handle the likely immediate reactions of the USSR, Communist China, and other foreign countries? What preparations should be made?

6. How would we deal with the likely domestic reaction? What preparations should be made? (These questions fall outside our competence.)

d. Interval Between Phases.

1. What specific responses are we looking for? How would we respond to vague signals of willingness to talk seriously? How would we react to enemy actions which seem promising but are unacknowledged by them?

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2. What measures would we be prepared to take against targets within NVN if we found them to be effectively countering our sea quarantine, e. g. , a key railroad bridge between Hanoi and China? Would we permit air or naval response to coastal battery fire against our quarantine forces?

3. What diplomatic stance should we adopt during the interval?

4. If Hanoi responds in a manner acceptable to us, should we offer to assist in removing the mines? Alternatively, should we simply not interfere with NVN sweeping and bypassing efforts and allow the mines to remain active for their present time?

5. How long should we wait before initiating a second phase of attacks? (Most of the questions concerning Phase I would apply to this and subsequent phases.)