

mistakes. It was a matter of opportunity: if they saw the possibility of taking on another target besides Vietnamization, they would do so.

Dr. Lynn remarked that some people were worried over the extent to which progress in the countryside actually represented accommodation. How could we know? Sir Robert said that there was less accommodation now than in the past, and this could be seen in the district towns. He did not elaborate. Mr. Palmer added that there was a time factor involved—when peasants returned to the rice paddies after a district was opened up, the RF/PF then moved in. There was more terrorism in the Delta than in other areas but elsewhere it was less easy to maintain a threat. He mentioned, too, that the province chiefs were good. Sir Robert endorsed Mr. Palmer's comment, saying that the province chiefs throughout the country "were the best yet."

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#### 154. National Security Decision Memorandum 36<sup>1</sup>

Washington, December 3, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT

Holiday Truces, Cease-fire and Troop Withdrawals

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<sup>1</sup> Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H-213, NSDM Files, NSDM 36. Top Secret; Sensitive. Attached to this memorandum is a 42-page draft paper, January 15, 1970, entitled "An Agreed General Cease-Fire in Vietnam," prepared by the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam and transmitted to the Chairman of the NSC Review Group by Sullivan. The paper discusses the major issues involved in an agreed general cease-fire, focusing on the conditions the United States should insist be met in order for it to accept such a cease-fire. The paper also identifies various options and identifies those that represent the minimum condition acceptable to each agency on the Ad Hoc Group. The President met with Rogers and Laird and apparently Mitchell (although he is not listed as a participant) on December 1 from 4:50 to 6:30 p.m. (President's Daily Diary, December 1; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files) Prior to the meeting, Kissinger called Laird on the telephone and asked him "to take a strong line" at the meeting opposing coupling the holiday cease-fire and a permanent cease-fire. Kissinger also called Mitchell and asked him at the President's request "to come out against" the "power play by State to ram their permanent ceasefire through." (Notes of telephone conversations, December 1, 3:15 and 3:22 p.m.; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 361, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) No other record of the meeting has been found.

In response to the Secretary of State's memorandum of November 28, 1969<sup>2</sup> and subsequent discussions with you, the President has made the following decisions with respect to holiday truces, cease-fire and troop withdrawals:

1. He wishes to avoid speculation that the U.S. Government is considering new proposals regarding a permanent negotiated cease-fire in South Vietnam and he does not want the issue of brief holiday truces linked with initiatives for a permanent negotiated cease-fire.

2. The President has approved the announcement of a 24-hour truce for Christmas and a 24-hour truce for New Years, with the announcement to be made in Saigon in coordination with the GVN.

3. Until the receipt of specific guidance to the contrary, there is to be no departmental speculation or comment whatsoever to the press on the subject of further troop withdrawals from Vietnam.

The decision regarding a permanent negotiated cease-fire should not preclude continuation of the studies under way on this subject which are designed to formulate the U.S. position and the conditions which we should insist be met if a cease-fire were to be proposed by the other side. It is contemplated, however, that the results of these studies, to include the views of the GVN, will be forwarded through the National Security Council framework for formal consideration by the NSC before discussions of any type would be undertaken with Hanoi's representatives in Paris or elsewhere.

**Henry A. Kissinger**

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<sup>2</sup> In this memorandum to Nixon, Rogers sought the President's urgent decision on U.S. policy regarding the traditional observance of the Christmas and New Year holidays in Vietnam. Rogers' recommendation was to endorse a truce from Christmas Day through New Year's Day, although he was willing to accept two separate truces—48 hours at Christmas, and 24 hours at New Year's. Rogers also stated that the United States ought to offer to begin negotiations on a longstanding cease-fire rather than merely restate its willingness to do so, and to make this offer at the same time as the announcement of the holiday truce. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET) At Kissinger's request Laird sent these views to Kissinger on November 28. Laird wrote that "under no circumstances should [the United States] extend holiday truces beyond the proposed 24-hour period," and they should "be kept completely separate from that of a negotiated permanent cease-fire." Laird also recommended the United States announce in Paris its readiness to begin immediate negotiations toward a formal agreement on a permanent cease-fire based on the eight points listed in Nixon's May 14 speech. Lastly, Laird believed that "simultaneous proposals for holiday truces and for opening negotiations on a permanent cease-fire might short-circuit pressure to extend the truces and at the same time give us a psychological advantage—both domestically and internationally." (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 66, Vietnam Subject Files, 2–D–A General Abrams Nov. II, Cease-fire, Vol. I, 1969)