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Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Chief, RIDD, ESD, WHS

Date: 13 Jan 2012 Authority: EO 13526 THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Improvement and Modernization of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces (RVNAF)

I appreciate your interest in and thoughts on the review of the RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program as provided by your memorandum of April 1. We have been continuously reviewing the program along lines quite similar to those set forth in your memorandum. In fact, we have underway, at present, three major efforts which should match very well the President's desire for a detailed analysis by 1 May.

- The JCS and Service Secretaries are conducting an overall evaluation of the progress of the current I&M program in order to justify both slippages and programmatic shortfalls.
- The JCS are preparing recommendations on a Vietnamese proposal to accelerate achievement of the FY 73 goal of 1.1 million men during FY 72.
- A major review is underway of the interdiction capability of the RVNAF including alternatives to the highly sophisticated air bombardment programs which we have relied upon.

In proceeding with the analysis desired by the President, I believe the primary focus should be upon functional capabilities. We are already proceeding in terms of RVNAF capability for conducting protracted war, countering the main force threat, interdicting North Vietnamese infiltration of men and materiel, and provision of local security in the countryside. In doing so, our emphasis is upon qualitative improvements rather than quantitative improvements since, as my conversations with President Thieu in January brought out, the problems facing RVNAF are not soluble by increasing strength levels beyond the 1.1 million currently programmed. What the Vietnamese really need is a greater ability to apply their combat capability at the critical points at the critical time. In this regard, the simultaneous conduct of LAMSON 719 and Toan Thang 01/71 already reflects greater mobility, tactical flexibility, and concentration of effort than we originally expected to be feasible at this stage of RVNAF's development.

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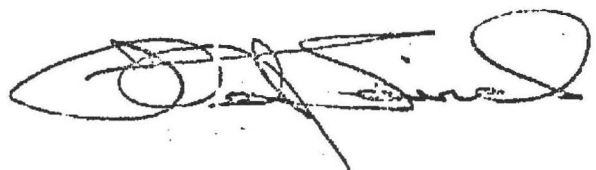
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I see the analysis we are engaged in as one which requires establishment of reasonable military capabilities within acceptable dollar, piaster and manpower limitations. Furthermore, the program must be related not only to the pace of US withdrawals, but to the allied negotiating posture, the possibility of a cease-fire, the PW situation, and the previous policy statements of the administration.

With these views in mind, I expect no difficulty in providing the President with the desired analysis by 1 May.

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