

suggest, to move to give us a tough problem. K said if Xuan Thuy comes back from Hanoi without anything, then we know they are out to break us and he will be back in the next few days. If the long road had a chance of success, they should keep us on it. They always have open to them that once we are down to lower figures, we will lose our combat effectiveness and then they will hit us. The President said we'll see." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 360, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

123. National Security Decision Memorandum 24¹

Washington, September 17, 1969.

TO

The Vice President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Attorney General
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT

Vietnam

As a result of the September 12 meeting on Vietnam,² the President has directed that:

1. Following Ambassador Bunker's return to Saigon, immediate discussions be undertaken with appropriate representatives of the Government of Vietnam with the purpose of determining specific conditions which the GVN considers essential for acceptance of a "Cease-fire." The discussions should be conducted in response to initiatives already taken by the GVN on this subject and should avoid any hint of pressure by the U.S. Government on the South Vietnamese. The views of the South Vietnamese Government should be forwarded to the President as soon as the discussions permit.

2. U.S. officials refrain from public discussion of "Ceasefire" except as required within the framework of the Paris negotiations.

¹ Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 363, Subject Files, NSDMs. Top Secret; Sensitive.

² Document 120.

3. Future decisions on U.S. troop withdrawals be based on full consideration of the three criteria previously enunciated by the President and decisions will be made on an incremental basis as the situation dictates. U.S. officials dealing with the press should therefore be instructed to avoid speculation on future plans, deadlines or timetables for the reduction of the U.S. presence in Vietnam.

Henry A. Kissinger

124. National Security Study Memorandum 74¹

Washington, September 17, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Director, U.S. Information Agency

SUBJECT

Planning for Laos

The President has noted that the next crisis in Laos may come during or before the next dry season starting about November. If the Communists push hard militarily or bring pressure on Souvanna Phouma, they may endanger the political balance in Vientiane or force Souvanna into a compromise which leaves our interests unprotected. In order to forestall that eventuality in so far as possible, and to meet it promptly if it arises, he has requested that the following three inter-related studies be carried out:

A. Prepare a paper as to what our behavior will be if the Communists upset the present fragile stability in Laos. Among others, the following questions should be addressed:

(1) At what point do we decide that we no longer have an interest in preservation of the 1962 agreement?

(2) How can we keep from reaching that point? i.e., are there means within our current level of military involvement to persuade the Communists that it is too dangerous to upset the balance? Can we

¹ Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 365, Subject Files, NSSM. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusive; Eyes Only. A copy was sent to Wheeler.