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EXTERNAL SUPPORT OF THE VIET CONG:

AN ANALYSIS AND A PROPOSAL

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June '86

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SUMMARY

(U) Revolutionary war has two aspects: the internal and the external. In order for the defender to defeat insurgency, he must execute an internal program substantially superior to that of the insurgents, and he must cope effectively with external support to the insurgents. Both actions are necessary.

(U) This is the case with the insurgency in South Vietnam, where Laos is the primary avenue of personnel infiltration from North Vietnam, most materiel comes by way of Cambodia and directly by sea, and both Laos and Cambodia provide sanctuaries for the Viet Cong.

(U) Although various alternatives have been considered for dealing with external support of the Viet Cong by North Vietnam, the commitment of substantial land forces to Southeast Asia has not been considered. This derives largely from U.S. experience in the past and from the official and public image of land warfare in Southeast Asia. U.S. experience in the Laos crisis of 1960-61 is illuminating in this regard.

(U) Modern technology (specifically, the improved tactical fighter, the modern STOL aircraft, and the turbine powered helicopter), together with Army and Air Force systems incorporating these and other items of equipment which have come available in quantity in the last four years, makes it possible to change the concept and the image of land-air action on the mainland of Southeast Asia. This, coupled with great increases in conventional strength since 1961, permits the consideration of proposals of a type which has not heretofore been considered. One such specific proposal for the use of land forces is outlined in this paper.

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PREFACE

(U) This paper was undertaken out of the intuitive feeling that there were two "myths" that seemed to have seriously degraded United States effectiveness in coping with the situation in South Vietnam and Southeast Asia in the past four years. As the paper has been written, this intuition has hardened into conviction.

The first of these myths is that it would be possible to defeat insurgency within South Vietnam without greatly restricting the amount of external support provided the Viet Cong by North Vietnam. By the end of 1964 this misconception had largely disappeared from policy making circles in Washington.

The second myth is that the commitment of U.S. land forces to the mainland of Southeast Asia cannot be considered as an acceptable course of action for coping with such a problem as external support of the Viet Cong by North Vietnam. This fundamental misconception still seems to exist, and thereby deprives U.S. policy makers of the opportunity to consider a broader range of alternatives as they survey the situation in Southeast Asia.

(U) In preparing this paper, the author has had the opportunity to discuss its subject matter in whole or in part with a wide range of individuals at action officer level or higher within the Department of Defense and the Department of State. There will be no effort here to name these many helpful persons. Access has also been afforded to classified records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, for purposes of researching the Laos crisis of 1960-1961.

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EXTERNAL SUPPORT OF THE VIET CONG AN ANALYSIS AND A PROPOSAL

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Annex A: Evaluation of 14 Selected Counterinsurgencies

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CHAPTER I

EXTERNAL SUPPORT AND REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The Challenge of Revolutionary War

(U) There must be no mistake as to the scope and gravity of the challenge presented to the United States in the mid-20th century by revolutionary war.

(U) As President Kennedy stated in April 1961, "We dare not fail to see the insidious nature of this new and deeper struggle. We dare not fail to grasp the new concepts, the new tools, the new sense of urgency we will need to combat it."¹

(U) Revolutionary war has two aspects: the internal and the external.

(U) In the internal aspect the revolutionary element within a country or territory systematically erodes the control of the established government and substitutes its own control.

(U) In 1930, Mao Tse-tung summarized the internal process as one of establishing base areas; systematically setting up political power; deepening the agrarian revolution; expanding the people's armed forces by a comprehensive process of building up first the township Red Guards, then the district Red Guards, then the local Red Army troops, all the way up to the regular Red Army troops; spreading power by advancing in a series of waves; and so forth."²

(U) This internal process, systematically improved and tested for more than thirty years, is what the United States is laboriously, with great frustration but with some success, developing its counterinsurgency doctrines to combat.

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(U) In the external aspect of revolutionary war, the revolutionary element within the country or territory is provided support and direction from beyond its borders.

(U) In 1949 the Chinese Communists turned seriously to the export of revolutionary war. In November 1949 Liu Shao-chi, a vice president in the new Mao government, announced in Peiping that "we bear a special responsibility to the colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia." He gave notice that China would assist all those countries which they regarded as under the heel of the "Anglo-American imperialists." This aid would take the form of encouraging the formation of revolutionary armies, and supplying them with funds and weapons.^{3,4}

(U) The November 1960 Congress of 81 Communist parties confirmed this policy as the doctrine of Communist support of "wars of national liberation."⁵

(U) This external aspect is, today, the more frustrating for the United States to develop the means to combat. It is especially troublesome in South Vietnam.

Relationship of Internal and External Aspects of Insurgency

(U) Examination of past insurgencies reveals a general relationship between the internal and the external aspects of an insurgency.

(U) Consider, for example, the unsuccessful insurgency in Malaya (1948-1960).

(U) In this case, British internal measures included an excellent organization and concept, and the execution of coordinated military,

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social, economic, intelligence, police, and other measures in a systematic plan. These were carried to a successful conclusion despite potentially difficult social and economic conditions and in the face of the well-organized Malayan Communist Party, which had considerable Chinese support.

(U) The insurgents received little external support. Their use of the sanctuary across the Thailand-Malaya border was inhibited by long distances and difficult terrain and by the cooperative attitude of the Thai government. The British were assisted by a 1949 agreement with the Thais which allowed Malay Federation police to pursue Communist guerrillas as far as ten miles within the Thai border.

(U) If one considers that complete absence of external support would be rated as "10" and that uninhibited and fully flowing external support would be rated as "0", one could state that the "degree to which the insurgents did not receive external support" was, in the case of Malaya, "8".

(U) Similarly, if one considers that overwhelming superiority of the defender's counterinsurgency measures, relative to the effectiveness of the insurgent opposition, would be rated as "10", and that the complete inadequacy of the defender's program would be rated as "0", one could state that, in Malaya, the "effectiveness of internal measures, relative to the opposition" was, again, "8".

(U) These ratings can be placed on a graph. (See figure 1, p. 4)

(U) In a separate study, ^(attached as Annex A) this method of analysis has been applied to each of a selected sample of 14 insurgencies since World War II.

(See Table 1, p. 5)

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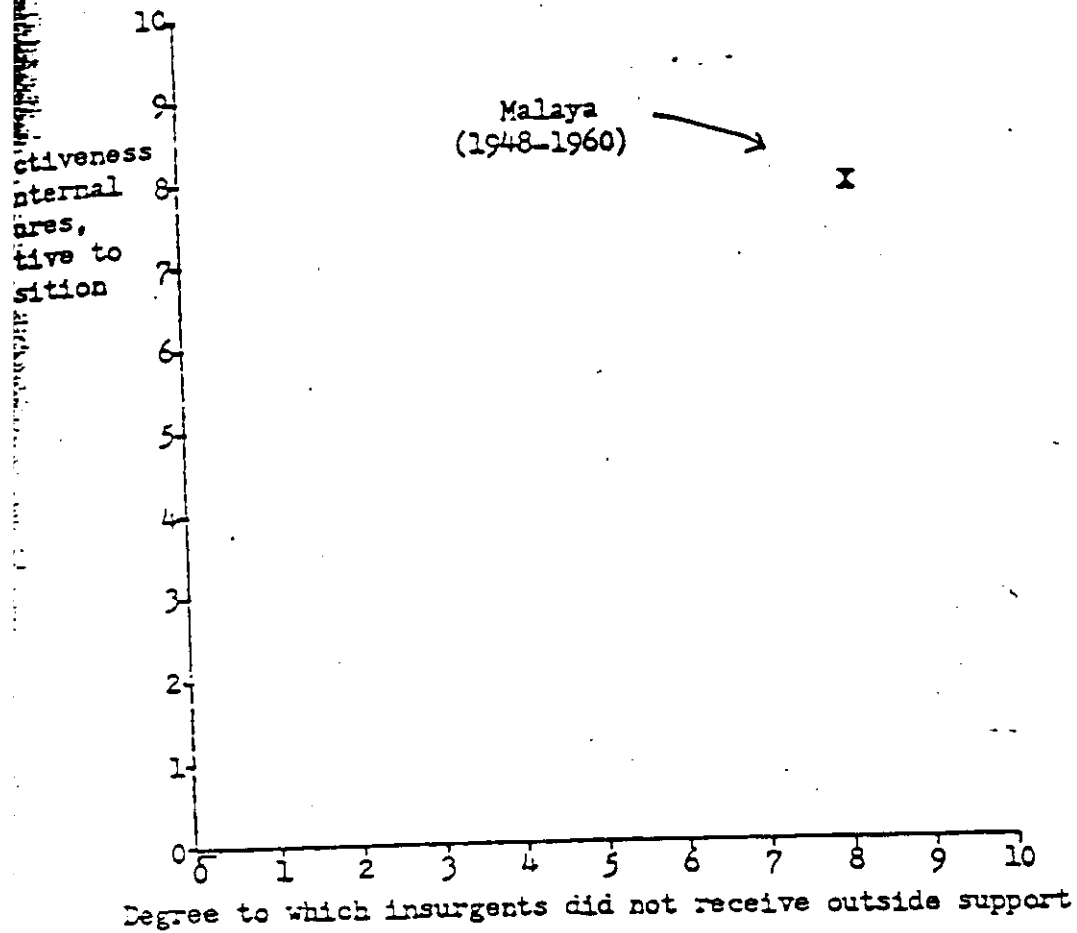


Figure 1

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TABLE 1

A SELECTION OF INSURGENCIES SINCE
WORLD WAR II

Counterinsurgency Successful

1. Burma (1948 - 1960)
2. Greece (1946 - 1949)
3. Hungary (1956)
4. Korea (1948 - 1954)
5. Malaya (1948 - 1960)
6. Philippines (1946 - 1954)
7. Tibet (1951 - 1960)

Insurgency Successful (or a draw)

- a. Algeria (1954 - 1962) (draw)
- b. China (1927 - 1949)
- c. Cuba (1953 - 1959)
- d. Indochina (1945 - 1954)
- e. Indonesia (1946 - 1949)
- f. Israel (1945 - 1948)
- g. Laos (1959 - 1961)

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(U) In seven of these, the counterinsurgency was successful. In the other seven, the counterinsurgency was unsuccessful, or resulted in a "draw" or stalemate, from which the insurgents achieved their goals.

(U) The ratings are summarized in Table 2 (p. 7) and are also plotted on a graph. (See Figure 2, p. 8)

(U) From these 14 cases, the following general principle is derived:

In order for a counterinsurgency to succeed, there must be both an internal effort substantially superior to that of the insurgents, and an effective restriction of (or an absence of) external support to the insurgents. Neither action alone is sufficient to success. Both are necessary.

(U) There may be exceptions to this general principle. However, examination of these 14 cases indicates that a defender against insurgency would disregard the general principle stated above only at very substantial risk to his eventual success.

(U) With this important principle in mind, we can now examine external support to the insurgents in South Vietnam by way of Laos and Cambodia.

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TABLE 2

COUNTERINSURGENCY SUCCESSFUL

<u>Insurgency</u>	<u>Rating</u>	
	<u>External</u>	<u>Internal</u>
1. Burma	8	6
2. Greece	6	8
3. Hungary	9	9
4. Korea	9	8
5. Malaya	8	8
6. Philippines	9	8
7. Tibet	9	9

INSURGENCY SUCCESSFUL (OR DRAW)

<u>Insurgency</u>	<u>Rating</u>	
	<u>External</u>	<u>Internal</u>
a. Algeria(draw)	7	5
b. China	5	3
c. Cuba	5	1
d. Indochina	1	3
e. Indonesia	4	3
f. Israel	6	3
g. Laos	1	2

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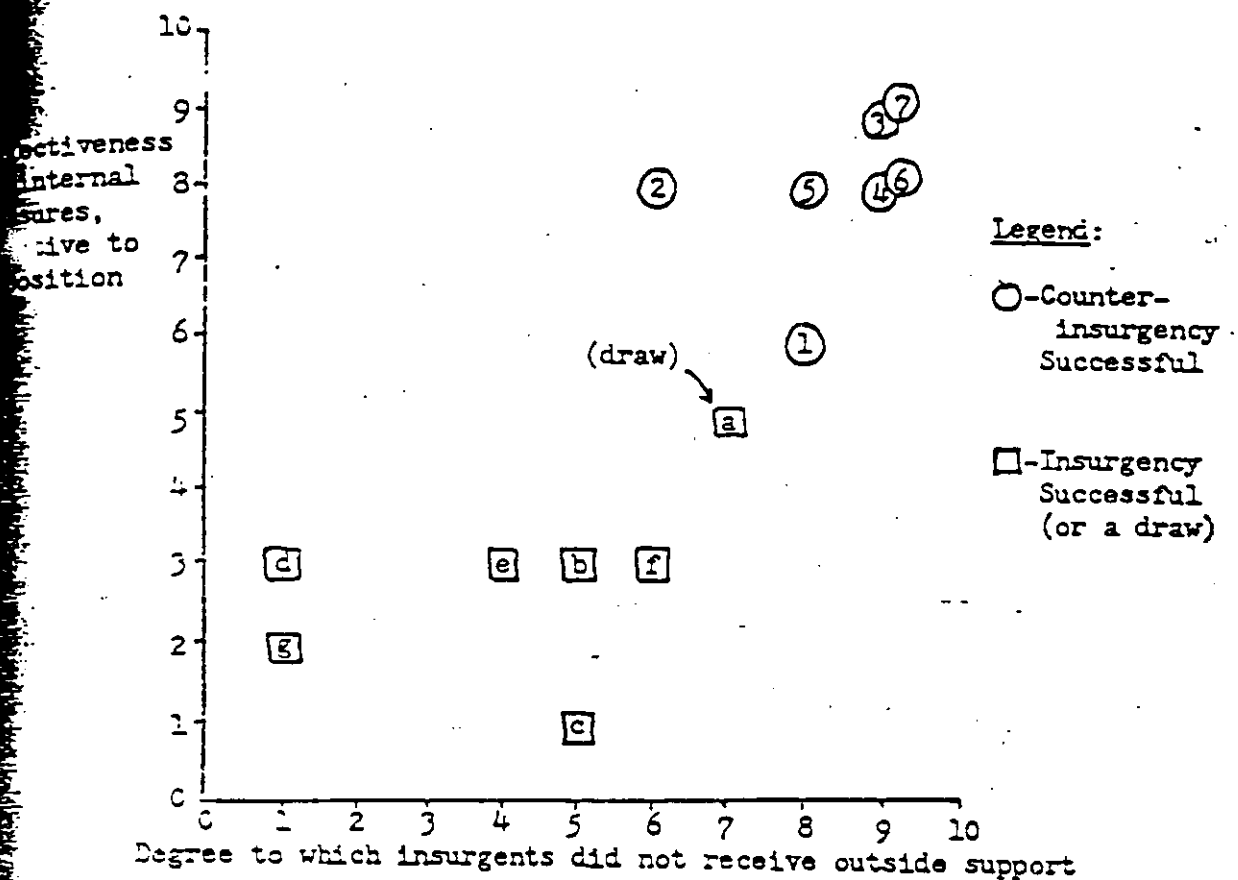


Figure 2

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CHAPTER II

EXTERNAL SUPPORT OF INSURGENCY IN SOUTH VIETNAM

The Role of External Support

(U) The attitude of Ho Chi-minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) is expressed in the DRV Constitution -- "our country is temporarily divided into two zones ... The cause of the peaceful reunification of the Fatherland will certainly be victorious."⁶

(U) The DRV has organized itself and its insurgent arm, the Liberation Front of South Vietnam (Viet Cong), to achieve that end. According to General Vo Nguyen Giap, DRV Minister of Defense, "The North has become a large rear echelon of our Army ... the North is the revolutionary base for the whole country."⁷

(U) Conditions are conducive to DRV support. The insurgents, who nominally withdrew their forces to the north after July 1954, left a well-established political and military structure in the south. In December 1954, Joseph Alsop described a three day visit to the Vietminh Committee of the South in its "mobile palm hut capital on the Ca Mau plain," with its army of 30,000 regular and regional troops. This insurgent authority had established its control in a "liberated area," with a permanent government, complete with financial, economic, health, propaganda, and police services. Currency was printed, taxes were levied and collected, and budgets were annually prepared.⁸

(U) Several thousand political agitators and activists and at least three experienced rifle battalions of the Vietminh structure in South

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...were left behind in 1955. This network within South Vietnam
...dormant until 1957 when it was reactivated and resumed its system-
...campaign of revolutionary war, directed and supported from Hanoi.⁹

(U) Geography favors infiltration. The 1200 miles of coastal
...of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), with their thousands of trans-
...junks and fishing vessels, provide innumerable opportunities and
...ries for infiltration by sea. The 900 mile land frontier, most of
...poorly marked, is mountainous and forested for 650 miles of its
...length, and the remainder is mostly paddy land flooded half the time.

This land frontier also is essentially wide open to infiltration.

(U) Furthermore, there is the ethnic similarity of the north
and south Vietnamese, so different from Malaya, where the primarily
Chinese insurgents could be distinguished from the Malay population.

(U) In 1959, the DRV began to establish and use a well organized
structure for infiltration of personnel and materiel into South Viet-
nam, both directly and through Laos and Cambodia. By late 1965,
the magnitude of this external support through Laos and Cambodia
had become massive.

The Role of Laos and Cambodia

(U) Within this framework of external support, the adjacent
territories of Cambodia and Laos are of particular importance.

(U) These territories present two different situations. The
Communist-held strip in the Laos panhandle bordering South Vietnam

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serves primarily as a complex of trails, footpaths, and supporting stations collectively known as "the Main Corridor." (See Map 3, Appendix) Through this corridor infiltrators move from North Vietnam into South Vietnam. The Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) estimates that, during the period from 1959 to mid-1964, a probable total of 34,000-45,000 personnel - cadre, replacements, military units, and political, financial, and other specialists - entered South Vietnam through this route.¹⁰ At end-1964, the influx was estimated at 500 per month. This area also serves to an unknown extent as a refuge for Viet Cong units operating in the RVN.

Although a coolie portage service exists, movement of materiel (including documents) by this route is generally confined to that which the infiltrators can carry with them. Most of the tonnages for insurgents enter Vietnam by sea, either directly or transshipped through Cambodia.

The mountainous area of northeastern Cambodia is an extension of the Laos panhandle infiltration routes. However, the paddy land of Cambodia from opposite Tay Ninh province of the RVN to the Gulf of Siam presents quite a different situation.

This low-lying territory serves primarily as a sanctuary to which Viet Cong military units and high political cadres can retire when necessary and as a base for Viet Cong operations and materiel support. It is only secondarily a means by which new personnel are infiltrated into the RVN.

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(U) Use of Cambodian territory by the Viet Cong has the tacit consent of Prince Sihanouk, the Cambodian chief of state, who has all committed himself to the support of the Viet Cong. In December 1964, Sihanouk expressed his position as follows:

To understand, you must realize that my little country is trapped between tremendous pressures ... There are the pressures exerted by Vietnam and Thailand, our historic enemies who throughout the years have grabbed much territory at our expense. More importantly, we are caught in the conflicting pressures exercised by (the United States and Communist China) ... In an increasingly deteriorating situation, I am faced with the need to preserve the territorial integrity of my country ...

I am convinced that the Viet Cong will ultimately take over in South Vietnam. If I wait until the moment when the Americans are driven out in humiliation and the Viet Cong are powerful, the Communists will have no reason to offer me any guarantee of my country's territorial integrity ... If I bargain with them before all is lost by the Americans, I have something to offer them that is of value ...¹¹

Most of the materiel infiltrated into South Vietnam is first shipped to Cambodia by sea or via the Mekong River and then transhipped for introduction into the RVN. The RVN has recently tightened its control over the Mekong to halt shipment of contraband into Cambodia and materiel now increasingly moves to the Cambodian ports of Kep and Sihanoukville on the Gulf of Siam.

Evaluation

(U) By end-1964, it was generally agreed in U.S. policy making circles that external support to the Viet Cong was decisive. An accepted end-1964 summary evaluation would be that:¹²

If external support to the Viet Cong is not substantially reduced, the insurgency within Vietnam cannot be defeated.

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Laos and Cambodia are the primary avenues for materiel and personnel infiltration. The corridor in the Laos panhandle is the avenue for most infiltration of personnel. Cambodia is the avenue for most infiltration of materiel, although important amounts enter directly by sea.

If both Laos and Cambodia were effectively denied the Viet Cong as avenues for infiltration, the DRV would be forced to send all personnel and materiel directly to South Vietnam by sea. This would be possible, but more difficult, and could be effectively impeded by U.S. and RVN action.

Both Laos and Cambodia provide sanctuaries for insurgent units and individuals. The border is poorly marked, and neither Cambodia nor Laos can exercise sufficient control over its own territory to prevent its use in this manner. Reduction of these sanctuaries would require Laotian and Cambodian cooperation and access to the territory by RVN or other friendly forces.

If use of Laos and Cambodia territory were denied, the Viet Cong ability to wage revolutionary war and their confidence in eventual success would be reduced, and the RVN could begin to make progress. If this territory continues to be available to the insurgents, hopelessness will grow among the officials and the government of the RVN. The deterioration of morale, coupled with the reinforcement flowing to the Viet Cong through these avenues, would probably be fatal to the RVN, regardless of the extent of U.S. support.

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The counterinsurgency problem in South Vietnam can be plotted as in Figure 3. (See p. 15) To arrive at success it will be necessary both to increase greatly the effectiveness of denial of outside support, and essentially to double the effectiveness of the internal program relative to that of the Viet Cong. This paper deals only with the external problem.

Measures to Cope with DRV Support

By end-1964, various measures had been suggested to block DRV external support to the Viet Cong, including: blocking the 900 mile RVN border with troops and barriers; bringing the United Nations' peacekeeping capability into play; interdicting the Laos infiltration routes with raids and air action; and a program of systematic air attack on DRV targets aimed at convincing the DRV that it would be in their best interests to cease support of revolutionary war in South Vietnam.

(W) Each of these proposals had its own likelihoods of risk and effectiveness.

Significantly, by end-1964 one alternative means for dealing with external support had apparently been given little serious consideration - namely, the commitment of substantial U.S. land forces to Southeast Asia.

(U) In this regard, it is instructive to review the United States' experience in the Laos crisis of 1960-1961.

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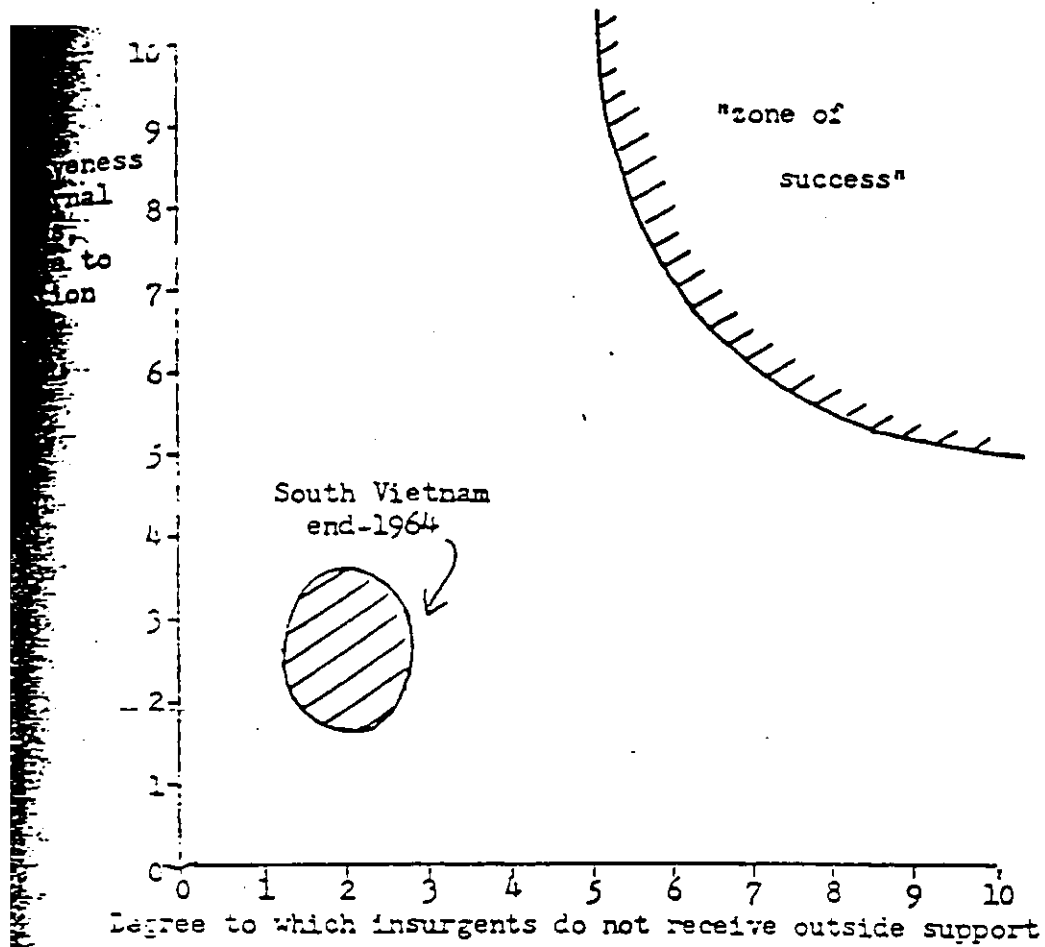


Figure 3

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CHAPTER III

THE LAOS CRISIS OF 1960-1961

Summary of Events

(U) In late 1960, the Communist Pathet Lao, supported by the DRV, Communist China, and the USSR, resumed their campaign to gain control of the Kingdom of Laos.

(U) In August 1960, just prior to the revolt of the parachutist Captain Kong Le and the resulting establishment of the neutralist Souvanna Phouma government in Vientiane, the holdings of the Pathet Lao were limited to areas bordering North Vietnam in the northeasternmost provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. (See Figure 4, p. 17)

(U) By mid-December 1960, after the U.S.-supported faction in Laos led by Phoumi Nosavan and Prince Boun Oum had ousted the Souvanna Phouma regime from Vientiane, the holdings of the Pathet Lao and the dissident Kong Le forces were as shown in Figure 5. (See p. 18) By this time, a Soviet airlift had started to the Kong Le forces and to the Pathet Lao on the Plaines des Jarres, and there was a full-scale crisis. SEATO representatives were meeting in Bangkok, the U.S. announced increased readiness for its forces in the Pacific, and the U.S. press was speaking of the "problems of jungle war" for U.S. troops.

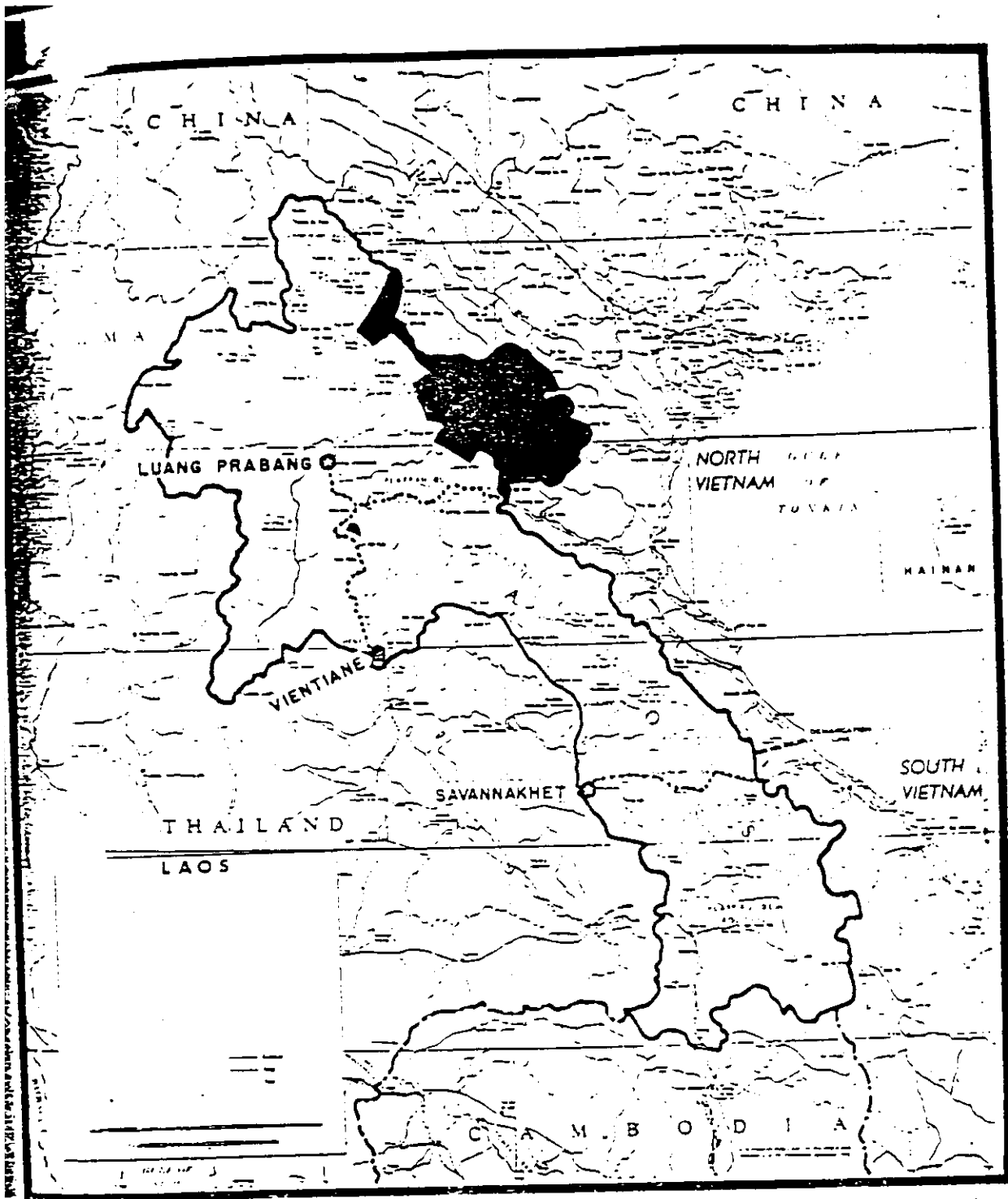
(U) By mid-March 1961, the holdings of the Communist supported rebels had expanded to those shown on Figure 6, (p. 19) and a major crisis existed. President Kennedy held a televised press conference on 23 March, at which he displayed Figures 4, 5, and 6.



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④ COMMUNIST REBEL AREAS

7 AUGUST 1960



⑤ COMMUNIST REBEL AREAS

20 DECEMBER 1960



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⑥ COMMUNIST REBEL AREAS

22 MARCH 1961

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By this time, the President was well advanced on the "two track" solution to Laos which he had followed since his inauguration. The "military track" consisted of measures to strengthen the position of the pro-West Royal Laotian Government (RLG) with all possible covert and overt assistance short of actual U.S. intervention. The "political track" consisted of a search for a "formula" by which there could be achieved a "truly neutral and independent Laos."¹³ As time went on, it had become evident that this formula would have to include a neutralist government under Souvanna Phouma.

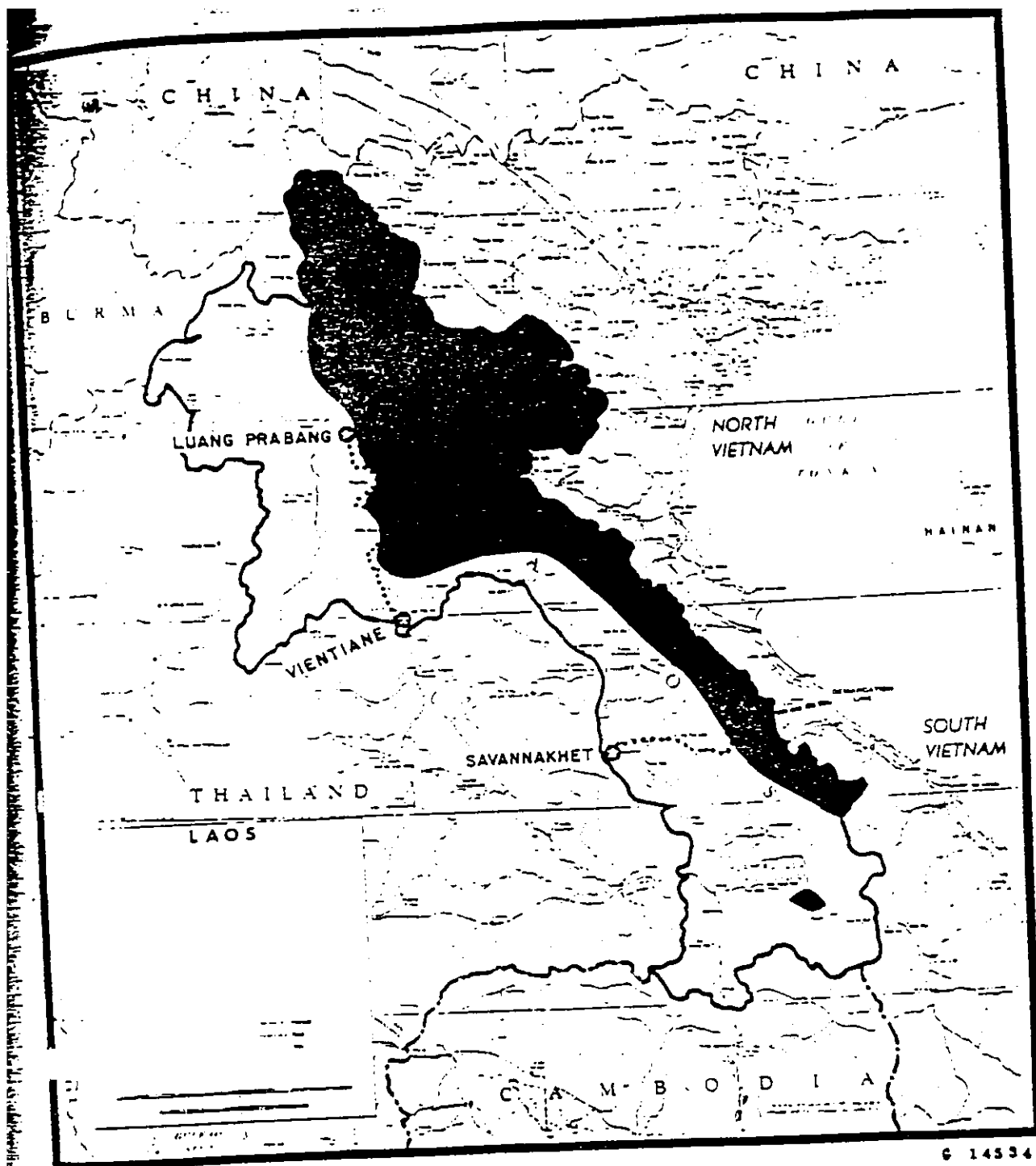
(U) In his press conference, the President emphasized on one hand the U.S. commitment to a truly neutral and independent Laos, stating that if there had been some question on that point in the past, there should be none now. At the same time, saying "Let no one doubt our resolution," he implied that the United States was prepared to take strong action if the externally supported Communist attacks did not stop in Laos.

(U) Also on 23 March, the U.K., with U.S. support, proposed to the USSR that there be (1) a cease fire by all sides - Pathet Lao, neutralists, and RLG forces; (2) verification of the cease fire by the revived International Control Commission (ICC) of the 1954 Geneva accords, and (3) the convening of a 14 nation conference on Laos.

(U) This proposal was the basis of the eventual settlement. However, by the time it had been negotiated with the Soviets as agents for Communist China and the Pathet Lao, and by the time it was eventually accepted by all three factions in Laos, it was 3 May 1961, and the holdings of the Pathet Lao had expanded to those shown on Figure 7.¹⁴

(See p. 21)

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⑦ COMMUNIST REBEL AREAS

3 MAY 1961

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The Issue of Commitment of U.S. Troops

(U) Throughout this crisis, the President had been considering the introduction of U.S. combat forces to Laos.

(JCS papers not declassified. JHK)

(U) Complicating the President's calculations was the fact that in early 1961 the strategic reserve of the U.S. Army was limited to

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three combat ready divisions and there were corresponding shortages in conventional tactical air and in airlift. At that time, the U.S. faced crisis situations in Berlin, the Congo, and Cuba, each of which might require conventional forces.

Throughout the crisis the President was inhibited by the fact that the prevailing public and official image of committing U.S. troops to Laos was that it was a first step to "bogging down in Asia," and raised the specter of repeating the Korean War ten years later in a worse environment.

The State-Defense-CIA paper prepared for President Kennedy's first White House meeting on Laos on 23 January had stated that:

(Not declassified. Jtz)

(U) This was not a new U.S. attitude. In early 1954, as the French military position in Indochina became desperate, President Eisenhower had said in a press conference, "I cannot conceive of a greater tragedy for America than to get heavily involved now in an all-out war in any of those regions, particularly with large units."¹⁸

(U) The U.S. Army Chief of Staff reinforced President Eisenhower's position with his own professional appraisal of the difficulties. General Ridgway told the President that Southeast Asia:

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Was practically devoid of those facilities which modern forces such as ours find essential to the waging of war ... Its telecommunications, highways, railways - all the things that make possible the operation of a modern combat force on land - were almost nonexistent ... We would have to go in with an Army that could not only stand the normal attrition of battle, but could absorb heavy casualties from the jungle heat, and the ruts and fevers which afflict the white man in the tropics ... (and) at a cost that would have eventually been as great or greater than that we paid in Korea.¹⁹

(JCS paper by

General Decker, C/S Army.

not declassified. JH)

(U) The image held by the Congressional leaders reflected the prevailing Army view, and this too was made clear to the President.

(U) As a further inhibiting factor, while the President was considering these aspects of U.S. intervention, he was also moving on the "political track" and negotiating with the Soviet Union toward a "truly neutral and independent Laos."

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(U) Evidently aware of the U.S. dilemma, the Communist forces in Laos pressed on. Their challenge was ambiguous. No single advance was of itself judged sufficient to justify the great decision to commit U.S. forces. While the eventual expansion of Pathet Lao and DRV control may well have been disastrous, it took place a little at a time, and while talks were going on.

(U) On 24 April, negotiations had been completed. The U.K. and the USSR foreign ministers, as co-chairmen of the 1954 Geneva conference, appealed jointly to all factions in Laos for a cease fire, and at the same time issued a call to the 14 nation conference to convene on 12 May at Geneva. The RLG and Souvanna Phouma accepted the cease fire the next day. The Pathet Lao delayed their acceptance until they had completed their seizure of key terrain.

(U) The cease fire "went into effect" on 2 May. The areas controlled by the Pathet Lao on 3 May are shown on Figure 7. (See p. 21)

Effects

(U) These 1961 events in Laos had far reaching effects on the U.S. position in Southeast Asia. Aside from the reaction in Thailand, South Vietnam, and Cambodia to the U.S. response in the first few months of 1961 and to the later course of events in Geneva as the U.S. disengaged itself from Phoumi, whom it had previously supported, there was the direct effect on the war in South Vietnam.

(U) Even after the "cease fire" there was little to keep the Communist forces from continuing to advance. People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN)

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battalions, reinforcing the Pathet Lao, fully secured the infiltration routes in Laos, which they had already held with lesser forces, and firmly established the DRV hold on the flank of the RVN.²²

In late April 1961, Lt. Gen. L. C. McGarr, Chief MAAG-Vietnam, had told the President's Vietnam Task Force, under Deputy Secretary of Defense Gilpatric, that while the RVN could cope with the current Viet Cong strength, Communist control of Laos adjacent to the RVN "makes the situation extremely grave."²³ The 27 April version of the report of the Vietnam Task Force to the President stated that "the ultimate achievement of U.S. objectives in Vietnam will depend largely upon effectively blocking the land corridors in Laos through which much of the Communist support to the Viet Cong passes. U.S. positions in the negotiations on Laos should take this fact into account."²⁴

In the July 1962 Geneva accords, the DRV along with 13 other nations pledged among other things that it would not "use the territory of the Kingdom of Laos for interference in the internal affairs of other countries."²⁵ This pledge was meaningless. DRV infiltration through the Laos corridor had totaled 4,500 in the period 1959-1960 and had risen to 5,400 in 1961. In 1962 it climbed to 13,000. In 1963 it was 6,200. To August 1964 it was 4,700 of which 75% were estimated to have been young draftees of North Vietnamese origin.²⁶

(U) The increase in Viet Cong strength and combat effectiveness through the Laos infiltration routes has contributed, perhaps decisively, to the 1963 deterioration of RVN control in the countryside, and to the grave effects which have flowed therefrom as the situation in South Vietnam further deteriorated in 1964.

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Going through the accounts of this crisis, one senses strongly the great frustration felt by the President as he searched in vain for ways to make U.S. power effective. He had pushed assistance, both covert and overt, to the Laos government about as far as he could. The next step was to bring U.S. military power directly to bear. The President was searching for a way to do this with some finesse - to use U.S. might effectively but with a precision and discrete application fitting to the occasion. At the same time he was very reluctant to take a step which ran a high risk of getting involved in a land war in Southeast Asia - a war which he visualized as either drawn out, logistically difficult, and debilitating - or nuclear.

He did not find the kind of military instrument he was looking for. U.S. military power was consequently not employed, and the U.S. ended by seeking political solutions from a disadvantageous military position, and with unfavorable results.

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CHAPTER IV

CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING U.S. ACTION IN 1965

The Problem

(U) Today, as 1965 opens, the United States is again struggling with the problem of how to bring its military capabilities usefully to bear in Southeast Asia.

The situation in Laos at end-1964 is shown in Figures 8 and 9. (See pp. 29,30) There is a de facto partition of that country into Communist-held and RLG-held areas. The Pathet Lao faction has left the Souvanna Phouma government. Most of the neutralist forces, including Kong Le himself, have remained loyal. Souvanna has shown hostility to the Pathet Lao and has been willing to accept U.S. help.

In South Vietnam, the United States has since 1961 increased its assistance effort from 800 to 23,000 men, and from \$234 to \$489 million annually (exclusive of operational costs), and the investment is rising.²⁷ Results have not been commensurate with this investment. At year's end, the Viet Cong were stronger than ever, they controlled more of the countryside, there was unrest in the cities, and the RVN government was demonstrating increasing instability.

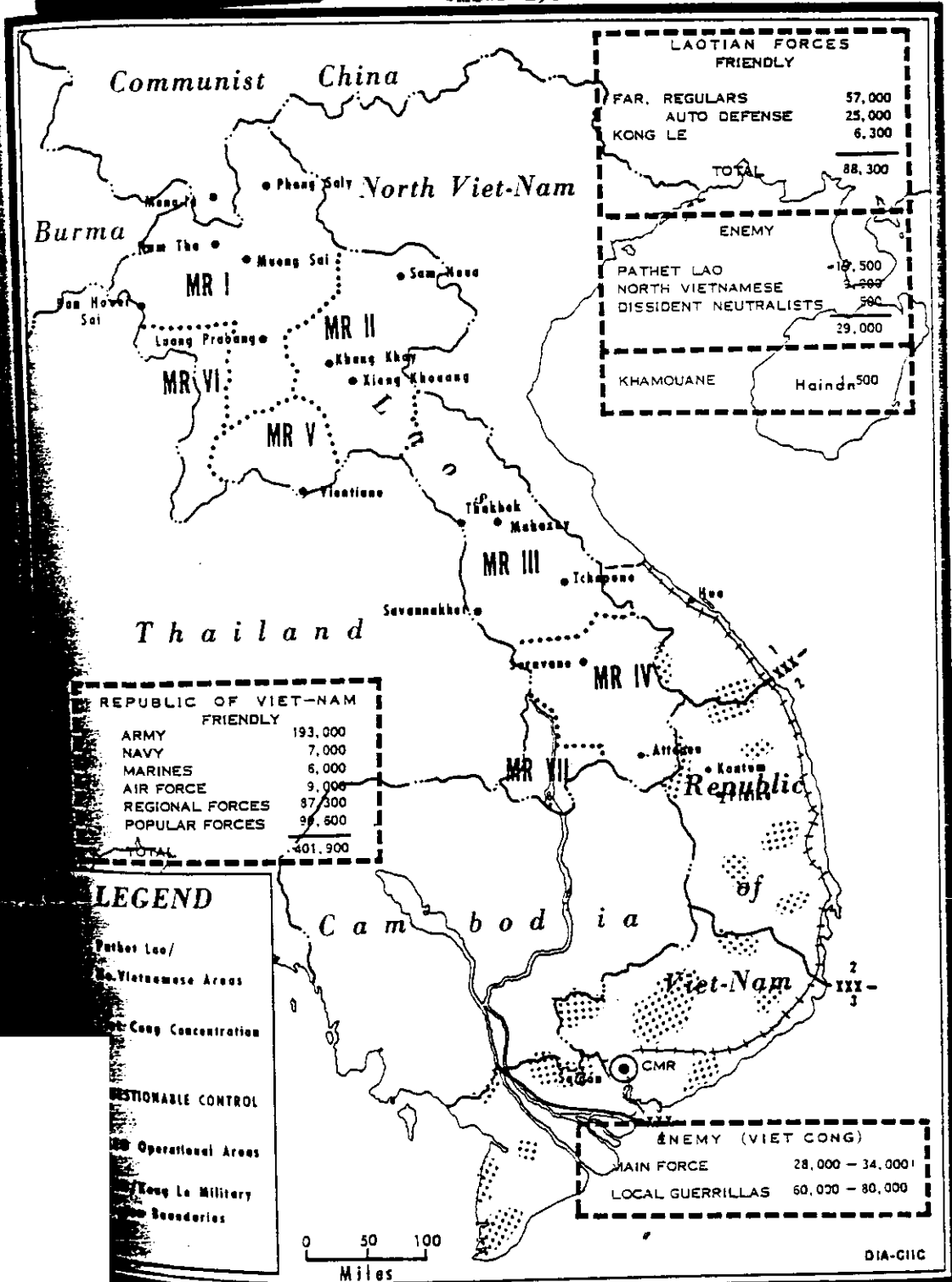
The basic problem confronting the United States in Southeast Asia in 1965 is the same as in 1961; to establish the limits of Communist Chinese southward expansion.

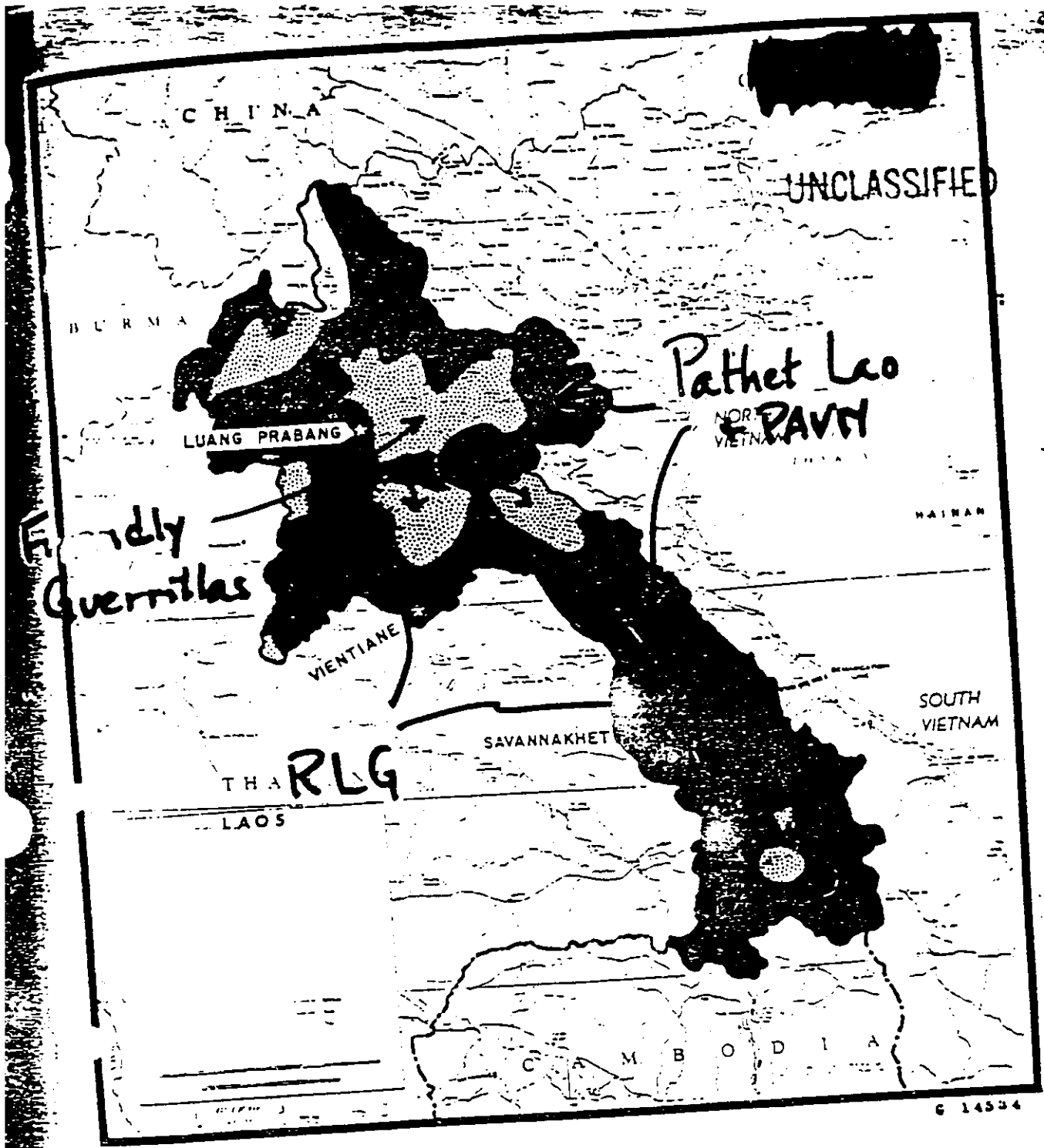
The pressing immediate problem is to bring a halt to the DRV support of revolutionary war inside the RVN. If this can be done, an

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⑨ COMMUNIST REBEL AREAS

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RVN government even though shaky can be expected to generate enough strength and self-confidence to undertake a systematic internal program. Small, measurable success with this program can in turn add more strength and self-confidence to the government, and the slow process of recovery can begin.

(U) As the U.S. ponders the various military courses of action in Southeast Asia, the public and the President seem to carry in their minds virtually the same image of land action that prevailed in 1954 and again in 1961. In a campaign speech in September 1964, President Johnson said: "We don't want our American boys fighting Asian boys ... We don't want to get involved in a nation with 700 million people, and get tied down in a land war in Asia."²⁸

Differences since 1961

(U) However, the factors bearing on the use of U.S. troops in Southeast Asia are quite different today from what they were in 1961.

For one thing, the judgment of the Army's professional leadership is different today. The Army Chief of Staff, General H. K. Johnson, has said that "war is where you find it" and he has been willing to propose the commitment of U.S. troops in strength to Southeast Asia. This is a substantial change.

The issue of nuclear escalation also presents a greatly different picture today. The nuclear question is complicated by possible possession by Communist China of a deliverable nuclear weapon. However, the Berlin crisis of 1961 and the Cuba crisis of 1962 increased both U.S. understanding of the nature of nuclear escalation and U.S. confidence in its ability to manage a serious crisis

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situation. Moreover, the greatly increased conventional capability of the U.S. today makes it less necessary to visualize use of nuclear weapons in the early stages of escalation.

● This growth in U.S. conventional strength is another major factor. The growth has been very great indeed. To list a few elements: There is today essentially twice as much airlift capacity as in early 1961; more than twice as much tactical fighter capacity, not including the added bonus from improved conventional weapons; eight, rather than three combat ready Army divisions (nine, including the 11th Air Assault Division being tested) in the strategic reserve; sufficient stocks on hand to support an extended non-nuclear war; forward stockpiles in key areas; improved reserve readiness; and improvements in the quantity, quality, and logistic readiness of Navy and Marine Corps forces. 29

● In rough terms, the U.S. has today at least twice the conventional combat power available for reaction in Southeast Asia as it had four years ago.

● Finally, new kinds of means are now available which were not available in 1961. Technology has placed within the grasp of the U.S. new capabilities which will in turn make it possible to realize changes in concepts for land/air warfare in Southeast Asia. This could make the 1954 image of war in Southeast Asia obsolete today, and thereby permit the U.S. President, Congressional leaders, and public to consider such a war a more acceptable undertaking in 1965.

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A New Operational Concept

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The new capabilities depend largely on three specific items of equipment: (1) the modern turbine powered helicopter, (2) the modern STOL aircraft, and (3) the improved tactical fighter/reconnaissance aircraft. The first of these, with its excellent performance and maintainability, makes possible a new concept of sustained air-mobile land operations in difficult terrain; the second of these makes possible the all-air logistic support of such operations; and the third, with its greatly improved conventional ordnance, provides the air superiority, interdiction, and close air support integral to the new concept.

These new items are on hand today in quantity. Since 1961, their stocks have grown dramatically:³⁰

	<u>On Hand End CY 1960</u>	<u>On Hand End CY 1964</u>
Turbine Helicopters (Army)		
UH-1 Iroquois (all types)	139	1119
CH-47 Chinook	0	71
Modern STOL aircraft		
CV-2B Caribou (Army)	0	139
C-130 Hercules (AF) (all types)	264	682
USAF tactical fighters, total arm. capability, one representative sortie (approx)	3100 tons (1100 acft)	7000 tons (1500 acft)

Corresponding Navy and Marine Corps capabilities have also grown. For example, at end-1960 the Navy had on hand three of the amphibious assault carriers used by Marine Corps landing forces. At end 1964, there were six.

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These items of equipment, and others, have been incorporated into Army and Air Force systems suitable for use in Southeast Asia.

The USAF has examined the greatly increased potential of conventional tactical air and has concluded that in Southeast Asia in 1964, tactical air could impose very substantial delays,

the

The JCS, less the Chief

of Staff, Air Force, agreed with that part of the Air Force study which stated that "Tactical air has the capability ..

impose time delays, and

(a)

inflict an attrition which will reduce the effectiveness of the enemy force, limit its ability to achieve major objectives, and reduce the number of friendly ground troops which must be committed to the defense of Southeast Asia." However, they took a cautious view as to the ability to reduce the ground forces called for in current war plans in the light of this tactical air capability. The CSAF held that proper use of air could reduce significantly the requirement for U.S. ground forces.³²

From the Air Force study and JCS comments it seems reasonable to conclude that, while tactical air is not a panacea, it can now contribute greatly increased conventional capabilities toward air superiority and interdiction in Southeast Asia, and can thus permit very large scale and extended operations

This is a significant change from

the situation in 1961.³³

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The basic new Army system is the airmobile division with its associated Army units. In this division, helicopter air mobility will replace vehicular mobility wherever feasible, and the division will thereby be able to operate essentially independent of terrain obstacles and road nets.

(U) Tests of these Army airmobile concepts began in 1962. In 1963 and 1964 tests were conducted by the experimental 11th Air Assault Division, including 10 weeks of division exercises in late 1964.

The airmobile division proposed by the Army as a result of these tests and other analyses will have 434 aircraft (all but six of them helicopters), compared to 101 in the standard infantry division. It will have no vehicles which are not transportable by helicopter.

According to the Army, the proposed airmobile division will be able to do the following better than other Army divisions:

- move combat elements rapidly and directly to key objectives without regard to the difficulty of the terrain

- maintain an exceedingly rapid tempo of operations both in time and intensity, in swift response to changing conditions

- change direction and fight consecutive engagements at considerable distance from each other within a very short period of time - a concept described as "vertical recycling"

- operate in enemy rear areas using only his vertical flank to get in and get out

- conduct counter and anti-guerrilla operations with a marked advantage over non-airmobile units

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disperse and assemble rapidly

exploit rapidly any opportunity presented or advantage gained by other forces

The limitations of this division, as stated by the Army, are:

it has limited protection and defense against armor attack

it needs local air superiority and suppression of enemy air defense, greater than do other type divisions

it is somewhat sensitive to weather and visibility conditions, although less so than expected

The Commander in Chief, U.S. Strike Command (CINCSTRIKE), after evaluating the Army's tests of the 11th Air Assault division, raised certain reservations as to its capabilities and the manner in which the division would operate in joint Army-Air Force operations. The Army has generally accepted the CINCSTRIKE reservations and considers that tests to date, together with modifications made as a result of tests, justify the immediate reorganization as an airmobile division of one of the eight divisions in the United States, after which the division organization and doctrine, including joint aspects, would be further tested and refined.³⁴

The air mobile division is ideal for employment in Southeast Asia. Here the air mobile infantryman would, as always, fight on the ground, where he would use the skills of the highly trained foot soldier to meet and defeat the jungle-wise enemy. But like the rest of the division he would greatly increase his effectiveness by air mobility, and this new kind of division, with its fully integrated airmobile fire, maneuver, logistic, and control/surveillance capabilities, would change the nature of land operations.

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With attached helicopters, the standard infantry and airborne division can use many of the tactics of the air mobile division, albeit with less effect because the air mobile division is specifically tailored for air mobility.

Also during the past four years, both the Army and the Air Force have improved the air logistic support of land operations in general, using such means as short field operations and precision low altitude delivery and extraction techniques.

To a degree, the development of the Army's air mobile concepts and the complementing Air Force capabilities have taken place separately, although U.S. Strike Command has exercised a coordinating function. STRICOM has supervised joint Army-Air Force tests which have resulted in substantial improvement in Air Force and Army joint operations. Evidence is that it would not be difficult to weld the Army's and Air Force's newly developed capabilities into a closely coordinated and compatible joint system, although inter-service divergencies do exist.

Blending these new and largely field-tested concepts, it appears possible to set forth a new concept of war against North Vietnamese and Communist Chinese forces on the mainland of Southeast Asia, along these lines: Using conventional weapons and operating over North Vietnam and South China, tactical air gains air superiority and conducts an interdiction campaign. Local regular and para-military forces provide a general stability to the forward area. At the same time, air mobile forces, including the air mobile division, with air

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reconnaissance, close air support, and air logistic support, greatly multiply their combat power through movement, make deep penetrations, punish the enemy, effectively deploy, engage, and disengage. All land forces, including local forces, are supported by air logistics. All land forces, including air mobile forces, fight on the ground.

Using such a concept, and making full use of corresponding capabilities of naval and amphibious forces, the technological advantages of the United States can be brought to bear on the mainland of Southeast Asia, and operations in that area become quite different from those portrayed by General Ridgway in 1954 and General Decker in 1961. Instead of our being at a disadvantage on the ground, the enemy would be, and the opportunity now exists to change U.S. attitudes to war in Southeast Asia.

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