

20 June 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE DEFENSE MEMBER OF THE NSC PLANNING BOARD
THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE JCS FOR NSC AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Tentative Army Position on "Issues in Southeast Asia" (U)

1. Allied vs Neutral Countries.

a. Question: To what extent should the degree of alignment with the Free World determine the U. S. attitude toward the countries of Southeast Asia, particularly as regards economic, technical and military assistance?

b. Answer:

(1) U. S. attitudes toward the countries of Southeast Asia should be governed by U. S. national objectives. U. S. objectives must be based upon what is obtainable and therefore will vary from country to country. These objectives range from retention of positive support for U. S. positions to the prevention of any additional Communist influence in neutral nations.

(2) The above notwithstanding, it is generally in U. S. interests to give preference to Allied nations who share in the belief that regional alliances are the only effective way to deter further Communist aggression. This should include special consideration for U. S. allies in the granting of economic, military and technical assistance. However, this should not preclude the granting of a substantial amount of aid to a neutral nation in preference to an allied nation, when it has been determined to be in the national interest to do so. In granting aid to neutral nations the US should declare its respect for the opinions of those nations, but the US should at the same time make clear that it does not agree with the logic of their positions.

2. Relative Weight of Assistance Programs.

a. Question: What proportion of U. S. resources available for assistance to Southeast Asia should be allocated to economic and technical assistance as against military assistance? Should greater emphasis be placed on operating an expanding number of technically-competent, pro-Western leaders and on "political warfare" activities, at the expense of economic assistance, if necessary?

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