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29

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

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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17 SEP 1970

CHV 29

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

SUBJECT: Southeast Asia Redeployments (U)

I consider the deployment schedule forwarded by my memorandum of August 20 to be the best balance between military requirements and manpower and budgetary constraints. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) concur in this judgment. The JCS rationale is explained in JCSM-438-70, 11 September 1970. A copy of that JCS Memorandum is attached.

As my earlier memorandum indicated, the pace of our redeployment has been somewhat slower than the schedule approved by the President in the budget decisions last December. The President approved that schedule, although the Joint Chiefs of Staff and I expressed concern at that time. Actual redeployments have been slower than programmed in the approved FY 70 and FY 71 budget levels, even though the military situation, pacification progress, and the enemy threat are all much more favorable than we projected a year ago. The table below compares the Budget Plan, my August 20 proposal (which the JCS recommended) and the JCS low risk redeployment schedule.

U.S. TROOPS IN SVN

	<u>FY 71 Budget</u>	<u>JCS Recommended</u>	<u>JCS Low Risk</u>
July 1, 1970	410,000	434,000	434,000
Oct. 15, 1970	367,000	384,000	384,000
Dec. 31, 1970	335,000	344,000	374,000
May 1, 1971	284,000	284,000	284,000

I do not see a significant difference in the risk associated with the slower schedule noted in your memorandum and the one I have proposed. The slower pace would leave an average of 19,000 more U.S.

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page 1 of 3 Pages

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2

troops in South Vietnam (about 5% of our present strength) during the period between October 15 and May 1. The largest difference would be during the early weeks of 1971 when 30,000 more troops would be available. (The combat effectiveness of these added troops would be degraded since they would be preparing to redeploy shortly after February 15.) Such small differences in the numbers of U.S. troops are most unlikely to have a measurable impact on the situation, because we will still have a 300,000 - 400,000 man U.S. force in South Vietnam as part of an allied force which totals about 1.5 million men.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff state in JCSM-438-70 that the redeployment schedule cited in your memorandum would have permitted us to reduce our force levels and activities in Southeast Asia "without excessive risk to U.S. objectives or undue hazard to the remaining forces." They further state that they endorse the schedule proposed in my August 20 memorandum, given present manpower and financial constraints. In their view, this schedule does pose additional risks, because it affords the enemy greater freedom of movement and reduces the U.S. forces available to back up the RVNAF should the VC/NVA mount a major new combat effort.

We estimate that the added dollar cost of the slower schedule would be about \$400 million. As I indicated above, the present redeployment pace is somewhat slower than that used in developing the FY 71 Budget. As a result, the Services have already been forced to absorb about \$200 million (annual rate) of added Southeast Asia costs. The impact is to reduce military programs designed to support our many other commitments and interests. Absorbing another \$400 million would be difficult, especially since we must anticipate that the Congress will press for budget reductions. The result would inevitably further weaken our world-wide posture. The only alternative would be to request a Supplemental Appropriation; but, as your memorandum notes, the President agrees this is not feasible.

The rapid phasedown of military manpower also poses major obstacles to following a slower redeployment schedule than that which I indicated in my August 20 memorandum. As you know, the financial and manpower programs contained in the President's FY 71 Budget dictate sharp reductions in active duty manpower. As a result, we have cut back sharply on draft calls during 1970. The real manpower squeeze, however, comes not from the reduced draft calls but rather from reduced manpower deliveries -- including those from Selective Service, new enlistments, and re-enlistments. The resultant manpower squeeze seriously limits our flexibility to slow our redeployment pace further.

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3

Since the men to be drafted in October will not be available for duty in Vietnam until next spring, the most likely source of trained manpower would be our units in Europe and units maintained in the U.S. for deployment to Europe, or for contingencies. Budget and manpower constraints have reduced many of these forces below their normal strengths. Meeting the greater demands for forces in South Vietnam would mean further reductions (largely in Army forces) of 20,000 to 30,000 men.

As the JCS memorandum notes, the impact of such manpower diversion on readiness would be substantial and, in my judgment, unacceptable. The only other option would be to extend the duty tours of our troops in Vietnam beyond the present 12 month standard. In my view, this should be considered only under grave circumstances.

For the reasons outlined above, I reaffirm my recommendations of August 20. The schedule which redeploys about 40,000 men between October 15 and December 31 and 60,000 more prior to May 1 can be supported with available manpower and the funds we now expect to get from the Congress. I have approved that schedule for planning purposes and have informed all DoD elements accordingly. The added risk of such a schedule is minimal, particularly when viewed in context of the progress of pacification and Vietnamization.

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Attachment X-5071

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