

~~TOP SECRET~~

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS  
Date: 21 DEC 2011 Authority: EO 13526  
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MDR: 12 -M- 0414

CHIEF (28)

11 February 1969

(33)

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

SUBJECT: Inquiry Regarding the Short Term Conduct of our  
Military Operations in Vietnam

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL  
Authority: EO 13526  
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS  
Date: DEC 21 2017

I appreciate your sending me a copy of the memorandum from the President concerning our military operations in South Vietnam. As I have already mentioned to you, I think that we must be very careful about the way in which this kind of matter is handled.

As a substantive matter, I would hope that the President will be assured that everything possible is being done with our present resources to apply military pressure on the enemy in South Vietnam. Indeed, the increase in recent weeks in the number of Americans killed in action, to nearly 200 per week, is largely attributable to our intensive efforts to gain contact with major enemy units. Although these efforts have been largely unsuccessful, they necessarily entail continuing casualties. I believe we must be sensitive to the incremental and total costs involved in our operations as well as to the marginal benefits.

While we have been successful, in the main, in deterring further enemy offensives of major proportions over the past few months, we should not assume that we can absolutely prevent widespread attacks. There is always the possibility that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces may attempt to launch some further offensive at some point in time. If they do so, General Abrams is confident that their attacks will be repulsed with heavy losses. At the same time, it should be recognized that continued application of maximum military pressure in South Vietnam cannot be expected to produce any significant change in the military situation over any short run period of time.

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Downgraded to Secret  
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