

-- Would assist in protecting friendly forces in South Vietnam by denying the Communists sanctuaries opposite vital III and IV Corps areas.

-- Could be the only way to keep vital LOC's open to the GOC.

Disadvantages

-- Would still have the disadvantages mentioned in Option 1 above -- calls for help, legal problems, friction, etc.

-- Would divert RVNAF resources incrementally from South Vietnam if NVA/VC pressures mounted.

3. ARVN FORCES TO HARASS VC/NVA LOC'S IN NORTHEAST CAMBODIA

Advantages

-- Would further complicate NVA/VC logistic movement into South Vietnam.

-- Could be justified as being directly related to Vietnam operations.

Disadvantages

-- If this involved deep and frequent penetrations, it could result in a counterproductive diversion of resources away from in-country tasks.

- Would not effectively block the flow of enemy and supplies through Northeast Cambodia.
- Would be relatively unproductive in aiding the survival of the GOC.
- Would pose some risk of escalatory countermeasures by the DRV.
- If ARVN is pressed, it might result in demands for U.S. help, which would be difficult to fulfill.

4. ARVN FORCES TO IMPEDE REESTABLISHMENT AND USE OF BORDER SANCTUARIES.

Advantages

- Could stimulate the GVN's self-confidence and make U.S. troop withdrawals more acceptable.
- Would keep concentrations of enemy troops and supplies away from vital areas in South Vietnam.
- If ARVN employed a mobile strike force only in occasional sweeps of the border areas, the chances of their devastating the Cambodian economy, arousing Cambodian animosities against South Vietnam, and diverting important assets from the Vietnamization program would be minimized.

-- If confined to operations directly related to the military situation in South Vietnam, this option would avoid political commitments to the GOC.

-- Least objectionable politically in the U.S. and least likely to lead to escalation and U.S. involvement.

Disadvantages

-- Could divert ARVN forces from tasks in South Vietnam.

-- If U.S. troop withdrawals are thereby delayed, this would lead to U.S. domestic criticism.

5. VNAF AIR OPERATIONS IN CAMBODIA IN SUPPORT OF FANK.

Advantages

-- Of the alternatives considered, this would involve the least damaging diversion of RVNAF resources from in-country tasks.

-- Could provide helpful support to FANK whose air arm is negligible.

-- Could remove the need for the U.S. to undertake

such air support.

Disadvantages

- For effective support a forward base in Cambodia and the deployment of some ARVN close by for security would be required.
- U.S. support of VNAF would pose legal and political problems if operations were conducted in areas beyond the border sanctuaries.
- If VNAF operations prove effective, there would be some danger of incremental and growing SVN involvement to preserve a friendly GOC.
- Would involve some danger of damage to Cambodian civilian population and property, thus raising Cambodian-Vietnamese frictions and political problems.

G. Should the U.S. back the employment of additional Thai forces in Cambodia?

There are only limited Thai regular forces available for deployment in Thailand, given the already thin in-country counterinsurgency and self-defense assets. The use of regular Thai military assets in Cambodia raises

problems relating to the expansion of U.S. commitments to Thailand, including SEATO, Communist retaliation against Thailand, Cambodian resentment, the legality of U.S. support, and domestic opposition to an alleged widening of the war.

A Thai RCT, together with supporting units if deployed close to the Thai border, is available for Cambodia, but may not be used because of limitations on U.S. support. Beyond this, unless the Black Panther units from South Vietnam were used, which raises some sticky problems, it would take six-eight months for Thai mobilization and training to provide substantial additional forces.

A feasible use of the limited Thai ground forces could be in a LOC security role in western Cambodia, or to provide protected zones along the border. Employment of RTAF assets in support of FANK is feasible only insofar as forward basing requirements are met and air support of any RTA units in Cambodia has been assured. Any use of Thai forces in Cambodia beyond its immediate border areas would further lock the RTG into a U.S.-backed, active, anti-Communist military role throughout

Indochina. This could reduce Thai diplomatic flexibility and diminish the possibility of any long-term political accommodation in the area.

Four alternatives are considered.

1. SUPPORT EMPLOYMENT OF RTA GROUND UNITS WHEREVER NEEDED.

Advantages

- Would offer some additional military support to the GOC without any direct U.S. involvement.
- Would help convince the Thai that the U.S. is seriously concerned about security in Southeast Asia.
- Could promote Thai-Cambodian cooperation.

Disadvantages

- Only limited Thai forces are available, without impairing Thai in-country counterinsurgency and self-defense capabilities.
- Might be interpreted by North Vietnam and/or the PRC as a direct challenge to the Communist position in Indochina, leading to retaliatory measures against Thailand, e.g., increased support for insurgency in North or Northeast Thailand, sapper

attacks against U.S./Thai bases.

- Would further lock the RTG into a U.S.-backed, active, anti-Communist military role throughout Indochina, which could reduce Thai diplomatic flexibility and diminish the possibility of any long-term political accommodation in the area.
- Would risk Thai-Cambodian and, possibly, Thai-Vietnamese friction if Thai forces operated in populous areas.
- Thai forces are incapable of extensive operations without substantial U.S. logistic support. Such support would be difficult to render, would raise serious legal problems, and could evoke serious negative Congressional reaction and public criticism to the use of mercenaries in an expanded war.
- Could lead to an invocation of the SEATO commitment if RTA units suffered defeat at the hands of NVA/VC forces.
- Would further compromise the concept of Cambodian neutrality, and make more difficult the achievement of a political settlement in Indochina.

2. PROTECT WESTERN PORTION OF CAMBODIA IN A TACIT
DIVISION OF LABOR WITH FANK.

The advantages and disadvantages discussed in 1 would also apply to this option, although to a lesser degree. In addition, Thai ground force operations in Western Cambodia would stimulate Cambodian fears that RTA units would not be withdrawn. It might even result in Thai annexation of some Cambodian territory.

3. TO SECURE A NARROW BORDER ZONE IN BATTAMBANG/PURSAT.

Advantages

- Would satisfy the most immediate Thai security interests.
- Would confine the Thai to an area of operations within their capabilities and supportable from Thailand.
- Actions obviously keyed to the self-defense of Thailand would be easier to explain and defend.

Disadvantages

- Deployment of RTA units beyond the border is not required for Thai security.

- A prolonged presence of RTA units would generate Cambodian suspicions of Thai ambitions, and perhaps result in the annexation of some Cambodian territory.
- Operations in populous areas could in any event lead to Thai-Cambodian frictions.
- The Communists might deliberately escalate operations in this area in order to strain U.S.-Thai relations; such efforts, even if unsuccessful, would threaten a widening of the war.

4. RTAF AIR OPERATIONS IN CAMBODIA IN SUPPORT OF FANK.

If Thai ground forces are committed, they would clearly be supported by the RTAF. If RTA units are not employed in Cambodia, limited RTAF assets would be available to support FANK.

Advantages

- Compared with the use of ground forces this would be an efficient means for the RTG to offer helpful assistance to the GOC.
- Would provide some needed air support to FANK

without any direct U.S. involvement.

Disadvantages

- If operations were conducted beyond a limited area contiguous to the Thai border, forward bases and a ground force presence would be required. While this would be consistent with Thai "forward defense" strategy, it would also lead the RTG to intensify pressure for increased U.S. support and a strengthened U.S. commitment.
- U.S. financial or logistic support for Thai air operations in Cambodia would pose legal and political problems.
- Thai air operations in populous areas would pose problems of coordination and civilian casualties.

H. To what extent should the U.S. encourage greater GVN/GOC/RTG/RLG security cooperation?

A formal anti-Communist security alliance of these states would have the following potential liabilities: it would be greatly dependent on the U.S. for leadership and support; would tend to draw us further into an expanded commitment; would threaten Communist retaliation in SEA;

and would subject the U.S. to the combined lobbying of a group of governments dedicated to the maximum obtainable U.S. commitment and involvement in the area. Coordination of allied military plans and operations could be achieved within the framework of an informal low-profile cooperation among GVN-GOC-RLG-RTG, with the U.S. providing advice on military coordination through its bilateral relations.

Three alternatives are considered.

1. SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATE IN A FORMAL NON-COMMUNIST REGIONAL ALLIANCE.

Advantages

- Consistent with the Nixon Doctrine, would encourage the coalescence of governments confronting a common security problem.
- Could facilitate the coordination of military plans and operations and might result in better utilization of region-wide assets.
- Would dramatize the fact that the basic problem in mainland Southeast Asia is DRV aggression

against non-Communist Indochinese states.

- Might enhance RTG/GVN respect for Laotian and Cambodian sovereignty while their forces were operating there.

Disadvantages

- The assets and capabilities of these states are sufficiently weak that an effective anti-Communist alliance would be heavily dependent upon the U.S. for financing, leadership and support.
- These states might interpret U.S. participation as meaning an enlarged U.S. military commitment and greater emphasis on our part on military rather than political efforts to reach a settlement.
- Formal engagement of the Thai in an alliance with Indochinese states might provoke additional PRC support for Thai insurgency and wider PRC involvement in the whole Indochina struggle.
- Would further polarize the situation politically and militarily, thus diminishing the prospects for political arrangements that could support a solution in mainland Southeast Asia.

- By joining such an alliance, the GOC and RLG would further renounce their neutral status, possibly eroding their international support.

2. ENCOURAGE REGIONAL ASSOCIATION WITHOUT DIRECT U.S. PARTICIPATION.

Advantages

- Lack of direct U.S. involvement would make less likely an expansion of U.S. responsibilities.
- Less likely than Option 1 to excite U.S. domestic opposition.
- Less likely than Option 1 to provoke increased PRC countermeasures.

Disadvantages

- Without a major U.S. role, the effectiveness of a regional association would be minimal.
- RTG participation in such an alliance would raise the question as to whether U.S. commitments under SEATO had been extended.

3. ACCEPT INFORMAL REGIONAL COOPERATION WITH LOW-LEVEL U.S. COORDINATION AND SUPPORT.

Advantages

- Would not involve formal compromise of Laotian and Cambodian neutrality to the same extent as 1 or 2.
- Informal association would permit cooperative endeavors without the disadvantages of 1 or 2.
- Would improve the coordination of tactical operations and military assistance, making somewhat better use of limited resources.
- Would not subject U.S. as directly to combined lobbying by a group of governments desiring maximum obtainable U.S. involvement and commitment in the area.
- Would permit assistance from Asian and other countries (e.g., Japan) which would not contemplate helping a formal anti-Communist alliance.
- Would allow for the orderly development of future cooperative relationships without U.S. support and direction.

Disadvantages

- The degree of actual U.S. support required for effectiveness might turn out to be inconsistent

with the maintenance of an inconspicuous U.S. role.

-- Even a low-profile U.S. role in a region-wide military coordinating body would risk some increased U.S. involvement and commitment in mainland Southeast Asia.



