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Summary:

Phased Mutual Withdrawal (December 30, 1969)

This paper has been cleared by the Review Group, with the exception of the sections on de facto mutual withdrawal and some non-substantive editorial changes. The Saigon Embassy's comments were incorporated into the paper before it went to the Review Group; the Embassy has not therefore cleared the sections on de facto mutual withdrawal. None of the paper has been discussed with the GVN.

This paper was written "to provide Saigon and Paris with a more detailed examination of the considerations which affect the phasing and the modalities or ground rules of mutual withdrawal for background use in consultations with the GVN and in preparing for negotiations with the NVN/NLF."

It discusses NVN and GVN attitudes, considerations affecting withdrawal decisions, and alternative scenarios for phased mutual withdrawal.

NVN Attitudes: The paper states that Hanoi wants to handle withdrawal as it handled the bombing halt: the U.S. to make an open and obvious concession, with Hanoi's response to be based on an ambiguous "understanding" which would not be subject to inspection. Points 2 and 3 of the May 8 ten-point proposal are intended to make a tacit arrangement possible. The Communists probably do not at present envisage removing all their forces from the South, particularly fillers in VC units or the regroupees which they sent in before 1965.

GVN Attitudes: The paper states that if we are able to obtain agreement with the other side on mutual withdrawals under optimum conditions (see below), there would be little difficulty in getting GVN concurrence. However, the GVN will be very sensitive to any modalities which appear to limit its sovereignty and authority, especially publicly. It will be important to the GVN that we tie our withdrawals insofar as possible to verified enemy withdrawals

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or reductions in threat through attrition. The GVN will attempt to block any negotiations we might undertake which appear to go further than they can tolerate or accept. A private agreement would present difficulties to the GVN in making explanations to its people.

Considerations Affecting Withdrawal Decisions: The bulk of the paper is devoted to an examination of the following considerations: timing, performance by the other side, supply, transportation, communications, modalities (control measures, whether or not a cease fire, whether a private or public agreement, nature of assembly areas, etc.) military, territorial, political, and intelligence and special operations.

With regard to timing, the paper concludes that in terms of our physical capability to remove U. S. forces and their equipment and supplies from South Vietnam, we require an absolute minimum of one year. The optimum period is 19 to about 24 months, which would include a four-month preparatory period, 12 months or more for major withdrawals, and three months for completion.

With regard to performance by the other side, the NSC has decided that we would make clear, at an appropriate stage in the negotiations, that we could not complete our withdrawals, whatever the timetable, if the total pattern of North Vietnamese actions indicated that our withdrawal was not being carried through in good faith.

With regard to modalities, agreed control measures should be worked out to separate forces now involved in combat. There should be arrangements to permit field headquarters of both sides to deal directly with one another on matters pertaining to the execution of the withdrawal agreements. Disengagement and withdrawal of forces on the basis of agreed procedures and schedules would be difficult without at least local cease fires. They would be facilitated by a general cease fire and an international supervisory body. The location and limits of provisional safe-haven assembly areas would have to be agreed to in principle at the political level, with the details of the boundary lines being resolved by the commanders in the field. Routes of egress must be mutually

agreed and movement of forces over these routes carefully scheduled. Withdrawal under a publicly announced agreement would be much less complicated than under a private agreement.

Military considerations include the relationship between an agreement and:

- Leverage provided by the U. S. presence in South Vietnam with which to negotiate the release of U. S. POW's -- POW's must be released before U. S. forces are totally withdrawn;
- The security of friendly forces and critical areas;
- The extension of GVN control through the pacification program; and
- The status of the RVNAF Accelerated Improvement and Modernization Program.

The paper states that it is highly desirable to insure that no agreement or arrangement is undertaken which would permanently limit the GVN in the exercise of its sovereign rights or access to all its citizens and territory.

From a political point of view, a publicly agreed mutual withdrawal is preferable to a private agreement for both the U. S. and GVN. However, Hanoi will be most reluctant to do so. In the event they will not, a private agreement would be politically preferable to a tacit understanding from our standpoint. A de facto reduction in NVA forces would pose uncertainties for the GVN similar to those related to tacit understanding; it would appear, however, to favor the GVN, since the settlement of the remaining problems would be an internal affair with the GVN in the driver's seat. The paper also notes that we should keep in close consultation with the troop-contributing countries. We should seek to preserve the image of seven (sic) allies with forces in Vietnam as late as possible in the withdrawal scenario.

With regard to intelligence and special operations, our intelligence capabilities will decline with withdrawal. Under most conceivable withdrawal scenarios residual intelligence capabilities would

probably be capable of warning of a rapid and major build-up of men and supplies in South Vietnam, and of providing a general impression about the size of enemy forces left behind, if any. It is highly doubtful however that we could unilaterally verify enemy withdrawals rapidly enough and with sufficient assurance to permit our own withdrawal to be carried out without significant risk in the minimum twelve-month period which is within our logistic capability. Laos will pose a greater problem than South Vietnam, and Cambodia will be still more difficult.

The paper then lists four alternative scenarios for phased mutual withdrawal, each influenced by the considerations just discussed. Two contain time-phased negotiated mutual withdrawals, one predicates a de facto or tacit enemy withdrawal, and one presents a specific scenario tailored to the President's proposals of May 14. The four scenarios are summarized in tables at the end of the paper.

The first scenario is for a negotiated mutual withdrawal under optimum conditions. The U. S. would withdraw within 19 months all combat forces, leaving a residual force of approximately 70,000. North Vietnam would withdraw within 16 months all of its personnel, including fillers and regroupees.

The second scenario is of a negotiated mutual withdrawal under minimum acceptable conditions. We would withdraw within twelve months, leaving the same residual force. North Vietnam would completely withdraw within nine months.

The third scenario describes mutual withdrawal on a tacit or reciprocal de facto basis. We would withdraw a major portion of combat and support units as North Vietnam withdraws or is attrited without replacement; we would retain a MAAG. We would retain a temporary residual of approximately 160,000-170,000. Upon completion of NVA withdrawals or attrition to an ineffectual level, the residual combat force could be withdrawn, with final reduction to a Command/MAAG residual presence of 10-15,000 men.

The fourth scenario, based on the May 14 proposal, would leave a U. S. residual of approximately 160,000 after 12 months, with North Vietnam withdrawal over 75 percent complete. The subsequent withdrawal period would include a U. S. residual not to exceed 60,000 to 70,000, if permitted by final agreements.

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Final Draft (revised)
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