

NO JOINT STAFF OBJECTION  
TO DECLASSIFICATION  
REQUIRES CONCURRENCE OF

~~TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE~~

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

DECLASSIFICATION BY JOINT STAFF

DATE: SEP 14 2000

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Conceptual Plan for Implementation of Operation  
DUCK HOOK

Operation DUCK HOOK (aerial mining of the Haiphong port complex and interdiction or quarantine of the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville) would not be approached as a purely military action but instead as a combined military and diplomatic operation intended to produce both military and political results with minimum adverse reactions at home and abroad.

We would commence with a diplomatic move timed to precede by seven days the actual military strike against the Haiphong sea approaches and the interdiction of Sihanoukville. We would call in Ambassador Dobrynin and tell him in strong terms that our patience with Hanoi had been strained to the breaking point, not only by its intransigence at Paris but equally by its actions in South Vietnam by overturning the "understandings," conducting acts of terror against the South Vietnamese civilian population, violating the 1962 Accords in Laos, openly conducting acts of aggression with North Vietnamese troops, and by infringing on Cambodian neutrality through the overt use of Cambodia as a sanctuary. We would warn Dobrynin that unless Hanoi reversed its course in all these areas in the very near future -- a matter of a few days, in fact, -- we would be obliged to take some form of action to show Hanoi that it could not escape the consequences of its behavior. We would expect as an immediate sign of Hanoi's changed intentions a significant constructive move on its part in the Paris negotiations.

~~TOP SECRET~~  
~~TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE~~

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 13526, Sec. 3.3  
By NW 30831  
DATE 3/15/13

Also at a point seven days in advance of our projected strike, we would have Ambassador Lodge take the same position with the communists in Paris that we took with Dobrynin in Washington.

We would, of course, not specify what we intended to do. However, by introducing Cambodia and especially Laos into the equation, we would leave the door open for a wide range of options, e. g. B-52 raids in Laos, rather than just countermeasures against North Vietnam. In this way we would preserve military security, keep the Soviets and Hanoi guessing, and build up the threat of a much stronger case before the world by introducing Hanoi's flagrant aggression in Laos and Cambodia. The Soviets are undoubtedly very much aware that Souvanna and Prince Sihanouk have both publicly attacked North Vietnam for its acts of aggression in their countries. Hopefully, the Soviets would then be concerned enough to put pressure on Hanoi to respond to our warning.

If Hanoi should not respond, we would proceed with our military measures. For the Haiphong operation we envisage the maximum possible effort in the shortest period of time, with maximum security. This would involve concentrating three attack carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin in a manner which would seem routine. We would not send sea-air rescue ships or radar vessels north of their normal stations until the mining aircraft were about to be launched. We would not inform any country, friend or foe, until one hour before the aircraft appear over the Haiphong sea approaches, so that no security leak could occur. For Sihanoukville, we would quietly detach the requisite number of interdiction ships and time their arrival on station to coincide with the strike off Haiphong. The strike would take place about 0500 Hanoi time (1800 in Washington), which would be first light there, early evening here.

One hour before the actual attacks we would call in the TCC's, the NATO powers, members of the OAS, the Lao Ambassador, and the Cambodian Charge' to the Department of State for appropriate advance briefings on the rationale for our moves. I would call in the Soviet Ambassador to inform him that we had given fair warning, that we had been compelled to act, and that he and Hanoi should now know we meant business. This was not anti-Soviet, but only against Hanoi.

(The same points would have been made to Moscow one-half hour later by a Molink message.) Finally, the Ambassadors of all friendly countries with ships in or en route to Sihanoukville and the Haiphong complex would be informed by the Department of State and the American Charge' in Phnom Penh would inform Prince Sihanouk.

Meanwhile, you would brief the Congressional leadership and there would be a locked-door press briefing. Concurrent with the strike, you would go on national television and radio, and we would simultaneously request a special meeting of the UN Security Council. (I anticipate that this meeting would be about two hours later.) In all of these actions, the following points would be stressed:

- No loss of life need occur.
- The mines are set to arm themselves 72 hours after being dropped, allowing ample time for all shipping to clear port.
- The acts do not constitute a resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam or an act of war against Cambodia; they are in response to Hanoi's own deliberate transgressions.
- Our moves demonstrate that we mean business. Although we do not contemplate further measures at this time, we will judge what further steps may be necessary in the light of Hanoi's response.
- We remain sincerely interested in a peaceful settlement of the war in Vietnam, and are, in fact, calling a special meeting of the Paris Talks to move in this direction.
- Our actions are not directed against the Soviet Union or Communist China, but only against Hanoi.

One problem about the mining of Haiphong will need to be met: the plans call for a seeding of Mark 36 destructors, which are set to arm themselves 24 hours after being dropped, in order to block sweeping and lightering operations. Another strike against the Haiphong sea approaches would thus be necessary no earlier than 48 hours after the first strike. (I believe on balance that you should mention this in (104?)

your speech so that the two separate strikes will be regarded as part of one action, even though the destructor missions might encounter increased reaction as a result.]

At this point, we would have done all we could do to meet the immediate needs of the situation. We would follow through at Paris with Hanoi, in Moscow and Washington with the Soviets, and wherever else we need to take diplomatic action with respect to our friends and our opponents. We would assume a heightened PACOM and SAC alert posture militarily // 7 to show our resolve and to respond to whatever contingencies arise.

In Paris, we would encourage a favorable Hanoi response by reiterating // all of our previous concessions in a new and forthcoming package. We would not expect, however, any substantive movement by Hanoi until they had assessed their new predicament, examined alternative courses of action, and checked with both the Soviet Union and China to determine what level and kinds of support they could expect.

You will notice that I have not recommended any direct approach to Communist China such as that made to the Soviet Union. I anticipate that our limited actions would speak for themselves as not being directed toward Peking. China's stance throughout the Vietnam war has been to stay in the background, avoiding a direct confrontation with us, and I believe it would continue as before.



National Security Archive,  
Suite 701, Gelman Library, The George Washington University,  
2130 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20037,  
Phone: 202/994-7000, Fax: 202/994-7005, [nsarchiv@gwu.edu](mailto:nsarchiv@gwu.edu)