

objectives); (3) graduated military and political pressures as proposed by the NSC Working Group (with inconclusive objectives and high risk as the uncertain pace could encourage enemy buildup); (4) graduated military pressure to reduce North Vietnamese capability to support the insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos (probably achieving U.S. objectives); and (5) rapid and forceful military pressure (involving the least risk, casualties, and costs, insuring less possibility of enemy miscalculation and intervention, and most likely to achieve U.S. objectives). The JCS recommended adoption of the fifth course of action.¹⁷

(TS) Having examined JCS and other agency viewpoints, President Johnson on 2 December issued another policy guide for South Vietnam. It followed most closely a sixth view submitted by the Office of International Security Affairs in OSD. The President concluded that South Vietnam's problems were two--government instability and Viet Cong insurgency as aided by the North. But the two problems were of unequal importance. Viet Cong actions were only contributory whereas a stable government in Saigon, in accordance with recent policy, was of paramount importance. Thus the United States could not risk preventing its establishment. This was the antithesis of the long-held Air Force--and lately--JCS position that gave top priority to ending North Vietnam's support for the insurgency.¹⁸

(U) After this decision, the President instructed Ambassador Taylor to "consult urgently" with South Vietnam's leaders to improve