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INFORMATION

Wednesday, February 14, 1968
11:25 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Sec. Rusk's personal
statement on negotiations, designed
to pre-empt U Thant's believed position.

W. W. Rostow

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TO, MOOSE AT WHITE HOUSE
GOULDING AT DEFENSE
FROM SAGGIAN AT STATE
TEXT OF RUSK STATEMENT February 14, 1968

Questions have been asked about the connection between the possibility of negotiations for a peaceful settlement in Viet-Nam and the military operations now in progress. It should be obvious that there is a connection since both are involved in moving from hostilities to peace.

Hanoi has repeatedly refused to take steps to reduce the scale of violence in Southeast Asia. They have refused to respect the territorial integrity and neutrality of Cambodia, despite intensive international effort to respond to Cambodia's own wishes in the matter.

Hanoi has repeatedly rejected any efforts to bring about a full compliance by all parties with the Geneva Accords of 1962 on Laos. Today their forces are increasing their operations in Laos itself and are stepping up their illegal infiltration through Laos into South Viet-Nam.

Hanoi has treated with contempt the demilitarized character of the DMZ between North and South Viet-Nam and has rejected all efforts to restore the demilitarization of that area.

Repeated periods of bombing cessation or reduction in North Viet-Nam have elicited no corresponding action by North

Vietnamese forces in South Viet-Nam. Quite the contrary, such periods have been used to build up their military forces in South Viet-Nam. Cease-fire periods have been marked by hundreds of cynical violations by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces -- and on a massive scale during the recent Tet holidays.

At no time has Hanoi indicated publicly or privately that it will refrain from taking military advantage of any cessation of the bombing of North Viet-Nam. Nor has it shown any interest in preliminary discussions to arrange a general cease-fire.

In recent weeks Hanoi knew that discussions of a peaceful settlement were being seriously explored; they also knew that there was a reduction of bombing attacks on North Viet-Nam, specifically in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas during these explorations. Their reply was a major offensive through South Viet-Nam to bring the war to the civilian population in most of the cities of that country. Their preparations for a major offensive in the northern provinces of South Viet-Nam continue unabated.

In assessing, therefore, whether Hanoi's alleged interest in political talks has anything to do with making peace, one must take into full account the negative meaning of their recent escalation. The President declared in his State of the Union Message that he would continue to explore the possibilities of negotiation and would report the results. I must report that all explorations to date have resulted in a rejection of his San Antonio formula.

All of the proposals made by the United States for peace in Southeast Asia continue to be valid; specifically, the San Antonio formula put forward by President Johnson in September remains the basis of our position.

We are not interested in propaganda gestures whose purpose is to mislead and confuse; we will be interested in a serious move toward peace when Hanoi comes to the conclusion that it is ready to move in that direction. Hanoi knows how to get in touch with us.