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Monday, March 18, 1968 -- 2:25 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith assembled are the legal memoranda concerning the constitutional authority of the President to employ U. S. armed forces in Vietnam.

Tab A -- State Department memorandum, June 29, 1964, on the legal basis for sending American forces to Viet-Nam.

Tab B -- State Department memorandum, February 11, 1965, on legal basis for US and South Vietnamese air strikes against North Vietnamese.

Tab C -- State Department memorandum April 6, 1965, on the President's authority to send American troops to Viet-Nam.

Tab D -- State Department Legal Adviser memorandum, June 11, 1965, considers the President's authority to increase from 52,000 to 95,000 and authorize use of ground forces in combat.

Tab E -- Memorandum for the President from the Attorney General (Katzenbach), June 10, 1965, on whether Congressional approval is necessary or desirable in connection with proposed deployment and use of troops in South Vietnam.

Tab F -- A comprehensive statement dealing with both international law and U. S. constitutional considerations, dated March 4, 1966.

*Tab E missing
from this file*

W. W. Rostow

WWRostow:rlh

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E.O. 12333, Sec. 3.4(b)

White House Conf. Room, Feb. 24, 1983

By *ALJ*3/31/92
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520


SECRET ATTACHMENTS

March 18, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. WALT W. ROSTOW
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Legal Memoranda on Viet Nam

In accordance with your request I am enclosing a series of legal memoranda considering the Constitutional authority of the President to employ United States armed forces in the defense of Viet Nam. The first is dated June 1964 and deals with the question of legal basis for sending United States troops to Viet Nam. This memorandum was forwarded to the President by Secretary Rusk on June 29, 1964. The next is dated February 11, 1965, and deals with the legal basis for air strikes against North Viet Nam. In April 1965 we prepared another memorandum on the President's authority to send American troops to Viet Nam. A memorandum of June 11, 1965 considers the question of the President's authority to increase the total of United States ground forces in Viet Nam to 95,000 and to authorize the use of ground forces in combat. A comprehensive statement dealing with both international law and United States Constitutional considerations is set forth in the Department's memorandum of March 4, 1966.


Leonard C. Meeker
The Legal Adviser

Attachments:

As stated.

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June 29, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Legal Basis for Sending
American Forces to Viet-Nam

The enclosed memorandum is submitted in response to your request of June 22 for a consideration of the legal basis for sending American forces to Viet-Nam. The conclusions of the memorandum may be summarized as follows:

1. The sending of American military personnel to serve in an advisory, non-combatant role rests on specific authority contained in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and on a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement with Viet-Nam.
2. The assignment of United States military personnel to duty in Viet-Nam involving participation in combat rests on the constitutional powers of the President as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, as Chief Executive, and in the field of foreign affairs. There have been numerous precedents in history for the use of these powers to send American forces abroad, including various situations involving their participation in hostilities. In the case of Viet-Nam, the President's action is additionally supported by the fact that South Viet-Nam has been designated to receive protection under Article IV of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty; both the Treaty and the Protocol covering Viet-Nam received the advice and consent of the Senate.

/s/ Dean Rusk

Dean Rusk

Enclosure:

Memorandum

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L:LCMeeker/L/FE:CPSalans:lr 6/26/64

FE-Mr. Bundy (draft)

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Authority *State Dec. 12/29/77*

By *rmj/ly* NARA, Date *4/6/92*
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June 25, 1964.

MEMORANDUM ON LEGAL BASIS
FOR SENDING AMERICAN FORCES
TO VIET-NAM

1.

Advisory and noncombatant activities of American Forces in Viet-Nam are authorized by Section 503 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1951 (22 U.S.C. (Supp. IV) 2311). That provision authorizes the President to furnish military assistance abroad to any friendly country through, inter alia, "assigning or detaching members of the Armed Forces of the United States... to perform duties of a noncombatant nature, including those related to training or advice." Furthermore, the United States and Viet-Nam are parties to an agreement for mutual defense assistance in Indo-China dated December 23, 1950 (TIAS 2440, 3 UST 2795), which was concluded pursuant to Public Law 329, 81st Congress (63 Stat. 714, 22 USC (1952 ed.) 1571-1604). This Agreement provides for the furnishing by the United States to Viet-Nam of military assistance in the form of equipment, material and services. Article IV, paragraph 2 of the Agreement states that "To facilitate operations under this Agreement, each Government agrees...To receive within its territory such personnel of the United States of America as may be required for the purposes of this Agreement..."

2.

The President's authority to send United States military personnel to Viet-Nam on assignments that include participation in combat derives from Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution, which provides that "The President shall be Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States." This power of the President is complemented by his special responsibilities under the Constitution in the field of foreign affairs (U.S. v. Curtiss-Wright Export Corp., 299 U.S. 304 (1936)) and by his position as Chief Executive with the duty to see that the laws are faithfully executed.

The line between Executive and Legislative power is not marked out with precision in the Constitution. For example, Article I, Section 8, provides that Congress "shall have power... To declare war, ...To raise and support armies,... To provide and maintain a navy". However, the debate at the Federal Convention in 1787 when the Constitution was being drafted makes clear that the powers of Congress are without prejudice to the right of the President to take action on his own "to repel sudden attacks".

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Since the Constitution was adopted there have been at least 125 instances in which the President, without Congressional authorization and in the absence of a declaration of war, has ordered the armed forces to take action or maintain positions abroad. These instances range from the war against the Barbary pirates in Jefferson's time to the sending of troops to Lebanon in 1958 by President Eisenhower. In a number of cases the President has acted in accordance with the general opinion of Congress or has sought Congressional ratification later. Many other cases, however, have not been referred to Congress at all.

While the most numerous class of these instances involved the protection of American property or American citizens in foreign lands, a number of them--such as the intervention in Texas in 1845 and in Mexico in 1917, the intervention in Panama in 1903-04, the dispatch of troops to Lebanon in 1958--were not concerned with the interests of individual citizens but with the general defense of the United States or the protection of some national interest or some concern of American foreign policy.

A memorandum detailing these historical events and discussing the question of the President's constitutional authority, prepared in the Department of State at the outset of the Korean conflict in 1950, is attached (Tab A). A further presentation of the views of the Executive Branch on this subject, published in 1951 as a Joint Committee Print of the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services, is also attached (Tab B).

Supreme Court decisions have not determined the extent of the President's authority to deploy and use United States armed forces abroad in the absence of express authorization from the Congress. The question has been the subject of Congressional debate at different times, and the power of the President to take action on his own responsibility has been generally supported. It has been supported on the theory that the President has both a right and a duty to take measures which he considers necessary for the defense of the United States. The view has sometimes been stated that the commitment of United States forces to combat may be made by the President on his own responsibility only when he judges the situation to be one of such urgency as to brook no delay and to allow no time for seeking the approval of Congress. Presidential decision that such an emergency exists is one which other branches of the Government are unlikely to try to overturn. There is, of course, a difference between (a) the participation in combat of individual U. S. military personnel attached to the armed forces of another country, and (b) the commitment of organized United States forces to combat. Congressional concern

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has been particularly with the latter, because of the clearer possibility it carries of involving the United States in large-scale hostilities.

If any question were raised as to the importance of Viet-Nam to the defense of the United States, this would be answered not only by the President's own evaluation, but by the fact that a Protocol to the Southeast Asia Treaty extends its protection to the Republic of Viet-Nam. Both the Treaty and Protocol received the advice and consent of the Senate. They represent a decision of the United States Government, in the constitutional form of a treaty, that the defense and security of Viet-Nam are necessary to the United States. Although the Treaty and Protocol have not been invoked with respect to the situation in Viet-Nam (since it is difficult to characterize North Vietnamese actions in South Viet-Nam as "armed attack" within the meaning of the Southeast Asia Treaty and the U. N. Charter), the existence of the Treaty and Protocol lends support to the President's action in sending American forces to Viet-Nam. The legislative history of the Treaty and Protocol indicates, however, an understanding that if the treaty were formally invoked as a basis for United States military action or if organized United States forces were committed to combat on a substantial scale, the President would act through Congress if it were in session, and if not in session would call Congress, "unless the emergency were so great that prompt action was necessary to save a vital interest of the United States."

This memorandum has been reviewed in the Department of Justice and approved by Mr. Schlei, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Office of Legal Counsel.

L:LCHecker/L/FE:CFSalans:lr 6/26/64

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February 11, 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY

THROUGH: S/S

FROM: L - Leonard C. Meeker

**SUBJECT: Legal Basis for United States and
South Vietnamese Air Strikes**

The attached memorandum considers the legal basis for United States and South Vietnamese air strikes on target areas in North Viet-Nam. The memorandum develops a justification based on collective self-defense against North Vietnamese aggressive conduct amounting to armed attack; the right of collective self-defense is recognized in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The memorandum avoids reliance on theories of reprisal or retaliation, which are less readily available under contemporary international law than they were before the Charter.

There would, moreover, be some inconsistency in U.S. reliance on reprisal or retaliation with respect to Viet-Nam when we have been publicly critical of such justifications in other circumstances -- for example, in the Near East in situations involving Israel and the Arab states.

There is the further consideration that a legal analysis based on self-defense is politically more appealing in presenting our case to other governments and in the court of public opinion around the world.

Attachment:

Memorandum

L:LCMeeker:jsf

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Legal Basis for United States Actions Against
North Viet-Nam

I

The Issue

This memorandum considers the question whether recent United States-South Vietnamese actions against military targets in North Viet-Nam are justified in international law, particularly in light of the United Nations Charter and the 1954 Geneva Accords on Viet-Nam. It concludes that these actions are fully justified.

II

The Facts

A. Recent Incidents

On February 7, Viet Cong forces attacked South Viet-Nam air bases in Pleiku and Tuy Hoa, two barracks installations in the Pleiku area, and a number of villages in the vicinity of Tuy Hoa and Nha Trang. Numerous casualties were inflicted. Since February 8, a large number of South Vietnamese and United States personnel have been killed in an increased number of Viet Cong ambushes and attacks. A district town in Phuoc Long province was overrun, resulting in further Vietnamese and United States casualties. In Qui Nhon, Viet Cong terrorists in

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By Wm. H. NARA, Date 4-6-92

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an attack on an American military billet murdered Americans and Vietnamese. In addition, there have been a number of mining and other attacks on bridges and railways in South Viet-Nam as well as assassinations and ambushes involving South Vietnamese civil and military officials.

The Governments of the Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States consulted and agreed on the necessity of taking prompt action to meet these attacks. Accordingly, on February 7, 8 and 11 United States and South Vietnamese air forces carried out attacks against military facilities in the southern area of North Viet-Nam. These military installations have been used by Hanoi as major training and staging areas for armed cadres infiltrating from the north into South Viet-Nam.

B. Background

In 1954, agreements were concluded in Geneva for the cessation of hostilities in Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia. These Geneva Accords divided Viet-Nam by establishing a provisional military demarcation line. The agreements provided for the complete cessation of all hostilities in Viet-Nam and for the withdrawal of the forces of either party from the territory under the control of the other. The Accords required the parties to ensure that the zones assigned to them were not

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used for the resumption of hostilities or to further an aggressive policy. They also required the parties--and North Viet-Nam was a signatory--to respect the territory under the control of the other party and to commit no act and undertake no operation against the other party.

From the beginning, it was apparent that North Viet-Nam sought to subvert South Viet-Nam in utter disregard of the 1954 Geneva Accords. Arms and ammunition were cached throughout the south. Key guerrilla forces were ordered to remain intact in South Viet-Nam. Political agents were left behind to promote Hanoi's cause. In the ensuing years, these elements gradually emerged and turned to the use of force and terror against the Government in Saigon.

By 1959, the guerrilla units in the south were being reinforced by the infiltration of both men and materiel from North Viet-Nam. Infiltration from the north has increased rapidly; up to 34,000 armed and trained personnel have moved into South Viet-Nam from the north since 1959. Military operations in the south have been directed, staffed and supplied in crucial respects from Hanoi. These activities on the part of North Viet-Nam were documented in "A Threat to the Peace," a publication issued by the Department of State in December 1961.

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Shortly thereafter, in a special report of June 1962, the International Control Commission in Viet-Nam concluded that there was "sufficient evidence to show beyond reasonable doubt" that these violations by North Viet-Nam had occurred.

To meet the threat created by these violations of the Geneva Accords and by North Viet-Nam's aggressive intervention contrary to general international law, the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam requested United States assistance. We had been providing Viet-Nam since 1950-1951 with both economic and military aid. This assistance was continued after the conclusion of the 1954 Geneva Accords, within the limitations prescribed by those agreements. It had become apparent, however, by 1961 that limited assistance was not sufficient to meet the growing Communist threat. Consequently, in 1961, the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam requested additional aid from the United States. The United States responded with increased supplies and with larger numbers of training and advisory personnel to assist the Vietnamese forces in prosecuting the war against the Viet Cong. This response was proportioned with the design of sustaining Viet-Nam in its defense against aggression without extending the conflict beyond the borders of the country.

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The Communists, however, increased their intervention without regard to obligations under international law and international agreements by which they were bound. They stepped up the assistance from the north and increased the use of neighboring Laos as an infiltration route, in violation of the freshly concluded 1962 Geneva Agreement for the Settlement of the Laotian Question.

In August 1964, the North Vietnamese launched a direct attack against United States vessels on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin. We responded, in self-defense, by striking the bases from which the attacking North Vietnamese torpedo boats operated and by destroying oil storage facilities used to support these bases.

The Viet Cong attacks since February 7 are part of a continuing aggression made possible only by North Viet-Nam. As indicated, the North Vietnamese have trained and dispatched cadres to the south and provided direction and supplies to the Viet Cong. In more recent months they have sharply increased the infiltration of men and equipment into the south, and virtually all personnel now coming in are natives of North Viet-Nam. What began as covert and indirect aggression has become open armed aggression. This aggression has been carried out across the internationally agreed demarcation line of 1954

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between North and South Viet-Nam, and across international frontiers between Viet-Nam and Laos.

III

International Law The U.N. Charter

The recent Viet Cong attacks were not, as has been seen, an isolated occurrence. They were part of a continuing armed aggression directed by North Viet-Nam against South Viet-Nam in violation of international agreements and international law.

This being the case, what are the Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States entitled to do under international law by way of response?

Under international law, the victim of armed aggression is obviously permitted to defend itself and to organize a collective self-defense effort in which others who are willing may join. This right is recognized in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Article 51 states that

"Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by the members in the exercise of this right of self-defense shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council

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under the present Charter to take at any time such actions as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security."

As has been seen above, the whole course of conduct of North Viet-Nam, particularly as it has evolved in recent months, adds up to open armed attack within the meaning of Article 51--armed aggression carried on across international frontiers. In these circumstances, South Viet-Nam has requested and received assistance from the United States and other nations in a collective defense effort.

The question may be raised as to the applicability to the Viet-Nam situation of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter. Article 2, paragraph 4 provides that

"All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations."

In the first place, it is plain that the use of force against territorial integrity and political independence has been initiated by North Viet-Nam and not by anyone else. Secondly, paragraph 2 of Article 4 of the Charter does not place an absolute prohibition on the use of force. It implicitly permits the use of force in a manner consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter. Moreover, the Charter itself specifically provides for the use of force in certain circumstances

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--action through the United Nations itself, action through regional arrangements and action in self-defense. The actions of the United States and the Republic of Viet-Nam, being defensive in character and designed to resist armed aggression, are consequently consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter and specifically with Article 2, paragraph 4.

It was as a measure of self-defense under Article 51 that the United States responded in August 1964 to the North Vietnamese attack on our vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin. Those measures were immediately reported to the Security Council in accordance with Article 51. The Security Council did not see fit to take any action to maintain or restore international peace and security in the area. Indeed, North Viet-Nam refused to participate in the deliberations of the Security Council and explicitly denied the right of the Council to examine this problem.

The attacks against South Viet-Nam have mounted in intensity since August, culminating in the recent attacks and acts of terror. In these circumstances, it was mutually agreed between the Government of South Viet-Nam and the United States Government that further means of providing for the collective defense of South Viet-Nam were required. Prompt defensive action was decided upon, and on February 7, 8, and 11 air strikes

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were made against the supply bases and assembly points in North Viet-Nam from which the aggression against the south was being carried out. The actions taken constituted a limited and measured response, fitted to the situation that produced it. Again, these measures were immediately reported to the Security Council in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. As yet, the Council has taken no action to maintain an effective peace in the area. Until the regime in Hanoi decides to cease its aggressive intervention in South Viet-Nam, and until effective steps are taken to maintain international peace and security in the area, the Governments of the United States and the Republic of Viet-Nam have every right to continue their individual and collective self-defense against the Communist armed aggression coming from North Viet-Nam.

IV

The Geneva Accords

It has been demonstrated that the North Vietnamese have repeatedly violated the 1954 Geneva Accords in a most serious and flagrant manner. In so doing, of course, North Viet-Nam is ignoring an international Agreement which it signed and by which it is bound. In addition, by the

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continued presence in neighboring Laos of North Vietnamese forces and their use of Laotian territory for infiltration into South Viet-Nam, North Viet-Nam is violating solemn commitments which it undertook in the 1962 Geneva Agreements to refrain from such activities.

In these circumstances, international law recognizes the principle that a material breach of a treaty by one party entitles other parties at least to withhold compliance with an equivalent, corresponding or related provision until the other party is prepared to observe its obligations.

The actions of the Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States are fully consistent with this principle. North Vietnamese violations of the Geneva Agreements have created an immediate danger to the continued independence and integrity of the Republic of Viet-Nam. The response of South Viet-Nam and the United States is designed to meet this threat created by North Viet-Nam's disregard of the Accords. The extensive North Vietnamese violations certainly justify South Viet-Nam at least to withhold compliance with those provisions of the Accords which limit its ability to protect its very existence. Both South Viet-Nam and the United States have made clear that the actions

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which they have taken will no longer be necessary if North Viet-Nam would begin to comply with the Accords.

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APR 6 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ACTING SECRETARY

THROUGH: S/S

FROM: L - Leonard C. Meeker

SUBJECT: President's Authority to Send American Troops
to Viet-Nam - BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

Attached is a question and proposed answer on the President's authority to send very large numbers of American troops to Viet-Nam (e.g., 300,000 ground troops). Such a question may be raised in the course of your appearance tomorrow on the Hill, as it was with Ambassador Taylor last week.

The suggested answer makes four basic points:

(1) Should circumstances require urgently the sending of large numbers of American forces to Viet-Nam, the President would have authority to deploy these forces by virtue of his constitutional powers as Commander-in-Chief and as Chief Executive and in the exercise of his constitutional responsibilities in the field of foreign affairs;

(2) The August 7, 1964, Congressional Joint Resolution on Southeast Asia provides confirmation from the Congress of the President's Constitutional authority, and has the effect of supplementing that authority to the extent that any supplement might be thought needed. The Resolution covers the taking of "all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol State of the SEA Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in the defense of its freedom." This includes the sending to Viet-Nam

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of such units of the armed forces as the President in his judgment considers necessary.

(3) Neither the Constitution nor the Joint Resolution contains any ceilings on numbers of ground troops or elements of naval or air forces that the President might decide to employ in the over-all national defense.

(4) In the exercise of his broad constitutional responsibilities, the President would consult with Congressional leaders on the sending of any greatly increased numbers of troops to Viet-Nam. The President has consistently engaged in such Congressional consultation with respect to major decisions on Viet-Nam.

L:LCMeeker:lr

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THE LEGAL ADVISER
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

June 11, 1965

MEMORANDUM OF LAW

Question

This memorandum examines the power of the President to commit ground and air forces to South Viet Nam, above the present total of approximately 52,000 to an anticipated total of 95,000, and to authorize the use of ground forces in combat in accordance with the terms of the White House statement of June 9, 1965.

Summary

The President does have power, under the Constitution and under the Joint Resolution of Congress of August 10, 1964, to deploy United States ground and air forces to South Viet Nam in the numbers and for the purposes indicated above.

Where the President determines that the defense of the United States requires immediate action, he is empowered under the Constitution to engage United States forces in combat without Congressional authorization. There are numerous precedents in United States history for deployment abroad of United States armed forces, and some of them include use in combat. In the Korean conflict, the United States maintained a troop strength in Korea of over 250,000.

If authorization from the Congress is considered requisite to sending 43,000 additional United States troops to Viet Nam at this time, the Joint Resolution of August 10, 1964 gives a broad authorization to the President. The Resolution declares:

"Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast

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By my/hg, NARA, Date 4/6/92

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Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol State of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom."

While the Joint Resolution expresses no limitation on numbers of forces or on the missions they might be assigned, and while the legislative history does not disclose a purpose to effect any such limitations, the record shows that the Resolution was passed on the understanding that there would be consultation with the Congress "in case a major change in present policy becomes necessary." The committing of an additional 43,000 United States forces to South Viet Nam, with combat missions included in their assignment, could be argued to constitute a policy decision calling for Congressional consultation. Consultation would not require new affirmative action by the Congress, but would afford the Congress an opportunity for review.

Deployment by the President of United States forces as indicated in the question stated at the outset of this memorandum would not require the declaration of a state of war.

Discussion

The missions of the additional 43,000 American troops to be deployed to South Viet Nam would be governed by the terms of the White House statement dated June 9. The text of that statement is as follows:

"There has been no change in the mission of United States ground combat units in Vietnam in recent days or weeks. The President has issued no order of any kind in this regard to General [William C.] Westmoreland recently or at

any

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any other time. The primary mission of these troops is to secure and safeguard important military installations like the air base at Danang. They have the associated mission of active patrolling and securing action in and near the areas thus safeguarded.

"If help is requested by the appropriate Vietnamese commander, General Westmoreland also has authority within the assigned mission to employ these troops in support of Vietnamese forces faced with aggressive attack when other effective reserves are not available and when, in his judgment, the general military situation urgently requires it."

This memorandum will consider, in turn, four aspects of the question of Presidential authority:

1. The power of the President under the Constitution;
2. The authorization given by the Joint Resolution of Congress dated August 10, 1964;
3. The political commitment of the Administration in connection with the Joint Resolution, to consult with the Congress "in case a major change in present policy becomes necessary";
4. Whether any declaration of war is required.

1. The Constitution. Basic Presidential authority to deploy United States military forces abroad derives from Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution which provides that "The President shall be commander in chief of the army and navy of the United States". This power of the President is complemented by his position as Chief Executive: Under

Article

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Article II, Section 3, "he shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed". The power is also complemented by the special responsibilities of the President in the field of foreign affairs. U.S. vs. the Curtiss-Wright Export Corp., 299 U.S. 304 (1936).

The line between Executive and Legislative power is not marked out with precision in the Constitution. For example, Article I, Section 8, provides that Congress "shall have power...To declare war, ...To raise and support armies,... To provide and maintain a navy". However, the debate at the Federal Convention in 1787 when the Constitution was being drafted makes clear that the powers of Congress are without prejudice to the right of the President to take action on his own "to repel sudden attacks". In cases where the President considers the need of military measures to defend the United States so urgent as to brook no delay, the President is empowered to commit and use United States forces in hostilities without first securing an authorization from the Congress. In the case of Viet Nam, Congressional authorization has already been given in the Joint Resolution of August 10, 1964.

Since the Constitution was adopted, there have at least been 125 instances in which the President, without Congressional authority and in the absence of a declaration of war, has ordered the armed forces to take action or maintain positions abroad. These instances range from the war of the Barbary Pirates in Jefferson's time to the sending of troops to Lebanon in 1958 by President Eisenhower. Substantial numbers of troops have sometimes been involved; President Roosevelt in 1941 deployed over 10,000 United States troops to Iceland to secure that country against Nazi aggression, and President Eisenhower in 1958 dispatched 14,000 American troops to Lebanon. Some of the historical instances have involved the use of United States forces in combat; in the most notable case--the Korean conflict of 1950-53--the United States maintained a troop strength of over 250,000 in Korea.

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A memorandum detailing these historical events and discussing the question of the President's constitutional authority, prepared in the Department of State at the outset of the Korean conflict in 1950, is attached (Tab A). A further presentation of the views of the Executive Branch on this subject, published in 1951 as a Joint Committee Print of the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services, is also attached (Tab B).

Supreme Court decisions have not determined the extent of the President's authority to deploy and use United States armed forces abroad in the absence of express authorization from the Congress. The question has been the subject of Congressional debate at different times, and the power of the President to take action on his own responsibility has been generally supported. It has been supported on the theory that the President has both a right and a duty to take measures which he considers necessary for the defense of the United States. The view has sometimes been stated that the commitment of United States forces to combat may be made by the President on his own responsibility only when he judges the situation to be one of such urgency as to brook no delay and to allow no time for seeking the approval of Congress. Presidential decision that such an emergency exists is one which other branches of the Government are unlikely to try to overturn. There is, of course, a difference between (a) the participation in combat of individual U.S. military personnel attached to the armed forces of another country, and (b) the commitment of organized United States forces to combat. Congressional concern has been particularly with the latter, because of the clearer possibility it carries of involving the United States in large-scale hostilities.

If any question were raised as to the importance of Viet-Nam to the defense of the United States, this would be answered not only by the President's own evaluation, but by the fact that a Protocol to the Southeast Asia Treaty extends its protection to the Republic of Viet-Nam. Both the Treaty and Protocol received the advice and consent of the Senate. They represent a decision of the United States Government, in the constitutional form of a treaty, that the defense and security of Viet-Nam are necessary to the United States.

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2. Joint Resolution of the Congress. The August 10, 1964 Joint Resolution on Southeast Asia provides Congressional authorization for the sending of United States military forces to Viet-Nam and for their use in combat operations.

The Joint Resolution provides "That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander-in-Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and, to prevent further aggression." In section 2 of the Joint Resolution, Congress has declared: "Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol State of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom."

In the course of Congressional consideration of this resolution, a number of statements were made bearing on the question of the President's authority to commit U. S. military forces to Viet-Nam and to use them in a combat role:

a. Statement by Secretary Rusk before House Committee on Foreign Affairs, August 6, 1964:

"I believe it to be the generally accepted constitutional view that the President has the constitutional authority to take at least limited armed action in defense of American national interests... As I have said before, we cannot now be sure what actions may be required."

b. On the floor of the Senate, August 6, 1964:

"Mr. Brewster: ...So my question is whether there is anything in the resolution which would authorize or recommend or approve the landing of large American armies in Viet-Nam or in China.

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"Mr. Fulbright: There is nothing in the resolution, as I read it, that contemplates it. I agree with the Senator that that is the last thing we would want to do. However, the language of the resolution would not prevent it. It would authorize whatever the Commander-in-Chief feels is necessary. It does not restrain the Executive from doing it."

c. On the floor of the Senate, August 6, 1964:

"Mr. Nelson: Am I to understand that it is the sense of Congress that we are saying to the executive branch: 'If it becomes necessary to prevent further aggression, we agree now, in advance, that you may land as many divisions as deemed necessary, and engage in a direct military assault on North Vietnam if it becomes the judgment of the Executive, the Commander-in-Chief, that this is the only way to prevent further aggression'?"

"Mr. Fulbright: If the situation should deteriorate to such an extent that the only way to save it from going completely under to the Communists would be action such as the Senator suggests, then that would be a grave decision on the part of our country as to whether we should confine our activities to a very limited personnel on land and the extensive use of naval and air power, or whether we should go further and use more manpower.

"I personally feel it would be very unwise under any circumstances to put a large land army on the Asian Continent.

"I do not know what the limits are. I do not think this resolution can be determinative of that fact. I think it would indicate that he would take reasonable means first to prevent any further aggression, or repel further aggression against our own forces, and that he will live up to our obligations under the SEATO treaty and with regard to the protocol states.

"I do not know how to answer the Senator's question and give him an absolute assurance that large numbers

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of troops would not be put ashore. I would deplore it. And I hope the conditions do not justify it now."

d. On the floor of the Senate, August 6, 1964:

"Mr. Nelson: ...But I would be most concerned if the Congress should say that we intend by the joint resolution to authorize a complete change in the mission which we have had in South Vietnam for the past 10 years, and which we have repeatedly stated was not a commitment to engage in a direct land confrontation with our Army as a substitute for the South Vietnam Army or as a substantially reinforced U. S. army to be joined with the South Vietnam Army in a war against North Vietnam and possibly China.

"Mr. Fulbright: Mr. President, it seems to me that the joint resolution would be consistent with what we have been doing. We have been assisting the countries in Southeast Asia in pursuance of the treaty. But in all frankness I cannot say to the Senator that I think the joint resolution would in any way be a deterrent, a prohibition, a limitation, or an expansion on the President's power to use the Armed Forces in a different way or more extensively than he is now using them. In a broad sense, the joint resolution states that we approve of the action taken with regard to the attack on our own ships, and that we also approve of our country's effort to maintain the independence of South Vietnam...

"In frankness, I do not believe the joint resolution would substantially alter the President's power to use whatever means seemed appropriate under the circumstances. Our recourse in Congress would be that if the action were too inappropriate, we could terminate the joint resolution, by a concurrent resolution, and that would precipitate a great controversy between the Executive and the Congress. As a practical question, that could be done."

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e. On the floor of the Senate, August 6, 1964:

"Mr. Cooper:... The Senator will remember that the SEATO Treaty, in article IV, provides that in the event of an armed attack upon a party to the South-east Asia Collective Defense Treaty, or upon one of the protocol states such as South Vietnam, the parties to the treaty, one of whom is the United States, would then take such action as might be appropriate, after resorting to their constitutional processes. I assume that would mean, in the case of the United States, that Congress would be asked to grant the authority to act.

"Does the Senator consider that in enacting this resolution we are satisfying that requirement of article IV of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty? In other words, are we now giving the President advance authority to take whatever action he may deem necessary respecting South Vietnam and its defense, or with respect to the defense of any other country included in the treaty?

"Mr. Fulbright: I think that is correct.

"Mr. Cooper: Then, looking ahead, if the President decided that it was necessary to use such force as could lead into war, we will give that authority by this resolution?

"Mr. Fulbright: That is the way I would interpret it. If a situation later developed in which we thought the approval should be withdrawn, it could be withdrawn by concurrent resolution.

f. Senator Nelson, on August 7, proposed an amendment to the Joint Resolution which read, in part:

"Our continuing policy is to limit our role to the provision of aid, training assistance, and military advice,

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and it is the sense of Congress that, except when provoked to a greater response, we should continue to attempt to avoid a direct military involvement in the Southeast Asian conflict.

Mr. Fulbright: (in rejecting the amendment)
"It states fairly accurately what the President has said would be our policy, and what I stated my understanding was as to our policy; also what other Senators have stated.

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3. Political commitment of consultation.

On August 6, 1964 Secretary Rusk, in testifying in executive session before a joint meeting of the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services concerning the Southeast Asia resolution assured the members of Congress that there would be close and continuing bipartisan consultations between the Executive and Legislative Branches on the problems in Southeast Asia, especially if the situation there developed "in ways which we cannot now anticipate."

In the Senate on August 6, Senator Fulbright made the following response after a brief statement by Senator Cooper:

"Mr. Fulbright: I have no doubt that the President will consult with Congress in case a major change in present policy becomes necessary."

The language of the Resolution and the statements made on the floor evidently recognized that the President might find it necessary to deploy large numbers of American forces in a combat role to accomplish the goal set forth in the Resolution. At the same time, the Congress passed the Resolution on the understanding that the President would consult with Congress in case a major change in policy became necessary. The commitment of substantially larger numbers of American troops in a short period of time and their assignment to combat would appear to be the kind of policy change which would call for such Congressional consultation. Consultation would not require new affirmative action by the Congress, but would afford the Congress an opportunity to express its views.

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Supplemental Appropriation for Southeast Asia

Congress reaffirmed its support of the Administration policy in Viet Nam as recently as May 6, 1965 when it appropriated at the President's request an additional \$700,000,000 for United States military activities in Southeast Asia. The President stated in his message of May 4:

"This is not a routine appropriation. For each Member of Congress who supports this request is also voting to persist in our effort to halt Communist aggression in South Viet Nam."

The Congress adopted the resolution by an overwhelming vote -- 408 to 7 in the House and 88 to 3 in the Senate. However, a number of Congressmen stated for the record that their vote should not be construed as a blanket endorsement of any future action on the Asian mainland of a different character than the policy then in effect.

Senator Stennis who sponsored the resolution in the Senate was asked directly by Senator Church whether he believed a vote in favor of the resolution endorsed whatever action might be taken in the future. Stennis replied that the resolution placed no limitations on the President's judgment but that each Senator must interpret his own vote. Stennis added:

"I do not believe we are signing a blank check. We are backing up our men and also backing up the present policy of the President. If he substantially enlarges or changes it, I would assume he would come back to us in one way or another."

The appropriation by Congress neither enlarged nor restricted the legal authority of the President to send combat troops to South Viet Nam. The vote did express strong support for the policy which the President was pursuing to

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defend South Viet-Nam, with the expectation that a substantial change in character of U. S. actions would be preceded by the President's going back to Congress "one way or another."

4. Declaration of War

A declaration of war by Congress is not necessary to commit American forces to South Viet-Nam for the purposes set forth earlier.

The President's powers under the Constitution exist side by side with the authority of Congress in this area. In addition to the power to raise and support armies and to provide and maintain a navy, the power to express Congressional policy and the power of the purse, the Congress has the power to declare war. As Constitutional history will show, this is not the same as the power to "make" war -- a power which the Federal Convention in 1787 deliberately withheld from the Congress.

Our Constitutional arrangements are such that the President is endowed with power to take actions which may eventuate in armed conflict. It remains for the Congress to give the legal characterization of "war", with the resulting legal consequences, to a particular conflict if it so decides. Thus no declaration of war is necessary for hostilities to occur or for U. S. forces to be major participants in them. The Korean conflict illustrates these points well.

By reason of the general legislative power of Congress, including its power over finances, there must be a basic concurrence and collaboration between the Executive and Legislative Branches of Government if any given policy and

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course of action of the President is to be sustained over a period of time. The Congress thus has a major role, and indeed a major influence, on the decisions made by the President both as Commander-in-Chief and in the field of foreign relations.

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The Legality of U.S. Participation in the Defense of Viet-Nam



Reprint from

The DEPARTMENT of STATE BULLETIN

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This legal memorandum was prepared by Leonard C. Meeker, Legal Adviser of the Department, and was submitted to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on March 8.

The Legality of United States Participation in the Defense of Viet-Nam

MARCH 4, 1966

I. THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH VIET-NAM HAVE THE RIGHT UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COLLECTIVE DEFENSE OF SOUTH VIET-NAM AGAINST ARMED ATTACK

In response to requests from the Government of South Viet-Nam, the United States has been assisting that country in defending itself against armed attack from the Communist North. This attack has taken the forms of externally supported subversion, clandestine supply of arms, infiltration of armed personnel, and most recently the sending of regular units of the North Vietnamese army into the South.

International law has long recognized the right of individual and collective self-defense against armed attack. South Viet-Nam and the United States are engaging in such collective defense consistently with international law and with United States obligations under the United Nations Charter.

A. South Viet-Nam Is Being Subjected to Armed Attack by Communist North Viet-Nam

The Geneva accords of 1954 established a demarcation line between North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam.¹ They provided for withdrawals of military forces into the respective zones north and south of this line.

¹ For texts, see *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955; Basic Documents*, vol. I, Department of State publication 6446, p. 750.

The accords prohibited the use of either zone for the resumption of hostilities or to "further an aggressive policy."

During the 5 years following the Geneva conference of 1954, the Hanoi regime developed a covert political-military organization in South Viet-Nam based on Communist cadres it had ordered to stay in the South, contrary to the provisions of the Geneva accords. The activities of this covert organization were directed toward the kidnaping and assassination of civilian officials—acts of terrorism that were perpetrated in increasing numbers.

In the 3-year period from 1959 to 1961, the North Viet-Nam regime infiltrated an estimated 10,000 men into the South. It is estimated that 13,000 additional personnel were infiltrated in 1962, and, by the end of 1964, North Viet-Nam may well have moved over 40,000 armed and unarmed guerrillas into South Viet-Nam.

The International Control Commission reported in 1962 the findings of its Legal Committee:

... there is evidence to show that arms, armed and unarmed personnel, munitions and other supplies have been sent from the Zone in the North to the Zone in the South with the objective of supporting, organizing and carrying out hostile activities, including armed attacks, directed against the Armed Forces and Administration of the Zone in the South.

... there is evidence that the PAVN [People's Army of Viet Nam] has allowed the Zone in the North to be used for inciting, encouraging and supporting hostile activities in the Zone in the

South, aimed at the overthrow of the Administration in the South.

Beginning in 1964, the Communists apparently exhausted their reservoir of Southerners who had gone North. Since then the greater number of men infiltrated into the South have been native-born North Vietnamese. Most recently, Hanoi has begun to infiltrate elements of the North Vietnamese army in increasingly larger numbers. Today, there is evidence that nine regiments of regular North Vietnamese forces are fighting in organized units in the South.

In the guerrilla war in Viet-Nam, the external aggression from the North is the critical military element of the insurgency, although it is unacknowledged by North Viet-Nam. In these circumstances, an "armed attack" is not as easily fixed by date and hour as in the case of traditional warfare. However, the infiltration of thousands of armed men clearly constitutes an "armed attack" under any reasonable definition. There may be some question as to the exact date at which North Viet-Nam's aggression grew into an "armed attack," but there can be no doubt that it had occurred before February 1965.

B. International Law Recognizes the Right of Individual and Collective Self-Defense Against Armed Attack

International law has traditionally recognized the right of self-defense against armed attack. This proposition has been asserted by writers on international law through the several centuries in which the modern law of nations has developed. The proposition has been acted on numerous times by governments throughout modern history. Today the principle of self-defense against armed attack is universally recognized and accepted.²

The Charter of the United Nations, concluded at the end of World War II, imposed

an important limitation on the use of force by United Nations members. Article 2, paragraph 4, provides:

All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

In addition, the charter embodied a system of international peacekeeping through the organs of the United Nations. Article 24 summarizes these structural arrangements in stating that the United Nations members:

... confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf.

However, the charter expressly states in article 51 that the remaining provisions of the charter—including the limitation of article 2, paragraph 4, and the creation of United Nations machinery to keep the peace—in no way diminish the inherent right of self-defense against armed attack. Article 51 provides:

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defense shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Thus, article 51 restates and preserves, for member states in the situations covered by the article, a long-recognized principle of international law. The article is a "saving clause" designed to make clear that no other provision in the charter shall be interpreted to impair the inherent right of self-defense referred to in article 51.

Three principal objections have been raised against the availability of the right of individual and collective self-defense in the case of Viet-Nam: (1) that this right applies

² See, e.g., Jessup, *A Modern Law of Nations*, 163 ff. (1948); Oppenheim, *International Law*, 297 ff. (8th ed., Lauterpacht, 1955). And see, generally, Bowett, *Self-Defense in International Law* (1958). [Footnote in original.]

only in the case of an armed attack on a United Nations member; (2) that it does not apply in the case of South Viet-Nam because the latter is not an independent sovereign state; and (3) that collective self-defense may be undertaken only by a regional organization operating under chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. These objections will now be considered in turn.

C. The Right of Individual and Collective Self-Defense Applies in the Case of South Viet-Nam Whether or Not That Country Is a Member of the United Nations

1. South Viet-Nam enjoys the right of self-defense

The argument that the right of self-defense is available only to members of the United Nations mistakes the nature of the right of self-defense and the relationship of the United Nations Charter to international law in this respect. As already shown, the right of self-defense against armed attack is an inherent right under international law. The right is not conferred by the charter, and, indeed, article 51 expressly recognizes that the right is inherent.

The charter nowhere contains any provision designed to deprive nonmembers of the right of self-defense against armed attack.³ Article 2, paragraph 6, does charge the United Nations with responsibility for insuring that nonmember states act in accordance with United Nations "Principles so far as may be necessary for the maintenance of

³ While nonmembers, such as South Viet-Nam, have not formally undertaken the obligations of the United Nations Charter as their own treaty obligations, it should be recognized that much of the substantive law of the charter has become part of the general law of nations through a very wide acceptance by nations the world over. This is particularly true of the charter provisions bearing on the use of force. Moreover, in the case of South Viet-Nam, the South Vietnamese Government has expressed its ability and willingness to abide by the charter, in applying for United Nations membership. Thus it seems entirely appropriate to appraise the actions of South Viet-Nam in relation to the legal standards set forth in the United Nations Charter. [Footnote in original.]

international peace and security." Protection against aggression and self-defense against armed attack are important elements in the whole charter scheme for the maintenance of international peace and security. To deprive nonmembers of their inherent right of self-defense would not accord with the principles of the organization, but would instead be prejudicial to the maintenance of peace. Thus article 2, paragraph 6—and, indeed, the rest of the charter—should certainly not be construed to nullify or diminish the inherent defensive rights of nonmembers.

2. The United States has the right to assist in the defense of South Viet-Nam although the latter is not a United Nations member

The cooperation of two or more international entities in the defense of one or both against armed attack is generally referred to as collective self-defense. United States participation in the defense of South Viet-Nam at the latter's request is an example of collective self-defense.

The United States is entitled to exercise the right of individual or collective self-defense against armed attack, as that right exists in international law, subject only to treaty limitations and obligations undertaken by this country.

It has been urged that the United States has no right to participate in the collective defense of South Viet-Nam because article 51 of the United Nations Charter speaks only of the situation "if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations." This argument is without substance.

In the first place, article 51 does not impose restrictions or cut down the otherwise available rights of United Nations members. By its own terms, the article preserves an inherent right. It is, therefore, necessary to look elsewhere in the charter for any obligation of members restricting their participation in collective defense of an entity that is not a United Nations member.

Article 2, paragraph 4, is the principal provision of the charter imposing limitations on the use of force by members. It states that they:

... shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

Action taken in defense against armed attack cannot be characterized as falling within this proscription. The record of the San Francisco conference makes clear that article 2, paragraph 4, was not intended to restrict the right of self-defense against armed attack.⁴

One will search in vain for any other provision in the charter that would preclude United States participation in the collective defense of a nonmember. The fact that article 51 refers only to armed attack "against a Member of the United Nations" implies no intention to preclude members from participating in the defense of nonmembers. Any such result would have seriously detrimental consequences for international peace and security and would be inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations as they are set forth in article 1 of the charter.⁵ The right of members to participate in the defense of nonmembers is upheld by leading authorities on international law.⁶

D. The Right of Individual and Collective Self-Defense Applies Whether or Not South Viet-Nam Is Regarded as an Independent Sovereign State

1. South Viet-Nam enjoys the right of self-defense

It has been asserted that the conflict in Viet-Nam is "civil strife" in which foreign intervention is forbidden. Those who make this assertion have gone so far as to compare Ho Chi Minh's actions in Viet-Nam with the efforts of President Lincoln to preserve the Union during the American Civil War. Any such characterization is an entire fiction disregarding the actual situation in Viet-Nam. The Hanoi regime is anything but the legitimate government of a unified country in which the South is rebelling against lawful national authority.

The Geneva accords of 1954 provided for a division of Viet-Nam into two zones at the

17th parallel. Although this line of demarcation was intended to be temporary, it was established by international agreement, which specifically forbade aggression by one zone against the other.

The Republic of Viet-Nam in the South has been recognized as a separate international entity by approximately 60 governments the world over. It has been admitted as a member of a number of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. The United Nations General Assembly in 1957 voted to recommend South Viet-Nam for membership in the organization, and its admission was frustrated only by the veto of the Soviet Union in the Security Council.

In any event there is no warrant for the suggestion that one zone of a temporarily divided state—whether it be Germany, Korea, or Viet-Nam—can be legally overrun by armed forces from the other zone, crossing the internationally recognized line of demarcation between the two. Any such doctrine would subvert the international agreement establishing the line of demarcation, and would pose grave dangers to international peace.

The action of the United Nations in the Korean conflict of 1950 clearly established the principle that there is no greater license for one zone of a temporarily divided state to attack the other zone than there is for one state to attack another state. South

⁴ See 6 UNCIO Documents 459. [Footnote in original.]

⁵ In particular, the statement of the first purpose: To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace. . . . [Footnote in original.]

⁶ Bowett, *Self-Defense in International Law*, 193-195 (1958); Goodhart, "The North Atlantic Treaty of 1949," 79 *Recueil Des Cours*, 183, 202-204 (1951, vol. II), quoted in 5 *Whitman's Digest of International Law*, 1067-1068 (1965); Kelsen, *The Law of the United Nations*, 793 (1950); see Stone, *Aggression and World Order*, 44 (1958). [Footnote in original.]

Viet-Nam has the same right that South Korea had to defend itself and to organize collective defense against an armed attack from the North. A resolution of the Security Council dated June 25, 1950, noted "with grave concern the armed attack upon the Republic of Korea by forces from North Korea," and determined "that this action constitutes a breach of the peace."

2. The United States is entitled to participate in the collective defense of South Viet-Nam whether or not the latter is regarded as an independent sovereign state

As stated earlier, South Viet-Nam has been recognized as a separate international entity by approximately 60 governments. It has been admitted to membership in a number of the United Nations specialized agencies and has been excluded from the United Nations Organization only by the Soviet veto.

There is nothing in the charter to suggest that United Nations members are precluded from participating in the defense of a recognized international entity against armed attack merely because the entity may lack some of the attributes of an independent sovereign state. Any such result would have a destructive effect on the stability of international engagements such as the Geneva accords of 1954 and on internationally agreed lines of demarcation. Such a result, far from being in accord with the charter and the purposes of the United Nations, would undermine them and would create new dangers to international peace and security.

E. The United Nations Charter Does Not Limit the Right of Self-Defense to Regional Organizations

Some have argued that collective self-defense may be undertaken only by a regional arrangement or agency operating under chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. Such an assertion ignores the structure of the charter and the practice followed in the more than 20 years since the founding of the United Nations.

The basic proposition that rights of self-defense are not impaired by the charter—as expressly stated in article 51—is not conditioned by any charter provision limiting the application of this proposition to collective defense by a regional arrangement or agency. The structure of the charter reinforces this conclusion. Article 51 appears in chapter VII of the charter, entitled "Action With Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression," whereas chapter VIII, entitled "Regional Arrangements," begins with article 52 and embraces the two following articles. The records of the San Francisco conference show that article 51 was deliberately placed in chapter VII rather than chapter VIII, "where it would only have a bearing on the regional system."¹⁷

Under article 51, the right of self-defense is available against any armed attack, whether or not the country attacked is a member of a regional arrangement and regardless of the source of the attack. Chapter VIII, on the other hand, deals with relations among members of a regional arrangement or agency, and authorizes regional action as appropriate for dealing with "local disputes." This distinction has been recognized ever since the founding of the United Nations in 1945.

For example, the North Atlantic Treaty has operated as a collective security arrangement, designed to take common measures in preparation against the eventuality of an armed attack for which collective defense under article 51 would be required. Similarly, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was designed as a collective defense arrangement under article 51. Secretary of State Dulles emphasized this in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1954.

By contrast, article 1 of the Charter of Bogotá (1948), establishing the Organization of American States, expressly declares that the organization is a regional agency within

¹⁷ 17 UNCIO Documents 288. [Footnote in original.]

the United Nations. Indeed, chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter was included primarily to take account of the functioning of the inter-American system.

In sum, there is no basis in the United Nations Charter for contending that the right of self-defense against armed attack is limited to collective defense by a regional organization.

F. The United States Has Fulfilled Its Obligations to the United Nations

A further argument has been made that the members of the United Nations have conferred on United Nations organs—and, in particular, on the Security Council—exclusive power to act against aggression. Again, the express language of article 51 contradicts that assertion. A victim of armed attack is not required to forgo individual or collective defense of its territory until such time as the United Nations organizes collective action and takes appropriate measures. To the contrary, article 51 clearly states that the right of self-defense may be exercised “until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.”⁸

As indicated earlier, article 51 is not literally applicable to the Viet-Nam situation since South Viet-Nam is not a member. However, reasoning by analogy from article

⁸ An argument has been made by some that the United States, by joining in the collective defense of South Viet-Nam, has violated the peaceful settlement obligation of article 33 in the charter. This argument overlooks the obvious proposition that a victim of armed aggression is not required to sustain the attack undefended while efforts are made to find a political solution with the aggressor. Article 51 of the charter illustrates this by making perfectly clear that the inherent right of self-defense is impaired by “Nothing in the present Charter,” including the provisions of article 33. [Footnote in original.]

⁹ For a statement made by U.S. Representative Adlai E. Stevenson in the Security Council on Aug. 5, 1964, see BULLETIN of Aug. 24, 1964, p. 272.

¹⁰ For texts, see *ibid.*, Feb. 22, 1965, p. 240, and Mar. 22, 1965, p. 419.

¹¹ For background and text of draft resolution, see *ibid.*, Feb. 14, 1966, p. 231.

51 and adopting its provisions as an appropriate guide for the conduct of members in a case like Viet-Nam, one can only conclude that United States actions are fully in accord with this country's obligations as a member of the United Nations.

Article 51 requires that:

Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defense shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

The United States has reported to the Security Council on measures it has taken in countering the Communist aggression in Viet-Nam. In August 1964 the United States asked the Council to consider the situation created by North Vietnamese attacks on United States destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf.⁹ The Council thereafter met to debate the question, but adopted no resolutions. Twice in February 1965 the United States sent additional reports to the Security Council on the conflict in Viet-Nam and on the additional measures taken by the United States in the collective defense of South Viet-Nam.¹⁰ In January 1966 the United States formally submitted the Viet-Nam question to the Security Council for its consideration and introduced a draft resolution calling for discussions looking toward a peaceful settlement on the basis of the Geneva accords.¹¹

At no time has the Council taken any action to restore peace and security in Southeast Asia. The Council has not expressed criticism of United States actions. Indeed, since the United States submission of January 1966, members of the Council have been notably reluctant to proceed with any consideration of the Viet-Nam question.

The conclusion is clear that the United States has in no way acted to interfere with United Nations consideration of the conflict in Viet-Nam. On the contrary, the United States has requested United Nations consideration, and the Council has not seen fit to act.

G. International Law Does Not Require a Declaration of War as a Condition Precedent To Taking Measures of Self-Defense Against Armed Attack

The existence or absence of a formal declaration of war is not a factor in determining whether an international use of force is lawful as a matter of international law. The United Nations Charter's restrictions focus on the manner and purpose of its use and not on any formalities of announcement.

It should also be noted that a formal declaration of war would not place any obligations on either side in the conflict by which that side would not be bound in any event. The rules of international law concerning the conduct of hostilities in an international armed conflict apply regardless of any declaration of war.

H. Summary

The analysis set forth above shows that South Viet-Nam has the right in present circumstances to defend itself against armed attack from the North and to organize a collective self-defense with the participation of others. In response to requests from South Viet-Nam, the United States has been participating in that defense, both through military action within South Viet-Nam and actions taken directly against the aggressor in North Viet-Nam. This participation by the United States is in conformity with international law and is consistent with our obligations under the Charter of the United Nations.

II. THE UNITED STATES HAS UNDERTAKEN COMMITMENTS TO ASSIST SOUTH VIET-NAM IN DEFENDING ITSELF AGAINST COMMUNIST AGGRESSION FROM THE NORTH

The United States has made commitments and given assurances, in various forms and

¹² For a statement made by President Eisenhower on June 21, 1954, see *ibid.*, Aug. 2, 1954, p. 163.

¹³ For text, see *ibid.*, p. 162.

¹⁴ For text, see *ibid.*, Sept. 20, 1954, p. 393.

at different times, to assist in the defense of South Viet-Nam.

A. The United States Gave Undertakings at the End of the Geneva Conference in 1954

At the time of the signing of the Geneva accords in 1954, President Eisenhower warned "that any renewal of Communist aggression would be viewed by us as a matter of grave concern," at the same time giving assurance that the United States would "not use force to disturb the settlement."¹² And the formal declaration made by the United States Government at the conclusion of the Geneva conference stated that the United States "would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."¹³

B. The United States Undertook an International Obligation To Defend South Viet-Nam in the SEATO Treaty

Later in 1954 the United States negotiated with a number of other countries and signed the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty.¹⁴ The treaty contains in the first paragraph of article IV the following provision:

Each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.

Annexed to the treaty was a protocol stating that:

The Parties to the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty unanimously designate for the purposes of Article IV of the Treaty the States of Cambodia and Laos and the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam.

Thus, the obligations of article IV, paragraph 1, dealing with the eventuality of

armed attack, have from the outset covered the territory of South Viet-Nam. The facts as to the North Vietnamese armed attack against the South have been summarized earlier, in the discussion of the right of self-defense under international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The term "armed attack" has the same meaning in the SEATO treaty as in the United Nations Charter.

Article IV, paragraph 1, places an obligation on each party to the SEATO treaty to "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes" in the event of an armed attack. The treaty does not require a collective determination that an armed attack has occurred in order that the obligation of article IV, paragraph 1, become operative. Nor does the provision require collective decision on actions to be taken to meet the common danger. As Secretary Dulles pointed out when transmitting the treaty to the President, the commitment in article IV, paragraph 1, "leaves to the judgment of each country the type of action to be taken in the event an armed attack occurs."¹⁵

The treaty was intended to deter armed aggression in Southeast Asia. To that end it created not only a multilateral alliance but also a series of bilateral relationships. The obligations are placed squarely on "each Party" in the event of armed attack in the treaty area—not upon "the Parties," a wording that might have implied a necessity for collective decision. The treaty was intended to give the assurance of United States assistance to any party or protocol state that might suffer a Communist armed attack, regardless of the views or actions of other parties. The fact that the obligations are individual, and may even to some extent differ among the parties to the treaty, is demonstrated by the United States understanding, expressed at the time of signature, that its obligations under article IV, paragraph 1, apply only in the event of *Communist*

aggression, whereas the other parties to the treaty were unwilling so to limit their obligations to each other.

Thus, the United States has a commitment under article IV, paragraph 1, in the event of armed attack, independent of the decision or action of other treaty parties. A joint statement issued by Secretary Rusk and Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman of Thailand on March 6, 1962,¹⁶ reflected this understanding:

The Secretary of State assured the Foreign Minister that in the event of such aggression, the United States intends to give full effect to its obligations under the Treaty to act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. The Secretary of State reaffirmed that this obligation of the United States does not depend upon the prior agreement of all other parties to the Treaty, since this Treaty obligation is individual as well as collective.

Most of the SEATO countries have stated that they agreed with this interpretation. None has registered objection to it.

When the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations reported on the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, it noted that the treaty area was further defined so that the "Free Territory of Vietnam" was an area "which, if attacked, would fall under the protection of the instrument." In its conclusion the committee stated:

The committee is not impervious to the risks which this treaty entails. It fully appreciates that acceptance of these additional obligations commits the United States to a course of action over a vast expanse of the Pacific. Yet these risks are consistent with our own highest interests.

The Senate gave its advice and consent to the treaty by a vote of 82 to 1.

C. The United States Has Given Additional Assurances to the Government of South Viet-Nam

The United States has also given a series of additional assurances to the Government of South Viet-Nam. As early as October 1954 President Eisenhower undertook to provide direct assistance to help make South Viet-

¹⁵ For text, see *ibid.*, Nov. 29, 1954, p. 820.

¹⁶ For text, see *ibid.*, Mar. 26, 1962, p. 498.

Nam "capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means."¹⁷ On May 11, 1957, President Eisenhower and President Ngo Dinh Diem of the Republic of Viet-Nam issued a joint statement¹⁸ which called attention to "the large build-up of Vietnamese Communist military forces in North Viet-Nam" and stated:

Noting that the Republic of Viet-Nam is covered by Article IV of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, President Eisenhower and President Ngo Dinh Diem agreed that aggression or subversion threatening the political independence of the Republic of Viet-Nam would be considered as endangering peace and stability.

On August 2, 1961, President Kennedy declared that "the United States is determined that the Republic of Viet-Nam shall not be lost to the Communists for lack of any support which the United States Government can render."¹⁹ On December 7 of that year President Diem appealed for additional support. In his reply of December 14, 1961, President Kennedy recalled the United States declaration made at the end of the Geneva conference in 1954, and reaffirmed that the United States was "prepared to help the Republic of Viet-Nam to protect its people and to preserve its independence."²⁰ This assurance has been reaffirmed many times since.

III. ACTIONS BY THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH VIET-NAM ARE JUSTIFIED UNDER THE GENEVA ACCORDS OF 1954

A. Description of the Accords

The Geneva accords of 1954²¹ established the date and hour for a cease-fire in Viet-Nam, drew a "provisional military demarcation line" with a demilitarized zone on both sides, and required an exchange of prisoners and the phased regroupment of Viet Minh forces from the south to the north and of French Union forces from the north to the south. The introduction into Viet-Nam of troop reinforcements and new military equipment (except for replacement and

repair) was prohibited. The armed forces of each party were required to respect the demilitarized zone and the territory of the other zone. The adherence of either zone to any military alliance, and the use of either zone for the resumption of hostilities or to "further an aggressive policy," were prohibited. The International Control Commission was established, composed of India, Canada and Poland, with India as chairman. The task of the Commission was to supervise the proper execution of the provisions of the cease-fire agreement. General elections that would result in reunification were required to be held in July 1956 under the supervision of the ICC.

B. North Viet-Nam Violated the Accords From the Beginning

From the very beginning, the North Vietnamese violated the 1954 Geneva accords. Communist military forces and supplies were left in the South in violation of the accords. Other Communist guerrillas were moved north for further training and then were infiltrated into the South in violation of the accords.

¹⁷ For text of a message from President Eisenhower to President Ngo Dinh Diem, see *ibid.*, Nov. 15, 1954, p. 735.

¹⁸ For text, see *ibid.*, May 27, 1957, p. 851.

¹⁹ For text of a joint communique issued by President Kennedy and Vice President Chen Cheng of the Republic of China, see *ibid.*, Aug. 28, 1961, p. 372.

²⁰ For text of an exchange of messages between President Kennedy and President Diem, see *ibid.*, Jan. 1, 1962, p. 13.

²¹ These accords were composed of a bilateral cease-fire agreement between the "Commander-in-Chief of the People's Army of Viet Nam" and the "Commander-in-Chief of the French Union forces in Indo-China," together with a Final Declaration of the Conference, to which France adhered. However, it is to be noted that the South Vietnamese Government was not a signatory of the cease-fire agreement and did not adhere to the Final Declaration. South Viet-Nam entered a series of reservations in a statement to the conference. This statement was noted by the conference, but by decision of the conference chairman it was not included or referred to in the Final Declaration. [Footnote in original.]

C. The Introduction of United States Military Personnel and Equipment Was Justified

The accords prohibited the reinforcement of foreign military forces in Viet-Nam and the introduction of new military equipment, but they allowed replacement of existing military personnel and equipment. Prior to late 1961 South Viet-Nam had received considerable military equipment and supplies from the United States, and the United States had gradually enlarged its Military Assistance Advisory Group to slightly less than 900 men. These actions were reported to the ICC and were justified as replacements for equipment in Viet-Nam in 1954 and for French training and advisory personnel who had been withdrawn after 1954.

As the Communist aggression intensified during 1961, with increased infiltration and a marked stepping up of Communist terrorism in the South, the United States found it necessary in late 1961 to increase substantially the numbers of our military personnel and the amounts and types of equipment introduced by this country into South Viet-Nam. These increases were justified by the international law principle that a material breach of an agreement by one party entitles the other at least to withhold compliance with an equivalent, corresponding, or related provision until the defaulting party is prepared to honor its obligations.²²

In accordance with this principle, the systematic violation of the Geneva accords by North Viet-Nam justified South Viet-Nam in suspending compliance with the provision controlling entry of foreign military personnel and military equipment.

D. South Viet-Nam Was Justified in Refusing To Implement the Election Provisions of the Geneva Accords

The Geneva accords contemplated the reunification of the two parts of Viet-Nam. They contained a provision for general elections to be held in July 1956 in order to obtain a "free expression of the national will." The accords stated that "consultations will be held on this subject between the compe-

tent representative authorities of the two zones from 20 July 1955 onwards."

There may be some question whether South Viet-Nam was bound by these election provisions. As indicated earlier, South Viet-Nam did not sign the cease-fire agreement of 1954, nor did it adhere to the Final Declaration of the Geneva conference. The South Vietnamese Government at that time gave notice of its objection in particular to the election provisions of the accords.

However, even on the premise that these provisions were binding on South Viet-Nam, the South Vietnamese Government's failure to engage in consultations in 1955, with a view to holding elections in 1956, involved no breach of obligation. The conditions in North Viet-Nam during that period were such as to make impossible any free and meaningful expression of popular will.

Some of the facts about conditions in the North were admitted even by the Communist leadership in Hanoi. General Giap, currently Defense Minister of North Viet-Nam, in addressing the Tenth Congress of the North Vietnamese Communist Party in Oc-

²² This principle of law and the circumstances in which it may be invoked are most fully discussed in the Fourth Report on the Law of Treaties by Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice, articles 18, 20 (U.N. doc. A/CN.4/120(1959)) II Yearbook of the International Law Commission 37 (U.N. doc. A/CN.4/SER.A/1959/Add.1) and in the later report by Sir Humphrey Waldock, article 20 (U.N. doc. A/CN.4/156 and Add. 1-3 (1963)) II Yearbook of the International Law Commission 36 (U.N. doc. A/CN.4/SER.A/1963/Add.1). Among the authorities cited by the fourth report for this proposition are: II Oppenheim, *International Law* 136, 137 (7th ed. Lauterpacht 1955); I Rousseau, *Principes généraux du droit international public* 365 (1944); II Hyde, *International Law* 1660 et seq. (2d ed. 1947); II Guggenheim, *Traité de droit international public* 84, 85 (1935); Spiropoulos, *Traité théorique et pratique de droit international public* 289 (1933); Verdross, *Völkerrecht*, 328 (1950); Hall, *Treatise* 21 (8th ed. Higgins 1924); 3 Accioly, *Tratado de Direito Internacional Publico* 82 (1956-57). See also draft articles 42 and 46 of the Law of Treaties by the International Law Commission, contained in the report on the work of its 15th session (General Assembly, Official Records, 18th Session, Supplement No. 9(A/5809)). [Footnote in original.]

tober 1956, publicly acknowledged that the Communist leaders were running a police state where executions, terror, and torture were commonplace. A nationwide election in these circumstances would have been a travesty. No one in the North would have dared to vote except as directed. With a substantial majority of the Vietnamese people living north of the 17th parallel, such an election would have meant turning the country over to the Communists without regard to the will of the people. The South Vietnamese Government realized these facts and quite properly took the position that consultations for elections in 1956 as contemplated by the accords would be a useless formality.²³

IV. THE PRESIDENT HAS FULL AUTHORITY TO COMMIT UNITED STATES FORCES IN THE COLLECTIVE DEFENSE OF SOUTH VIET-NAM

There can be no question in present circumstances of the President's authority to commit United States forces to the defense of South Viet-Nam. The grant of authority to the President in article II of the Constitution extends to the actions of the United States currently undertaken in Viet-Nam. In fact, however, it is unnecessary to determine whether this grant standing alone is sufficient to authorize the actions taken in Viet-Nam. These actions rest not only on the exercise of Presidential powers under article II but on the SEATO treaty—a treaty advised and consented to by the Senate—and on actions of the Congress, particularly the joint resolution of August 10, 1964. When these sources of authority are taken together—article II of the Constitution, the SEATO treaty, and actions by the Congress—there can be no question of the legality

²³ In any event, if North Viet-Nam considered there had been a breach of obligation by the South, its remedies lay in discussion with Saigon, perhaps in an appeal to the cochairmen of the Geneva conference, or in a reconvening of the conference to consider the situation. Under international law, North Viet-Nam had no right to use force outside its own zone in order to secure its political objectives. [Footnote in original.]

under domestic law of United States actions in Viet-Nam.

A. The President's Power Under Article II of the Constitution Extends to the Actions Currently Undertaken in Viet-Nam

Under the Constitution, the President, in addition to being Chief Executive, is Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy. He holds the prime responsibility for the conduct of United States foreign relations. These duties carry very broad powers, including the power to deploy American forces abroad and commit them to military operations when the President deems such action necessary to maintain the security and defense of the United States.

At the Federal Constitutional Convention in 1787, it was originally proposed that Congress have the power "to make war." There were objections that legislative proceedings were too slow for this power to be vested in Congress; it was suggested that the Senate might be a better repository. Madison and Gerry then moved to substitute "to declare war" for "to make war," "leaving to the Executive the power to repel sudden attacks." It was objected that this might make it too easy for the Executive to involve the nation in war, but the motion carried with but one dissenting vote.

In 1787 the world was a far larger place, and the framers probably had in mind attacks upon the United States. In the 20th century, the world has grown much smaller. An attack on a country far from our shores can impinge directly on the nation's security. In the SEATO treaty, for example, it is formally declared that an armed attack against Viet-Nam would endanger the peace and safety of the United States.

Since the Constitution was adopted there have been at least 125 instances in which the President has ordered the armed forces to take action or maintain positions abroad without obtaining prior congressional authorization, starting with the "undeclared war" with France (1798-1800). For example, President Truman ordered 250,000 troops to Korea during the Korean war of the early

1950's. President Eisenhower dispatched 14,000 troops to Lebanon in 1958.

The Constitution leaves to the President the judgment to determine whether the circumstances of a particular armed attack are so urgent and the potential consequences so threatening to the security of the United States that he should act without formally consulting the Congress.

B. The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty Authorizes the President's Actions

Under article VI of the United States Constitution, "all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land." Article IV, paragraph 1, of the SEATO treaty establishes as a matter of law that a Communist armed attack against South Viet-Nam endangers the peace and safety of the United States. In this same provision the United States has undertaken a commitment in the SEATO treaty to "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes" in the event of such an attack.

Under our Constitution it is the President who must decide when an armed attack has occurred. He has also the constitutional responsibility for determining what measures of defense are required when the peace and safety of the United States are endangered. If he considers that deployment of U. S. forces to South Viet-Nam is required, and that military measures against the source of Communist aggression in North Viet-Nam are necessary, he is constitutionally empowered to take those measures.

The SEATO treaty specifies that each party will act "in accordance with its constitutional processes."

It has recently been argued that the use of land forces in Asia is not authorized under the treaty because their use to deter armed attack was not contemplated at the time the treaty was considered by the Senate. Secretary Dulles testified at that time that we did not intend to establish (1) a land army in Southeast Asia capable of deterring Communist aggression, or (2) an

integrated headquarters and military organization like that of NATO; instead, the United States would rely on "mobile striking power" against the sources of aggression. However, the treaty obligation in article IV, paragraph 1, to meet the common danger in the event of armed aggression, is not limited to particular modes of military action. What constitutes an adequate deterrent or an appropriate response, in terms of military strategy, may change; but the essence of our commitment to act to meet the common danger, as necessary at the time of an armed aggression, remains. In 1954 the forecast of military judgment might have been against the use of substantial United States ground forces in Viet-Nam. But that does not preclude the President from reaching a different military judgment in different circumstances, 12 years later.

C. The Joint Resolution of Congress of August 10, 1964, Authorizes United States Participation in the Collective Defense of South Viet-Nam

As stated earlier, the legality of United States participation in the defense of South Viet-Nam does not rest only on the constitutional power of the President under article II—or indeed on that power taken in conjunction with the SEATO treaty. In addition, the Congress has acted in unmistakable fashion to approve and authorize United States actions in Viet-Nam.

Following the North Vietnamese attacks in the Gulf of Tonkin against United States destroyers, Congress adopted, by a Senate vote of 88-2 and a House vote of 416-0, a joint resolution containing a series of important declarations and provisions of law.²⁴

Section 1 resolved that "the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." Thus, the Congress gave its sanction to specific actions by the President

²⁴ For text, see BULLETIN of Aug. 24, 1964, p. 268.

to repel attacks against United States naval vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin and elsewhere in the western Pacific. Congress further approved the taking of "all necessary measures . . . to prevent further aggression." This authorization extended to those measures the President might consider necessary to ward off further attacks and to prevent further aggression by North Viet-Nam in Southeast Asia.

The joint resolution then went on to provide in section 2:

The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

Section 2 thus constitutes an authorization to the President, in his discretion, to act—using armed force if he determines that is required—to assist South Viet-Nam at its request in defense of its freedom. The identification of South Viet-Nam through the reference to "protocol state" in this section is unmistakable, and the grant of authority "as the President determines" is unequivocal.

It has been suggested that the legislative history of the joint resolution shows an intention to limit United States assistance to South Viet-Nam to aid, advice, and training. This suggestion is based on an amendment offered from the floor by Senator [Gaylord] Nelson which would have added the following to the text:

The Congress also approves and supports the efforts of the President to bring the problem of peace in Southeast Asia to the Security Council of the United Nations, and the President's declaration that the United States, seeking no extension of the present military conflict, will respond to provocation in a manner that is "limited and fitting." Our continuing policy is to limit our role to the provision of aid, training assistance, and military

advice, and it is the sense of Congress that, except when provoked to a greater response, we should continue to attempt to avoid a direct military involvement in the Southeast Asian conflict."

Senator [J. W.] Fulbright, who had reported the joint resolution from the Foreign Relations Committee, spoke on the amendment as follows:

It states fairly accurately what the President has said would be our policy, and what I stated my understanding was as to our policy; also what other Senators have stated. In other words, it states that our response should be appropriate and limited to the provocation, which the Senator states as "respond to provocation in a manner that is limited and fitting," and so forth. We do not wish any political or military bases there. We are not seeking to gain a colony. We seek to insure the capacity of these people to develop along the lines of their own desires, independent of domination by communism.

The Senator has put into his amendment a statement of policy that is unobjectionable. However, I cannot accept the amendment under the circumstances. I do not believe it is contrary to the joint resolution, but it is an enlargement. I am informed that the House is now voting on this resolution. The House joint resolution is about to be presented to us. I cannot accept the amendment and go to conference with it, and thus take responsibility for delaying matters.

I do not object to it as a statement of policy. I believe it is an accurate reflection of what I believe is the President's policy, judging from his own statements. That does not mean that as a practical matter I can accept the amendment. It would delay matters to do so. It would cause confusion and require a conference, and present us with all the other difficulties that are involved in this kind of legislative action. I regret that I cannot do it, even though I do not at all disagree with the amendment as a general statement of policy."

Senator Nelson's amendment related the degree and kind of U. S. response in Viet-Nam to "provocation" on the other side; the response should be "limited and fitting." The greater the provocation, the stronger are the measures that may be characterized as "limited and fitting." Bombing of North Vietnamese naval bases was a "limited and fitting" response to the attacks on U. S. destroyers in August 1964, and the subse-

¹¹⁰ *Cong. Rec.* 18459 (Aug. 7, 1964). [Footnote in original.]

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

quent actions taken by the United States and South Viet-Nam have been an appropriate response to the increased war of aggression carried on by North Viet-Nam since that date. Moreover, Senator Nelson's proposed amendment did not purport to be a restriction on authority available to the President but merely a statement concerning what should be the continuing policy of the United States.

Congressional realization of the scope of authority being conferred by the joint resolution is shown by the legislative history of the measure as a whole. The following exchange between Senators Cooper and Fulbright is illuminating:

Mr. COOPER [John Sherman Cooper]. . . . The Senator will remember that the SEATO Treaty, in article IV, provides that in the event an armed attack is made upon a party to the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, or upon one of the protocol states such as South Vietnam, the parties to the treaty, one of whom is the United States, would then take such action as might be appropriate, after resorting to their constitutional processes. I assume that would mean, in the case of the United States, that Congress would be asked to grant the authority to act.

Does the Senator consider that in enacting this resolution we are satisfying that requirement of article IV of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty? In other words, are we now giving the President advance authority to take whatever action he may deem necessary respecting South Vietnam and its defense, or with respect to the defense of any other country included in the treaty?

Mr. FULBRIGHT. I think that is correct.

Mr. COOPER. Then, looking ahead, if the President decided that it was necessary to use such force as could lead into war, we will give that authority by this resolution?

Mr. FULBRIGHT. That is the way I would interpret it. If a situation later developed in which we thought the approval should be withdrawn it could be withdrawn by concurrent resolution.²⁷

The August 1964 joint resolution continues in force today. Section 2 of the resolution provides that it shall expire "when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress." The

President has made no such determination, nor has Congress terminated the joint resolution.²⁸

Instead, Congress in May 1965 approved an appropriation of \$700 million to meet the expense of mounting military requirements in Viet-Nam. (Public Law 89-18, 79 Stat. 109.) The President's message asking for this appropriation stated that this was "not a routine appropriation. For each Member of Congress who supports this request is also voting to persist in our efforts to halt Communist aggression in South Vietnam."²⁹ The appropriation act constitutes a clear congressional endorsement and approval of the actions taken by the President.

On March 1, 1966, the Congress continued to express its support of the President's policy by approving a \$4.8 billion supplemental military authorization by votes of

²⁷ 110 Cong. Rec. 18409 (Aug. 6, 1964). Senator [Wayne] Morse, who opposed the joint resolution, expressed the following view on August 6, 1964, concerning the scope of the proposed resolution:

Another Senator thought, in the early part of the debate, that this course would not broaden the power of the President to engage in a land war if he decided that he wanted to apply the resolution in that way.

That Senator was taking great consolation in the then held belief that, if he voted for the resolution, it would give no authority to the President to send many troops into Asia. I am sure he was quite disappointed to finally learn, because it took a little time to get the matter cleared, that the resolution places no restriction on the President in that respect. If he is still in doubt, let him read the language on page 2, lines 3 to 6, and page 2, lines 11 to 17. The first reads:

The Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

It does not say he is limited in regard to the sending of ground forces. It does not limit that authority. That is why I have called it a predated declaration of war, in clear violation of article I, section 8, of the Constitution, which vests the power to declare war in the Congress, and not in the President.

What is proposed is to authorize the President of the United States, without a declaration of war, to commit acts of war. (110 Cong. Rec. 18426-7 (Aug. 6, 1964)). [Footnote in original.]

²⁸ On March 1, 1966, the Senate voted, 92-5, to table an amendment that would have repealed the joint resolution. [Footnote in original.]

²⁹ For text, see BULLETIN of May 24, 1965, p. 822.

392-4 and 93-2. An amendment that would have limited the President's authority to commit forces to Viet-Nam was rejected in the Senate by a vote of 94-2.

D. No Declaration of War by the Congress Is Required To Authorize United States Participation in the Collective Defense of South Viet-Nam

No declaration of war is needed to authorize American actions in Viet-Nam. As shown in the preceding sections, the President has ample authority to order the participation of United States armed forces in the defense of South Viet-Nam.

Over a very long period in our history, practice and precedent have confirmed the constitutional authority to engage United States forces in hostilities without a declaration of war. This history extends from the undeclared war with France and the war against the Barbary pirates at the end of the 18th century to the Korean war of 1950-53.

James Madison, one of the leading framers of the Constitution, and Presidents John Adams and Jefferson all construed the Constitution, in their official actions during the early years of the Republic, as authorizing the United States to employ its armed forces abroad in hostilities in the absence of any congressional declaration of war. Their views and actions constitute highly persuasive evidence as to the meaning and effect of the Constitution. History has accepted the interpretation that was placed on the Constitution by the early Presidents and Congresses in regard to the lawfulness of hostilities without a declaration of war. The instances of such action in our history are numerous.

In the Korean conflict, where large-scale hostilities were conducted with an American troop participation of a quarter of a million men, no declaration of war was made by the Congress. The President acted on the basis of his constitutional responsibilities. While the Security Council, under a treaty of this country—the United Nations Charter—recommended assistance to the Republic of Korea against the Communist armed attack, the United States had no treaty commitment

at that time obligating us to join in the defense of South Korea. In the case of South Viet-Nam we have the obligation of the SEATO treaty and clear expressions of congressional support. If the President could act in Korea without a declaration of war, *a fortiori* he is empowered to do so now in Viet-Nam.

It may be suggested that a declaration of war is the only available constitutional process by which congressional support can be made effective for the use of United States armed forces in combat abroad. But the Constitution does not insist on any rigid formalism. It gives Congress a choice of ways in which to exercise its powers. In the case of Viet-Nam the Congress has supported the determination of the President by the Senate's approval of the SEATO treaty, the adoption of the joint resolution of August 10, 1964, and the enactment of the necessary authorizations and appropriations.

V. CONCLUSION

South Viet-Nam is being subjected to armed attack by Communist North Viet-Nam, through the infiltration of armed personnel, military equipment, and regular combat units. International law recognizes the right of individual and collective self-defense against armed attack. South Viet-Nam, and the United States upon the request of South Viet-Nam, are engaged in such collective defense of the South. Their actions are in conformity with international law and with the Charter of the United Nations. The fact that South Viet-Nam has been precluded by Soviet veto from becoming a member of the United Nations and the fact that South Viet-Nam is a zone of a temporarily divided state in no way diminish the right of collective defense of South Viet-Nam.

The United States has commitments to assist South Viet-Nam in defending itself against Communist aggression from the North. The United States gave undertakings to this effect at the conclusion of the Geneva conference in 1954. Later that year the United States undertook an international

obligation in the SEATO treaty to defend South Viet-Nam against Communist armed aggression. And during the past decade the United States has given additional assurances to the South Vietnamese Government.

The Geneva accords of 1954 provided for a cease-fire and regroupment of contending forces, a division of Viet-Nam into two zones, and a prohibition on the use of either zone for the resumption of hostilities or to "further an aggressive policy." From the beginning, North Viet-Nam violated the Geneva accords through a systematic effort to gain control of South Viet-Nam by force. In the light of these progressive North Vietnamese violations, the introduction into South Viet-Nam beginning in late 1961 of substantial United States military equipment and personnel, to assist in the defense of the South, was fully justified; substantial breach of an international agreement by one side permits the other side to suspend performance of corresponding obligations under the agreement. South Viet-Nam was justified in refusing to implement the provisions of the Geneva accords calling for reunification through free elections throughout Viet-Nam since

the Communist regime in North Viet-Nam created conditions in the North that made free elections entirely impossible.

The President of the United States has full authority to commit United States forces in the collective defense of South Viet-Nam. This authority stems from the constitutional powers of the President. However, it is not necessary to rely on the Constitution alone as the source of the President's authority, since the SEATO treaty—advised and consented to by the Senate and forming part of the law of the land—sets forth a United States commitment to defend South Viet-Nam against armed attack, and since the Congress—in the joint resolution of August 10, 1964, and in authorization and appropriations acts for support of the U. S. military effort in Viet-Nam—has given its approval and support to the President's actions. United States actions in Viet-Nam, taken by the President and approved by the Congress, do not require any declaration of war, as shown by a long line of precedents for the use of United States armed forces abroad in the absence of any congressional declaration of war.