

In 1971, while stationed at Sandia Army Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico, I sent a letter to President Nixon about Vietnam. The content was if he wanted to know what to do about Vietnam, he should talk to veterans of that war. In response to the letter, I received a ten page pamphlet [copy enclosed]. I do not have a copy of my letter.

James B. [Jim] Evans
11 February 2004



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

May 13, 1971

Dear Fellow American:

President Nixon has asked me to reply to your comments about our policy in Southeast Asia. We would like to send you a personal reply but hope you will understand that the volume of our mail sometimes forces us to use form letters.

We understand your concern about the war. One of the President's first acts after assuming office was to review US policy in Viet-Nam. He significantly changed that policy to put us on the road to peace. He has made it clear that he does not anticipate maintaining US forces indefinitely in Viet-Nam. However, the President has refused to fix a date for the withdrawal of our forces, because such a move, in the absence of North Viet-Nam's agreement to mutual withdrawals, would not bring real peace in Indochina. While a unilateral withdrawal timetable might comfort some Americans, it would offer far more comfort and encouragement to the enemy. It would remove the enemy's strongest incentive to negotiate and would give enemy commanders the exact information they need to marshal attacks against our remaining forces at their most vulnerable time.

The President's policy of withdrawing US forces steadily and by orderly stages, in accordance with the progress of Vietnamization and continuous estimates of the enemy's capabilities and intentions, but without a fixed timetable, is in our best national interests. It permits us to end our involvement while giving South Viet-Nam the chance to determine its own future.

I enclose statements about our policy and hope you will give these your full consideration. Perhaps you will then conclude as we do that the only real alternative for the United States is the fulfillment of our commitment to South Viet-Nam while pursuing our efforts to achieve a just and honorable peace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W.D. Blair Jr." with a stylized "Jr." at the end.

William D. Blair, Jr.
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Public Affairs

Enclosures.

PUBLIC INFORMATION SERIES

BUREAU of PUBLIC AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES POSITION ON TROOP REPLACEMENT IN VIET-NAM

On April 7, 1971 President Nixon announced his plan for the withdrawal from Viet-Nam of another 100,000 American troops, to be completed by December 1, 1971. Added to the previous withdrawals, this reduction will bring the US troop ceiling in Viet-Nam down to 184,000. The troop ceiling in June 1969, when the President ordered the initial withdrawal of US troops, was 549,500. Replacement of US forces by the armed forces of the Republic of Viet-Nam (RVNAF) will have reduced the number of American troops in Viet-Nam by two-thirds by December 1.

Reductions are carefully carried out so as not to endanger other American troops or those of our allies. The redeployment program, however, does not mean that US troops will no longer be sent to Viet-Nam. The regular troop rotation system will continue to provide men to take the place of individual servicemen who complete their one-year tour of duty in Viet-Nam.

Rate of Withdrawal Depends on President's Criteria

The rate of withdrawal of our troops from Viet-Nam depends on the three criteria set by President Nixon when he first outlined his program for the redeployment of US forces: progress in the training and equipping of the South Vietnamese forces, progress in the Paris peace talks and the level of enemy activity. The latest decision was based entirely on the progress of Vietnamization. It was made after consultation with US commanders in the field and has the approval of the Government of Viet-Nam. The timing and pace of the new withdrawals in the over-all schedule will be determined by our best judgment of the current military and diplomatic situation. The President has stressed that, as replacements of US forces take place, no actions will be taken which endanger the attainment of our objective, the right of self-determination for the people of South Viet-Nam.

Cambodia and Laos Operations Assure Continued Withdrawal

In March and April of 1970, communist troops used their long-held bases in Cambodia to move against the Government of Cambodia in a way which increased the long-term threat to US and allied forces

in South Viet-Nam as well as the future of our Vietnamization and withdrawal programs. On April 30 the President announced his decision to launch attacks, in cooperation with the RVNAF, for the limited purpose of cleaning out the major enemy sanctuaries on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border and destroying his supplies and equipment. Two months later, on June 30, the President reported that all American troops had withdrawn from Cambodia in accordance with his timetable. This successful operation seriously set back the communist war effort. As a result there has been a dramatic slackening of enemy offensive moves in South Viet-Nam. The operation saved American and allied lives and assured that our withdrawal program could proceed on schedule.

The success of the Cambodian operation caused the North Vietnamese to place increasing importance on the southern Laos area, where for years they had been using the Ho Chi Minh Trail to bring men and supplies into South Viet-Nam. In February 1971 the South Vietnamese conducted a limited operation to interdict this flow of supplies and to disrupt enemy forces concentrating in Laos for an attack on allied forces in South Viet-Nam. President Nixon reported on April 7 that this operation -- against the best troops of North Viet-Nam -- was even more damaging to the capability of the North Vietnamese to sustain major offensives in South Viet-Nam than the operation in Cambodia.

RVNAF Fight Effectively on Their Own

The Cambodian operation had shown the success of Vietnamization as the South Vietnamese performed with skill, valor and confidence. The Laos operation was a significant milestone, as the South Vietnamese fought without American ground advisers. While South Vietnamese casualties were heavy, the casualties suffered by the enemy were far heavier, and the RVNAF demonstrated an increasing capability of fighting their own battles against the best North Vietnamese forces. As the South Vietnamese have assumed more of the burden of battle, American casualties have declined. During the first three months of 1971, our casualties were only a fifth of what they had been in the first three months of 1969. The number of Americans killed in action in 1970 was the lowest in five years.

The President was able to announce on April 7 that the American involvement in Viet-Nam is coming to an end. "The day the South Vietnamese can take over their own defense is in sight. Our goal is a total American withdrawal from Viet-Nam. We can and we will reach that goal through our program of Vietnamization."

Negotiations are Best Path to Peace

While the withdrawal of 100,000 more men means that we have the end of American involvement in sight, the President pointed out that "we would infinitely prefer to reach it even sooner -- through negotiations."

The United States took initiatives -- the partial bombing halt of March 31, 1968 and the total bombing halt of November 1, 1968 -- to bring about the Paris peace talks. We accepted the National Liberation Front as one of the parties to the negotiations. In Paris, from January until early May 1969, we put forward concrete proposals for bringing an end to armed conflict in Viet-Nam on the basis of mutual withdrawal of forces and restoration of military respect for the demilitarized zone.

President's Program for Peace

In May 1969 we presented in Paris a comprehensive program for peace advanced by President Nixon. The President proposed the withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces from South Viet-Nam under circumstances that would permit the South Vietnamese people to determine freely their own political future. Our basic position remains unchanged. It was repeated on October 7, 1970, when the President announced a major new initiative for peace.

Withdrawal of All Forces

President Nixon stated in presenting his October initiative: "In the past twenty months, I have reduced our troop ceilings in South Viet-Nam by 165,000 men. During the spring of next year these withdrawals will total more than 260,000 men -- about one-half the number that were in South Viet-Nam when I took office." He outlined five proposals under which we are prepared to withdraw all of our forces:

- The immediate negotiation of a cease-fire in place throughout Indochina, without preconditions but involving effective supervision by international observers.
- An Indochina peace conference.
- The negotiation of an agreed timetable for complete withdrawal of foreign forces as part of an over-all settlement.
- A search for a political settlement that truly meets the aspirations of all South Vietnamese.
- The immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of war held by both sides.

If all of our proposals are accepted, the three criteria of President Nixon's withdrawal plan will be satisfied and complete withdrawal of US troops could take place within twelve months. If just the cease-fire part is accepted, then at least the criterion of the level of enemy activity will have been met.

Even if our proposals are rejected entirely, we will still maintain our withdrawal policy as part of the Vietnamization program. This would be the slowest of the three possibilities, but we would nevertheless continue withdrawing our forces as the South Vietnamese are able to assume an increasing share of their own defense.

US Proposals Consistent and Reasonable

We believe that our proposals are consistent with our decision not to seek a military solution on the battlefield. We are willing to withdraw our troops immediately and simultaneously with the North Vietnamese. If Hanoi agrees, a relatively rapid end of the war is possible.

Hanoi's Demand for Unilateral US Withdrawal Unreasonable

However, the other side, in the "ten points" of the National Liberation Front (NLF), as well as in the essentially identical position of its more recent "eight points," continues to demand that United States forces leave unconditionally while North Vietnamese forces stay to do as they please. The intransigence of the communist side convinced us that we had to take other positive measures to lower the level of violence in the conflict and to induce the other side to cooperate in bringing the war to an end. We therefore accelerated our program to build up the RVNAF so they could take over their country's defense. The continuing success of our program to further strengthen the RVNAF is putting Hanoi on notice, even as we bring our troops home, that our basic objective remains unchanged and that the communists have nothing to gain by persisting in their aggression against South Viet-Nam.

US Willing to Discuss Other Proposals

On numerous occasions since May 1969, President Nixon has reiterated our desire to bring about genuine negotiations in Paris. All of our proposals, public and private, remain on the conference table to be explored. In the final analysis, progress toward peace can be accelerated significantly if the other side is prepared to get down to practical negotiations on the basis of the President's proposal outlined above. We and the Government of South Viet-Nam are prepared to discuss its details with the other side. Our proposals are not offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. We are willing to talk about anybody's programs -- Hanoi's four points, the NLF's ten points -- provided it is consistent with our few basic and simple terms: mutual withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces from South Viet-Nam and free choice for the people of South Viet-Nam. The long-term interests of peace require that we insist on no less.

PUBLIC INFORMATION SERIES

BUREAU of PUBLIC AFFAIRS

THE AMERICANS AND THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIET-NAM - PART I*

Today the people of South Viet-Nam are being given a choice between two opposing ways of life. The average Vietnamese may not be a skilled dialectician, but he has given ample evidence that he understands the true nature of communism. In 1954, after the Viet Minh victory over the French, more than 800,000 Vietnamese in the North "voted with their feet" against communism and fled to the South. In South Viet-Nam, the flow of refugees has been one way -- from enemy areas to areas under Government control. The Viet Cong receive little spontaneous support from the people; what cooperation they get is often extracted by force and terror. The Government of Viet-Nam (GVN) does not yet have overwhelming popular support, but it is making significant progress, with US cooperation, in reaching the people and assisting them to achieve better living conditions in increasing security.

The Negative View

Dissenters to United States assistance to South Viet-Nam often charge that differences in American and Vietnamese cultures, traditions and ways of life prevent effective cooperation. They also charge that we are exhausting ourselves in a fruitless endeavor for which we will never receive any gratitude. Critics of the war, citing isolated incidents and distorted reports, have gone so far as to suggest that Americans are hated by the majority of the South Vietnamese who want the US troops out of Viet-Nam immediately. Some have even expressed the demonstrably false view that the South Vietnamese, wanting peace at any price, are indifferent to the form of their government. These negative views do not stand up in light of American-Vietnamese progress in the mutual effort to build a viable democratic society while defending it against communist aggression.

The Positive View

South Viet-Nam, torn by war for decades, obviously wants peace. The South Vietnamese, like any people with an old and proud culture and a national consciousness, are aware that while our forces shield them from the enemy, their presence inhibits the

growth of strong national institutions. The South Vietnamese do wish to see American and allied forces quit Viet-Nam. But even more, they want to see the Viet Cong lay down their arms and the North Vietnamese leave the South. Although North Viet-Nam persists in its aggression, it is our policy, recognizing the South Vietnamese determination and desire to stand independently, to withdraw our forces as the South Vietnamese grow in strength and combat ability.

Communism is Repugnant to Vietnamese

Some Americans do not grasp the intensity of the South Vietnamese desire to be free from communist domination. When a South Vietnamese says he wants the Americans to leave his country, more often than not he means that he wants us to leave only after we have made sure South Viet-Nam can defend itself. To allege that it makes little difference to the people of Southeast Asia who rules them is to show disregard for their individuality and ignorance of their way of life. The South Vietnamese has demonstrated over many years of fighting that he does not want to be a "volunteer" for a Viet Cong labor company and that he does not want his family and village-oriented way of life destroyed by social and political centralization imposed by a communist dictatorship.

American-Vietnamese Relations are Good

Despite the major obstacles of wartime stresses and differences in culture and language, American relations with the Vietnamese people are good. In addition to combat troops, thousands of Americans -- military and civilian -- live and work among the Vietnamese, many in exposed and isolated areas. Yet assassinations of any of these scattered Americans have been rare. Vietnamese citizens, at great risk to themselves, have warned Americans of enemy ambushes or given Americans other assistance. Nor do Americans suffer in their personal lives or in the performance of their official duties from popular disaffection or non-cooperation. This is because the South Vietnamese recognize that the United States, unlike the communists, has no designs on them and that we have helped them and their country.

We have made mistakes, but we have also learned to appreciate and understand the Vietnamese and to apply our efforts better. We realize that it is less important to offer the Vietnamese showy projects than to give them something they can keep, to provide security to those who have resettled and declared their allegiance to the Government. Providing protection and jobs is not spectacular or dramatic, but it means a lot to the Vietnamese.

American Assistance Takes Several Channels

The US Agency for International Development (AID) has been providing economic and social assistance to South Viet-Nam since

1954. By the end of fiscal year 1971, AID will have spent or committed about \$4 billion. By June 1971, less than 1,700 AID personnel are expected to be working in Saigon and the provinces. The AID effort has been strongly seconded by the US Armed Forces which assist primarily through civic action. Coordinated by the Military Assistance Command in Viet-Nam, American aid and technical advice is funneled through US Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) -- an inter-agency management group combining the efforts of AID, the US Information Agency, several US Embassy offices and the noncombatant provincial advisory teams of the US Armed forces. Voluntary agencies, missions, foundations and other non-profit, non-governmental organizations comprise an extensive US private effort to provide the Vietnamese people with material assistance in medicine, education, community development and social services. A large part of this effort is for refugee relief.

Constructive Contribution by Americans

The record of constructive contribution by Americans in Viet-Nam is impressive. At the national, village and personal levels, programs of civic action and self-help are aiding the Vietnamese to strengthen their society and achieve a better life for themselves. An almost-completed road-building program launched in 1967 is creating a network of 2,500 miles of excellent highway to augment the established but inadequate system in linking the different regions of the country. Numerous seaport and airport facilities are being built and the national railroad is being reconstructed. The GVN is also carrying out a massive land reform program with some US financial support and the aid of American technical advisers.

Progress Despite Economic Problems

One of the most important forms of assistance has been the Commercial Import Program (CIP) and related efforts to maintain economic stability. The expansion of US forces in 1964, - 1968 and the resulting strain on Viet-Nam's resources distorted the nation's economy. AID has helped the GVN take stabilization measures and through the CIP has insured that adequate supplies of consumer goods and basic commodities are available in the market, as well as raw materials and machinery for domestic industry. This program helps prevent consumer shortages, commodity speculation and spiraling inflation. The CIP does not include luxury goods and, contrary to what some have charged, is helping to alleviate the black market situation. Today there is virtual price stability in Viet-Nam, primarily as a result of reform measures carried out by the GVN in September and October of 1970.

AID has made important contributions to agriculture -- the backbone of Viet-Nam's economy. The key crop, rice, has been in-

creasing appreciably since the introduction in 1967 of "miracle" rice, which is expected to return Viet-Nam to self-sufficiency in this basic food in 1971. Meat production has also increased substantially, and AID has sustained this increase by providing the necessary additional livestock feed. Improved production and marketing techniques have stimulated vegetable and fruit production. AID has assisted the GVN in establishing the Agricultural Development Bank to enable farmers to buy modern farm equipment and materials and to obtain credit at reasonable rates of interest.

Focus on the Villages

Destruction caused by the war is to blame for some of the needs of the Vietnamese, but the American effort goes far beyond replacing damaged property and caring for the wounded. More serious than bomb damage is the destruction of whole hamlets and villages in the course of battle. After the communist Tet offensive in 1968, a US Army division near Tay Ninh helped build 1,800 homes in five months for persons made homeless in the attacks. AID built a 2,000-unit apartment development in Cholon for families who lost their homes during the offensive. Assistance to villages and hamlets by AID and US military personnel has raised the level of health and welfare in Viet-Nam. Over 10 million Vietnamese have been given medical and dental care by US medical and dental personnel. American-constructed hospitals, orphanages, schools and temples have provided the Vietnamese, often for the first time, with social benefits essential to a life with dignity. Minor projects include capping disease-infested wells, creating public reading rooms, renovating market places, and constructing dispensaries and playgrounds where none existed before. Civic pride at the village level is increased by the GVN's self-development program, which makes substantial funds (over \$20 million in 1970) available for use by village governments to carry out projects inspired in part by American initiatives.

Sound Basis for Further Growth

A sound basis for the future has thus been laid. The American and Vietnamese armed forces have trained a core of workers skilled as carpenters, plumbers, electricians and mechanics. Over 25,000 village and hamlet officials have been trained in public administration, and 15,000 new South Vietnamese teachers have graduated since 1965. Today over 85 per cent of South Viet-Nam's children of elementary school age attend classes, compared to fewer than 10 per cent fifteen years ago. Secondary school enrollment has climbed from 54,000 students in 1955 to 623,000 in 1970, and university enrollment is up from 2,900 to 40,000 students, with several new universities open.

These are all assets to the nation-building force on which the future of South Viet-Nam depends. The assistance and cooperation of Americans have contributed decisively to that future.

PUBLIC INFORMATION SERIES

BUREAU of PUBLIC AFFAIRS

THE AMERICANS AND THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIET-NAM - PART II*

The United States, in addition to helping the South Vietnamese defend themselves against communist aggression, is assisting them to achieve better living conditions. For example, the United States has contributed to the growth of the Vietnamese school and university system. Americans involved in this task realized that this system had to be based on the Vietnamese cultural heritage; they did not attempt to import a foreign system. Many Americans in Viet-Nam -- military and civilian -- have participated in this work. American volunteer teachers have taught in Vietnamese schools and universities to help overcome the serious teacher shortage. The frequent voluntary participation of American military personnel in education and other civic action programs is not as well publicized as their actions on the battlefield. However, beneficial civic action projects have enhanced the good relations between the Vietnamese people and the American soldiers and serve to mitigate the destructive effects of the war.

Vietnamese Accept Costs of Their Defense

It is sometimes alleged that, in the US effort to help South Viet-Nam, heavy casualties are inflicted on innocent civilians, their land bombed beyond reclamation and their country's plant life damaged past recovery. This concern for South Viet-Nam is understandable, but the Vietnamese people would not want it used as an argument for bringing US forces home immediately and before they are able to assume total responsibility for their own defense. The Vietnamese know the Americans are helping them. They understand and accept the costs of the defensive effort against the North Vietnamese.

US Troops Take Risks to Avoid Harming Noncombatants

The United States does not sanction intentional harming of non-combatants. Such actions violate the 1949 Geneva Conventions on the Protection of War Victims as well as the customary law of war. Often, contrary to sound military practice, the people of an area are notified in advance of US and South Vietnamese operations in order to prevent civilian casualties. American fighting men are instructed to avoid causing undue hardship among noncombatants. Allied operations are planned and carried out to minimize loss of

life and destruction of property.

Civilian War Casualties

Widely varying statistics about allegedly US-caused casualties in Viet-Nam are often cited by those opposed to the war. The fact is that at present there are no definitive statistics on overall civilian war casualties. There are reliable statistics since 1967 on admissions of civilian war casualties to Vietnamese military and civilian hospitals and to US military hospitals in Viet-Nam, but there is no way to fix responsibility for these casualties. Hospital admissions of civilian war casualties from the beginning of 1967 through July 1970 totalled 238,124 (including 21,398 to US military hospitals). These figures do not include war casualties who never reach hospitals or who are treated in Vietnamese Government medical facilities below the province level. There is no realistic prospect of getting reliable statistics on untreated casualties.

Reliable figures are also available since 1967 on civilian victims of enemy terrorism. From May 1967 through 1970 (except for February 1968 when the Tet offensive made accurate record-keeping impossible), terrorist victims numbered 69,089, including 21,153 killed and 47,936 wounded. Regrettably, there is a tendency among critics of the war to overlook enemy terrorism, nonetheless horrible for being routine, in favor of distorted emphasis on the My Lai incident, use of napalm, defoliation and bombing.

My Lai Incident Does not Invalidate US Position

The My Lai incident runs counter to everything this country represents. President Nixon has stressed that the United States can never condone atrocities against civilians. My Lai is under extensive investigation and appropriate action according to the Uniform Code of Military Justice is being taken against those found responsible. The reaction of the American people and their Government to My Lai -- the fact that the incident is being forthrightly and openly discussed, properly investigated, and generally condemned -- demonstrates the great differences in attitudes and human values between the open society of the free world and the closed society of communism. The My Lai incident, though abhorrent and unjustified, does not change the issues in Viet-Nam nor invalidate the US position there.

Napalm Use Misunderstood

Those who condemn napalm as an immoral weapon misunderstand its use. Burning oil has been accepted as a conventional weapon of war for centuries ("Greek fire" was first used by Byzantium in 675 A.D. to help repulse the Arabs who were besieging Constantinople.) Only the method of delivery, as in the case of explosives, has changed. In Viet-Nam, US troops exercise restraint in the use of all weapons in areas inhabited by Vietnamese civilians, not only for humane reasons but also because they want the people to have confidence in their good intentions. In certain situations,

however, napalm is the only effective weapon. Frequently US forces encounter elaborately built bunkers, tunnels and trenches protected by overhead layers of logs and earthworks from which enemy troops can fire with relative immunity. These fortifications are impervious to artillery fire and bombs except for a direct hit. Napalm is the weapon best suited to penetrate these heavily fortified positions. If the use of napalm were withheld from them, US troops would unnecessarily be exposed to far greater risks of injury or death than they now face.

Chemicals Deprive Enemy of Cover

The effects of defoliants in Viet-Nam have been greatly exaggerated. Herbicides are used to defoliate the perimeters of allied military installations or remote jungle areas in order to deny the enemy cover and concealment and to increase the safety of allied troops and the Vietnamese civilian population. All defoliation actions are initiated by the Vietnamese, usually by a district or province chief who has identified a Viet Cong area. The aircraft and technical capability for this program are largely American because the Vietnamese do not yet have them.

The fiscal year 1971 Military Appropriations Act provides funds for the National Academy of Sciences to study the ecological and physiological effects of herbicides in Viet-Nam. The use of herbicides there has been reduced and is subject to restrictions comparable to those for US domestic commercial use. Herbicides are no longer employed to destroy crops in Viet-Nam. Areas where crop destruction was carried on in the past were thinly-populated and known to be occupied by the enemy.

Increased Security Promotes Rice Production

Some critics have cited South Viet-Nam's importation of 850,000 tons of rice in 1968 as evidence that crop destruction severely reduced rice crops. These critics failed to mention enemy activity as a cause of low rice production. Nor did they mention that South Vietnamese rice production rose from a low of 4.3 million tons in 1966 to 5.1 million tons in 1970, the best crop since 1964. This improvement is due to increased security from enemy attacks for Vietnamese farmers and to the "miracle" rice developed in the Philippines with US assistance. As a result of these advances, Viet-Nam is expected to achieve self-sufficiency in rice production in 1971.

Viet-Nam's "Lunar Landscape" Is a Myth

It is not true, as some critics claim, that US military operations have devastated the land. A tract, published by a dissenter group in 1969, charged that US B-52 bomb strikes in South Viet-Nam had made two and one-half million craters 45 feet in diameter and 30 feet deep. This statement was evidently designed to convey the impression that most of South Viet-Nam has been reduced to a lunar landscape. There are concentrations of bomb craters around

military targets, but the total area of two and one-half million holes 45 feet in diameter amounts to a minuscule .216 per cent -- slightly more than two-tenths of one per cent -- of the entire area of South Viet-Nam. Moreover, most bombing (like defoliation) was done in jungle and in other uncultivated or uninhabited areas. While the war has caused some damage to farm land, the damage is not of such proportions that the land cannot be put back into use. Indeed, this is being done as security improves and farmers return to fields they were forced temporarily to abandon.

Many visitors to South Viet-Nam are surprised to find that the reputed "lunar landscape" does not exist. One group of private Americans, after visiting Viet-Nam in 1969, reported, "We had expected to see a devastated country with ruined cities, despoiled forests and bomb craters dotting the land. After traveling from east to west, north to south, and covering tens of thousands of square miles of territory, we found nothing of the kind. South Viet-Nam is today still a beautiful, lush country -- damaged but not devastated."

Tear Gas Saves Lives

The use of riot-control agents in Viet-Nam has been scored by those who do not understand that their use is not only militarily advantageous but has saved the lives of many Vietnamese civilians and Allied troops. Tear gas is often used in Viet-Nam when caves and tunnels are suspected of harboring enemy troops and, perhaps, innocent civilian hostages. It has been used when enemy troops infiltrated population centers. The employment of tear gas is consistent with the US effort to use the most effective tactics and weapons to hold casualties and property damage to an absolute minimum.

Contrast Between US and Enemy Actions

Conversely the enemy often attacks hamlets and villages defended only by farmers who care for their crops by day and become militia at night. The enemy also sets booby traps which often claim civilians as victims. Throughout the war, the Viet Cong have assassinated village and hamlet officials, kidnapped persons of all ages and forced young men and even boys into their ranks.

The care taken by US and South Vietnamese forces to save lives is noted by the people. Since 1965 over three million South Vietnamese have fled from enemy areas to Government areas. American and South Vietnamese military operations have enabled almost two-thirds of them by now to return to their homes or to be resettled in new areas. It is evident that, despite all the vicissitudes of war, most Vietnamese place their hopes in their Government and are determined to defend their country.

PUBLIC INFORMATION SERIES

BUREAU of PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CONSEQUENCES OF A PRECIPITATE UNITED STATES WITHDRAWAL FROM VIET-NAM

There has been much honest and proper debate about the wisdom of the US commitment of troops to Viet-Nam as well as the past conduct of the war, but today the urgent question is not why we are in Viet-Nam, but how best to bring an end to the war and to achieve a just peace. President Nixon is second to none in his desire to end the fighting, and we are ready to take every reasonable step to do so. The United States and South Vietnamese Governments have publicly renounced the pursuit of a purely military outcome of the war and have made numerous repeated overtures to induce the other side to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the issues at stake. So far the North Vietnamese have not responded in a constructive way.

Substantial Reduction of US Combat Troops

Despite North Vietnamese intransigence in Paris, we are turning over more and more of the fighting to the South Vietnamese forces. When he first outlined his program for the withdrawal of US troops in June 1969, the President set three criteria for these withdrawals: progress in the training and equipping of South Vietnamese forces, progress in the Paris peace talks and the level of enemy activity. Since that time, the progress of the South Vietnamese armed forces has permitted us to withdraw over a quarter of a million of our troops and reduce American casualties substantially. By December 1971, we will have reduced the troop ceiling to 184,000 men -- about one-third of the authorized level of 549,500 at the beginning of 1969. The reductions are being made in a way that will not endanger other American troops or those of our allies in Viet-Nam.

Fixed Date for US Withdrawal Would Help Enemy

Some Americans suggest that we completely withdraw our forces from Viet-Nam by a specified date. Others go so far as to demand, without regard to the consequences, an immediate and total US withdrawal. While President Nixon has stated that our goal is total withdrawal and has called for negotiation of a timetable for withdrawal of all foreign forces from South Viet-Nam, he has refused to fix a date for the unilateral withdrawal of our forces. As the President explained to the nation

on April 7, the announcement of such a date would serve the enemy's purpose -- not our own. It would remove any incentive for the North Vietnamese to negotiate. It would remove our principal bargaining counter to win the release of American prisoners of war. It would give the enemy a significant tactical advantage, permitting him to attack our withdrawing forces, resulting in disorder and possibly large casualties, military and civilian. It would also offer the North Vietnamese the opportunity to mark time until we got out and then to resume their drive for a military victory over the other nations of Indochina.

"The issue," the President said, "very simply is this: Shall we leave Viet-Nam in a way that -- by our own actions -- consciously turns the country over to the communists? Or shall we leave in a way that gives the South Vietnamese a reasonable chance to survive as a free people? My plan will end American involvement in a way that would provide that chance. The other plan would end it precipitately and give victory to the communists."

South Vietnamese Want to Carry Own Burden

We have stated and are demonstrating our intent to withdraw our forces from South Viet-Nam as quickly as is prudent. Although North Viet-Nam persists in its aggression, the growing South Vietnamese self-defense capability is enabling us to proceed with our redeployments, leaving the South Vietnamese in a position to determine without external interference the kind of government and society they shall have. This is not only our policy, but it is ardently desired by the South Vietnamese themselves. They appreciate our shielding them from the North Vietnamese aggression which would deny them their freedom, but they recognize that the presence of American forces inhibits the growth of strong national institutions and the capacity for self-defense and self-management.

The South Vietnamese are also acutely aware that if the US withdrawal were carried out faster than their forces could fill the gaps, the communists might be able to seize unprotected parts of the country. Such reverses, even though temporary, could severely damage South Vietnamese morale. The military and psychological advantage thus given the enemy could enable him to prolong the fighting and conceivably lead in time to a North Vietnamese takeover of the South and forcible imposition of a communist dictatorship -- a political system repugnant to and feared by the great majority of the South Vietnamese people.

Immediate Withdrawal Would Mean Death to Many South Vietnamese

From the past actions of the communists, it is evident that they would execute thousands of South Vietnamese if an ill-considered and precipitate US withdrawal should negate years of sacrifice and lead to a communist victory. Bernard B. Fall, an authority often cited by those opposed to US assistance to South Viet-Nam, noted that "perhaps 50,000 were executed" in the North by the communist regime in 1954-56 (Last Reflections on a War). More than 800,000 Vietnamese fled to the South in 1954 when the Viet Minh gained control of the North. An equal number would also have left if the North Vietnamese had not violated the Geneva Agreements by forcibly preventing their departure. In the South, communist terrorists have killed thousands of civilians over the years. At least 3,000 noncombatants, including women and children, were deliberately slaughtered by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese in Hue during the three weeks in 1968 that the communists held that city. A recent study estimates 100,000 as the minimum number of lives that a victorious communist regime would take in reprisals, while a high ranking North Vietnamese defector stated that there are three million South Vietnamese on the communist "blood debt" list. Needless to say, imprisonment and repression would be imposed on even more people than those executed.

Long Term Interests of Peace Cannot be Ignored

Those Americans who urge an immediate and unilateral US withdrawal from South Viet-Nam are not taking into consideration the broad significance of the conflict there and the realities of the international situation. World conditions have changed materially since the two World Wars and Korea. Nevertheless, we still consider that appeasement or retreat before aggression, especially when specific pledges have been given as in Viet-Nam, is the surest way to encourage further aggression. Four successive Presidents have pledged the assistance of the United States to South Viet-Nam. If the United States were to renege on its solemn undertaking to help a victim of aggression, we would strengthen those communist leaders who scorn negotiation, who advocate a foreign policy based on military force and who disregard the risks of violent confrontation.

US Pledges Would be Discredited

Since World War II we have helped to develop a collective security network of free world nations, and we have more than 40 allies with whom we are mutually pledged by treaty to resist aggression. The keystones of this security structure are our nuclear deterrent and our will to stand by our commitments. Precipitate withdrawal from Viet-Nam would be considered around the world as a failure of the United States to fulfill an important

international commitment. As a result, the risk of armed conflict in other areas of the world where peace has been maintained in part by a US commitment -- the Middle East, Europe including Berlin, Latin America -- would be increased. The 20-year effort in Asia for collective security against communist expansion would be dangerously weakened, with serious implications for the non-communist countries in the area. All of our allies -- Asian and Western -- would feel compelled to reexamine the utility of their defense treaties with us.

US Cannot Avoid Responsibilities as Free World Leader

Some who oppose the war point to those countries that have withdrawn from their overseas engagements as thus having gained in prestige and world respect. The proponents of this argument seem to forget that those countries could act as they did with relative impunity because they could withdraw, so to speak, behind the shield held by the United States. We have no such handy shield. Abroad some people around the free world deplore our stand in Viet-Nam. They do not seem to realize that their own freedom is also ultimately at stake in the distant but very real battleground of Viet-Nam.

Whether we like it or not, the United States is a world power. The Nixon Doctrine, proclaimed by the President at Guam in 1969, redefines the strong role the United States has assumed as leader of the free world. The Doctrine calls for a readjustment of the balance of obligations among our European allies to reflect more accurately the economic and political realities of European progress, and it calls for nations threatened with insurgency or conventional aggression to bear the principal responsibility for their own defense. Under the Nixon Doctrine, the United States will gradually reduce its military presence overseas, providing material assistance as its allies supply the manpower to defend themselves. This policy is very evident in Viet-Nam. It does not mean that we can avoid our responsibilities in helping to maintain world peace and stability in a nuclear age. The securing of a just and durable peace in Viet-Nam is one of those responsibilities. If we were to flinch from our role and withdraw from Viet-Nam without assuring South Viet-Nam's ability to defend itself, we would be causing great risks to world peace.

PUBLIC INFORMATION SERIES

BUREAU of PUBLIC AFFAIRS

"PEOPLE'S PEACE TREATY"

A number of college students and others have requested the views of the Department of State on a "Joint Treaty of Peace between the People of the United States and the People of South Viet-Nam and North Viet-Nam" which is currently being circulated by the National Student Association.

Provisions of "Treaty"

This document:

- demands "immediate and total" withdrawal of United States forces from Viet-Nam, but says nothing about withdrawal of the North Vietnamese forces from South Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia.
- places the communist side under no obligation to release the Americans they hold prisoner, and requires Hanoi only to "enter discussions" on the question.
- obligates the United States to remove the government of South Viet-Nam, a government which was constitutionally elected to office by the people of that country.
- contains no provision for ending the fighting in Laos or Cambodia, other than a reiteration of intention to respect the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962, which have been violated by North Viet-Nam ever since.
- contains no provision for international supervision of the implementation of any of its terms.

The provisions of this paper are in essence the same terms which have been put forward repeatedly over the past two years by the communist delegation in Paris. They have not proved acceptable to any political group in South Viet-Nam except the Viet Cong.

What's Blocking Progress Toward Peace?

The United States and the Republic of Viet-Nam have proposed a program for peace which includes an immediate cease-fire throughout Indochina under effective international supervision; withdrawal of outside forces; a political settlement in South Viet-Nam which reflects the existing relationship of political forces; an Indochina peace conference; and immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of war held by both sides. Our two governments have stated that we are prepared to negotiate seriously on the basis of these proposals. At the same time, we are prepared to discuss the proposals of the communist side as well, without any preconditions.

The communist response has been an adamant refusal to engage in discussions on a peace settlement unless their demands are accepted in advance. It is this position which has blocked any progress toward peace. It is this position which those who want peace should try to change.