

Tuesday, August 1, 1967
10:15 a. m.

MR. PRESIDENT:

Fritz Hollings called me. Having spent a vacation in South Carolina next door to him two years ago, we are friends.

He reported as follows.

He is very worried about the mood on Viet Nam among the men whose support you really need in the Senate for Viet Nam.-- in particular, Senators Russell, Stennis and Byrd. He says the mood is affected by stories of the Marines getting ambushed in the DMZ, damage to the carrier, and a general feeling that we are on a treadmill in Viet Nam. Dick Russell's view is that we should "declare war or get out." Stennis', that we are vastly overcommitted and that we are fighting at the level "the enemy dictates."

He says this mood of frustration lies behind the support for Fulbright's resolution.

I said that there were two facts as seen from the Executive Branch:

-- In the wake of McNamara's trip we have never had the Saigon and Washington teams so completely agreed that in military terms we were making good progress; we could see a process under way that really gave light at the end of the tunnel; and, in fact, our greatest anxiety and caution was the Vietnamese election.

-- In substance, what was happening was that the manpower pool under the control of the Viet Cong in the South was being run down slowly but surely, and the North Vietnamese could not or would not put in enough forces across the DMZ or otherwise to divert effectively U. S. forces from maintaining effective pressure on the Viet Cong, along with the South Vietnamese, the Koreans, etc. The North Vietnamese have had to withdraw from I Corps units which had been fighting there for rest and refit after their engagements with Marines.

I concluded that in face we were on a winning track if we had the capacity to sweat it out.

He said it was extremely important that we conveyed all the evidence for this view to these key Senators.

W. W. R.