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Secret/EXDIS

TO: ITF - Ambassador Brown
FROM: ITF - D.F. Lambertson
SUBJECT: Discussion Item for WASAG: Coastal Evacuation

We presently have a sea-lift capacity in the waters off Viet-Nam of 58,000 (12 MSC charter vessels). Most are presently in the vicinity of Vung Tau, relatively close to shore, and some are picking up any Vietnamese who reach them by small boat. We need to decide whether this is the best way to use those ships, or whether they can somehow be employed to allow for a more selective pickup of genuinely high-risk Vietnamese. The problem will become more acute immediately following the fall of the GVN, when the refugee airlift will be ended but while many thousands of high-risk or relatively high-risk Vietnamese are still able to use small coastal vessels or short-range aircraft to escape.

Options

We have essentially four alternative courses of action:

- 1) Active posture: The MSC vessels would be deployed in the vicinity of likely egress routes and would actively patrol designated sectors. They would move toward any vessels they sight and take passengers aboard. (The ships would operate just beyond the three-mile limit.)
- 2) Close-in, but passive: The ships would again be spotted in the vicinity of egress routes, from Vung Tau to Phu Quoc, at or just beyond the three-mile limit. However

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