

notably in the direction of increased patrolling and surveillance, greater attention to publicizing the Commission's findings and expanding the Commission's representation in the DRVN.

Direct Hostilities

3. It is obvious that the mere existence of the Commission in Vietnam, even in the present situation when its functions may have been pared down below that contemplated in the Cease-Fire Agreement, will continue to pose an obstacle to resort by either the North or South to open warfare. We have no repeat no evidence to support any suggestion that an actual invasion is planned by either side although the State Department inform us that they have apparently reliable reports that the DRVN has now stationed two battalions in the area just North of the demarcation line and that there is some indication that the DRVN may be increasing its air arm. Neither of these developments however can be accepted as an unequivocal indication of aggressive intent. Furthermore, our impression is that the DRVN would see no repeat no value in direct action at the present juncture, when it is already engaged in support of the Pathet Lao and when its indirect intervention in South Vietnam appears to be so successful. Nevertheless, as State Department officials have on occasion remarked to us, the presence of an international body in Vietnam will continue to have deterrent value should the North show signs of wanting to resort to open force. For this reason alone we should think it wise that every effort be made to maintain and strengthen the Commission's standing and effectiveness.

Indirect Intervention

4. The deterring of indirect intervention would seem to involve three areas of Commission action; investigation of subversive activities in the South, increased surveillance, and quicker and more effective publicity for Commission reports and activities.

Investigation and Surveillance

5. As a result of the GRVN letter of October 24, the ICSC is already seized of an important problem of subversion and covert activities in South Vietnam. Because of the clandestine nature of such activities, however, it seems obvious that in a great many instances the Commission will be able to do no repeat no more than pass a retrospective judgement about what has happened. This may have some deterrent effect, but probably very little, given the already complicated and vulnerable situation in South Vietnam, both from the military and the political point of view. It might therefore be useful to review the history of the Commission's operations in Vietnam to see whether there is any prospect of increasing its capacity to extend surveillance of traffic across the borders of South Vietnam. While such surveillance as the Commission might provide might not repeat not in itself put a stop to such traffic, it would we think tend to reinforce the deterrent effect of other Commission activities and in any event serve to contain the problem in South Vietnam within limits and so offer some prospects of success to the GRVN in its drive against the Viet Cong.

6. You will already be aware that this problem has not repeat not been overlooked by the State Department. Our impression is that Assistant Secretary Harriman had this problem in mind in our discussion with him on December 7 (see paragraph 2(b) of our telegram 3722 December 8). The Vietnam desk has also intimated that this problem deserves serious attention. As indicated in our telegram 3635 November 30,† there is reference to the possibility of despatching an investigation group into the demilitarized zone. In paragraph 6 of Candel Saigon telegram 252 December 9,† there is reference to requesting the Commission to undertake an inspection of the Laos border area. Finally, on two recent occasions, the Vietnam desk has mentioned patrolling the demarcation line at the Seventeenth Parallel. (From these conversations it appears to be the view of State Department officials that proposals of some two years ago for increasing patrols along the demarcation line fell through because the DRVN