

Friday, September 15, 1967
6:00 p.m. 91

MR. PRESIDENT:

Herewith a rather full compilation of statements by President Kennedy regarding Viet Nam and U. S. interests and commitments in Southeast Asia.

I have marked in yellow what I regarded as the most significant passages, with red markings for items particularly quotable. But I concluded that you might want to look at the whole file rather than merely the marked passages.

What emerged for me more sharply even than what I would have predicted are these basic elements in President Kennedy's position:

- his explicit linkage of the commitment in Viet Nam to the SEATO Treaty;
- his flat acceptance of the domino theory in Southeast Asia (see especially page 38 -- but the point is made many times);
- his recurrent linkage of Viet Nam to Berlin, and the general theme that the fate of our own liberty was involved in Viet Nam.

I don't believe any objective person can read this record without knowing that President Kennedy would have seen this through whatever the cost.

On page 33 the record states: "In my opinion, for us to withdraw from that effort would mean a collapse not only of South Viet-Nam, but Southeast Asia. So we are going to stay there." That is the nut of the story.

W. W. R.

Attachment