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19 April 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Comments on Gilpatric Proposal on Organization and Administration of Special Operations in Critical Overseas Areas

1. I attach a brief comment from Abbot Smith indicating that the national estimating machinery can and should play a key role in determining what countries are critical. If the Gilpatric proposal is adopted, I would consider that a formal NIE is highly desirable before you ask the President to make a determination of "criticality." This might well have to be a crash estimate, but there is no reason why we should not do the work if the very top levels of Government are going to get involved in the question.

2. Basically, the proposal leaves me quite cold. It seems premised on an overly formalized view as to the precision with which situations in countries and areas can be categorized. I am also concerned that every desk officer with reasonably tough problems before him would conspire and contrive to get his country designated "critical" in the fear that otherwise his area would be relegated to a low-priority status.

3. There is also a strange implication that coordination of operations is only needed in areas of outstanding criticality.

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4. If informality is to be the rule, why not let your Thursday lunch group take the place of the Critical Areas Board? I have no particular objection to task forces headed by a full-time director provided it is recognized that the latter must have the seniority of approximately an assistant secretary or he won't be able to get his job done.

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6. All in all, I do not regard this proposal as in the same class with the Jackson, Jackson, and Jackson report of eight years ago.

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ROBERT AMORY, JR.
Deputy Director (Intelligence)

Attachment:
Comments by Abbot Smith,
dated 19 April 1961

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the DDP for Executive Branch Matters

SUBJECT: Special Operations in Critical Areas

REFERENCE: Gilpatric Memorandum to the DCI, dated 17 April 1961, same subject

1. Informal comments of the CA Staff regarding reference are submitted herewith. Our comments are limited to that portion of referenced paper which sets forth the general organizational concept for dealing with "special operations" in critical areas. We understand Dez FitzGerald is preparing comments on the particular application of the concept in Vietnam.

2. At the outset, the use of the term "special operations" in reference is misleading and we would like to see another term substituted. "Special operations" normally carries a clandestine connotation. Apparently, this meaning is not intended in the paper where it is used to apply to all operations conducted by State, Defense, CIA, USIA and ICA, the proposed members of the "Critical Areas Board." As used in the paper, it may be all-encompassing to include all U. S. Governmental activities abroad.

3. The proposal for a "Critical Areas Board" is interesting and the document setting forth the concept contains much with which one might agree. The proposed solution for deficiencies in the decision-making machinery, however, may raise more

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problems than it solves. Basically, the proposal seems to challenge the President's recent decision, as we understand it, to center in State responsibilities for over-all planning and coordination of U. S. foreign policy as well as operations. The proposal itself seems to advocate a combination of the roles of the NSC and OCB in the new Critical Areas Board, although a close reading of the document suggests that the functions of the new Board would be restricted to giving the President opinions (with dissents) as to whether an area should be considered one of crisis or opportunity. (Parenthetically the paper refers, from time to time, to countries of opportunities but seems really concerned only with current or potential crisis areas. In our opinion, we might have less of the latter if we paid more attention to the former.) After the President determines that a country or area is critical, he appoints a Task Force (T. F.) which thereafter seems to run the show and the role of the Critical Areas Board becomes obscure. It is not clear from the proposal what, if any, role the Board or in fact, the heads of the Departments or Agencies will have on:

a. The selection of the representatives from their organizations - (The President . . . " will establish a Task Force . . . One representative from each department and agency will serve . . . ")

b. The selection of the Director of the T. F. - ("The President will select . . . a Director, who shall serve full time . . . and be releived of all other . . . duties.")

c. The performance or reporting of the T. F. - (". . . the T. F. shall . . . prepare a plan, . . . supervise, . . . monitor, etc. . . . and keep the President and his major advisors informed.")

4. The proposal also, (in some cases, aptly) raises pointed questions about the over-all competence of Chiefs of Mission to discharge responsibilities assigned under Executive Order 10983, since in some cases, they have "not been provided with needed assistance." Thus, the Country Team concept may be discarded and a 3-man task force dispatched to the field.

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This T. F. would appear to be both over and under the COM or a chief designated by the President to administer the "plan" if "the COM cannot or should not be responsible . . . "

5. The whole document rather forthrightly challenges past Executive Branch procedures and indirectly questions the efficacy of attempts of the present Administration to streamline those procedures. Whether the proposal transmitted in reference will resolve or compound past or present difficulties is, in our opinion, open to question. It tends to institutionalize the task force concept to which increasing resort has been made in U. S. Government practice in recent years. It certainly tends to draw things closer to the White House and, unless carefully refined, the formalization of the Task Force procedure may lead to by-passing the heads of the departments and agencies it seeks to coordinate. Basically, however, this controversy seems to be one primarily between Defense and State and one which we should enjoy watching from the side-lines but not as active participants.

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Chief
Covert Action Staff

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19 April 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: DDP/EBM

SUBJECT: Defense Department Paper on Special Operations in Critical Areas

1. I agree with the Director that by and large this paper is not too bad and would not be harmful to us however much it may precipitate battling between Defense Department and State.

2. The principal lack in the paper seems to me to be lack of a definition of "special operation," particularly as that may apply to ICA and USIA, to say nothing of ourselves.

3. The idea of a "critical areas board" seems to me a pretty good one and the appointment of task forces for areas to be determined critical also seems to me sound and in line with current ad hoc practices. The idea of supplying chiefs of mission with a special three-man staff is reminiscent with the frequently suggested concept of supplying chiefs of mission with a chief of staff who is responsible for coordination. I would think that the three-man staff concept should be more flexible so that in a relatively uncomplicated area a single person could be designated whereas in highly complex areas an even larger group than three might be required.

4. On top of page 4 the statement is made "Recently, one person has been designated to monitor all U. S. special operations in Laos." There is as you know a Laos task force and a designated chairman but I was not aware that a particular individual had been selected to perform the office described.

5. The concept set forth on page 5 of substituting the "best qualified person" for the Ambassador in certain situations appears

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on replacement

to me to be wholly unsound. A little greater flexibility in the movement of Ambassadors should suffice.

6. With regard to the specific paper on Vietnam, I believe the first and second goals stated on page two, i. e. pacification and stabilization, are wholly sound objectives. The third objective, unification, seems to be infinitely long range and perhaps very dangerous if taken seriously.

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Desmond FitzGerald
Chief, Far East Division

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