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Approved For Release 2004/11/29 : CIA-RDP77M00144R000500080023-7

OLC 75-2576

14 October 1975

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Briefings of Congress on the PHOENIX Program

Congressman Dellums has requested specific information on who in Congress and OMB were briefed prior to the execution of "Project PHOENIX" and the CORDS Program.

1. The PHOENIX or PHUNG HOANG Program was a Vietnamese Government internal security program designed to neutralize the Vietcong infrastructure (VCI). The Government of Vietnam called it PHUNG HOANG and the American side called it PHOENIX. The program was first established in December 1967 by decree of the Vietnamese Prime Minister with the aim of coordinating all efforts against the VCI. In 1968, the program was made more official by a decree of the Vietnamese President. This provided for the establishment of an organizational structure to coordinate collection of information and the conduct of activities targetted against the VCI. As such, it involved the activities of various U.S. Government agencies working in Vietnam. The overall direction of the American side of the PHOENIX Program was the responsibility of the Deputy Commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command of Vietnam for Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS). Accordingly, the PHOENIX Program was not a CIA program, but rather a program in which a number of U.S. Government agencies, including the CIA, and counterpart Vietnamese organizations made contributions.

2. The CIA, therefore, did not brief the Congress on the PHOENIX Program but rather briefed the Congress on its activities in Vietnam which contributed to satisfying the objective of the PHOENIX Program. When the program was first instituted in December 1967, the Agency had several ongoing activities which later contributed to PHOENIX. A review of the files of 1965 to 1966 showed that the Congress was briefed on certain activities which contributed to the PHOENIX effort on the dates indicated:

a. 28 July 1965 - A meeting was held with a staff member of the House Appropriations Committee.

b. 21 September 1965 - Mr. Helms accompanied by William Colby met with the Mahon Subcommittee of House Appropriations.

c. 8 February 1966 - The Director met with the CIA Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee.

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d. 9 February 1966 - The Director met with the CIA Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.

e. 5 April 1966 - The Director met with the CIA Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees.

3. Regarding the Office of Management and Budget, CIA budget and supplemental request are discussed and cleared with OMB before it goes to Congress. Fund requirements for Agency activities contributing to the PHOENIX Program were included in CIA budget and supplemental request. For example, on 23 July 1965, Admiral Raborn met with Mr. Charles Schultze, Director of BOB to discuss Agency budget for FY 1967 through 1970. The discussion included a review of requirements for Vietnam. Monies were requested for political action, advanced political action, counter terror and census grievance teams.

4. The foregoing does not constitute an exhaustive search of all briefings of Congress on CIA's connection with the PHOENIX Program. The findings as indicated above show that the Congress and OMB were told of CIA activities in Vietnam which later contributed to the PHOENIX Program.

5. A background on the PHOENIX Program and how it fitted into the overall U.S. Government effort in Vietnam can be found in the Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 2nd Session, on Civil Operations and Rural Development Support Program. The title of the Hearing is "Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970."

Distribution:
Original - Review Staff
1 - OLC Subject
1 - OLC Chrono
cc: Chief, EA Division, w/att.
OLC:RC:cmw (typed 24 October 1975) [redacted]

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