

## 73. National Security Decision Memorandum 23<sup>1</sup>

Washington, September 16, 1969.

TO

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

SUBJECT

Vietnam Special Studies Group

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H-211, National Security Decision Memoranda, NSDM 23. Top Secret. A copy was sent to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In order to more systematically assess the facts upon which Vietnam policy decisions should be based, the President has directed the formation of a Vietnam Special Studies Group.<sup>2</sup>

This group will:

- sponsor and direct on a continuous basis systematic analyses of U.S. programs and activities in Vietnam,
- undertake special analytical studies on a priority basis as required to support broad policy and related program decisions,
- provide a forum for and encourage systematic interagency analysis of U.S. programs and activities in Vietnam.

The Group will meet as necessary to initiate and review studies and to supervise the preparations of issues papers for consideration by the President and the National Security Council. The Group will conduct its affairs without prejudice to the existing interdepartmental framework concerned with day-to-day operational matters on Vietnam.

The membership of the Vietnam Special Studies Group shall include:

The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
(Chairman)

The Under Secretary of State  
The Deputy Secretary of Defense  
The Director of Central Intelligence  
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Depending on the issue under consideration, other agencies shall be represented at the discretion of the Chairman.

**Henry A. Kissinger**

---

<sup>2</sup> Kissinger proposed establishing the group in a September 5 memorandum to the President in which he cited six examples from 1962–1968 of “how frequently officials have let their preconceptions about Vietnam lead them astray even though a careful and objective analysis of readily available facts would have told them differently.” He then listed six issues that needed “careful consideration [as] to whether we have marshaled and analyzed all the available evidence,” and proposed that the Vietnam Special Studies Group “give continuous direction to the analyses.” For text of the memorandum, see *Foreign Relations*, 1969–1976, volume VI, Vietnam, January 1969–July 1970, Document 115.