

## "No. 52 Vietnam" NSA Memorandum, May 11, 1961

The White House  
Washington  
May 11, 1961

National Security Action Memorandum No. 52

TO: The Secretary of State

The President today reviewed the report of the Viet-Nam Task Force, entitled "Program of Action to Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam." Subject to amendments or revisions which he may wish to make after providing opportunity for a further discussion at the next meeting of the National Security Council, now scheduled for May 19, the President has made the following decisions on the basis of this report:

1. The U.S. objective and concept of operations stated in the report are approved: to prevent Communist domination of South Vietnam; to create in that country a viable and increasingly democratic society, and to initiate, on an accelerated basis, a series of mutually supporting actions of a military, political, economic, psychological and covert character designed to achieve this objective.
2. The approval given for specific military actions by the President at the National Security Council meeting on April 29, 1961, is confirmed.
3. Additional actions listed at pages 4 and 5 of the Task Force Report are authorized, with the objective of meeting the increased security threat resulting from the new situation along the frontier between Laos and Vietnam. In particular, the President directs an assessment of the military utility of a further increase in GVN forces from 170,000 to 200,000, together with an assessment of the parallel political and fiscal implications.
4. The President directs full examination by the Defense Department, under the guidance of the Director of the continuing Task Force on Vietnam, of the size and composition of forces which would be desirable in the case of a possible commitment of U.S. forces to Vietnam. The diplomatic setting within which this action might be taken should also be examined.
5. The U.S. will seek to increase the confidence of President Diem and his government in the United States by a series of actions and messages relating to the trip of Vice President Johnson. The U.S. will attempt to strengthen President Diem's popular support within Viet-Nam by reappraisal and negotiation, under the direction of Ambassador Nolting. Ambassador Nolting is also requested to recommend any necessary reorganization of the Country Team for these purposes.
6. The U.S. will negotiate in appropriate ways to improve Vietnam's relationship with other countries, especially Cambodia, and its standing in world opinion.

7. The Ambassador is authorized to begin negotiations looking toward a new bilateral arrangement with Vietnam, but no firm commitment will be made to such an arrangement without further review by the President.
8. The U.S. will undertake economic programs in Viet-Nam with a view to both short term immediate impact and a contribution to the longer range economic viability of the country, and the specific actions proposed on pages 12 and 13 of the Task Force Report are authorized.
9. The U.S. will strengthen its efforts in the psychological field as recommended on pages 14 and 15 of the Task Force Report.
10. The program for covert actions outlined on page 15 of the Task Force Report is approved.
11. These directions will be supported by appropriate budgetary action, but the President reserves judgment on the levels of funding proposed on pages 15 and 16 of the Task Force Report and in the funding annex.
12. Finally, the President approves the continuation of a special Task Force on Vietnam, established in and directed by the Department of State under Sterling J. Cottrell as Director, and Chalmers B. Wood as Executive Officer.

McGeorge Bundy

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