

69

TOP SECRET - Sensitive

On the judgment that it will not "flash" the Soviet Union or China -- we should follow Course d (fast escalation). Failure to resume would serve none of our purposes and make us appear irresolute. A "flat line" program would reduce infiltration (but not below PAVN/VC needs) and would placate GVN and domestic pressures. But this is not good enough. A fast (as compared with a slow) escalation serves a double purpose -- (1) it promises quickly to interdict effectively, i.e., to cut the DRV level of infiltration to a point below the VC/PAVN requirements, and (2) it promises to move events fast enough so that the Chinese "take-over" of North Vietnam resulting from our program will be a visible phenomenon, one which the DRV may choose to reject. There is some indication that China is "smothering North Vietnam with a loving embrace." North Vietnam probably does not like this but, since it is being done by "salami slices" in reaction to our "salami-slice" bombing program, North Vietnam is not inspired to do anything about it. This condition, if no other, argues for escalating the war against North Vietnam more rapidly -- so that the issue of Chinese encroachment will have to be faced by Hanoi in bigger bites, and so that the DRV may elect for a settlement rather than for greater Chinese infringement of North Vietnam's independence. The objections to the "fast" escalation are (1) that it runs serious risks of "flashing" the Chinese and Soviets and (2) that it gets the bombing program against the North "out of phase" with progress in the South. With respect to the first objection, there are disagreements as to the likelihood of such a "flash"; as for the second one, there is no reason why the two programs should be "in phase" if, as is the case, the main objective is to interdict infiltration, not to "persuade the unpersuadable."

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9. Criticisms of the program. There are a number of criticisms of the program of bombing North Vietnam:

a. Cost in men and materiel. The program of bombing the North through 1965 cost 100(?) airmen (killed and missing or prisoner) and 178 US or South Vietnamese aircraft (costing about \$250 (?) million) in addition to the ammunition and other operating costs. The losses and costs in 1966 are expected to be 200(?) airmen and 300(?) aircraft.