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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

JCSM-480-67
26 August 1967

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Use of Riot Control Agent CS in Combat
Aircrew Recovery Operations in Laos and
North Vietnam

1. COMUSMACV has requested approval to use riot control agent CS (tear gas) in combat aircrew recovery operations in Laos and North Vietnam (NVN). The American Embassies, Saigon and Vientiane, concurred in the request for use in Laos, subject to approval by Washington agencies. CINCPAC recommended that authority be granted for use of CS in Laos as a measure to enhance the recovery of downed airmen. However, because of possible political implications, CINCPAC did not concur with the MACV proposal to use CS in NVN.

2. A large number of downed combat aircrew personnel have been captured by hostile forces in Laos and NVN prior to the arrival of recovery helicopters. In some instances, recovery methods currently employed have not prevented the capture of downed aircrews.

3. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that the use of CS to assist in recovery of downed aircrews would provide a better suppressive capability than present strafing methods alone and would significantly increase the probability of recovering aircrews. In addition to the principal advantage, there are ancillary benefits which would accrue. The use of CS as proposed would improve the survivability of aircraft participating in search and recovery operations by more effectively suppressing groundfire; the potential hazard to nearby civilian noncombatants may be significantly diminished in those situations where this temporarily disabling agent is used in conjunction with or in lieu of lethal or maiming munitions.

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4. ~~(S)~~ The use of CS as proposed is a defensive measure. The downed US crewmen would be subject to the same effects of the agent as the hostile forces and the noncombatants. Additionally, Viet Cong main forces in South Vietnam have been using irritants in their operations against US forces. These factors will tend to reduce the effects of any attempt on the part of NVN to propagandize to their advantage our use of CS in recovery operations.

5. ~~(S)~~ The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that authority be granted for the use of riot control agent CS in combat air-crew recovery operations in Laos and NVN.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:



EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff