

(b)(1)

JCS 2343/468

26 September 1964

Pages 1 - 6 incl.

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIES

to the

JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

on

US SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS - SOUTHEAST ASIA (U)

The enclosed memorandum by the SACSA, subject as above, together with its Appendix and Annex, is submitted for consideration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

R. C. FORBES

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Joint Secretaries

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ENCLOSURE

MEMORANDUM BY THE SACSA

for the

JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

on

US SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS - SOUTHEAST ASIA (U)

U.S. &

1. Problem. To consider a CINCPAC concept* for search and rescue (SAR) operations in support of Operation Plan (OPLAN) 34A and Republic of Vietnam (RVN) operations into Laos. 1 2 3

2. Information. On 18 September 1964, COMUSMACV requested** that authority be granted to include OPLAN 34A operations in existing SAR plans for Laos and the Gulf of Tonkin. 4 5 6 7

3. On 24 September 1964, CINCPAC concurred in the requirement from COMUSMACV, modified and expanded the specifics thereof, and requested approval of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide SAR support for OPLAN 34A and RVN cross border operations into Laos, as detailed in the memo. 8 9 10 11 12

4. In his proposal, CINCPAC has included air operations of the RVN and (b)(1) 13 14

in his definition of non-US military operations. 15

4. 5. Discussion. OPLAN 34A air operations utilize routes over the Gulf of Tonkin and over Laos, and from their designated drop zones in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). 16 17 18 19

5. 6. OPLAN 34A maritime operations transit international waters of the Gulf of Tonkin en route to and from their targets in the DRV, territorial waters, although whenever possible the routes remain outside these waters. 20 21 22 23

* CINCPAC Message to JCS, DTG 242306Z SEP 64
Joint Secretariat
** COMUSMACV Message to CINCPAC, MAG:SO, 18 SEP 64
Sep 64; on file in Joint Secretariat

6. The inherent risks of these operations, as well as those 1
faced by RVN forces operating in Laos, are high. [It is consi- 2
dered that the best interests of the US Government will re- 3
quire] a procedure for military SAR operations [in order to]: 4

a. Enhance the morale and will to fight of RVN forces 5
engaged in cross border operations, and 34A personnel; 6

b. Provide the best possible plan for assistance to RVN 7
ground forces, air and boat crews, and (b) air crews en- 8
gaged in OPLAN 34A operations; 9

c. Conserve to maximum practicable extent important and 10
expensive RVN and 34A assets. 11

7. As CINCPAC indicated, OPLAN 34A personnel should not be 12
briefed on safe areas in Laos because of the risk of compro- 13
mise in the event of capture in the DRV. 14

Every precaution [should] be taken to reduce the risk of 15
accidental US involvement in DRV/RVN engagements which may 16
result from 34A [maritime] operations. Therefore, no US SAR 17
efforts should be made within the DRV, [the 12-mile limit in 18
DRV consist of off shore islands, the Gulf of Tonkin] or when DRV forces are in hot pursuit. 19

10. Recommended Action. It is recommended that: 20

a. The memorandum in the Appendix, together with its 21
Annex, be forwarded to the Secretary of Defense.

b. This paper NOT be forwarded to commanders of unified 23
or specified commands]

c. This paper NOT be forwarded to officers assigned 25
to NATO activities. 26

d. This paper NOT be forwarded to US Delegation, United 27
Nations Military Staff Committee. 28

11. Coordination. Time limitations precluded formal Service 29
coordination. 30

APPENDIX

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: US Search and Rescue Operations -
Southeast Asia (U)

1. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered recommendations 1
from CINCPAC and COMUSMACV respecting search and rescue (SAR) 2
operations in support of Operation Plan (OPLAN) 34A actions 3
and cross border operations into Laos by Republic of Vietnam 4
(RVN) forces. 5

2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that existing SAR 6
plans should be expanded to include OPLAN 34A and RVN cross 7
border operations in order to enhance the morale and will of 8
both 34A personnel and RVN forces engaged in these operations. 9
A great deal of time and effort has already been expended in 10
organizing, planning, and training for cross border operations 11
into Laos, and in building 34A resources and capabilities. 12
Accordingly, this additional effort should be made to protect 13
our interests as far as possible. On the other hand, every 14
precaution should be taken to reduce the risk of accidental 15
US involvement in DRV/RVN engagements which may result from 16
34A [maritime] operations. [Hence, no US SAR operations 17
be made within the DRV, [the 12-mile limit from the Gulf of 18
Tonekin] or when DRV forces are in hot pursuit of 19

3. Therefore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend approval 20
of this expansion according to the conditions listed in the 21
attachment hereto. 22

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ANNEX

SAR CONDITIONS/LIMITATIONS

A. LAOS

1. A rescue attempt will be made when the aircraft is down 1
and it is evident a reasonable chance exists to rescue per- 2
sonnel.

2. No rescue attempt will be made ^{unless there is firm} if undue risk to SAR ^{knowledge of the location of the downed aircraft and circumstances indicate probable success} aircraft and personnel is apparent.

3. US SAR resources committed in Laos will be provided air 6
cover sufficient to insure protection of the US SAR force 7
from hostile interference. Rules of engagement for the pro- 8
tective force will be the same as the rules of engagement for 9
other US forces operating in Southeast Asia. 10

4. No overt rescue attempt will be made if personnel are 11
believed to be down in the DRV. 12

5. Night SAR operations will not be conducted. 13

B. GULF OF TONKIN

1. A rescue attempt will be made when the aircraft is down 15
and it is evident a reasonable chance exists to rescue per- 16
sonnel. 17

2. No rescue attempt will be made if undue risk to SAR 18
aircraft and personnel is apparent. 19

3. No overt rescue attempt will be made if personnel are 20
believed to be down in the DRV. 21

4. US SAR operations in support of OMA 34A operations will be con- 22
ducted in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin a 23
minimum of 12 miles from the DRV coast or offshore islands. 24

5. US SAR operations will not be undertaken in support of 25
34A maritime operations in cases involving the DRV. 26
DRV forces.

6 US SAR resources committed in or over international 1
 waters of the Gulf of Tonkin will be provided air and naval 2
 surface cover sufficient to insure protection of the US SAR 3
 force from hostile interference. Rules of engagement for the 4
 protective force will be the same as the rules of engagement 5
 for other US forces operating in Southeast Asia. 6

7 Rescue attempts will be made only when information exists 7
 that an aircraft or surface craft is in distress in or over 8
 international waters of the Gulf of Tonkin. 9

8 SAR operations by air and naval surface or subsurface 10
 craft may be conducted at night at the discretion of the 11
 commanders concerned. Air cover will be provided ^{US} Navy surface 12
 craft as required. 13