

59. National Security Study Memorandum 37¹

Washington, April 10, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Vietnam

As indicated in NSDM 9 of April 1, 1969,² the President has directed the preparation of certain studies on Vietnam. He has asked that the following papers be prepared by the interdepartmental Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam and submitted to the NSC Review Group by the dates indicated.

Phased Withdrawals

a. *Mutual Withdrawal*

This paper should examine the modalities of mutual withdrawal, whether agreed to publicly or privately by both sides, tacit, or de facto. It should cover timetables, phasing, types of personnel, regroupment, local cease fires and any other relevant subjects. Military, logistic, territorial and political factors and implications should be considered. (May 16, 1969)

b. *Vietnamizing the War*

This paper should examine the modalities of US withdrawals under conditions of our progressively turning over combat efforts to the South Vietnamese in the absence of reciprocal enemy withdrawals. It should cover timetables, phasing, types of personnel, regroupment, and substitution of South Vietnamese forces. Military, logistic, territorial, and political factors and implications should be considered.

This study should reflect the findings of the preliminary report of the Secretary of Defense on a specific timetable for Vietnamizing the war. (June 13, 1969) (See NSSM 36)³

¹ Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H-142, NSSM Files, NSSM 37. Top Secret; Sensitive. A copy was sent to General Wheeler.

² Document 51.

³ Document 58.

Verification for Mutual Withdrawal

This paper should examine various means and mechanisms for verifying the process and completion of mutual withdrawals, whether agreed to publicly or privately by both sides, tacit, or de facto.⁴ It should set forth the advantages and disadvantages of various types of verification machinery including joint belligerent commissions, reactivation of the ICC, and creation of new international groups (such as an Asian body). The paper should include a discussion of our unilateral capability to verify withdrawals drawing on all sources of information. It should consider how agreed arrangements can usefully supplement our unilateral capabilities. (May 16, 1969)

Political Settlement for South Vietnam

This study should explore various types of political settlement within South Vietnam and the possible US role concerning these questions. The paper should examine all feasible options, including elections at all levels, sharing of governmental power before and/or after elections, constitutional considerations, agreed or de facto territorial accommodations, decentralization of government power. The study should discuss the feasibility of each alternative and the likely attitudes of the GVN, the various segments of the South Vietnamese populace, the NLF, and Hanoi. It should evaluate the likely evolution within South Vietnam under alternative arrangements. Finally, the possible US role—in Vietnam as well as in the negotiations—in achieving a political settlement should be covered. (May 16, 1969)

International Guarantees

The paper should explore the subject of international guarantees for

- mutual withdrawal
- political settlement in South Vietnam
- the DMZ
- any other appropriate aspects of an overall Vietnam settlement.

In so doing, the study should be consistent with the separate papers on mutual withdrawal, verification for mutual withdrawal, political settlement for SVN, and our policy on the DMZ. This paper should

⁴ In a May 1 memorandum to Rogers, Laird, and Helms, Kissinger amended NSSM 37 to read: “the specification for a paper on ‘Verification for Mutual Withdrawal’ should be amended by adding the following sentences after the first sentence: ‘In addition, the paper should examine the requirements for verifying that there is no resumption of infiltration in the future, in a post-withdrawal situation. For both purposes, the means and mechanisms for verifying should include a careful discussion of manpower and logistic requirements. The paper should set forth. . .’” (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H-142, NSSM Files, NSSM 37)

discuss the advantages and disadvantages of attempting to achieve international guarantees, and ways to negotiate them—e.g., at Paris, in a follow-on international conference, etc. (June 13, 1969)

Henry A. Kissinger

60. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon¹

Washington, April 15, 1969.

SUBJECT

Memorandum of Conversation with Dobrynin April 14, 1969

After an exchange of pleasantries and a somewhat lengthy discussion of the Middle East (reported separately),² the discussion turned to Vietnam. I asked Dobrynin whether he had had any reaction from Moscow to our last conversation. He said he had not, but that he was aware of a conversation Zorin had had with Lodge.

I then said that the President had wished me to convey his thoughts on Vietnam to Moscow. We had followed the discussions in Paris with great interest and considerable patience. As Lodge had already pointed out to Zorin, it was very difficult to negotiate when the other side constantly accused us of insincerity, when every private meeting so far had been initiated by us, and when every proposition was put forward on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The President had therefore decided to make one more direct approach on the highest level before drawing the conclusion that the war could only be ended by unilateral means. The President's personal word should be a guarantee of sincerity. After showing Dobrynin the talking points and the President's initials, I read them to him. He took copious notes, stopping every once in awhile to ask for an explanation. When I said we wanted to have the negotiations concluded within two months, Dobrynin said that if this proposal was feasible at all, we would be able to tell after the first week of negotiations whether they would lead anywhere. When I got through, Dobrynin asked whether I was saying that unless

¹ Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/HAK, 1969 [part 2]. Secret; Nodis. A handwritten note on the memorandum reads: "Back from President, 4/16/69."

² Attached but not printed.