should have to pay the price necessary to insure South Vietnam's continued domination by military dictatorships as opposed to communism.

This is what it comes down to.

Secretary ROGERS. You put it in terms of continuing the war. We put it in terms of stopping the war. Our program is to stop the war.

The CHAIRMAN. The Senator from New Jersey pressed you very hard, and I will not press you again. He wants the same thing I want, a reasonable assurance that you really do have a plan that will accomplish this.

Senator JAVITS. That is right, there is not any kind of a veto including the nature of South Vietnam's laws.

The CHAIRMAN. This is why we are up in the air. This is why, when you say give us time, we do not want any public hearings, this is the very thing this committee is responsible to look into and to assure not only ourselves but the American people.

You say give you time. You have had 10 months approximately, 9 or 10 months.

Secretary ROGERS. I do not think I ever used the phrase, give us time.

The CHAIRMAN. I thought you did.

Senator GORE. Yes; you did.

The CHAIRMAN. I apologize if you did not.

Secretary ROGERS. I said that a public hearing would not be helpful.

The CHAIRMAN. That is right, and I think you said we should give you time, that people should quit arguing about these things and if you could get support, that everything would be all right. I think they would be delighted to be quiet and give support if there were assurance in the minds of just the people here on this committee who have been asking you these questions, that they were convinced that you are on the right track.

Secretary ROGERS. Well, the President tried to and I tried to, and I suppose that we could continue on. I do not know of any better way for the President to do it. I do not know of any better way for me to do it. We mean what we say. We think we are on the right path, and I think if the committee would take the President's speech in the spirit in which it was given and just watch developments, that you would all be satisfied. You would all be——

Senator GORE. Could you yield to me just a minute?

The CHAIRMAN. Sure.

WITHDRAWAL BASED ON CONDITIONS

Senator GORE. Take the President's speech. You mean what you say. The President sets up two propositions and then he says I have chosen the second course.

Now, here is the second course:

> . . . continued implementation of our plan for Vietnamization, if necessary, a plan in which we withdraw all of our forces from Vietnam on a schedule in accordance with our program as the South Vietnamese become strong enough to defend their own freedom.

I am taking the President's speech. I am taking what he says precisely. And this is a condition. This is a condition that contemplates the retention of forces there until such time as the South Vietnamese

are strong enough to defend themselves against whatever foe they face, both internally——

Secretary ROGERS. You can read it that way. I do not read it that way.

Senator GORE. It would be helpful if you can tell me how you read that.

Secretary ROGERS. The way I read that is that he has a plan and he says we will withdraw all our forces from Vietnam on a schedule in accordance with our program and as the South Vietnamese become strong enough to defend their own freedom. He means our program has taken that into account, that we have analyzed what we think the South Vietnamese are going to need to become strong enough to do that. That is a factor in our program and our program is going to be carried out.

Senator CASE. That is part of the question again.

Senator GORE. The President says two things. He has a plan. To put it briefly, he has two plans. One, to get out, and the other to stay in. Then he asks us to unify support.

Secretary ROGERS. That is not right. That is not fitting. Where does he say that?

Senator GORE. Well, until the South Vietnamese—I just read it. The Senator from New Jersey made this quite plain.

BASE OF SOUTH VIETNAM GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE BROADENED

Just let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, since I have asked you to yield.

Mr. Secretary, I took some encouragement from the report you gave us of the proposals which you have made. As I see it, the war is about the character of the Government in South Vietnam. Until we are ready to compromise on that, I do not see any basis of a negotiated settlement. Unless and until they are ready to negotiate and compromise on that, I take the same dire outlook. So it is some encouragement to me that you have made some offers to which they have, not in your view, responded affirmatively, and satisfactorily. I wish they would.

At least we seem to have answers to the point that our difference of opinion is now on how to end the war. I think that is some progress. The difference is that some of us on this committee, and that includes me, feel the policies we are presently pursuing will prolong the war; not end it or lead to an early settlement. But you have told us today about concessions and propositions you have made which you hope would lead to an early negotiated settlement. I wish you the greatest of good fortune with these. Yet I am still very disturbed about a phased withdrawal. The time will come when you cannot withdraw further, when you may have to send troops back in, or when the Saigon Government will fall because it is so narrowly based.

In conclusion, my view, for whatever it is worth, and I do not claim it has great value, it seems we must utilize our presence while we are there—not as we are coming out—to bring about a broadly based government which the people of South Vietnam themselves can accept.

Thank you very much.

U.S. HAS AGREED TO SUPERVISORY COMMISSION TO HOLD AN ELECTION

Secretary ROGERS. Senator, could I just say one word about the negotiations so there is no misunderstanding?

[Deleted.]

Senator GORE. As I understood your description of them, they were initiatives taken by our Government, by your administration.

Secretary ROGERS. Yes, sir.

Senator GORE. Initiatives offering to be flexible, offering to negotiate with respect to the character of the Government in South Vietnam?

Secretary ROGERS. Well, the supervisory force is what I am talking about, not the present government. We have been totally flexible about setting up an electoral commission or commission to supervise elections, that kind of thing, as distinguished from the government, because I do not want to appear that we have had any discussions about removing the present government. We have indicated willingness to be bound by the results of an election. Do I make myself clear? Because I do not want any misunderstanding on that point.

Senator GORE. Well, if, of course, you have an election conducted by and supervised by an international body——

Secretary ROGERS. Supervisory force.

Senator GORE (continuing). You are in fact to that degree removing the Saigon Government from administrative control of an election process within their country.

Secretary ROGERS. Election process as distinguished from removing a government.

Senator GORE. I do not contemplate toppling the government in the process.

Secretary ROGERS. In other words, turn over the responsibility for conducting the election to the international supervisory force as a group to see that the elections are fair.

Senator GORE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Has that ever been done successfully? Do you know?

Secretary ROGERS. Of course there have not been many situations likes this. I do not know. I think there was one country where something similar to this was done. I will have to check that.

Mr. TORBERT. Greece, perhaps?

Secretary ROGERS. Let me check it.

The CHAIRMAN. Greece? When, Mr. Torbert?

Secretary ROGERS. Let us not get a new issue. Let me just check and we will see.

The CHAIRMAN. I do not know of any.

LETTER FROM PROFESSOR AT YORK UNIVERSITY IN TORONTO

I received a very interesting letter from a professor of political science at York University in Toronto, Canada. The Canadians, as you know, have maintained much closer relations with both Russia and the Chinese and with the North Vietnamese.

This is from Prof. Joseph R. Starobin, who is either a Communist or former Communist. He says in his letter that he has communicated

all of this to Mr. Kissinger. So I thought I would quote part of it and insert the whole letter in the record:

After a long, heated exchange of views within the framework, of course, of our long-term relationship, Xuan Thuy—this is the representative of North Vietnam—declared: Very well, let us assume, as you say, that Mr. Kissinger does want peace. . . . The United States side has for a long time been asking for private talks with our side. We are willing to have such private talks provided that the United States accepts the principle of a complete and total withdrawal and shows its good faith by withdrawing 100,000 troops. On this basis we are prepared for private talks either among ourselves, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (the Viet Cong), and the United States, or pending the possibility that the United States will not wish to talk with us in the presence of the PRG, we are prepared for talks between ourselves and the United States. In those talks, he continued, we propose to examine the various points which have been advanced by both sides. It is not true that we reject everything that the United States may propose. On the crucial question of who will organize the elections, we do not feel that the PRG proposes only a provisional government headed by itself. We have in mind a provisional coalition government that will include others who stand for peace, independence, democracy, neutrality, including some members of the present Saigon administration.

That is that quote. The other one is similar and reads:

To summarize this crucial point: early in September, as part of a cross discussion in which I was twice an intermediary, the North Vietnamese indicated that they would accept the principle of complete withdrawal instead of total and prior withdrawal as the condition which could open the way to private talks with the United States; they also indicated a readiness to talk without the presence of the Viet Cong (at least as of September 1), and thirdly, they indicated they would not be adamant on a provisional coalition government defined by their side, but were ready to bargain for something between their conceptions and the American conceptions, making room for some members of the present Saigon administration. And they also indicated strongly their readiness for a reasonable, logical, and speedy end of the war using the phrase, within four or five months.

I am going to add this down below:

My own opinion is that the administration is trying to do something which most poker-playing Americans would recognize as untenable in their own daily lives: the war has been played with poor cards and has not been a winning proposition, but the administration is trying to walk away from the game not only refusing to pay any price, but wanted to keep the chips in the center of the table at the same time.

This in a way represents the crux of the question raised here this morning as to the emphasis upon the role of the present government in South Vietnam. As I said in the beginning, and I still think, not that they should be excluded, but only to play a part along with other people. This is the essential element lacking in an effort to get a negotiated peace.

(For the full text of the correspondence referred to see appendix.)

VIETNAM RESOLUTIONS

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Secretary, we have submitted several resolutions to the Department along with the Scott-Mansfield resolution and the Goodell resolution. We have had no reply.

Secretary ROGERS. I have a reply prepared. We will send it to you.

The CHAIRMAN. On all of them?

Secretary ROGERS. All of them.

The CHAIRMAN. Good. That would help.

Secretary ROGERS. Would you like to have them separately or in one package?

The CHAIRMAN. I guess separately, if we can, because we may not be able to take them all up at once, if at all.

Secretary ROGERS. Originally when this session was scheduled it was for that purpose, so I had that all prepared for my opening statement. We will just have to break it down by letters.

The CHAIRMAN. They are all prepared. It would be helpful if you would comment on each one in a single letter.

Secretary ROGERS. I think we can do it. Before the end of the week I will have a letter on each one.

The CHAIRMAN. That will be fine. We would like to have them just to get us moving along.

I believe that is all. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

Secretary ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate it.

(The following answers to questions of Senator McGee were later supplied:)

ANSWERS SUPPLIED TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MCGEE

Senator MCGEE. Earlier in the testimony today, there was considerable dialogue in regard to whether the American Government had as one of its principles the self-determination of South Viet-Nam. The suggestion was made that, how could we call it self-determination when there are so few North Vietnamese present in the south and when there are so many Americans there. Surely it is the Americans, it was suggested, that prevent self-determination.

It seems to me that we miss the point of Viet-Nam if we try to reduce it to the overly simplified term of "self-determination." I would think it more important if we start with the two Vietnams which emerged from the Geneva Agreements of 1954. Now I don't wish to indulge at this point the question of why or the right or the wrong. Like the two Berlins, or the two Germanys, or the two Koreas, the two Vietnams started out as a temporary transitional agreement and—because of the pressures of postwar problems—became frozen into two separate entities. The American escalation of its manpower commitments in Viet-Nam, beginning in its largest measure early in 1965, stem from the belief that the chances for some reasonable settlement in Eastern Asia were better by starting with the two Vietnams rather than by letting matters drift or be exploited without restraint. This had to include many unhappy, and sometimes deplorable, circumstances or conditions.

It is my judgment, however, that we would be utterly unrealistic if we thought at this late date—nearly fifteen years after the Geneva Conference—that it was possible to pretend there hadn't been a Geneva Conference any more than we could pretend that there wasn't a 38th Parallel created in Korea or a wall in Berlin. And so I think it would help us to clear some of our misunderstandings if we could at least start where we are and where we've been for a great many years; namely, with two Vietnams.

The problem which faces us in these hearings is to come to grips with the question we have all agreed upon—How do we disengage from the complex politics of the Indochinese peninsula in a way that is responsible and in a way that would not sow the seeds for even a more bloody war than that which has taken place in Southeast Asia? Thus, the question of self-determination does not, it seems to me, become relevant. It is rather the question of do we stand for orderly change, hopefully without violence; and do we believe there is something to be said for discouraging those who would try to change agreed-upon boundary lines by force of arms? This, then, brings us to the heart of the matter in regard to how we disengage.

Do we disengage without regard for what North Viet-Nam may do in relation to South Viet-Nam? Does it make a difference how fast we disengage and how far our disengagement carries us from the trouble spots?

Mr. Secretary, all of this leads me to my first question.

Since the Geneva Agreements of 1954, has the United States at any time insisted upon, demanded, or even hinted at taking territory away from North Viet-Nam? If your answer is "No," then it seems to me abundantly clear that the issue in South Viet-Nam is simply the right of the South Vietnamese to

work out their own problems uninterfered with by the forces of the North. If only we could get agreement on that, it would be very easy for the American presence to be disengaged from South Viet-Nam. Do you agree, Mr. Secretary?

RESPONSE

Yes, the United States has never, at any time, sought to take territory away from North Viet-Nam, or to invade that country, or to bring about the overthrow of its government. And I agree, Senator, that the principal issue, indeed, is the right of the South Vietnamese to work out their own problems without interference from any outside source, and particularly from North Viet-Nam. Agreement on the withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces from South Viet-Nam, as the President proposed in his speech of May 14, would certainly speed the disengagement of American forces. Unfortunately, the North Vietnamese at Paris have consistently refused to engage in serious discussion of the President's proposals of May 14.

My second question has to do with the proper role of the United States at this stage in regard to some kind of government in Saigon. Some here in the hearings today have suggested that we ought to force the present government of Saigon to capitulate or that the present government ought to be replaced by a provisional government for the ostensible purpose of holding fair elections.

I would ask you this question about such possible elections. Are we talking about elections for both Vietnams, including the North; or are we talking about only elections in the South?

RESPONSE

We are talking only about elections in South Vietnam. President Thieu, in his July 11 proposal for a joint electoral commission, addressed himself to elections in the South. The other side at Paris has again refused to discuss this very reasonable and forthcoming proposal. (End response.)

Then I cannot understand, Mr. Secretary, how the Government of the United States dare cram down the throats of the South Vietnamese people our own concept of a government or a temporary government. I would think we would be well advised to leave that question to the South Vietnamese people themselves. What would be your response to that suggestion?

RESPONSE

Our consistent position has been that the political future of South Vietnam must be determined by the people of South Vietnam; no outside power—neither the United States, nor North Vietnam, nor anyone else—should impose any kind of government on South Vietnam. Yet despite President Thieu's offer to discuss political matters privately with the National Liberation Front, the NLF has refused to enter into such discussions. (End response.)

Well, let's carry this one step further, Mr. Secretary. Hanoi, we are told, insists that a provisional government be established in Saigon. In your judgment, would such a provisional government—whatever its dimensions—likely be stronger or weaker than the present Saigon government?

RESPONSE

Apparently, as proposed by the other side, the "provisional coalition government" would include communist participation, so from its inception, it would be under communist control or at least responsive to communist influence. So from the standpoint of assuring the right of self-determination and democracy, it would be weaker than the present Government of Viet-Nam. (End response.)

Well, Mr. Secretary, is it conceivable that Hanoi makes this demand because the present government in Saigon right now would be tougher for them to overthrow than would a provisional government, or a coalition government, or however we would choose to describe it?

RESPONSE

As I indicated in my response to your last question, Senator, I think that is a valid assumption. (End response.)

I cannot see how we dare to accept as any condition for talks our deliberate and conscious displacement of or toppling of the existing government in South Vietnam. I hasten to add that I make no defense for its many shortcomings. But

I don't believe it should be our business, nor the subject of diplomacy, how to bring about its changes from the outside. This does violence to every principle we stand for and would certainly do violence for any chances of some kind of orderly change there.

Let me turn now to still another area where there was much question. That is the area of communist expansion. It has been my feeling for a very long time that we could clear the air and make more relevant our dialogue if we could agree to abolish the use of the word "communist" in talking about aggression in Southeast Asia. I say that not because there are no communists there but because communism is only a coincidence. It is less the communism that disturbs us than the violent acts of aggression. The moment that we use the word "communist," it immediately means many different things to many different people—the consequence of which is that none of us are tuned in on a common wave length. But the aggression is clearly definable and understandable. And if we would liken it to that condition, I think we would eliminate a good bit of confusion in public opinion about one of the basic factors at stake in Southeast Asia. Once we agree upon that, then it seems to me we could properly advance the theory that one of the better ways to discourage aggression is to foster the independence of small governments and—where necessary in critical parts of the world or strategic parts of the world—to shield them from major acts of aggression in the hopes that their independence will have a chance to grow stronger and thus better enable them to survive. The best defense against most forms of aggression is strong, independent governments—no matter what the philosophy of that government.

Could you, in the State Department and in the policy-making branch of the goverument, project policy thoughts and arrive at jndgments without using the word "communist" in Southeast Asia and confine it to the use of the word "aggression"?

RESPONSE

Many of the problems of Southeast Asia today—such as exist in South Viet-Nam and Laos—involve communist movements. Virtually all of the external assistance is coming from communist governments in Europe and Asia. Therefore I am not sure, Senator, what purpose we would serve by omitting mention of these facts in formulating our policy judgments of situations in Southeast Asia, or elsewhere for that matter. I would certainly agree with you, however, that fostering the independence of small states in various parts of the world is a good way of discouraging aggression of whatever sort—and this, indeed, is the purpose of all our international assistance programs. (End response.)

Next, I want to inject some thonghts about what I consider to be a basic fallacy in our outlook toward Viet-Nam. That fallacy is that we talk about Viet-Nam as though it was some kind of national entity with traditions of nationalism and feelings of patriotism. If my study of the history of the Indochinese states says anything, it is that there is no common base of nationalist impulse. For many hundreds of years, in fact, the rivalries and treacheries, and warfare among the Tonkinese in Indochina, the Annamese in neighboring sections, and the Cochin-Chinese in the south divided national definitions.

The areas that we now call North and South Viet-Nam reflected the convenience of colonial administrations more than the roots of common interest.

Thus, it is not important that we avoid applying judgments that would be valid in nationalistic societies but not so in a fragmented region made up of a variety of cultures, language differences, and competing political ambitions?

RESPONSE

I would certainly agree with some of your observations, Senator. I think the Vietnamese people, for example, have a rather strong sense of ethnic and linguistic identity, a sense of identity that sets them apart from their neighbors such as the Chinese or the Cambodians. On the other hand, it is certainly true that history has denied the Vietnamese any stroug sense of nationalistic identification with a state, or a government, of all of Viet-Nam. (End response.)

Well, there has been too much of an inclination in our own country to try to judge the South Vietnamese in American terms from the vantage point of American experiences. And I cannot resist making the point again that, with our very severe demands upon cleaning up or democraticizing the Thieu Government in Saigon, we make no similar demands on Hanoi. It is not without point that some of the political opponents of the present administration in South Viet-Nam have been jailed or driven from the country, but that is still a far cry from what happened to the political opposition in North Viet-Nam during the same testing periods or in the North. The Hanoi regime didn't jail them or drive them into exile. It shot them—some 30,000 to 40,000 of them, in fact. This, too, ought to make a difference in our assessment of the issues in that part of the world.

All of these questions and comments, Mr. Secretary, are by way of skirting the main issue of this closed session of this Committee; and that is, given our determination to disengage wisely and with responsibility, would public hearings by the Foreign Relations Committee help the President to achieve that disengagement; or, would it hinder it? Why?

RESPONSE

I believe I have already responded to that point, Senator, in my earlier answer to Senator Case's question. (End response.)

(Whereupon, at 1:35 p.m. the committee recessed, to reconvene Wednesday, November 19, 1969, at 10 a.m.)

BRIEFING ON VIETNAM

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1969

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to recess, at 10:05 a.m., in room S–116, the Capitol, Senator J. W. Fulbright (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Fulbright, Sparkman, Mansfield, Gore, Church, Symington, Pell, McGee, Aiken, Case, Cooper, and Javits.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

The committee is meeting this morning to receive testimony from the Secretary of Defense concerning the military aspects of the President's Vietnam policy.

On November 3 the President told the American people that he had put into effect—

> * * * a plan which will bring the war to an end regardless of what happens on the negotiating front.

He stated that a plan had been adopted—

> * * * which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete withdrawal of all U.S. combat ground forces, and their replacement by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled timetable.

Later, he said that under the Vietnamization plan—

> * * * we will withdraw all of our forces from Vietnam on a schedule in accordance with our program, as the South Vietnamese become strong enough to defend their own freedom.

I hope the Secretary will enlighten the committee on the details of this administration's plan, particularly the timetable for it; the premises on which it is based; the current military situation in South Vietnam; the future outlook; the capabilities of the South Vietnamese forces; and the capacity and intentions of the other side.

We are very pleased you would come, Mr. Secretary, and before we start on that I wish to thank you for sending up the Thai contingency plan which the committee considered. I think that your letting us see it was a very satisfactory solution to an important problem. I was very glad that you consented to work it out in that fashion. I think it was a very wise thing to do.

We are very pleased to have you. Some of the other members will be along. I see no reason to wait for them, though, because I know you are busy as is everybody else. Will you proceed, sir?

STATEMENT OF HON. MELVIN R. LAIRD, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Secretary LAIRD. Mr. Chairman, I am very happy to have this opportunity to contribute to the important deliberations of this commit-

tee on the problem that, above all others, absorbs the attention, time, and energy of the President and the Department of Defense—the restoration of peace in Vietnam.

My testimony this morning will be largely prospective, not retrospective. It would serve no useful purpose to explain or assess the decisions of prior administrations that have brought about today's situation. As the President said in his speech of May 14th:

> * * * the urgent question today is what to do now that we are there, not whether we should have entered on this course, but what is required of us today.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, the question which I believe it would be most fruitful for me to discuss is not "Why Vietnam," but "Why Vietnamization."

REASONS FOR "VIETNAMIZATION"

There are two basic reasons for Vietnamization. One is broad and one is narrow; but both are tremendously important for our own interests and for the future of all Asia.

Both at Guam last July and in his address to the Nation on November 3d, President Nixon charted the course for a new Asian policy under his administration. This new Nixon Doctrine for Asia was summarized in his November 3d address in three principles:

(1) The United States will keep all of its treaty commitments;

(2) We shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security; and

(3) In cases involving other types of aggression, we will furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.

From the broader perspective, Vietnamization is the first step in implementing our new Asian policy. It recognizes and supports our obligations to our allies in South Vietnam and to the others participating in the defense of South Vietnam. At the same time, Vietnamization implements our expectation and insistence that in the future military defense will and must be a responsibility increasingly shouldered by the Asian nations themselves, as in the case of Vietnam. So the broad purpose of Vietnamization is to bring our Asian doctrine that much closer to fruition in all of Asia by applying these principles in Vietnam.

USE OF WORD "OBLIGATION" RATHER THAN "COMMITMENT"

Senator AIKEN. I notice you use the word "obligation" rather than "commitment." I have been using that for some years. There is a difference.

Secretary LAIRD. Well, I think sometimes——

Senator AIKEN. We have an obligation to the 800,000 or so people moved into South Vietnam but not a direct commitment to them. I am not criticizing. I am just pointing out——

Secretary LAIRD. No, I understand, sir.

Senator AIKEN (continuing). That I think "obligation" is a better word.

The CHAIRMAN. So do I. Proceed, sir.

PURPOSE OF VIETNAMIZATION

Secretary LAIRD. The narrower but equally important purpose of Vietnamization is to end the war in Vietnam so that the men, women, and children of Vietnam can enjoy peace and self-determination. In a sense, Vietnamization is both a complement and an alternative to the Paris talks. By strengthening the capability of the South Vietnamese to defend themselves rather than depending on American troops, we provide an additional incentive to Hanoi to negotiate. If, on the other hand, Paris continues stalemated, Vietnamization provides the means for the orderly disinvolvement of American troops from combat without having to sacrifice our single objective—the right of self-determination for the people of Vietnam.

Vietnamization, then, is intended—and must be considered—as the means both an end and a beginning: an end to the American combat role in Vietnam and the beginning of our new policy for peace and increased self-reliance in Asia. It is vital in terms of bringing an end to this war and it is vital if we are to prevent similar American combat involvement in another Asian land war.

With that as a backdrop, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, permit me to discuss our program for peace in Vietnam which has come to be known as Vietnamization.

UNPRODUCTIVE RECORD OF NEGOTIATION

To understand why the administration found it necessary to devise and begin implementation of a Vietnamization program in the Republic of Vietnam, it is necessary to review briefly the unproductive record of negotiation, which was covered by the Secretary of State yesterday. I understand that the Secretary of State covered most of this. I think for the record, however, it might be well if it appears.

The CHAIRMAN. On the progress of the negotiations.

Secretary LAIRD. Right.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. If you wish.

Secretary LAIRD. Since taking office 10 months ago, President Nixon has tried persistently and energetically to bring the war to an end by the processes of diplomacy. At Paris and in other places, publicly and privately, by direct and indirect methods of communication, the administration has made clear its readiness to end the war on conditions that do not deny the opportunity for self-determination to the people of South Vietnam.

In an effort to bring movement to the stalled negotiations, the President offered a specific formula for a negotiated peace in his address of May 14. The terms were fair and generous. They included a cease-fire, withdrawal of outside troops, free elections, prompt release of prisoners of war, and observance of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962. All these steps, he proposed, would be accomplished under the supervision of an international body acceptable to both sides. Six months have elapsed since the President

made these proposals. The response from the other side has made clear their absolute refusal to join us in seeking a just peace.

The war in Vietnam continues because Hanoi and its suppliers will it to continue.

Unpromising as the path of negotiation has been, we shall not abandon it. But the next move on the negotiation front must come from Hanoi and the National Liberation Front.

Although Vietnamization does not offer as speedy a route to peace as would productive negotiation if both sides were eager for peace and willing to make reasonable compromises to achieve it, Vietnamization does offer the best alternative to a negotiated settlement. The war could be ended in short order if Hanoi would negotiate in good faith. But one side alone cannot negotiate a peace.

In present circumstances, Vietnamization is the best course available in the absence of negotiation.

Vietnamization is the orderly transfer to the South Vietnamese, within a reasonable time frame, of the major responsibilities that the United States has assumed in that country.

MILITARY ASPECTS OF VIETNAMIZATION

The most obvious and most costly type of responsibility which the United States assumed in Vietnam was the direct military responsibility of providing troops and engaging in combat operations.

When the present administration took office, a program of upgrading the training and equipment of South Vietnamese forces had begun. The goal of this program, however, was limited to increasing the combat capability of the forces of the Republic of Vietnam to the level needed to defeat the Vietcong once all North Vietnamese forces had been withdrawn from the South.

The Nixon administration early this year worked out a new objective with the Government of South Vietnam for the training and equipping of the armed forces of South Vietnam. The objective we set was attainment by the South Vietnamese of a level of combat capability which would be adequate to defeat not only the Vietcong but the invading North Vietnamese forces as well.

At the same time a decision was made to begin a phased reduction of the number of American troops in Vietnam. The size and the frequency of troop reductions, the President decided, would be regulated by three factors:

(1) Progress in Vietnamization;
(2) The level of enemy activity; and
(3) Progress toward a negotiated peace in Paris.

OTHER ASPECTS OF VIETNAMIZATION

The Nixon administration recognized from the outset that proficient armed forces alone are not enough to bring about the objective we seek in South Vietnam. The threat to a sturdy, free, and independent South Vietnam is more than a military threat. In fact, the attainment of the combat capability required of the armed forces may depend on strengthening other institutions outside the military and reforming their practices.

The economy of South Vietnam is one of the areas which needed to be strengthened.

The effectiveness of governmental institutions at all levels is another.

Internal security against acts of terrorism and of disruption required strengthening by methods that are closer to police work than to military combat.

PROGRESS OF VIETNAMIZATION

It is impossible in a brief report to indicate in detail the scope of the progress that has been made since the program of Vietnamization was launched. I limit myself to a bare recital of some of the most impressive indicators of progress that give solid ground for hope.

The most visible to the American people is the fact that American forces in Vietnam in terms of both authorized strength and actual manpower will have been reduced by more than 60,000 men through December 15.

Senator AIKEN. Are you not running a little ahead of schedule?

Secretary LAIRD. We are running ahead of the schedule as far as our troop strength in Vietnam is concerned. Our ceiling right now is 484,000 men and as of November 13, we are at 489,200 and we have 30 days to go, so we will be well below—we will be going below, considerably below, the troop ceiling that has been established by the President. But once you get the momentum going on a reduction program like this, I do not follow those dates precisely. Those are target dates, as you know. We were supposed to achieve a certain level by the end of August. When we got up to that particular date we were supposed to be an actual strength of 515,000. As you know, we were actually at 509,600. And once we get the momentum going on this program, a few thousand below the target figure, I think, is inevitable.

Senator AIKEN. It looks as if you are at least 2 or 3 weeks ahead of schedule.

Secretary LAIRD. Well, I do not send out any messages to them on that. I just try to keep them——

FURTHER REDUCTIONS ARE PLANNED

Secretary LAIRD. The size of the South Vietnamese military establishment continues to grow. The Regional and Popular Forces (RF/PF), which serve as the government's and the people's main line of defense against the Communists in villages and hamlets, have also shown marked increases this year in both strength and firepower. Similar expansion has occurred in the People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF). The growth in these forces serves to mobilize large numbers of rural Vietnamese behind the South Vietnamese Government, increasingly denies the Communists local manpower and logistic support, and erodes their popular support.

There has been marked improvement in security of lines of communication especially in the vital Delta area. This change has not occurred dramatically within a short period of time, but rather has been gradual and steady. During the past year, improvement has been particularly notable, and of political importance, in the waterway/highway network of the Mekong Delta, South Vietnam's breadbasket

and most heavily populated area. Waterways are most important there, and 2 years ago, travel was restricted to only a few major rivers and canals, with armed escort the norm. Today, all significant waterways in the delta are classed as open (travel during daylight with armed escort) and about 80 percent are rated secure (no escort for daylight travel). Roads have experienced similar improvement. This opening up of the vital lines of communication and commerce, made possible by better government security protection and by repairing damage done by the Communists, permits not only resumption of the flow of agricultural products, but also, and perhaps more important, return to something approaching a normal life for the people of the Delta, who make up about 55 percent of the total South Vietnamese population.

I believe it is significant that the Vietnamese have carried the primary burden of fighting to free the Delta, and the United States is now in a support role in this important area.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the 9th Division was completely taken out of the Delta area and the full responsibility is now with the South Vietnamese forces except for support activity. This responsibility even includes the air control of all aircraft in the area as well as the full combat responsibility in the area.

The very effective pacification program to permit normal economic and social activity is completely a Government of South Vietnam responsibility.

The above examples of improvement are part of the general progress being made in bringing government support to more areas. Others, such as the number of Vietcong rallying to the government, and reduction in refugees show the same trend. Since February of this year, for example, the number of South Vietnamese refugees has been reduced by well over 50 percent. When I went to Vietnam early in March there were 1,450,000 refugees in refugee camps. That has been reduced now to 537,000 as of October 31.

RESETTLEMENT AND CARE OF REFUGEES

Senator GORE. Could I ask a quick question?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Senator GORE. Secretary Rogers told us yesterday that these refugees had either returned to their homes or had been resettled. Do you have a breakdown as to the numbers who have returned to their native villages and the number who have been resettled?

Secretary LAIRD. No, I do not have that breakdown with me. As I recall, it was about two-thirds returning to their former homes and about a third that were resettled, but I will supply that at this point in the record.

(The following information was later supplied for the record:)

RESETTLEMENT AND CARE OF REFUGEES

The fact that so many have either returned to their homes or have been resettled in secure areas testifies to the spread of stability in South Vietnam.

In January 1969, there were 1,318,000 refugees in the Republic of Vietnam. The refugee population which reached an all-time high of 1,450,000 in February, had been reduced to 537,000 by 31 October 1969. At that time, there were 364,000

refugees remaining in camps and 173,000 out-of-camp refugees. During the first ten months of this year, 847,000 refugees were resettled in place and 396,000 were returned to their original hamlets with Government of Vietnam assistance. During this same period, 87,000 new refugees were generated as compared to 300,000 new refugees in 1968 and 700,000 in 1967.

ECONOMY OF SOUTH VIETNAM

Secretary LAIRD. The economy of South Vietnam shows many signs of strength: markets are functioning, industrial output has picked up, relative quiet prevails on the labor front, the income of farmers is increasing, and the Government already is making plans for the postwar economy.

Along with improved local security, and interacting with it, has come a resurgence of local government throughout the countryside. More and more of the villages and hamlets now have popularly elected local governments. As a matter of fact, this has gone to better than 8 out of 10 of the villages and hamlets which have popularly elected local governments at this time.

On the other side of the coin, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, South Vietnam still faces serious problems. Inflation and an adverse balance of payments constitute the most threatening economic problems. The Government needs to make further improvements to overcome inefficiency and corruption which do exist. Some units of the defense forces have not reached a satisfactory level of efficiency. And the enemy, though weaker, can still cause trouble. We should be prepared for setbacks from time to time and should expect that we will still have the continued small unit attacks and terrorist attacks which have been continuing during this period of time.

"VIETNAMIZATION" IS A NEW POLICY

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, Vietnamization is a new policy. The complaint is sometimes heard that the policy of the Nixon administration is simply a continuation of "tired old policies of the past."

In fact, this is not true. Vietnamization is a major departure from the policy of the past.

Past policy envisaged a continued massive American military presence in South Vietnam until a satisfactory settlement was achieved by negotiation or until North Vietnamese troops withdrew from South Vietnam.

Present policy entails the replacement of American troops by South Vietnamese troops. The soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen who have been taken out of South Vietnam under the present policy of Vietnamization can describe the difference vividly to any who profess to see nothing new in the present policy.

Late last year, the previous administration was still increasing U.S. forces. On September 25, 1968, my predecessor as Secretary of Defense said:

> We have not yet reached the level of 549,500 American troops in South Vietnam. We intend to continue to build toward that level. We have no intention of lowering that level * * * at any time in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, under the new policy, the present American troop ceiling already has been lowered to 484,000, and it will be further reduced based on the three criteria established by the President. As of November 13, we were at a level of 489,200.

There is an obvious difference between maintaining a massive American force in Vietnam until the North Vietnamese withdraw and reducing the size of the American force as South Vietnamese forces assume greater responsibility for the conduct of the war.

There is an obvious difference between using American troops in Vietnam for the primary purpose of engaging enemy forces and using them in a supporting role for the primary purpose of assisting the South Vietnamese forces to achieve the capability to defend themselves.

Mr. Chairman, the last thing I want to do is convey false hopes or promises to the American people. I do want to give as full a picture as I can of the situation we face in Vietnam and what we are trying to do about it. I cannot promise a miraculous end to the war. I cannot promise that our losses in combat will continue to average less than 100 a week. As a matter of fact, this past week they stood at 113. But I can say to you that we are on the path that has the best chance of minimizing U.S. casualties while resolving the war in the shortest possible time without abandoning our basic objective.

ALTERNATIVES TO VIETNAMIZATION

This administration has listened carefully to all proposals offered to solve the tangled problem of Vietnam and it has weighed the alternatives open to it very carefully. I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that every alternative that has been suggested by individual Members of the Congress, by the Senate, by all people—we have studied these very carefully in the Department of Defense and I am sure this is true of other departments including the State Department.

Frankly, the realistic alternatives are few. We would welcome alternative proposals that would offer a better prospect of winning the peace than Vietnamization does. So far we have not seen them.

The administration has considered the advice of those who argue for an intensified American effort designed to bring a military victory over North Vietnam. It has not been persuaded that this would be a wise course. It would involve costs, in manpower and resources, far beyond those committed to the conflict at this time and at the time of our greatest involvement there. More importantly, it would run counter to the general policy of the Nation toward the Far East and the Pacific, the Nixon Doctrine, which I discussed in the opening section of my remarks.

The only other realistic alternative policy course—the precipitate withdrawal of American troops and of other forms of support which our Nation has been providing to help South Vietnam—involves the gravest risks of undermining the hard-won stability that South Vietnam has largely attained and of producing a victory by Hanoi. It also would undermine successful implementation of the Nixon doctrine.

In specific terms, the real issue of Vietnam which confronts the Nation today is—

(1) Whether the transfer of responsibility to the South Vietnamese now well under way should proceed along its orderly

course so that South Vietnam will have the opportunity for self-determination in the future, or

(2) Whether we pull out precipitately, regardless of the consequences.

The consequences of a precipitate pullout were described by the President in his address of November 3. In the long run, as the President said, a precipitate pullout "would not bring peace, but more war."

VIETNAMIZATION DOES NOT MAKE US CAPTIVES OF SAIGON

I think that it is generally recognized that in the effort to achieve peace by negotiation we are, to a degree, dependent on Hanoi, for North Vietnam can block—indeed has blocked—peace by saying "no" to any proposal we offer.

It is sometimes alleged that Vietnamization makes us captives of Saigon. If the South Vietnamese drag their heels, it is argued, we stay on indefinitely.

I can say that whatever the case has been in the past, South Vietnam is not now dragging its heels. It has moved forward resolutely to prepare itself in every field to assume its enlarged responsibility.

And I can assure you that we expect no heel-dragging in the future. The Government of the Republic of South Vietnam understands the course on which we have embarked, and has made clear its determination to maintain a satisfactory level of progress in the development of its capability.

Senator JAVITS. Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the witness feels he should insert at that point whatever provision of the President's plan there is which provides for this contingency that they do drag their heels.

Secretary LAIRD. Well, I can assure you——

The CHAIRMAN. You can ask about that in just a moment. He is almost through.

Senator JAVITS. All right. Thank you.

THE NIXON DOCTRINE AND VIETNAMIZATION

Secretary LAIRD. To return to the point with which I began my remarks, in Vietnam right now, we are seeing the first application—and the first test—of the new Nixon Doctrine for Asia. We are looking to Vietnam to provide the manpower for its defense.

If the test succeeds in Vietnam, other nations in Asia which wish to live in peace will be encouraged. And nations that seek conquest by war—waged directly or by proxy—will be deterred from aggression. In short, Mr. Chairman, Vietnamization provides the American people with a practical middle course between isolationism and the role of world policeman.

NEED FOR SUPPORT OF VIETNAMIZATION

Failing success at negotiations, I know of no plan other than Vietnamization which offers the prospect of restoring peace for the American people without sacrificing the objective of self-determination for the people of South Vietnam.

It cannot guarantee a complete end to the war for the Vietnamese—only Hanoi can do that—but it offers the prospect of a situation in which the South Vietnamese can manage without American combat operations, and the prospect, one day, of peace with justice and freedom.

Let me emphasize that the success of Vietnamization depends primarily on the South Vietnamese. They must continue to develop their material and moral strength until it becomes equal to the increasing burden they are assuming.

The success of this policy depends, in lesser but still substantial degree, on the United States. We must encourage and assist the South Vietnamese in developing their strength. Their will to succeed can be stiffened or enfeebled by our deeds and our words.

The support of the Congress and the public for the President's policy can have an influence in both parts of Vietnam. In my view, the greatest obstacle to peace in Vietnam is the belief of the leaders in Hanoi, conditioned by the outcome of their war with France, that public opinion in this country will force the President to capitulate in order to end the war.

Those who believe this do not know this President. They do not know this country. The sooner they are disabused of their false impressions of our Nation and its leaders, the sooner peace will be attained. I am confident, Mr. Chairman, that the attainment of this peace is the mutual objective of this committee, the Congress, the Executive branch and the American people. I am also confident that we will achieve it.

WHAT IS OBJECTIVE OF THE WAR?

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. You raised the very difficult question of what you consider to be a capitulation? Would a negotiated peace be a capitulation?

Secretary LAIRD. No; I do not believe a negotiated peace——

The CHAIRMAN. What do you consider to be the objective of the war? What do we expect to achieve? What is the justification of the war, in your view?

Secretary LAIRD. The objective of the war in my view, is to achieve peace in Vietnam and the right of self-determination for the people of South Vietnam.

The CHAIRMAN. We all agree on peace. Now, with regard to the right of self-determination, would you elaborate a bit on that? Why is this vital to us and why does this warrant what we are doing?

Secretary LAIRD. Well, I think it is vital—it is the objective that has been stated by the President. There may have been other objectives in the past as to the reasons for our involvement in Vietnam but the President made it very clear in his May 14 speech and again on November 3, that the only objective that we have in Vietnam at the present time, is the restoration of peace and the accomplishment of self-determination for the people of that area of the world. This is our only objective. I do not believe that it serves any purpose to get into the other stated objectives at other times in the past. I think the President has made it very clear what our country's objective is now.

The CHAIRMAN. And you subscribe to that?

Secretary LAIRD. I subscribe to it.

The CHAIRMAN. It is self-determination. By self-determination, do you mean an election?

Secretary LAIRD. I mean by that an election, a fair election.

The CHAIRMAN. An open election?

Secretary LAIRD. A fair and open election.

The CHAIRMAN. Not dominated by the present government in Vietnam?

Secretary LAIRD. Dominated by the people of South Vietnam.

The CHAIRMAN. I am asking about the present government. This is important to me as to what you mean by capitulation. Supposing that there were an alternative. You say there is no alternative. But supposing there is an opportunity for negotiation; would the administration be interested in it?

Secretary LAIRD. They would.

IS THERE HOPE FOR A NEGOTIATION?

The CHAIRMAN. The tenor of your remarks is that you have very little hope, if any, of a negotiation, of a political settlement; that the only solution is Vietnamization.

Secretary LAIRD. Mr. Chairman, when I took over in this office I found that the only plan that our Government had—as far as Vietnam was concerned—was a plan which was based on success in negotiation. That plan was that we would be able to successfully negotiate the North Vietnamese out of South Vietnam and that all we had to do was prepare the South Vietnamese to deal with the Vietcong threat. I felt that this was inadequate because I could not assure myself and I did not think we could assure the American people or the Congress that we could have success with negotiations. So I thought we had to prepare another plan, a full-back position, so that in the event we did not have success with negotiations, we still would be able to disengage Americans in that area of the world. And there was no plan approved in the Pentagon or any place else in our Government that took this problem into consideration. And I am not abandoning our efforts and I think we should continue our efforts in negotiation, but as Secretary Rogers outlined in testimony before this committee yesterday and as I have today, we have not had much success taking that route. Vietnamization does not interfere with negotiation. It merely goes along with negotiations and if we are successful, it would just hasten the reduction of American involvement in this area of the world, particularly in South Vietnam. So, I hope I did not give this committee or you, Mr. Chairman, the impression that I wanted to abandon the route of negotiation.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, it seems you may be forced to abandon the goal of negotiation. I guess a better way of putting it is that you have simply lost hope in it.

NATURE OF A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Let me come to another point. It seems to me both in Mr. Rogers' and your statements that the critical question is, are the President and the administration willing to accept a provisional government for the purpose of holding elections or seeking self-determination, a govern-

ment which is not dominated by the Thieu regime? This seems to be the critical point.

I have an interesting letter that came only very recently from a Canadian professor. He sent me a memorandum which he had sent to Dr. Kissinger, at the latter's request. He expressed simply a feeling that Dr. Kissinger either did not subscribe to it or did not take it seriously. And he reports conversations with the representative of the North Vietnamese in the Paris peace talks, Xuan Thuy.

Now, let me read you a paragraph to give you the idea. The writer's name is Starobin and he is, I think, a former communist. He is reporting on the conversations he had with Xuan Thuy, who said:

> We are willing to have such private talks provided that the United States accepts the principle of a complete and total withdrawal and shows its good faith by withdrawing 100,000 troops. On this basis, we are prepared for private talks either among ourselves, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (The Viet Cong) and the United States, or pending the possibility that the United States will not wish to talk with us in the presence of the PRG, we are prepared for talks between ourselves and the United States. In those talks, he continued, we proposed to examine the various points which have been advanced by both sides. It is not true that we reject everything that the United States may propose. On the crucial question of who will organize—this is the point—on the crucial question of who will organize the elections we do not mean that the PRG proposes only a provisional government headed by itself. We have in mind a provisional coalition government that will include others who stand for peace, independence, democracy and neutrality, including some members of the present Saigon administration.

Now, what I would like to know, and please be as precise as you can, is this administration prepared to move to a provisional government in which the present Thieu government is represented along with others, or does it insist upon the election being carried on while this government still continues to control the country? It seems to me this is the very critical point that stands in the way of elections under some, let us call it, non-Thieu government.

To put it another way, it seems to me the reason that this administration does not proceed to a political settlement is its feeling that Thieu is a great political leader and it would be the equivalent of a capitulation if we in any way undermined the Thieu government. This is the crux of the matter, in my mind.

I do not want to capitulate in the sense of a precipitate withdrawal. I do not think anybody on this committee has ever advocated precipitate withdrawal. I think most of us advocate some form of negotiated settlement with varying ideas as to how it could be brought about.

POSSIBILITY OF ELECTION WITHOUT THIEU-KY GOVERNMENT

I think our differences are almost completely on how you bring about the negotiated settlement. After reading this letter, I have the feeling that the North might negotiate if they felt the election would be held and that there was a fair chance at it. On the contrary, they believe there is no possibility of a fair election so long as the Thieu and Ky dominate the government.

Could you comment on that particular point?

Secretary LAIRD. Mr. Chairman, this administration as well as the Government of South Vietnam has made it clear that the question of the elections is a matter that they would be very happy to negotiate

and to discuss. They have already gone quite a ways in this area even before the other side has agreed to negotiate the point.

They moved in the last 12 months to a position where they have indicated that the Communists would participate in the election procedures and that they would go forward drawing up some sort of a coalition election supervising commission or an international supervision of an election.

So, I believe that as far as a negotiating position is concerned, the United States and the South Vietnamese have already moved a great deal in the last 10 or 12 months to make such an election possible.

CRITICAL QUESTION IS ROLE OF THIEU GOVERNMENT

Senator CHURCH. Mr. Chairman, you asked a very important and specific question and I think we still need the answer to it. It is a critical question as to which there remains a great deal of ambiguity.

The CHAIRMAN. To me it is still ambiguous, even after the answer as to the role of the Thieu government. If we believe that it must remain in power while an attempt to hold an election is being pursued, I think I can understand that the North Vietnamese would have no confidence in the election. There was an election there, we have read various reports of it, and I think by and large it was believed that all those who seriously opposed the administration were not allowed to vote. They were disqualified. There have been instances in this country of doing that. I think there is little confidence in a fair election being held. So, I am not clear yet from what you said, is our Government prepared to disassociate itself from the Thieu government for the purposes of giving the power of the state to a provisional government pending the carrying out of an election? Now, that seems to be the condition that is expressed in these statements which originated with the North Vietnamese representative in Paris. They say they do not require or they are not insisting that it be a government dominated by them but that it simply not be dominated by the Thieu government because it is a military government and they believe it would be able to thwart any attempt at a free election.

Secretary LAIRD. Mr. Chairman, the place to decide how the elections are conducted is in Paris, not here in Washington, I believe. I feel that this is a matter that is a proper matter for negotiation. The President has made his position clear on this.

The South Vietnamese Government has made its position clear. There are beginning positions in any negotiation but I think the place to decide it is not here in Washington. The place to decide it is at the negotiating table in Paris.

ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION SEEMS UNCLEAR

The CHAIRMAN. What I am trying to elicit is what is the real position of this administration? You are one of their principal spokesmen and right in the middle of the activity.

Let me quote from an article by Terence Smith written from Saigon, South Vietnam, last July 13. He says:

Apparently in an attempt to quiet the criticism from the right, Foreign Minister Tran Chanh Thanh held a news conference yesterday—a day after the President's speech—

This is President Nixon's May 14 speech—

in which he "explained" some of the points in the President's offer. He promised that Communists "as such," would never be permitted to stand for election in South Vietnam and that special elections, while negotiable, would still have to be organized by the Saigon government?

Then I skip a paragraph.

The exercise appeared to be a classic example of the South Vietnamese technique coupling two steps forward with an apparent step backward in order to reassure jittery South Vietnamese that they are not being sold out.

To me this is a critical point. If we cannot give way on that, then Vietnamization, I guess, is the only alternative.

Secretary LAIRD. And too, Mr. Chairman, if Hanoi cannot give way on its position, I think that you have problems as far as the election is concerned. But the place to decide this matter is through regular negotiations and we have a procedure set up for that. I know that you feel that my report is gloomy from the standpoint of negotiation.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Secretary LAIRD. I have been staying away from making forecasts or prophecies about the future military situation in Vietnam but I can point out that as far as the military situation and the Vietnamization part of the military program is concerned, we are making progress and have made progress. I could give you many other examples of that.

I am not walking away from negotiations or suggesting that this country should, but I think we have to have an alternative course of action in case negotiation fails.

ADMINISTRATION POSITION ON THIEU GOVERNMENT

Senator CASE. I wonder if I could attempt, for my information and for anyone else who might be interested, to clarify this question. I take it our Government is not in the business of maintaining this particular government in power at any cost. That is not our objective and if the South Vietnamese decided to opt for another government, we would not attempt to keep the present government in power. Is that a fair statement?

Secretary LAIRD. That is correct.

Senator CASE. Now, then, the question of the chairman, based upon this suggestion from the writer he referred to——

The CHAIRMAN. Starobin——

Senator CASE (continuing). It is really a suggestion, not by the chairman but from another party, that we negotiate with Hanoi to get rid of this government. In other words, it is suggested that we take an affirmative step to get rid of this government as a part of a move toward negotiation. The administration's position—you did not say this specifically, but you may want to answer this question—is that our Government does not intend to eliminate the Thieu government for the purpose of negotiation. Is this a correct statement?

Secretary LAIRD. That is correct. We have already made our position clear that we would be willing to negotiate the kind of commission that could conduct this election. I think we have gone a long ways in that direction and——

Senator CASE. That has nothing to do with eliminating the government.

Secretary LAIRD. That has nothing to do with the elimination of the government but it has something to do with the fairness and the question of justice, the question of openness, and the question of whether election results can be credible, and I think that this is certainly a fair and logical approach and one which should be considered at the negotiating table in Paris.

Senator CASE. I think it is important that we understand our Government's position, which I, frankly, am inclined to say is pretty sound. If the North Vietnamese would like to use these negotiations in order to overturn the Thieu government, I do not think we should cooperate. Whatever support we provided to the coup against Diem represented a mistake and, in my opinion, we assumed responsibilities for the Government of South Vietnam which never should have been assumed. This assumption of responsibility has been part of the trouble with which we have been plagued ever since. I think we ought not either support or take affirmative action to eliminate this regime. That is my own feeling.

IMPARTIAL ROLE BY UNITED STATES URGED

The CHAIRMAN. Now, you have made a very important point there which I wanted to develop.

If we would in effect stand aside instead of affirmatively supporting the Thieu government and your Vietnamization proceeds to the point where they are on their own and we are not taking any responsibility in the determination, that is another matter. But I seem to feel that your policy is not only not to disavow them in any way but to affirmatively support them with everything they need in the way of money and arms and advice, everything but manpower.

Secretary LAIRD. Mr. Chairman, I think the Vietnamization program should be an incentive to Hanoi to negotiate seriously in Paris.

PUTTING THE WHOLE RESPONSIBILITY ON SAIGON

Senator JAVITS. Mr. Chairman, are we not omitting one critical point and that is if you really put the responsibility on Saigon, and that is the key question, they must broaden the base of their government and then you may have a better chance to do everything you are both talking about? This is omitted in this debate and that is what we are really arguing with the administration about.

Senator CASE. I just had not reached that point.

Senator CHURCH. Could I say in that connection, Senator Javits, just to complete the picture, that you have to take into consideration the position of the present Saigon government on the question of coalition. The last statement we have from President Thieu is:

I solemnly declare that there will be no coalition government, no peace cabinet, no transitional government, not even reconciliatory government.

So, I do think that in terms of the likelihood for a successful negotiation, the chairman has raised the key question. The administration's position relative to that key question is still ambiguous.

Senator COOPER. Mr. Chairman, may I raise a question?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Senator COOPER. I think that the Secretary has made, at least from the standpoint of the administration, the most comprehensive statement I have heard. Now, I do not say this with any disrespect to anyone. I think we all understand each other. We all like to ask questions about it. Is there some procedure where we could follow going down the line with our questions?

AMBIGUITY IN ADMINISTRATION'S GOAL OF SELF-DETERMINATION

The CHAIRMAN. All right. I asked that one question. I know this questioning is all related to it. Let me end with one comment.

It seems to me that along with the Vietnamization—this comes with regard to Senator Case's point—a continuing and unalterable support of the Thieu government is assumed by the Secretary, that is, maintaining their stability. We will give them everything they need to continue in office. If they should weaken we will increase our support which in effect would be the creation of a puppet government which we can continue to control. This does not seem to me to be in our interests. I am inclined to agree that we do not have any business trying to dictate what kind of government they have. This is a contradiction of your own statement, that our objective is self-determination. I do not think it is self-determination in any real sense if we call the shots. Self-determination in accordance with our plan is inherently a contradictory position. But if you really mean self-determination then we will turn it over to them and let them do the best they can which would be consistent with your announced objective of self-determination and I could go along with that. But this is the ambiguity that plagues me.

I do not think what happens in Vietnam warrants what we are doing, that is another matter. But dealing with it now, we say self-determination, yet at the same time we intervene in a massive way for an indefinite period with money, and with supplies and arms of every kind. This is not self-determination. It is self-determination in accordance with an American plan. There is an inherent ambiguity.

Secretary LAIRD. Well, the election process, Mr. Chairman, I still feel is a matter that should be determined finally in the negotiations in Paris.

The CHAIRMAN. But you do not even get to negotiations.

Secretary LAIRD. I am testifying today on the military aspects of the Vietnamization program which we have responsibility for in the Department of Defense.

DISASSOCIATION FROM THIEU GOVERNMENT URGED

The CHAIRMAN. You are more than military. You are a former Congressman and we all respect your understanding of the political process. If you were only a general I would not ask you such questions. But these communications indicate the North is willing, and in

fact, even anxious to have private talks. It seems to me the critical point that this administration cannot accept, is the disassociation from the Thieu government, that is, the insistence that it remain in power. If that is the condition, then I would assume you are not going to have any real negotiation.

Secretary LAIRD. In most of the discussions as I understand them, Mr. Chairman, there has been insistence that we install a new government before the elections. I would certainly say that this is something that we have resisted—the taking over of this kind of responsibility on the part of the United States. The President has made it very clear that we are willing to negotiate the question of the kind of supervisory commission, the kind of procedures that are used to conduct this election, and I believe that the place to negotiate that is in Paris. [Deleted.]

The CHAIRMAN. Are there any private talks going on now?

Secretary LAIRD. [Deleted.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Aiken?

MAKING HEARING RECORD PUBLIC

Senator AIKEN. Mr. Chairman, I think this is an excellent statement made by the Secretary. I have one criticism of it, however, and that is this secret classification. I think it would be a great thing if this statement could be released to the American public and the people of the world with the possible exception of certain paragraphs. I do not think we gain anything by trying to put the blame on somebody for lack of complete achievement of objectives at this time.

Secretary LAIRD. Mr. Chairman, I do not see anything about this statement that is secret.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Secretary, I think that may be a good point and I think the whole record should be made public, your prepared statement as well as the whole record.

Senator CASE. It is a question of timing, Mr. Chairman. When the release of these records is delayed several months, the statements become very stale. I think Senator Aiken's idea of quick action is a good one.

The CHAIRMAN. If the whole record is made public, I would have no objection. I am all for the whole record being made public, the discussion and the questions.

Senator AIKEN. I have felt all the time that we put so much emphasis on the term "negotiate the settlement", that the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong have come to interpret that as capitulation on their part. Now, I would not do away with the Paris conference. We have done good in one respect and that is slowing down the criticism of the rest of the world but I still feel that before we can effect final reorganization of Vietnamization over there, it is highly important to phase down the fighting to the lowest possible level and I do not care how that is done. It would be nice to negotiate a settlement but they will never agree to that. But if that could be phased down by private talks or without any talks at all, then I think we would be in a much better position to discuss national elections and Vietnamization as it is called now.

MAKING U.S. POSITION CLEAR

I would like to see Secretary Laird's statement made public. I think it would be exceptionally helpful in making our position clear to all the people of this country.

Secretary LAIRD. Mr. Chairman, I am confident myself that this statement page by page is not secret. It is labeled secret, I think, only on the first page, is it not, because——

Senator AIKEN. Habit.

Secretary LAIRD. It was done that way because it is up to this committee to release it and not up to the Department of Defense to release it at this time. That is why the label is on there. I do not think it is on each page of your statement, is it?

The CHAIRMAN. No. Just the first page.

Secretary LAIRD. I think it is just on the first page—the cover page—and it is up to this committee to release it.

Senator AIKEN. That word stamped Secret is usually applied to departmental errors.

Secretary LAIRD. We have too much classification and we are trying to move in that other direction in the Department of Defense and I think we are succeeding.

Senator AIKEN. That is all I have.

The CHAIRMAN. Does the committee wish to make this whole record open?

Senator SPARKMAN. I so move.

The CHAIRMAN. It is moved that the entire record be made a public record. All in favor, say aye.

(Chorus of "ayes".)

Senator MCGEE. Before I cast my vote, is that today's record or yesterday's record, too?

The CHAIRMAN. Just today's.

Senator MCGEE. I wanted to make sure.

Secretary LAIRD. And, of course, in my answers to your questions, I hope that I will have the opportunity to have a security review made by my security review people in the Department of Defense.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, that is agreed to.

Secretary LAIRD. Because I support their review from a security classification standpoint of any answers to any questions. That is where the review should come and I would assume that would be the understanding. I can review the record, though, and have it back to you tonight.

The CHAIRMAN. That is good.

RELEASE OF HEARING WITH SECRETARY ROGERS

Senator SYMINGTON. Mr. Chairman, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, but am wondering if it would not be well, inasmuch as there was talk of open hearings, and then decision by the committee to go to executive hearings, if it would not be well to consider also suggesting to Secretary Rogers that his statement and the subsequent testimony be released after sanitization. It would appear a good idea to release both of them.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, no one thought to raise this yesterday but I agree with the Senator. I think they both ought to be published under the same circumstances——

Senator SYMINGTON. With the right of the Secretary——

The CHAIRMAN. As the Secretary stated, that they have an opportunity——

Senator SYMINGTON. With the right of the Secretaries to review it and the right of the members——

The CHAIRMAN. Would there be any problem on the part of the Departments?

I think it is much better that that be done. We ought to minimize these secret documents.

Senator MCGEE. Reserving the right to object to that, just so I have an understanding, I am submitting, as the chairman permitted me to do yesterday, my questions to the Secretary yesterday for his responses which I assume it will not take very long to get ready, but they would be a part of the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Torbert can look after that, can you not?

We will give you the time. It ought to be done today. The Secretary say he can have the transcript back this afternoon.

Senator MCGEE. I can, too, as long as the witness will do a part of it, but I will have to get it to you.

Mr. TORBERT. I cannot agree we can answer all the questions in a day.

The CHAIRMAN. Sure you can.

Senator SYMINGTON. One other point; there may be some question the Secretary is answering he would want classified, and Secretary Rogers would want classified; and I presume the understanding would be to take out what was thought would be against national security.

Senator SPARKMAN. That was the condition that he said.

Secretary LAIRD. The chairman agreed I would have that opportunity.

Senator SYMINGTON. I was asking for Secretary Rogers.

THIS HEARING NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR OPEN HEARING

Senator SPARKMAN. That is what we agreed to a minute ago.

Senator CHURCH. Mr. Chairman, I think one other thing ought to be clear. Whatever we decide as to public hearings later, our decision to make public these proceedings ought not to be considered as a substitute for subsequent public hearings.

The CHAIRMAN. No. They just stand on their own. This is a good point. I think the statement itself should be made public only in connection with the whole hearing, not on its own, and not have something follow it. It should be made public as a part of this briefing.

Senator AIKEN. Would that not take the place of public hearings, considerably?

Senator MCGEE. The committee will have to discuss that.

The CHAIRMAN. That is a matter for the committee to determine.

Senator SPARKMAN. I think Secretary Rogers said yesterday that he felt much more free to discuss things than he would have had it been a public hearing. Now he can go over it with considerable thought and sanitize it completely.

Senator AIKEN. He felt much more free because he can never anticipate what questions are going to be thrown at him.

Senator SPARKMAN. That is right. None of us could anticipate what questions might have come up yesterday or what might come up this morning.

Senator McGEE. May I ask a question?

Isn't it unusual that the Defense Department is taking the initiative in making public everything that is said and declassifying it while the State Department is a little more concerned about it? That is a kind of switch, is it not?

Ordinarily you have military figures that are carefully weighed, Mr. Secretary, and——

The CHAIRMAN. I wonder if we could proceed to make the record. We have settled that. Let's go.

PRAISE FOR SECRETARY'S STATEMENT

Senator SPARKMAN. Fine. Mr. Secretary, I want to join with the others who have stated their pleasure with this statement. I think it is a very fine statement. I surely endorse it. And I endorse the program that has been outlined.

I realize it is a most difficult thing to work out something that will satisfy everybody, but I think the President in his message gave us cause to hope, and I think you have followed that this morning in the statement that you have given to us.

I want to say that I think Senator Case advanced a very fine thought and to my way of thinking I hope at least it is what has been contemplated all along. I do not think we should try to control the Government of South Vietnam even to the extent doing what Senator Javits suggested, that is, insisting they broaden the base. I do not think that is our business.

And so far as answering criticism that the Chairman made that we have promised them support, I view that as being support to the South Vietnamese people regardless of who represents them as the government as long as it is a freely elected government.

And it seems to me that you are right in your suggestion that negotiations relating to that election belong in the Paris peace talks. I am rather of the opinion that perhaps there is going to have to be set up some kind of international control of those elections and that many of the details are going to have to be left to that international body, whatever it may be, whether it is a commission set up for that purpose or a subcommittee of the United Nations or whatever it may be.

REDUCTION IN U.S. FORCES

I do not know that I have any questions to ask you. I did notice that with reference to the reduction in the forces, you say the ceiling is 484,000.

Secretary LAIRD. 484,000 as of December 15.

Senator SPARKMAN. As of December 15. Well, that is what I wanted to ask you because you did not give any date. You did not say as of December 15.

Secretary LAIRD. In the second announcement that President Nixon made, he lowered the troop ceiling to 484,000. It had been at the start of January 549,500 and he lowered the ceiling to 484,000 effective December 15, 1969.

Senator SPARKMAN. In your statement you say the present American

Army troop ceiling already has been lowered to 484,000. You do not say as of December 15. I was just a little confused.

Secretary LAIRD. Thank you. That is a very good suggestion. It should be——

Senator SPARKMAN. As of December 15.

Secretary LAIRD. It should be made clear in that sentence, but that 484,000 troop ceiling, the effective date on that is December 15.

Senator SPARKMAN. And as of November 13 it is 489,200.

I have no further questions. I appreciate the statement that you have given us.

Secretary LAIRD. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Case.

Senator CASE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Nice to have you here and I join with my colleagues in thanks for being able to talk to people who speak a language we and the American people can understand.

We all know of your service in Congress and we all feel honored as Members of that body.

ABILITY OF SAIGON TO HANDLE COMBAT RESPONSIBILITIES

Senator Javits left a question which he asked me to put to you. He said:

Please ask for me with reference to your statement what do we do if Saigon does engage in heel-dragging or shows inability to handle combat responsibilities or is in danger of defeat, and what is our timetable in such eventuality?

The President stated—and I do not have the statement before me, but I am sure we can agree on its substance—that he had a timetable, and he was not going to disclose it, and that it would take into account Hanoi's actions and also the capacity of the Saigon government to assume responsibility.

And the question we raised and pressed the Secretary on was, whether this meant a definite time schedule which we would follow even if Hanoi came in with additional forces or even if the South Vietnamese, as Senator Javits' question raised, demonstrated that they could not or would not shape up.

We pressed the Secretary a bit on the matter of the President's having a definite timetable and we asked if he needed some kind of flexibility and, if so, what kinds of flexibility we were talking about. In other words, were we really talking about a timetable, or were we not?

The reason I had some concern about this is that I have held a long-time conviction that the South Vietnamese government would never shape up unless it were faced with such a timetable. I still have to be persuaded that that is not true. That is why I have been concerned about what appears to me to be the chief question as to the soundness of the administration's position as announced so far.

And, in addition to that, I want to say that I regard the change in direction of our policies a very significant one. I wholly approve it, but the question is, how do we carry on?

I am sorry to have talked so long, but I would like very much, in addition to answering Senator Javits' question, for you to deal with this in your own way.

Secretary LAIRD. Thank you, Senator Case.

MILITARY LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH VIETNAM

First, I would like to make the point that our military leadership in South Vietnam is meeting on almost a constant basis with the Joint General Staff of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces and certain goals and targets have been established, as far as the military modernization and improvement program is concerned, in the discussions which have gone on between our military and the Joint General Staff.

These discussions were held, as far as setting improvement goals, on a rather rapid basis after my visit in Vietnam in March. During that visit, I outlined in my discussion with President Thieu and with the military leaders in South Vietnam how seriously we felt about turning over the combat responsibilities, as well as the other responsibilities in Vietnam, to them as rapidly as we possibly could.

I found that there were several divisions of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces that could not be relied upon. [Deleted.]

These particular divisions [deleted] did not have good leadership. I visited the other divisions of the South Vietnamese Forces. I went up to I Corps and watched the 1st Division, which has always been pointed out over the past few years as I sat on the Defense Appropriations Committee as sort of the model division and we always got fine reports on the 1st Division, but then when you went into some of the other divisions, the reports were not as they should have been.

It was made very clear that in this particular program they had better get with it because we were not in a position where we could support any longer this kind of establishment with our military assistance programs.

I would like to point out that the division commanders were changed. These division commanders—some people thought it took quite a while for the change, from March until this summer, but these things do take some time to make changes, but they have been changed and these divisions are out moving now.

I think it was General Pershing who said that there is no such thing as a tired division, but there are sometimes tired division commanders. I think the problem here was a question of the leadership of the divisions rather than anything else.

MODERNIZATION PROGRAM

Now, as far as the modernization program is concerned and the improvement program, it is running ahead of schedule at the present time. At the present time we have incountry 100 percent of all of the M–16 weapons that are needed to outfit the regional forces, the popular forces, and the regular forces of the South Vietnamese. Ninety-seven percent of all of those forces have this new weapon in hand at this time and have been trained to use it.

This is a very rapid change in a period of about 8 months, and this makes a great deal of difference so far as their forces are concerned.

To be specific, with regard to your question and that of Senator Javits, I would just like to say that the South Vietnamese understand full well that they must keep the momentum going in this program in order for this program to succeed. The success of this program, although it means a great deal to us, means more to them because we are

serious about our reduction as far as American involvement in combat in that area is concerned.

EFFECT OF HANOI ON WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE

Senator CASE. Well, I appreciate that statement. Could you give me an idea whether the President has a timetable which specifies type and kinds of American forces to be withdrawn and, also, whether it is conditioned upon Hanoi's not escalating its own activity or upon the capability of the South Vietnamese regime to take over as we withdraw?

Secretary LAIRD. The President has a plan which does take into consideration the improvement program as set forth for the Vietnamese forces.

This improvement program has been agreed to by the Joint General Staff of the South Vietnamese and I have no question in my mind that as far as that improvement program is concerned, the target dates will be met.

Now, as far as the second part of your question, whether the plan relates in any way to some action that Hanoi might take if Hanoi goes forward with a massive escalation of the war, certainly it would interfere with this program and with this plan. I would not want to give the impression to Hanoi or anyone else that they have complete freedom to move forward and escalate the war and that it would not affect the President's plan, because it would.

Senator CASE. Well, this is important and I appreciate your development of this position because it is not in accordance with my own analysis. I think we ought to take a position which is reasonable in the circumstances, and then stick to it. Otherwise, I do not think we will get Saigon really to come through.

Secretary LAIRD. But the only point that I wanted to make Senator, was in relation to the Saigon portion, the South Vietnamese portion. The target dates that have been established on the modernization and improvement of the military aspects of their forces will be met, I am confident of that.

The second part of your question was that if Hanoi moves in a massive way in South Vietnam, will it not affect the plan. I do not want to give anybody the impression that this would not have some effect on the plan because it would.

The CHAIRMAN. Would the Senator yield for a question?

ENEMY TROOP STRENGTH IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Would you put in the record, Mr. Secretary, how many enemy troops are in South Vietnam.

Senator CASE. Has that not been cleared up?

The CHAIRMAN. No, it has not. It was brought up yesterday and Secretary Rogers deferred to Secretary Laird believing he would know the figures. Do you remember the question?

Senator CASE. Yes. The question was raised yesterday because Secretary Rogers made some such statement as this, as I recall it, something like [deleted] enemy troops.

The CHAIRMAN. North Vietnamese?

Senator CASE. North Vietnamese and South, and about 80 percent of them were North.

The CHAIRMAN. That is right.

Senator CASE. And that was in conflict with the estimates we had.

Senator SYMINGTON. Senator Gore asked the question. He might ask it of the Secretary.

Senator CASE. Then it was agreed that the Secretary and Defense Department people would get together and straighten the whole thing out.

The question is, as I think Secretary Rogers said, the total North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces in the area, in the range of about [deleted] and secondly, about 80 percent of those are North Vietnamese, so that would be in the neighborhood of [deleted].

Well, we have been receiving statements as to the number of North Vietnamese troops engaged in South Vietnam, and the highest figure I think we had seen on any of those statements was something like [deleted]. Is that not right?

The question was reconciling the difference in these figures. I do not know whether that has been done for the record.

The CHAIRMAN. No, it has not been done to my knowledge. Do you want to do it now?

Secretary LAIRD. Yes, Mr. Chairman, I will be glad to do that.

Senator CASE. We will go back to the question that has been raised with the Secretary after this is done.

DATA ON TROOP FIGURES DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN

Secretary LAIRD. Mr. Chairman, I regret the confusion that did exist yesterday, November 18, over the enemy strength data that were discussed. As a generalization, data are always difficult to obtain and are certainly subject to considerable uncertainties when you start estimating these various strengths.

As a matter of fact, I think a case in point is the fact that we have pictures taken from helicopters of the ground around the Washington Monument last Saturday, and we have seen estimates running all the way from 180,000 to 320,000. Many of these estimates were made by reliable people, including the police chief here and others. That is one reason I do not like to get into this numbers business and have tried to stay away from it.

I have continually tried to stay away from getting into the numbers business, whether it concerns the precise number of enemy troops or anything else, because I think it has caused considerable problems in the past as to the credibility of what is said by the Department of Defense. As you know, these are hard things to estimate.

I will go ahead, however, and explain the differences that exist between the figures that were used here yesterday just so that we do have an understanding of what took place.

Now, we have been providing this committee on a regular basis data that has to do with the whole enemy strength in South Vietnam.

Senator GORE. That is the table to which I referred yesterday?

Secretary LAIRD. Right, and these tables are sent to you by our Department on a regular basis. They are forwarded here by the Deputy Controller for Information Services, Mr. Foster Adams, on a regular basis, so that your committee has a record of this information.

The information that was used yesterday by Senator Gore was the data that was sent to this committee and it represented troop strength on July 31 of 1969. Now, this was the estimate as of the end of July, and the second point I think that should be made is that it is based on partial information.

I think that perhaps for the purpose of this committee it might be important to understand thoroughly the figures that were used by Secretary Rogers. Do you all have them before you?

Senator CASE. [Deleted] total, of which [deleted] estimated North Vietnamese.

LATEST AGREED ESTIMATES OF ENEMY TROOP STRENGTH

Secretary LAIRD. The figures that were used by the Secretary yesterday are the basis on which the intelligence agencies make their particular estimates. I will supply for the record the latest agreed estimate.

This agreed estimate includes North Vietnamese combat forces, [deleted]. There is a footnote on that table, and this footnote is important for everyone to understand. That figure includes [deleted] troops, combat troops, that are stationed and located immediately above the DMZ, but are assigned the primary missions in South Vietnam in operating in the I Corps area. This is made very clear in the table.

Senator GORE. If you subtract that [deleted], then you would have in Vietnam——

Senator AIKEN. As of July 29?

Secretary LAIRD. No. This table—I have the latest agreed estimate, and the latest agreed estimate is the 30th of September 1969. Now, I have a later estimate, but I would rather stay with the agreed estimate, and the latest agreed estimate is the 30th of September 1969.

Senator AIKEN. And do you have the estimate of 6 months earlier?

Secretary LAIRD. Yes. We have those estimates.

Now, I can make a comparison——

Senator CHURCH. Could we get the figures first? Let's get the figures of the agreed estimate.

Secretary LAIRD. Of the agreed estimate?

Senator CHURCH. Yes, please.

Secretary LAIRD. All right, I will be glad to give it.

On September 30, 1969, the regular combat forces of the North Vietnamese are [deleted]; the VC [deleted] totals, [deleted].

I am giving you the range in the estimate.

[Deleted.] That is the range.

I want to point out again that in the North Vietnamese combat forces this estimate includes approximately [deleted] personnel in units deployed in North Vietnam and there——

Senator SYMINGTON. What is the Vietcong administrative again?

Secretary LAIRD. [Deleted.]

Senator MCGEE. Does this include any troops that may be stationed in Cambodia, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary LAIRD. This does not include troops in Laos or Cambodia that are not assigned to South Vietnam. It includes those troops that are assigned to South Vietnam.

Senator MCGEE. That may move in and out of there?

Secretary LAIRD. We have approximately [deleted] North Vietnamese troops in Laos that are not assigned to move in and out of South Vietnam, and they are not in the estimates.

Senator GORE. Mr. Chairman, I think this is very close to the statement I gave. I said the highest estimate, nonverified, that I had heard of North Vietnamese organized military forces in South Vietnam was [deleted].

The nonverified statistics reported to the committee were [deleted]. If you subtract the [deleted] stationed across the DMZ, from your verified estimate of [deleted] you arrive at [deleted] North Vietnamese regulars in South Vietnam.

The CHAIRMAN. That is very close to what you said.

Secretary LAIRD. I want to make it clear that as far as the figures that your committee has are concerned, those charts are used throughout government. There is no recognition in those figures of the troops that are immediately across the DMZ. [Deleted.]

TOTAL OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS

Senator CHURCH. Mr. Secretary, while you are on the subject of figures, could you also supply us with the figures of the South Vietnamese forces, including the regional, popular, and regular forces, so we will have a comparison?

Secretary LAIRD. Yes, I will.

Senator CASE. I wonder if this reconciliation between Secretary Rogers' statement and your own could be put in some tabular form for the record.

Secretary LAIRD. I have that right here. In showing you the different bases on which the estimates are made, I would like to caution you. I think it is important to use the agreed figures if we are going to be just talking within this room because we do have agreed-upon figures there within these ranges.

Now [deleted] estimates are somewhat different than these. [Deleted.]

So from my point of view, if we are going to use figures, I would rather use the agreed-upon figures rather than get into these various sets. [Deleted.]

The things I think are best to use, for all of us to use, are the agreed-upon estimates.

Senator SYMINGTON. How about the Vietcong guerrillas, combat, Mr. Secretary? You have now [deleted] Vietcong's administrative. You segregate the guerrillas, but are there not some combat guerrillas?

Secretary LAIRD. In all of the estimates on administrative forces for the Vietcong, both combat and guerrilla forces, all estimates place the administrative force level between [deleted].

Senator MCGEE. That includes the guerrillas?

Secretary LAIRD. Yes.

Senator SYMINGTON. Thank you.

Secretary LAIRD. As a matter of fact, on the figures that your committee has, which are based upon July 31, I think you will find that estimate has [deleted] administrative support in July 31 for the Vietcong as I recall the table.

The CHAIRMAN. You were going to give the South Vietnamese figures and then move on.

Secretary LAIRD. I will be glad to supply a table.

The CHAIRMAN. You do not have them with you?

Secretary LAIRD. I have the figures here, but do you want me to go through the table?

The CHAIRMAN. Just the totals. He asked for the total strength of South Vietnamese troops.

Secretary LAIRD. I want to give you the last figure on this. I will put it in. I have it here some place.

[The following sentence was later added: The table is classified and was provided separately to the committee. Total RVN forces as of 1 January 1969 were 998,100. On 30 June 1969, the total had risen to 1,052,000, and on 30 September 1969, it stood at 1,103,300.]

Senator AIKEN. Are the levels of enemy troops going up or down?

Secretary LAIRD. Since the last agreed estimate, the number of enemy troops has gone down by approximately [deleted].

The range in June, June 30, 1969, was a range of [deleted]. Now the range in these figures I have given you today, on September 30, the last agreed estimate, the range is [deleted].

Senator GORE. I am afraid if you take the total enemy forces that might leave an erroneous impression from the standpoint of the North Vietnamese forces. It would appear that the number has increased from January of this year to September 30. The estimates previously supplied to the committee show as of January [deleted] of North Vietnamese, and the estimate you have given us as of September 30 by the intelligence services shows, with the exclusion of the [deleted] north of the DMZ, an estimate of [deleted].

Now, I suppose it may not actually represent an increase because [deleted] would be about as near the middle between [deleted] as you could get. So it would appear that the North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam have remained constant throughout this year.

Secretary LAIRD. Well, I will give you for the record the total estimate as of June 30, the last agreed estimate, and compare that with September 30. Now, if you would like the agreed estimate for January, I did not bring that with me.

(The table is classified and was provided separately to the committee.)

TOTAL ENEMY STRENGTH IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Senator GORE. I take it the table the Department of Defense has already supplied as of January is sufficient, that it is as accurate a count as you can arrive at.

Secretary LAIRD. It is accurate, but it is based upon a different set of intelligence information, and that is my only problem. I would rather compare the agreed statements all the way through, rather than use different bases.

Senator GORE. Fine.

The CHAIRMAN. Gentlemen, do you not think we have taken enough time on these numbers? Can we not go on so everybody will have an opportunity to ask questions. He can straighten that out when he goes over the record.

Senator GORE. I hope, Mr. Chairman, if you will pardon me, that the record would avoid any confusion as to the total enemy strength, that is, of the North Vietnamese strength in South Vietnam. That is all I ask to be clarified.

Secretary LAIRD. I will see that it is well clarified for the record. I am not trying to make a big point of this, Senator Gore, but my only problem is that I hope we compare similar intelligence figures because I think it is very important to do that.

Senator GORE. I agree.

Secretary LAIRD. To show any trends.

Senator GORE. I agree.

Senator MCGEE. Is it fair to ask or to be sure that when you submit the ARVN figures for us that they will be broken down in a similar category?

Secretary LAIRD. Yes, if we have it available. [DOD later added the following sentence: "The South Vietnamese Armed Forces summaries are not available broken down into these categories."]

Senator MCGEE. So far our confusion has arisen out of the fact that we talk about combat troops some of the time and are referring to total troops and other comparative terms, and this gives a very serious misreading. You are going to need that orally now if we put it in the record so we can get on with the chairman's points.

Secretary LAIRD. If we gave the September figures as far as the South Vietnamese Regular, Regional, and Popular forces are concerned, I will break them out but the total force is 1,103,300. That includes combat, logistics support and administrative support. I will break them out by Regional forces (RF), Popular forces (PF), and Regular forces at this point.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Case, would you continue, please?

Senator CASE. You have been very frank about the effect of an escalation by the North Vietnamese upon the timetable.

MATTERS WHICH AFFECT POLITICAL STABILITY AND STRENGTH OF SVN TROOPS

If I may turn to South Vietnamese shaping up, you have spoken quite specifically about military improvements. I wonder if you would give us your comment on those matters which affect the military capacity of South Vietnam, but also affect its political stability and strength, such as the morale of the troops and of the people. What about pay for the soldiers? What about their chances for advancement? What about their officer corps, the lower ranks as well as the higher ranks, and what about discipline and what about corruption, particularly at the top, which has been something which has been of great concern to all of us?

Secretary LAIRD. First, I think I should direct myself to the problem areas that do exist. There are two problem areas as far as the forces are concerned.

LEADERSHIP PROBLEM

The number one problem area is still the leadership problem of developing noncommissioned officers, high-ranking noncommissioned officers, and also the lower ranking officers in the middle grades as

far as the officer personnel are concerned. This is a problem, and it is one that the South Vietnamese recognize and they are improving.

DESERTION RATE

The second major problem is the problem of desertion. Although the desertion rate has run as high as [deleted] out of a thousand, it is now down to about [deleted]. But this is still a fairly high rate, and it is attributed largely to the fact that many of these soldiers in the South Vietnamese forces did not have adequate contact with their families. Most of these desertions, when we traced them out and checked them out, are the South Vietnamese returning to their families. There is no way right now for them to deliver money to their families. You cannot do it through the mail services or anything else in South Vietnam. Many times, after they have been gone for four or five months, they begin to worry about how the family is getting along and want to take a little money to them. So they just pick up and leave. Many of them might show up later in the Regional forces or the Popular forces.

They do not take their weapons with them, but they just go home to see how the family is. This is the one way that they can get money to their families because there is not the system that we have of returning family allowances while a soldier is in the service.

Now, we are encouraging a change in this. First, we are trying to set up places where families can stay together. Under a rather cheap sort of construction we encourage the South Vietnamese to make some of these available for the families of some of these service personnel. We are also encouraging them to go forward with a means of seeing that the families can receive some allowances so that the men that are in the services do not have that particular concern.

Now, when a person goes from the Regular forces and joins up with the Regional forces, of course he is listed as a deserter. But we do not have much in the way of desertions with the Regional forces and popular forces. The Regional forces are good now. They have the M–16 rifle. And we do not have much of a desertion rate there because these people are very close to their homes.

LOYALTY TO REGIONAL RATHER THAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

We hear a lot of talk about the government in Vietnam. There really has not been a great nationalistic feeling in South Vietnam as far as the national government is concerned. The important government to most people in Vietnam is the local government, their village government, their hamlet government and within their own region. These people have a certain loyalty to their region and to their particular area. So the desertion rate is low there.

But I wanted to point out that there still is somewhat of a problem with the desertion rate in the Regular forces. Part of it is caused by the fact that there is not necessarily this great nationalistic feeling in South Vietnam that some envision. That is why I think some people in the United States put a greater emphasis on the national government of the country than they should, because when you can see the people electing their local hamlet and village officials, and this has

gone up to 8 out of 10, in many ways this is more important than the national government as far as the lives of these people are concerned. I think we have to understand that.

EXCELLENT FIGHTING OF SOUTHERN FORCES

Now, with the exception of those two problems, the forces are well ahead of schedule in training, in their combat responsibility, and in taking over this responsibility. I think the turning point was the Ben Het affair and many people, as they read about that affair, thought the South Vietnamese were taking a beating. They did not take a beating at Ben Het. They repulsed the enemy.

A decision was made that the South Vietnamese would stand at Ben Het and we gave them artillery support and other types of support, but they stood there and they won. They made mistakes as far as their communications were concerned and they made other mistakes, but they wrote their own handbook as far as combat operations are concerned and all of the units are using the Ben Het experience as a way of learning what they should do.

The experiences that have taken place as far as the fighting of the South Vietnamese in the last 2 months have all been excellent. Within this last week they stood and fought along the Cambodian border and they did a very outstanding job on their own, while the United States supplied only support.

I do not want to imply, Senator Case, that they are going to win every battle, because in any war they are going to lose some battles. But they have been standing and they have been fighting and they have been improving their divisions. They have gone forward and taken over complete responsibility in the delta area. And they are taking over more and more responsibility in I Corps.

EFFECT OF STABILITY OF SOUTH VIETNAM GOVERNMENT OF TIMETABLE

Senator CASE. I must raise this specifically. You had said if Hanoi changes its present tactics and begins massive escalation, this would change the timetable.

Suppose South Vietnam collapsed? Will that change the timetable? Or if it simply does not shape up? Would we still adhere to our timetable?

Secretary LAIRD. As far as the turning over of the combat responsibility is concerned. [Deleted.] I think that I would not want to indicate in any way that we are looking for any type of collapse on the part of the South Vietnamese Government. [Deleted.]

Now, the only thing that I feel should be involved in this—and I think Hanoi should understand this—is that if the enemy increases the level of activity in South Vietnam, then we would have to go forward with somewhat of a different response.

Senator CASE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Gore?

PROGRESS TOWARD TERMINATION OF WAR SEEN

Senator GORE. Secretary Laird, I think there is something to be said for the fact that today we are discussing means of ending the war. Our differences, such as they are, as I listened this morning, appear to be with respect to the consequences of present and planned policies, whether those policies are likely to lead to an early peaceful settlement, on the one hand, or to prolongation of the war, on the other.

I heard no one here this morning, nor do I hear anyone now in the Senate, advocating escalation of the war. So it seems to me that we have made some progress toward termination of the war and to the extent that anyone has had a part in that, I wish to extend congratulations.

Now, with that brief statement, let me add this other caveat.

I believe that all of us, I know this certainly applies to me, wish to assist in the termination of this bloody and tragic war. I am confident that is your motivation and President Nixon's.

POLICY OF "VIETNAMIZATION" IS NOT NEW

So let's go to "Vietnamization." You have given us a definition for it, the first definition I have seen. You say:

Vietnamization is the orderly transfer to the South Vietnamese within a reasonable time frame of the major responsibilities that the United States has assumed in that country.

Though I do not wish to provoke an extended discussion on that, I respectfully submit that Vietnamization is a long word that is applied to a policy which we have had for a long time.

For instance, former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford more than a year ago said to this committee:

We will continue to seek ways to effect a reduction of hostilities, to lower the level of violence in South Vietnam, and to turn over more and more defense responsibilities to the South Vietnamese themselves.

Indeed, much further back than that, in 1964, President Johnson sent a message to the Government of South Vietnam:

As the forces of your government become increasingly capable of dealing with this aggression, American military personnel in South Vietnam can be progressively withdrawn.

So, Mr. Secretary, whether it is a wise policy or an unwise policy, it seems to be one on which we have been embarked for a long while.

Secretary LAIRD. Senator, I would just like to state, if I might at this point that that may have been the policy, but there was no plan. The only plan and the only policy that had been implemented as far as the Department of Defense was concerned when I took office was a policy to modernize the forces of South Vietnam to meet a possible VC threat and there had been nothing else approved. And it was not until after my visit in March to Vietnam that the new policy was established. I felt it was better described by the term "Vietnamization." When we started using that term to describe our new policy, we actually went forward and implemented it. Our program was implemented not only with the South Vietnamese, but right here in our own

military establishment as far as the military aspects of Vietnamization are concerned.

The priority was given not to the equipping of U.S. forces in Vietnam, because they had already been equipped, and they always had the top priority. But under Vietnamization, emphasis was given to equipping the South Vietnamese so they could meet both of these threats, so that Americans could be relieved and Americans could be reduced in that area.

So I agree with the statements you read. They are factual statements. But in order for something to be meaningful, it has to be implemented, and certainly the place that it has to be implemented is in the Department of Defense.

I met with Mr. Clifford and I met with Mr. McNamara. I have met with the people who had this job before. I try to keep in touch with them and they have been helpful with their advice and their counsel. I have great respect and admiration for them, but even the speech that Mr. Clifford made which was printed in the Foreign Affairs Quarterly in July talks about a large support force being necessary for many years to come in Vietnam. Our plans and our programs go beyond that. The plans and the programs we are working with in the Department of Defense concerning the military aspects of Vietnamization go beyond this. I want you to know that, Senator.

Senator GORE. Well, I did not wish to make any particular point except that Vietnamization is a term that has come into popular use, but so far as I can find it describes a program that has been stipulated for a long time, and indeed I distinctly recall statements of officials of the Saigon government referring to a phased withdrawal and an ultimate South Korean type settlement.

DISCUSSION OF UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL

I wanted to get to an examination of the Vietnamization policy and ask some questions about it because I have been troubled by the fear that it was a program which would lead to a prolonged war rather than to an early peace.

On May 14, President Nixon made his first speech to the American people on the Vietnam war. At that time he ruled out unilateral withdrawal. In fact, three times in his speech, he inveighed against unilateral withdrawal. I would like to read it:

> We have also ruled out either a one-sided withdrawal from Vietnam or the acceptance in Paris of terms that would amount to a disguised American retreat.

Later on he said:

> Another reason for not withdrawing unilaterally stemmed from debates within the Communist world between those who argue for a policy of containment or confrontation with the United States and those who argue against it.

Three paragraphs later the President said:

> Almost without exception the leaders of non-Communist Asia have told me that they would consider a one-sided American withdrawal from Vietnam to be a threat to the security of their own nations.

Now, again without trying to be critical but in the hope of trying to understand our policy, I was a bit perplexed when, less than a month later, a one-sided withdrawal or unilateral withdrawal program was announced and began. As the figures discussed in today's session

of the committee have shown, there has been no reduction of North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam, no withdrawal on their part. Now, at the same time the President three times denounced unilateral withdrawal, he proposed mutual withdrawal. As quickly as I could prepare a speech because of those and other Presidential statements from which I took encouragement, as quickly as it could be prepared, I made a speech in the Senate praising the President's speech—only to find that on June 8, from Midway, the beginning of a unilateral withdrawal was announced.

Now, if you could help me clarify this, I would appreciate it.

Secretary LAIRD. Senator Gore, I hope that you do not confuse what normally is referred to as a unilateral withdrawal with the troop reductions which we are making in Vietnam at the present time. Although the action is a unilateral action on the part of the U.S. Government, the President of the United States has made it clear that not a single American will remain in South Vietnam any longer than is needed and necessary in order to achieve the objective which he has outlined in his May 14 speech. We are not going to keep Americans in Vietnam longer than they are needed. As the forces of the South Vietnamese Army—Regular, Regional, and Popular—are in a position to take over more and more of the responsibilities, more and more Americans are going to be coming out.

Now, you may refer to that as unilateral withdrawal but I think in the minds of most people as they refer to unilateral withdrawal, this is an entirely different kind of troop reduction. This troop reduction is made on the basis of a turnover of responsibilities and the increase of capabilities on the part of the Government of South Vietnam and their military forces.

Senator GORE. Well, is it mutual withdrawal?

BASIS OF U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWALS

Secretary LAIRD. It is not a mutual withdrawal as far as an agreement with the North Vietnamese is concerned. There has been no agreement worked out with the Government of North Vietnam. The reductions that have been made and the announcements in the first and second increments—the two reductions in troop strength levels—were based primarily on the turnover of responsibility for combat activities to the forces of the South Vietnamese.

And I do not believe that this should lessen our drive and our determination to work in Paris for mutual withdrawal as far as troops are concerned. A mutual withdrawal agreement in the terms the President outlined—a 12-month mutual withdrawal of all troops—is the fastest way to reduce the American presence in South Vietnam.

Senator GORE. Then, you describe it as unilateral action on our part to reduce our forces in Vietnam?

Secretary LAIRD. It was action on our part, that is correct, and under the terms of what unilateral means that certainly is unilateral. But I think in the terms that some people use the word "unilateral," it is a withdrawal without basing it upon the improvement of the other side, and these withdrawals have been based on the premise that those Americans were no longer needed or necessary in Vietnam

because of the improvements that had been made as far as the forces of South Vietnam are concerned.

I do not mean to get into a sematic argument. I know what unilateral means and I am sure that you know what it means. We both understand what it means, but it is used differently sometimes by different people.

Senator GORE. Yes. If there is confusion as to the use and meaning of terms, that perhaps is not the fault of either of us. But coming to the action itself, you say it is unilateral action on our part, I believe, to reduce American forces in South Vietnam.

Secretary LAIRD. I want to make it clear though, that it is based upon the need of the Americans there and the improvement that has been made insofar as the forces of South Vietnam are concerned.

Senator GORE. I think you have made that clear and it is not——

TIMESPAN NECESSARY TO ACCOMPLISH VIETNAMIZATION

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Secretary, one further point. Could you indicate about the timespan that you visualize being necessary to accomplish Vietnamization? Have you done that? I do not remember that you have.

Secretary LAIRD. This is part of the plan; that is correct.

The CHAIRMAN. That is what I mean. What is the timespan?

Secretary LAIRD. Well, Mr. Chairman, as far as giving specific dates, it has been decided that the President will make these announcements on a basis that he determines as far as reductions are concerned and as far as the program is concerned. I have been the leading advocate in the administration of not announcing times or dates well in advance. I sat on the Defense Appropriations Committee and I saw these times and dates used over a long period of time. I thought it helped destroy the credibility of everything we were doing in Southeast Asia. I saw dates used indicating for example, that we would have our combat troops home by Christmas and I do not think it did any good for people to project dates like that. As one of the leading advocates in this administration of not going forward and projecting dates and times far into the future, I believe that it would do a great disservice to get into spelling out a timetable not only for phase 1, which takes the combat responsibilities, but also for phase 2, which goes into the support and other activities that are carried on. So, I would caution against putting a timetable out and making it a matter of public or private information at this particular time. I would just like to say that I am sure that every member of this committee will consider that these plans are reasonable and that the time frame is a reasonable time frame.

The CHAIRMAN. I do not want you to say on April first such and such will happen. I thought maybe it was not unreasonable in executive session to provide an answer and take it out if you feel it is a security matter. I thought you contemplated a year or two before substantial disengagement could be shown. If it is a 5 or 10-year plan, it would make a lot of difference, in my mind, as to whether we ought to do it.

Senator CASE. Or if it is indefinite.

Secretary LAIRD. It is not indefinite, Mr. Chairman, but I am

perhaps the strongest voice cautioning against this kind of projection.

The CHAIRMAN. Your predecessors did mislead the committee so perhaps that is why we are skeptical.

Secretary LAIRD. This is a reasonable time frame and I am sure Senator Fulbright, as chairman of this committee, knowing you as long as I have, that you would consider it reasonable, too. And I would like to leave it, that it is a reasonable time frame, not only on the first phase, which is the combat responsibilities, but also on the second phase, which deals with the support and logistics program.

SECURITY OF REMAINING U.S. FORCES

Senator GORE. I like to stay on track. You have given us a definition a Vietnamization and I thank you for it. You use the phrase "within a reasonable time frame." Now, for those of us who are troubled, Mr. Secretary, and I am one who is troubled, there are, it seems to me, two very crucial questions in arriving at a decision as to whether Vietnamization is reasonably calculated to bring an early peace or whether it is equally reasonably calculated to prolong the war indefinitely. One was raised by Senator Javits yesterday. The contingency plans, contingent events, possible contingency plans to meet those contingent events.

And the second, the extent of the time frame. Now, if I may, I would like to come to the contingent events about which Senator Javits questioned Secretary Rogers yesterday but which questions, I think Senator Javits will agree, tend more appropriately to be put to the Secretary of Defense.

Senator JAVITS. Or at least, as appropriate.

Senator GORE. I will accept the amendment.

I have felt, Mr. Secretary, and I hope that you can accept my views as being as nonpartisan and as patriotic as the next one. I have felt that a phased withdrawal would unreasonably prolong the war and would run the grave risk of two contingencies. Assuming that North Vietnam does not withdraw, and there is no evidence here presented that they have, assuming that the Vietcong, whether they lay low meanwhile or whether they increase their offensive, nevertheless remains adamant, how far can contingent withdrawals, piecemeal withdrawals, proceed until the American forces remaining there are in danger from a possible offensive by a combination of the North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam, plus the large North Vietnamese army now in North Vietnam, plus the Vietcong? This comes to the time frame. That is one of the contingent events to which Senator Javits referred.

FATE OF THIEU-KY GOVERNMENT AFTER WITHDRAWAL

Another contingent event is that if we withdraw without bringing about a broadly based government in South Vietnam which the people can accept, do we not thereby doom the democratic processes there, because I really have not heard anyone express any view whatsoever that the Thieu-Ky regime could last beyond many settings of the sun without the presence and the support of U.S. forces.

Now, I do not wish to question at length. My time would not permit. But, would you comment on these two contingent events?

Secretary LAIRD. Senator Gore, the first concern which you express has to do with really the safety and security of American forces as the Vietnamization program progresses. I think you particularly refer to that period of time when we will have turned over the combat responsibilities to the forces of South Vietnam and yet will still have a considerable American force present in a support role.

That is the first concern which you expressed.

SECURITY OF AMERICAN FORCES

I want you to know and I want to give you every assurance, Senator Gore, that in that program, that concern is very much before us. With any increment of American forces remaining in Vietnam, we will also have combat troops which will have the security responsibility for American support forces. They will not have the combat responsibility within the country but they will have the capability of defending the security of American forces [deleted].

Senator GORE. This is reassuring so far as the security of our own personnel in South Vietnam is concerned. It raises more questions than it settles, however, with respect to the time frame.

Secretary LAIRD. Well, Senator, as I said earlier, I can assure you that our plan that has been approved by the President, includes these two important phases.

First, the turnover of the combat responsibilities within the country to the South Vietnamese; and second, the reduction even of the support forces of the United States that will be necessary for a longer period of time than will the actual combat forces assigned to combat responsibility within the country.

Senator GORE. But it does not contemplate the withdrawal of combat forces to the extent that combat capability would be necessary to preserve our own forces in whatever amount that may remain there.

Secretary LAIRD. The security of the American forces must always be foremost in our minds because we cannot commit forces any place in the world unless we do protect their security.

RESIDUAL FORCES

Senator GORE. Now, you used the term recently—I am trying to think of your word—residual forces. With what meaning did you use that term in the context of our discussion here?

Secretary LAIRD. Senator Gore, I think the word residual is an unfortunate term. I did use it and we use it in connection with budget planning. I have now tried to find a better word that we can use with our budget planning, but this is a term that is used by the military comptrollers in the Department of Defense when they talk about the whole budget process. As you know, we have not got our budget for 1970 yet, but we hope to have that soon and we are now working on our 1971 budget and our 5-year plan. So that the term residual forces is used, and it does come up in the budget document and budget discussions. As far as residual forces are concerned in Vietnam, I think it would be better to refer to them as transitional forces, or the transitional or residual support force. I would welcome any help you could give me in finding a better term for the phase 2 program, but perhaps

the term "residual support force" is as good as "transitional." I think I will start using transitional force, though.

Senator CASE. Could you put the elements in it that you have in mind, what will these forces be? That is what I think——

Secretary LAIRD. Yes. Those forces will be made up of the security force that is necessary to protect American support personnel. Within that support force will be air power, and some artillery support.

There will be some communications support and largely it will be made up of those elements.

Senator CASE. Naval forces?

Secretary LAIRD. Our naval program, the Vietnamization program as far as the Navy is concerned, will be to turn over all of the naval activities within the country to the Vietnamese and that program is moving along very well. The Vietnamization program as far as the Navy is concerned, within the country will almost be entirely completed by the 30th of June.

Senator CHURCH. What about engineers? Would they be part of the support?

Secretary LAIRD. Support engineers, yes, but there will not be too many combat engineers involved. There will be some engineers; we will also have some construction elements involved there.

Senator CHURCH. Also supply?

Secretary LAIRD. And logistic support activities.

Senator GORE. Plus, as you said earlier——

Secretary LAIRD. Security forces.

Senator GORE. Combat security forces in case they were needed.

Secretary LAIRD. That is correct.

Senator GORE. This would be [deleted].

Secretary LAIRD. Well, I would rather not get into the units that are involved. We do know the units that are involved in this, but I would rather not get into that, Senator Gore.

Senator GORE. Well, let us get into it even though you take it out of the record. I am trying to find out what you mean and am trying to fit what your plans are, what the contingent events are, and contingency plans to meet those events, into the time frame.

Secretary LAIRD. Well, this is somewhat different from contingency plans. The plan of the President as I look at it is more than a contingency plan. A contingency plan, Senator, is somethig that has really been approved at some level in the Department of Defense. When a plan has been approved by the——

Senator GORE. I was not attempting to use a military word of art.

Secretary LAIRD. When a plan has been approved by the Commander in Chief, it no longer is a contingency plan. It is a plan of our Government.

Senator GORE. Well, let us come to the actual things that you have said. You have assured us that American forces would not be endangered by the gradual withdrawal of the U.S. troops, that enough combat strength would be retained there to secure the people who do remain there.

Secretary LAIRD. That is correct. And that will require [deleted].

Senator GORE. That will require [deleted]. Then we understand.

PRESIDENT'S PREDICTION OF PEACE WITHIN 3 YEARS

Now, President Nixon said or was quoted as saying in a piece that was released to the press on October 15: "I will say confidently that looking ahead just 3 years, the war will be over."

How does that fit into the time frame and the residual forces, the support of the Saigon Government, the attainment of our objectives?

Secretary LAIRD. I think the President was referring to U.S. involvement, Senator Gore. The war in Southeast Asia has been going for 20 years. I am confident that the President was referring to the U.S. involvement. I would not want to predict that there would be no war going on in Southeast Asia 3 years from now. Maybe I am getting too careful about making prophecies and predictions in this job, but I would not believe that that was what the President had in mind. I think he was referring to the United States being involved in this particular war.

Senator GORE. That is what I was getting to.

Secretary LAIRD. I think that is perhaps the reference. I am afraid that perhaps somebody reading your question might feel that it was put in the broader context of no war in Southeast Asia, and I do not believe that the President was referring to that. All of us hope that there can be peace in Southeast Asia now and in the future.

MEANING OF TERM "VIETNAMIZATION"

Senator GORE. I had not so intended it. I was trying to relate it to the time frame, which phrase you used in your definition of Vietnamization.

Secretary LAIRD. My definition of Vietnamization was limited to turning over the major responsibilities that the United States has assumed in this area, in this war, to the South Vietnamese in a reasonable time frame. When I talk about Vietnamization, that is what I am talking about, Senator Gore; I am talking about the military aspects. Now, there are other aspects to Vietnamization that are just as important as the military aspects, and I do not want to underestimate them either.

When you get into the scientific, the economic, and the security aspects within country, they are important, but my definition dealt with the United States.

Senator GORE. I understand, and I am trying to understand just precisely the meaning of the term and the meaning of the terms you used in giving the definition of it. I realize that it requires the kind of closely reasoned interrogation that takes more time than either of us has here.

Secretary LAIRD. It does take much time. I spend more time on this than anything else. Every day I start my day and spend the first 2 or 3 hours every day just on this program. Many days I spend the whole day on it. But every day I spend from 2 to 3 hours, the first 2 to 3 hours each day on this program.

Senator GORE. Well, you have used the term "major responsibilities." President Nixon has referred to, has confidently predicted peace within 3 years.

Now, does he mean by peace the total disengagement of U.S. forces from South Vietnam? You again referred to major responsibilities as a part of Vietnamization.

Secretary LAIRD. I think that the President in his remarks, his statement, was referring to the U.S. involvement in an actual shooting war in Southeast Asia, and he was referring to the fact that the United States would not be involved in combat operations in South Vietnam. I am sure that that is the context in which we should consider the President's statement.

Senator GORE. Well, if residual forces remain, or transitional forces, however you describe them, if they involve——

Secretary LAIRD. A residual force in my view should be considered in terms perhaps of a MAAG mission or something like that. I do not like to refer to our troops in Europe or in Korea as residual forces, because I think they go far beyond the so-called residual force. A residual force seems to me to be something that is pretty well fixed for a long period of time, and I hope that we do not try to equate our forces in Europe or our forces in Korea as residual forces.

"VIETNAMIZATION" MEANING IS STILL UNCLEAR

Senator GORE. Well, I think one great mistake has been made by many people in trying to equate World War II with the situation in Vietnam. I agree with you. I think we have at least advanced a little beyond the unrealistic equating of the Vietnam war with the war with Hitler in Europe and the war with Japan. But we still have not come to a meeting of minds on what is meant by "Vietnamization."

Now, in response to a question by Senator Church, you identified various military elements—artillery, support forces, logistic forces, infantry, air force. Now, if there is no mutual withdrawal, if the army of North Vietnam is still there and the fighting is still underway, if the Viet Cong is still allied with the North Vietnamese army or part of it, as the case may be—in other words, if the war is still going on and we still have large numbers or small numbers, as the case may be, in South Vietnam with combat capability, and pledged as we are to prevent these forces from defeating the forces of the Saigon Government, here is a contingency. Here is a contingent event, the possibility that war, even though deescalated, might suddenly have to be escalated. Would you agree with that possibility?

Secretary LAIRD. Senator Gore, I perhaps have not made it clear, but Vietnamization and the plans of Vietnamization that have been approved by the President provide for Vietnamizing the support and the logistic role, too. This is not a program just to turn over the combat responsibility. This is a program to turn over the logistic support and the air responsibility as well to the Vietnamese.

Senator MCGEE. Would the Senator yield for just one question?

Senator GORE. Sure.

CONTINUATION OF HEARING

Senator MCGEE. I would like to ask it of the chairman.

Is it possible, Mr. Chairman, that we could agree to resume with the Secretary? We have waited a very long time and this line of

questioning has gone on now for 44 minutes. And I think it is important. I think it is desperately important. But could we agree to reconvene?

The CHAIRMAN. The Secretary has stayed longer than I anticipated, and there are still five more Senators to question him. What are your plans? Would you rather discontinue now?

Secretary LAIRD. I think I would rather finish, if I could, Mr. Chairman. The reason for that is that I am supposed to do some briefing later this afternoon on the Okinawa situation, and then we have the visitors from Japan that are here and I have some meetings on that tomorrow. I think from the standpoint of getting going here and getting the record back and everything else, I would rather just remain here.

Senator COOPER. Will the Senator yield for one more question?

When my time comes, I intend chiefly to propound some questions to him which he can answer in writing. I will do this because I know it will take a long time, and I want others to have a chance to question him. I can probably finish my questions in that way.

Senator MCGEE. If we could have one more day even to do that so you could have time to respond to our questions, rather than release this by 5 o'clock, I think it would help facilitate this problem.

Senator COOPER. I think all of us ought to have the right to ask questions.

Senator SYMINGTON. I would support the position of Senator McGee on this. There are some questions I would like to ask the Secretary. I want to sort of trade some thinking with him. He knows of my respect for him. I do not want to have to hurry because it is late.

Whatever way you want to work it out for Senator Cooper, Senator Church, Senator McGee, and myself, is fine with me.

The CHAIRMAN. I am at the disposal of the Secretary. Could you come back tomorrow morning instead of this afternoon?

Secretary LAIRD. Tomorrow morning I am committed, but I——

The CHAIRMAN. I do not like to put you under such a long strain either.

Secretary LAIRD. No; it is no long strain for me. I enjoy it.

Senator CHURCH. We are hearing Governor Rockefeller tomorrow on his report on Latin America.

The CHAIRMAN. The Senator is asking a lot of questions. With all deference to this limitation of time, I do not think any Senator can quite get into the meat of a subject in any 7 minutes. A Senator has to have time to develop his question.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. Let us recess for 5 minutes.

Senator MCGEE. Can we not settle this other question here, so we can get some chance for questions here?

Senator GORE. Out of respect for my colleagues, I desist.

The CHAIRMAN. This can be off the record.

(Discussion off the record.)

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Secretary, it is getting late and we do not want to impose upon you today. We know that you have other plans. Can you come back either tomorrow or Friday morning?

Secretary LAIRD. Mr. Chairman, I can arrange to be back here this afternoon if you want me to.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. When would it be convenient for you to come back?

Secretary LAIRD. Well, why do I not come back here at 2:30?

The CHAIRMAN. Fine.

(Whereupon, at 12:55 p.m., the committee recessed, to reconvene at 2:30 p.m. the same day.)

AFTERNOON SESSION

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will be in order.

I recognize the Senator from Kentucky.

CHANGE IN MILITARY ORDERS FOR U.S. FORCES IN VIETNAM

Senator COOPER. I would like to say that I consider that the policy of this administration has changed, changed markedly since the transfer of power. It has reversed the course of the past administration. I felt that more strongly when I heard President Nixon's speech on November 3d. Also I have had occasion to talk with him on several occasions. I would say that the new direction in policy has been more clearly defined by your statement today and by the statement of the Secretary of State yesterday. As I said earlier, I think your statement is one of the most comprehensive that has been made explaining the administration policy. I have thought that the President has said in addition to the actions of returning troops that we intended to disengage U.S. troops in combat. There was one question I wanted to ask you about your own statement. I ask it because of a statement made by the President in his November 3d speech. He referred there to a change in the military orders for U.S. forces in Vietnam. I do not believe that you referred to that issue. Would you comment on that?

STATEMENT OF HON. MELVIN R. LAIRD, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE—Resumed

Secretary LAIRD. Senator Cooper, I will be very happy to discuss the changes in the orders which were issued by the administration with the President's approval. The orders to our troops were revised in accordance with the speech which President Nixon made on May 14th. The orders in the field which had been in existence for several years, did not coincide with the change in direction which President Nixon outlined in his speech of May 14th.

The major changes are as follows:

First, the new orders, or the revised orders, put the major emphasis on Vietnamizing the Southeast Asia conflict in Vietnam. They provide the maximum assistance in developing, training, and equipping the forces of South Vietnam, including naval forces, army forces, and air forces.

Senator COOPER. May I interrupt just a moment so I can be more specific. My question went to the change in orders of the action of

our forces in Vietnam, not as applied to Vietnamization, but the military——

Secretary LAIRD. Well, this is the military——

Senator COOPER (continuing.) Strategy.

Secretary LAIRD (continuing). The military orders give the primary responsibility now to our military commanders in Vietnam to move in the direction of Vietnamization, to provide for the training, developing, and equipping of the Vietnamese forces as rapidly as possible. The previous orders, Senator, had as one of their basic goals a military victory in Vietnam. The new orders give the primary emphasis to turning over the combat responsibilities to the forces of South Vietnam through training and equipping these forces. The orders continue military support for accelerated pacification, civil action, and security programs. The new military orders provide for the conduct of military operations that are designed to accelerate the improvement of the Vietnamese forces, but also the new military orders are very explicit concerning the item we discussed this morning. These orders provide for the security of all U.S. forces in Vietnam. They provide for the conduct of military operations to reduce the flow of material and manpower support for the enemy in South Vietnam. There is a change in emphasis in these new military orders from one that placed the primary emphasis upon a military victory to placing the primary emphasis on this Vietnamization program.

Senator COOPER. In the past, some have characterized the past military operations as search and destroy which, of course, was an offensive operation. That also could be a preemptive operation. But I understand that the administration decided the military tactic as more of a defensive operation.

Secretary LAIRD. I would like to refer to it as a protective reaction as far as our——

Senator COOPER. Protective, I think, is the term used.

Secretary LAIRD. As far as our orders to our troops are concerned. I first used that term in March when I was in Vietnam and I think that it better describes our activities than the term that was used by President Johnson in his letter to General Abrams. The term that he used to describe the orders in his letter to General Abrams was to keep maximum pressure on the enemy at all times.

I personally believe that the actions that are being followed by General Abrams at the present time are better described as a policy of protective reaction as far as American forces are concerned, but I want it clearly understood that their primary mission is the Vietnamization of the war in Southeast Asia. Every military commander understands, that from the standpoint of the military aspects of the war, that is their most important mission today.

Senator MANSFIELD. Mr. Chairman, could I ask a question?

The CHAIRMAN. Will the Senator yield?

Senator COOPER. Certainly.

TACTIC OF SEARCH AND DESTROY

Senator MANSFIELD. I was interested that you mentioned protective reaction. What has happened to the tactic of search and destroy?

Secretary LAIRD. Senator Mansfield, search and destroy as a term is certainly used by some military commanders and I noticed that in