

TELEGRAM

Foreign Service of the
United States of America

INCOMING AMEMBASSY BRASILIA POL-VIETNAM

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Control: STATE 207657

Recd: DEC 16, 1969

ACTION

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL DIPLOMATIC POSTS PRIORITY

RUMJDH/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2178

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ACTION COPY

ACTION TAKEN

PARIS ALSO TODEL 3625

FOLLOWING IS TEXT PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT ON VIETNAM MADE
AT 6 PM EST DECEMBER 15:

I HAVE ASKED FOR THIS TELEVISION TIME TONIGHT TO GIVE YOU
A PROGRESS REPORT ON OUR PLAN TO BRING A JUST PEACE IN VIET-
NAM, WHICH I DESCRIBED IN MY TELEVISION ADDRESS ON
NOVEMBER 3.

AS YOU WILL RECALL, I SAID THEN THAT WE WERE PROCEEDING IN
OUR PURSUIT FOR PEACE ON TWO FRONTS -- A PEACE SETTLEMENT
THROUGH NEGOTIATION, OR IF THAT FAILS, ENDING THE WAR THROUGH
VIETNAMIZATION, A PLAN WE HAVE DEVELOPED WITH THE SOUTH
VIETNAMESE FOR THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL FIRST OF ALL U.S.
COMBAT GROUND FORCES AND EVENTUALLY OF OTHER FORCES AND
THEIR REPLACEMENT BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES ON AN ORDERLY
SCHEDULED TIMETABLE.

I REPORT WITH REGRET TONIGHT THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO PROGRESS
WHATEVER ON THE NEGOTIATING FRONT SINCE NOVEMBER 3. THE
ENEMY STILL INSISTS ON A UNILATERAL, PRECIPITATE WITHDRAWAL
OF AMERICAN FORCES AND ON A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WHICH
WOULD MEAN THE IMPOSITION OF A COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT ON THE
PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM AGAINST THEIR WILL, AND DEFEAT AND
HUMILIATION FOR THE UNITED STATES.

THIS WE CANNOT AND WILL NOT ACCEPT.

TYPICAL OF THEIR ATTITUDE IS THEIR ABSOLUTE REFUSAL TO
TALK ABOUT THE FATE OF THE AMERICAN PRISONERS THEY HOLD AND
THEIR REFUSAL EVEN TO SUPPLY THEIR NAMES SO AS TO EASE
THE ANGUISH OF THEIR LOVED ONES IN THE UNITED STATES.
THIS CRUEL, INDEFENSIBLE ACTION IS A SHOCKING DEMONSTRATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS RECEIVED FILE

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PAGE 2 STATE 207657

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OF THE INFLEXIBLE ATTITUDE THEY HAVE TAKEN ON ALL ISSUES
AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE IN PARIS.

DESPITE THEIR ATTITUDE, HOWEVER, WE SHALL CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PARIS TALKS AND TO SEEK A NEGOTIATED PEACE -- ONE WHICH IS FAIR TO NORTH VIETNAM, FAIR TO THE UNITED STATES AND, MOST IMPORTANT, FAIR TO THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM. I HAVE INDICATED THAT ANYTHING IS NEGOTIABLE EXCEPT THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN FATE.

AS YOU KNOW, AMBASSADOR LODGE HAS HAD TO LEAVE HIS ASSIGNMENT IN PARIS BECAUSE OF PERSONAL REASONS. I HAVE DESIGNATED PHILIP HABIB, ONE OF OUR MOST EXPERIENCED FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS WHO HAS BEEN PARTICIPATING IN THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR OVER 18 MONTHS, AS THE ACTING HEAD OF OUR DELEGATION WITH THE PERSONAL RANK OF AMBASSADOR. HE HAS BEEN GIVEN FULL AUTHORITY TO DISCUSS ANY PROPOSAL THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO A JUST PEACE.

LET ME TURN NOW TO THE PROGRESS OF OUR PLAN FOR VIETNAMIZATION AND OUR TROOP WITHDRAWAL PROGRAM.

WHEN I ANNOUNCED THE TROOP WITHDRAWAL PROGRAM IN JUNE, I SAID THAT THE RATE OF WITHDRAWAL WOULD DEPEND ON THREE CRITERIA -- PROGRESS IN THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS, PROGRESS IN THE TRAINING OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES AND THE LEVEL OF ENEMY ACTIVITY.

WHILE THERE HAS BEEN NO PROGRESS ON THE NEGOTIATING FRONT I HAVE A MUCH MORE FAVORABLE REPORT TO GIVE TO YOU TONIGHT WITH REGARD TO THE TRAINING OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES.

FIRST LET ME TELL YOU HOW I REACHED THIS CONCLUSION. IN MAKING DECISIONS, I BELIEVE A PRESIDENT SHOULD LISTEN NOT ONLY TO THOSE WHO TELL HIM WHAT HE WANTS TO HEAR BUT TO THOSE WHO TELL HIM WHAT HE OUGHT TO HEAR. IT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO GET INDEPENDENT JUDGMENTS FROM INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE EXPERT ON THE FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED BUT WHO ARE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE OPERATIONS THEMSELVES. THIS IS PARTICULARLY ESSENTIAL WHEN THE LIVES OF AMERICAN MEN ARE INVOLVED.

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PAGE 3 STATE 207657

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SEVERAL MONTHS AGO I READ A BOOK BY SIR ROBERT THOMPSON, A BRITISH EXPERT WHO WAS ONE OF THE MAJOR ARCHITECTS OF THE VICTORY OVER THE COMMUNIST GUERRILLAS WHO ATTEMPTED TO TAKE OVER MALAYA IN THE 1950S. IN HIS BOOK WHICH WAS PUBLISHED JUST AS THIS ADMINISTRATION TOOK OFFICE HE WAS VERY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR. HE PARTICULARLY NOTED THE FAILURE TO PREPARE THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE TO TAKE OVER THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THEIR OWN DEFENSE.

ON OCTOBER 17 I MET WITH MR. THOMPSON AND ASKED HIM TO GO TO VIETNAM AND GIVE ME A FIRST HAND, CANDID AND COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT REPORT ON THE SITUATION THERE. AFTER FIVE WEEKS OF INTENSIVE INVESTIGATION HE GAVE ME HIS REPORT ON DECEMBER 3.

HIS FULL REPORT, WHICH MAKES SEVERAL CONSTRUCTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS, MUST REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL SINCE IT BEARS ON THE SECURITY OF OUR MEN. BUT LET ME READ TO YOU FROM HIS SUMMARY OF HIS FINDINGS.

"I WAS VERY IMPRESSED BY THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN VIETNAM AS COMPARED WITH ALL PREVIOUS VISITS AND ESPECIALLY IN THE SECURITY SITUATION, BOTH IN SAIGON AND THE RURAL AREAS.

"A WINNING POSITION IN THE SENSE OF OBTAINING A JUST PEACE (WHETHER NEGOTIATED OR NOT) AND OF MAINTAINING AN INDEPENDENT, NON-COMMUNIST SOUTH VIETNAM HAS BEEN ACHIEVED BUT WE ARE NOT YET THROUGH. WE ARE IN A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERIOD WHERE THE GREATEST NEED IS CONFIDENCE, A STEADY APPLICATION OF THE 'DO IT YOURSELF' CONCEPT WITH CONTINUING U. S. SUPPORT IN THE BACKGROUND WILL INCREASE THE CONFIDENCE ALREADY SHOWN BY MANY SOUTH VIETNAM LEADERS."

MR. THOMPSON'S REPORT, WHICH I WOULD DESCRIBE AS CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC, IS IN LINE WITH THE REPORTS I HAVE RECEIVED FROM OTHER OBSERVERS AND FROM OUR OLD CIVILIAN AND MILITARY LEADERS IN VIETNAM.

THERE IS ONE DISTURBING NEW DEVELOPMENT, HOWEVER, WITH REGARD TO ENEMY ACTIVITY. ENEMY INFILTRATION HAS INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY. IT HAS NOT YET REACHED THE POINT WHERE OUR MILITARY LEADERS BELIEVE THE ENEMY HAS DEVELOPED THE CAPABILITY TO MOUNT A MAJOR OFFENSIVE BUT WE ARE WATCHING THE SITUATION CLOSELY TO SEE WHETHER IT COULD DEVELOP TO THAT EXTENT.

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PAGE 4 STATE X 207657

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TAKING ALL THESE DEVELOPMENTS INTO CONSIDERATION, I AM ANNOUNCING TONIGHT A REDUCTION IN OUR TROOP CEILING OF 50,000 MORE U.S. TROOPS BY APRIL 15 NEXT YEAR. THIS MEANS THAT THE CELING WHICH EXISTED WHEN I TOOK OFFICE ON JANUARY 20 HAS NOW BEEN REDUCED BY 115,500 MEN. THIS REDUCTION HAS BEEN MADE WITH APPROVAL OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM, AND IN CONSULTATION WITH OTHER NATIONS WHICH HAVE COMBAT TROOPS IN VIETNAM.

THERE ARE SOME WHO BELIEVE THAT TO CONTINUE OUR WITHDRAWALS AT A TIME WHEN ENEMY INFILTRATION IS INCREASING IS A RISK WE SHOULD NOT TAKE. HOWEVER, I HAVE CONSISTENTLY SAID THAT WE MUST TAKE RISKS FOR PEACE.

AND IN THAT CONNECTION, LET ME REMIND THE LEADERS IN HANOI THAT IF INFILTRATION AND THE LEVEL OF ENEMY ACTIVITY INCREASE WHEN WE ARE REDUCING OUR FORCES, THEY ALSO WILL BE RUNNING A RISK. I REPEAT THE STATEMENT I MADE IN MY SPEECH ON NOVEMBER 3.

"HANOI COULD MAKE NO GREATER MISTAKE THAN TO ASSUME THAT AN INCREASE IN VIOLENCE WILL BE TO ITS ADVANTAGE. IF I CONCLUDE THAT INCREASED ENEMY ACTION JEOPARDIZES OUR REMAINING FORCES IN VIETNAM, I SHALL NOT HESITATE TO TAKE STRONG AND EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THAT SITUATION."

THIS REDUCTION IN OUR FORCE IS ANOTHER ORDERLY STEP IN OUR PLAN FOR PEACE IN VIETNAM.

-- ITZARKS FURTHER PROGRESS TOWARD TURNING OVER THE DEFENSE OF SOUTH VIETNAM TO THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE.

-- IT IS ANOTHER CLEAR SIGN OF OUR READINESS TO BRING AN END TO THE WAR AND TO ACHIEVE A JUST PEACE.

BEFORE CONCLUDING THIS REPORT, I WISH TO EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION TO THE GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE NATION WHO HAVE INDICATED THEIR SUPPORT FOR OUR PROGRAM FOR A JUST PEACE SINCE MY SPEECH ON NOVEMBER 3.

THIS SUPPORT WAS PARTICULARLY UNDERLINED BY THE ACTION OF THE CONGRESS IN WHICH A MAJORITY OF BOTH DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY 334 TO 55 FOR A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE PLANS FOR PEACE WHICH I ANNOUNCED ON NOVEMBER 3.

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PAGE 5 STATE 207657

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THE LEADERS IN HANOI HAVE DECLARED ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS THAT DIVISION IN THE UNITED STATES WOULD EVENTUALLY BRING THEM THE VICTORY THEY CANNOT WIN OVER OURS FIGHTING MEN IN VIETNAM. THIS DEMONSTRATION OF SUPPORT BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FOR OUR PLAN TO BRING A JUST PEACE HAS DASHED THOSE HOPES COMPLETELY.

HANOI SHOULD ABANDON ITS DREAM OF MILITARY VICTORY.

IT IS TIME FOR THEM TO JOIN US IN SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS.

THERE IS NOTHING TO BE GAINED BY DELAY.

IF HANOI IS WILLING TO TALK SERIOUSLY THEY WILL FIND US FLEXIBLE AND FORTHCOMING.

I AM GLAD THAT I WAS ABLE TO REPORT TONIGHT SOME PROGRESS IN REACHING OUR GOAL OF A JUST PEACE IN VIETNAM. AFTER FIVE YEARS OF INCREASING THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS IN VIETNAM, WE ARE BRINGING MEN HOME.

OUR CASUALTIES CONTINUE TO BE AT THE LOWEST RATE IN THREE YEARS.

BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT DESPITE THIS PROGRESS, I SHALL NOT BE SATISFIED UNTIL WE ACHIEVE THE GOAL WE ALL WANT -- AN END TO THE WAR ON A JUST AND LASTING BASIS.

THIS IS THE FIFTH CHRISTMAS WHEN AMERICANS WILL BE FIGHTING IN A WAR FAR AWAY FROM HOME.

I KNOW THAT THERE IS NOTHING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT MORE AND NOTHING I WANT MORE THAN TO SEE THE DAY COME WHEN THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF "PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN" WILL NOT BE JUST AN ELOQUENT IDEAL BUT A REALITY FOR AMERICANS AND ALL OTHERS WHO CHERISH PEACE AND FREEDOM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF OUR PLAN FOR PEACE WILL GREATLY STRENGTHEN OUR HOPES THAT WE CAN ACHIEVE THAT GOAL.

ROGERS

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