

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

September 19, 1969

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE HONORABLE HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBJECT: Working Group under NSDM 23

1. Following our telephone conversation concerning how best to carry out NSDM 23, I have noted down a few thoughts on organization, scope and personnel.

2. In general, the following points cannot be over-emphasized:

a. The focus of this operation must be on information and analysis, not policy.

b. The individuals on the permanent working group must be free of their agency and the superiors in their agency.

c. The more anonymity and privacy the working group can have the better.

d. The selection of the chairman of the permanent working group is absolutely critical.

e. Honesty and integrity, even when it means personal loss, are required of each member of the working group.

f. The chairman of the working group must have your clear imprimatur and access to you.

g. The "enemy" of this effort will be the bureaucracy here and in Saigon and if the various agencies, per se, are allowed to 1) set up the organization or 2) staff the organization, it will be virtually undermined (witness every effort from Special Group CI through Komer's shop).

3. More specifically, with regard to organization, three attributes should be kept in mind: 1) impartiality,

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2) discretion, and 3) flexibility. All are necessary to get the information and analysis we need. All three would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve if a large structure was created. Neither low visibility (both within and without the government) nor objectivity can be achieved if a large, formalized, bureaucratically intricate operation is developed. Maximum results can be attained only through a small, private working group here in Washington, perhaps tying in with an equally small group in Vietnam. This should be a permanent working group with its own authority to form and uniform sub working groups on an ad hoc basis to deal with particular problems. The working group should be composed of those who 1) are fully informed on Vietnam substance (so no time need be spent "reading in"), 2) have demonstrated capability to do impartial factual analysis free of bureaucratic bias, 3) have shown discretion and trustworthiness, 4) are fully familiar with the bureaucratic structure and "players" in the Vietnam game both here and in Vietnam. There should be no restrictions on the group members as to agency -- instead the concentration should be on the above four individual qualities, not their originating agency.

Additionally, it is important that the members of the permanent working group be protected from bureaucratic pressures of their parent agencies. Thus, they should be free of any responsibility back to their agency. To emphasize this point, the permanent working group should be physically located in the EOB/White House.

A most important organizational consideration is that the permanent working group chairman report directly to the Vietnam Special Studies Group, with no intermediaries. The chairman should also be given the authority to pick the other members of the permanent working group regardless of agency and present job. Although all agencies should be represented in some way, how and in what proportion should be determined by the chairman of the working group. The chairman should have full responsibility and authority for each report produced for the Special Studies Group.

4. A major problem in providing analyses of the situation is the magnitude and complexity and interrelations of the problems involved. Thus, there is a tendency to cover the "waterfront", which ends in massive documents like NSSM 1. For instance, problem areas which are

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theoretically worthy of consideration are:

- Economic Stabilization
- Development of Local Government
- Land Reform
- Chieu Hoi
- Phoenix
- Broadening of the GVN
- Military Leadership
- Infiltration
- Casualties
- Military Tactics and Strategy
- AID Program
- Vietnamization
- Impact of US Withdrawals
- Long-term Economic Programs
- Security in the Countryside
- Corruption

Not only does this across-the-board approach provide massive documents but it also defeats our main purpose: to obtain timely, sharp, independent checks on key elements of our policy. Additionally, attempting to cover many problem areas will lead to expansion of the staff and proliferation of all the bureaucratic tendencies we are trying to get away from.

Thus, useful timely analysis requires a severe pruning of the problem areas to be examined. The pruning should be tailored to fit those areas which seriously affect our policy objective, which seems to me to be: To cut our costs, men, money and materiel, while bolstering the Vietnamese so that the war becomes less and less ours and more and more theirs. I see four basic areas which fit this category:

- a. Vietnamization (to include combat effectiveness and military leadership) ✓
- b. Economic Stabilization ✓
- c. Situation in the Countryside - *Corruption* ✓
- d. Political Development ✓

Thus, it seems useful to have the initial analysis concentrate on these areas.

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5. The eventual success or failure of this effort will, along with the group's freedom from bureaucratic bias and jockeying, depend on the selection of the personnel to be the chairman and members of the permanent working group. Nothing will be more critical than this. In particular, the selection of the chairman for the permanent working group will largely determine its validity and usefulness. The issues in Vietnam have become so personalized and so crucial to the careers and fortunes not only of each individual involved but also to their agencies (both their budgets and their reputations) that obtaining a knowledgeable, nonparochial, impartial and courageous "expert" is very difficult. Nonetheless, this kind of man is essential and must be found. Further, the chairman must be able to devote full time to this task. We will think further about the candidates. As for members of the working group, Charlie and Jonathan consider the following to have the necessary expertise and strength for inclusion:

LTC Gerald H. Britten	OSD/ISA
Mr. Roger Darling	AID
Mr. Sven Kraemer	NSC
Col. Paul Gorman	Paris Delegation
Mr. Louis Sarris ✓	State
LTC Donald Marshall	MACV
Col. William Simons	Hdqtrs., USAF
Col. John Wickham	JCS

6. We feel it desirable that the working group contain some outsiders, that is, people knowledgeable on Vietnam and who have the necessary clearances but who are not presently employed within the Government. This is important not only for the reason of independence cited above but also in order to be able to tap information resources other than purely official ones.

Individuals outside the Government with the necessary prerequisites:

✓ Gerald Hickey	RAND/Saigon
I. Milton Sacks	Brandeis Univ.
✓ Bing West	RAND
Irving Haymont	RAC
Les Gelb	Brookings
Charles Sweet	Harvard

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There are quite a few others known by reputation, who might be checked and considered:

Mr. Frank Wisner	State
✓ Mr. Paul Hare	State
LTC Dale Vesser	NSC
Capt. Bob Sansom	NSC
LTC Al Williams	OSD/ISA
[Redacted]	DIA
Col. Bill Benedict	Army
Col. Sam Karrick	OSD/ISA
Mr. Geza Feketekudy	BOB
✓ Maj. Stan Kanarowski	NSC
Mr. Dolf Droge	NSC
Mr. Dan Ellsberg	RAND
Mr. Joe Zasloff	RAND
✓ Mr. George Allen	CIA
Col. Bob Montague	Dept. of Army
Mr. Tom Thayer	OSD/SA
Mr. Phil Odeen	OSD/SA
Mr. John Wilhelm	AID
Mr. Jim Rosenthal	State
Mr. Dick Teare	State
Mr. Dave Engel	Paris Delegation
✓ Mr. John Negroponte	Paris Delegation
Col. Sam Pesacreta	AID/PSD
Mr. Paul Kattenburg	State
Mr. Frank Scotton	State/Taiwan
Mr. Steve Lyne	State/INR
LTC Bob Switzer	Dept. of Army
LTC Andy Simko	USARV
[Redacted]	
Mr. Craig Johnstone	CORDS/Saigon
Mr. Ed Bumgardner	CORDS/Saigon
Dr. Mort Halperin	Brookings
✓ Mr. Dick Burnham	<del>RAND</del> <i>Wall Street</i>
Dr. Herman Kahn	Hudson

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7. In conclusion, if we can implement the kind of arrangements discussed above and carry out the careful selection of personnel, I think the kind of timely, accurate information and impartial factual analysis which we are now lacking can be provided.

  
Elliot L. Richardson

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