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SPECIAL REPORT

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## TRANSCRIPT OF A NEWS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY OF STATE ROGERS WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1969

(Secretary Rogers) Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Merry Christmas.

Mr. Hensley?

(Question) Mr. Secretary, my question has to do with the U. S. formula for approaching a settlement between Israel and Jordan. The Israeli Prime Minister has said they can't accept the ideas embodied in that formula because this would be treasonous from Israel's standpoint. They charged that the U.S. formula constitutes appeasement of the Arabs. Would you care to comment on that, sir?

(The Secretary) Well, I would like to comment on the proposal generally. We think that the proposals that we have had both insofar as UAR and Jordan are concerned are fair proposals. We think they are comprehensive. We think they are entirely consistent with the Security Council resolution which we supported and we would hope that they would provide a framework which would permit the parties to negotiate under auspices of Ambassador Jarring. I would only comment on one word in your question, and the word is "appeasement." I think it is an unfortunate word. It suggests that the Arabs are enemies of the United States, and somehow we are appeasing them. Of course, that isn't true. We have had friendly relations with the Arab states for a number of years, for many years. We are on friendly terms with many of the Arabs now, and our position is that we hope that the parties could begin negotiating under the provisions of the Security Council resolution -- hopefully to end this conflict that has existed for so many years in this Middle East.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, there is a report on the wire this morning from Israel, suggesting that the United States may limit arms shipments to Israel because Israel has refused to accept this proposal.

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AMERICAN EMBASSY - TOKYO

Vietnam. Most of it was critical in tone. Since that time, as a result of

(The Secretary) No. we have not had any discussions of that kind at all. And, as I said to answer Mr. Hensley, our proposals we think are fair. They are carefully thought through, and we have offered them in the hope that the parties will begin to negotiate.

Now, nothing has happened since the Security Council resolution in terms of negotiations since 1967, and we believe that if these proposals are studied, thought about, fully considered, than there is a possibility that the parties under the Rhodes' formula could start negotiations.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, is there any linkage between the pending request for additional aid and Israel's attitude towards the U.S. proposals and, if not, what are the criteria under which this request is being considered?

(The Secretary) Well, there is no linkage. Secondly, we are considering the request made by Israel carefully, with full consideration of their problems, and in full realization that we have an obligation, as do the other nations in the United Nations, to support the sovereignty of Israel and its future security.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, the Israeli Prime Minister and Foreign Minister have also made a personal comment about you, that in a two-and-a-half hour conversation with Mr. Eban you failed to discuss this Jordanian proposal in any way, is that true, and what was your reasoning behind that?

(The Secretary) Well, I don't want to get involved in a discussion about everything that transpired in a conversation, and I don't think it serves any useful purpose. We have tried consistently to consult with all interested countries, to keep everyone advised about what we are doing, why we are doing it, and we have followed that in the past and we intend to do it in the future.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, would you give us your year-end appraisal of where we stand in Vietnam, both as to negotiations and as to Vietnamization in the search for peace?

(The Secretary) I suppose that there has been no necessity for my commenting about the domestic considerations. The President has done that very successfully. I would like to say that I think that one of the most dramatic changes that has occurred during these last 11 months has been the change in the attitude of other governments toward our Vietnam policy. The predominant discussion, the thing that some of the European nations talked about most on our first trip to Europe, was our policy in Vietnam. Most of it was critical in tone. Since that time, as a result of

the President's statements, and the Vietnamization Program, the other nations in the world that I have talked to have, I think, approved the policies that we are following, so that the climate, as far as foreign policy is concerned, has been greatly improved because of our change of policy in Vietnam.

Now, on the Vietnamization Program itself, let me say that we are encouraged by the fact that the South Vietnamese have accepted the program by carrying out their responsibilities quite adequately. And, it is particularly encouraging, I think, to find that the young officers in South Vietnam are supporting the program very enthusiastically, and this is particularly true in the IV Corps area where we have turned over most of the responsibilities to the South Vietnamese.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, in your foreign aid bill the Administration had no request for a \$54.5 million for jets for Taiwan nor for \$50 million in additional aid for South Korea.

House Minority Leader Ford has quoted the Secretary of Defense as being in favor of both of these items. What is your own position, sir?

(The Secretary) Well, our position is that we carefully thought through what we thought were the priorities in the Military Assistance Program, and we did have provision for military equipment for Taiwan. Now, we did not include a request for these F-4's and, although I suppose it can be argued that they would be useful to the Republic of China, we did not include it in our request. And I think the answer then is quite self-evident.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, now that the first round --

(Question) Korea was the next question.

(The Secretary) The same thing is true. We didn't request that for Korea either in any specific amount. We did, of course, have some military equipment for Korea. In other words, what I am saying is that we thought through our proposal carefully before we made it and we think it represents a good program.

We have to take into consideration the economies and their priorities in the Military Assistance Program, but my answer covers both Korea and Taiwan.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, now that the first round of the SALT talks has ended, could you tell us what was achieved and what remained unsolved, and especially what is the explanation for the long delay between the first and second round?

(The Secretary) Well, let me say that we are **very encouraged** by the results of the preliminary talks in Helsinki.

The talks were held without any polemics at all. There was a frank discussion of the security needs of both nations, and there was an active and frank discussion of the areas that might be discussed in the final talks. And, it was a very business-like meeting all the way around. Another thing that was interesting to us, in addition to the atmosphere of the talks themselves, was that there was no effort on the outside to take advantage of the other. There were no planted stories; the rules were followed by both sides, and we are quite encouraged by the results of the talks. Now, I think that I should say, too, that we shouldn't be too encouraged by that because as I said when I first discussed the SALT talks before their initiation, that the fact that these talks have proceeded, we think, in a successful manner, is no guarantee that they will succeed when we get down to substance. And we haven't gotten to the portion yet of tough bargaining.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, what portion of the Administration's Middle East policy is now being governed by concern for an erosion in America's economic and diplomatic position in the entire area?

(The Secretary) I don't think any. I mean obviously, these are considerations that occur to you. But the position of the United States in both these papers -- both the UAR paper and the paper on Jordan -- are consistent with the Security Council resolution that the United States supported. And they are an honest attempt to do what we can to bring the bodies together in negotiations.

So we have been talking about these things in private for some time. We have made every effort we could, and because our position was being distorted in some parts of the world, we thought it advisable to present the policy of the United States which we did in the statement that I made.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, how do you reply to the Israeli criticism that the American role should be to get the Arabs and the Israelis together for direct negotiations, and that it should not be the American function to suggest specific proposals which the Israelis feel prejudice their case?

(The Secretary) Well, we just don't agree with that. We think we have a role, as a member of the Security Council, to play in these discussions. We have made that clear from the very first. We are a member of the Security Council; we have a responsibility to do all we can to bring the parties together to see if a peaceful settlement can be worked out.

Now, that doesn't suggest that we want to impose a settlement. We have always made it clear that we are not going to do that. The proposals that we have made make it clear that on the important security arrangements that have to be worked out between the parties, that that has to be done in the negotiations between the Arabs and the Israelis.

So I think it is quite clear that the United States had a very important role to play. We played it all these years -- 20 years. In fact, we have provided the majority of support for the refugees in the area. So I can understand why Israel is concerned, and why they don't necessarily agree with everything we do. But we have to conduct our foreign policy in a way that we think is best for our national interests.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, your speech on the Middle East was vague on the specific subject of Jerusalem, which has led to some worries in Israel that an eventual proposal would envisage some Jordanian role in the new sector of the city. Are those fears justified?

(The Secretary) Well, we have left the Jerusalem aspects in the form that we set them forth in the paper deliberately, because we think those things have to be worked out. The arrangements for Jerusalem have to be worked out between the parties. We do not want to suggest what we think that final solution might be. We have indicated the framework we think that suggests how they might work it out. But we don't want to suggest that -- and we don't intend to.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, I want to ask you a question about Communist China. Does the relaxation of trade restrictions lead to a change in the American view toward Peking as a member of the United Nations, in the early future?

(The Secretary) No, not yet, certainly. And whether anything like that would transpire in the future depends on events.

The steps that we have taken are quite consistent with the policy that we have announced; and, that is, that we would like to improve our relations with Communist China. We think the way to do it is by small steps and we have taken now two unilateral steps which we think indicate our good faith. We are encouraged by the fact that -- although we haven't had any affirmative response from Peking -- we are encouraged by the fact that there is a possibility that these talks at the ambassadorial level may resume.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, do you believe that it is possible that all United States combat troops may be withdrawn from Vietnam by the end of 1970?

(The Secretary) No. I don't want to get involved in the timetable. I think the President has made clear what his program is and policies are; and I don't want to expand on that.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, on the SALT talks, now that the next round of talks will not be resuming until April, would it appear to you that there is bound to be a very prolonged delay before there could be anything like a moratorium on ABM's or on MIRV's?

(The Secretary) Well, I think that probably it is unlikely that there will be any agreement until the SALT talks resume. But I wouldn't want to make any prediction about what happens when they do resume.

Peter, do you have a question?

(Question) I had one. I have asked it.

(The Secretary) Okay.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, on the same subject of SALT, in preparing for the preliminary round, the Administration approach was described as a "building block" approach. Now that the preliminary phase is over, is the Administration now getting into the stage where it can put some of these "building blocks" together into a negotiating proposal to be put to the Russians, in the light of what they told us in the first round?

(The Secretary) Well, I don't want to get involved in a discussion about what we are going to propose, and what we are not going to propose. We have now until -- what is it -- April 17 to consider the moves, and we will do that in due time.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, it has been noted in your recent policy statement on the Middle East that you mentioned "Palestinians" only once; and it has been criticized that you underestimated the growth of Palestinian nationalism in the area. I wonder, in our developing policy towards the Middle East, what role do you envision for the national Palestinian groups playing in that. In other words, would you deal directly with them?

(The Secretary) No, we have no intentions of dealing directly with them.

I did point out that any settlement has to take into consideration the refugees, and the serious problem that has been caused by the refugees. There are a good many of the refugees that weren't even born back in 1947. So that they, obviously, can't be responsible, and any settlement has to take into consideration their problems. Now, how that is to be done, we think, has to be worked out by the parties.

We have indicated a willingness to help, as we have in the past -- financially and otherwise. But, as I said in the speech, any settlement that is lasting has to be worked out by the parties. They have to agree to get together, and each party has to say to itself, "We will have to make some compromises in the interest of a permanent peace." In the absence of that, these hostilities may continue indefinitely.

So although we recognize that we can't be optimistic about the hopes of a negotiated settlement, it seems to us that we have to do everything we can to move them forward and to see whether it is possible to work out a settlement in the interests of all parties concerned.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, you mentioned the fact that the United States has a right, if not a responsibility, to make proposals as a member of the Security Council. Do you regard the Soviet Union as having that same right and responsibility, and has anything been done to get them to make similar proposals?

(The Secretary) Yes, I do, I think they do have a right. Obviously, they have a right to make suggestions. Just as the United States has a right to make suggestions.

I don't think we have a right to impose our suggestions on the parties, and that has not been our purpose. We hope to provide what we think is a useful framework for the parties to use as a basis for the negotiations.

In answer to the second part of your question; yes, we have discussed with the Soviet Union many of these things. Mr. Sisco has had extended conversations with them; and there has been, as we have said before, some slight progress in that regard. For example, now I think there is general agreement that any settlement has to be a comprehensive settlement and that no part of it can go into effect until the agreement is signed, and it is a contractual agreement, and the future of Israel is guaranteed. And at that point, after the comprehensive agreement is signed, then it is implemented.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, as you approach the end of the first year of your Administration, I wonder if you could give us the benefit of your overview -- what you think were the main accomplishments and the main disappointments?

(The Secretary) Yes. I have already mentioned one which I think is very significant, and that is, that the international climate towards the United States has greatly improved as a result of the new policies of this Government toward Vietnam.

Secondly, we have, I think, underscored the importance of our NATO commitment; and we have, particularly in this last meeting, had a very successful meeting of the NATO nations. We all recognize that, ~~whereas, we want to do all~~ we can to reduce tensions realistically by any negotiations that hold out any promise for success, that at the same time we have to maintain the strength of NATO because it has been our security shield successfully for the last 20 years.

In that connection, the relations between the United States and France have greatly improved. I think it was quite noticeable in the NATO meetings that the attitude of the French Government was quite different than it was at the spring meeting of NATO. Our relationships with the new (Government of the) Federal Republic of Germany are excellent. So that, on the NATO front, we believe that it has been a successful year.

We also have made it clear to the German Government, the Federal Republic of Germany, that we support their efforts to negotiate the reduction of tensions with the Soviet Union, with Poland, with East Germany. We have indicated that those efforts parallel our own efforts. And we have consulted with each other on a very close friendly basis.

So that I think that the situation in Europe is favorable.

I think also, in terms of our SEATO obligations, that progress has been made. We have been able to reduce our presence in Vietnam and reduce our troop strength in Thailand, without causing the SEATO nations to feel that we were going in any way to renege on our treaty obligations.

Certainly, the success of Indonesia has been encouraging. They have, as you know, stabilized their economy very dramatically, and are taking an active part in the regional organizations in Southeast Asia.

I think that the agreement that we worked out with Japan on Okinawa is of historic significance. I think, if it were not for the war in Vietnam, that it would have gotten a lot more attention, because it is a very significant agreement which I believe will benefit the United States and improve our relations with that part of the world for many years to come.

Certainly, on the negotiating front, we are pleased that the NPT has been ratified by the Soviet Union and the United States and is being ratified by others, so, we hope it will become effective soon.

We are pleased about the SALT talks. We are also satisfied with the discussions we have had with the Soviet Union about seabeds. We are hopeful that we can, as I have said, have discussions with the Chinese Communists. So, on the negotiating front, with the single exception of the Middle East, we think progress has been made.

We think the Latin-American policy of new partnership has been well received in Latin America, and it is a realistic policy which we believe will be beneficial in the years to come.

As you know, I plan to go to Africa in February and visit several countries. I have not decided on the itinerary for sure yet. I will announce that later.

We are, of course, disappointed in some things. We are disappointed in the continuation of the tragic war in Nigeria. We think that the policy of the United States is sound. We have contributed \$70 million in food and medicine to that part of the world -- more than any other nation. We have not taken part in any of the political activities, but I think our efforts are well received in all of Africa.

So, on the whole, I think that the President can be proud of his leadership in the foreign affairs field during his first 11 months.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, you referred to SEATO in your year's round-up there. As you know, Senator Fulbright has expressed some concern about the Administration's position on opposing a revocation, an annulment, of the Tonkin Gulf resolution, and he has asked publicly what intention the Administration may have for further use of the Tonkin Gulf resolution.

In addition to that question, I would also like to ask you if you foresee in the coming year any hope of improving relations with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the release of transcripts.

(The Secretary) Well, I think the relations between the State Department and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have been pretty good. We worked out the release of the transcripts on the Philippines after some extended discussion in a satisfactory way, and I think we can in terms of Laos and Thailand.

I would hope that we can continue to have a close working relationship with that committee, because they have a very important rôle to fill in the conduct of foreign affairs. And rather than being a burden on the Executive Branch, there is no reason why they should not be of assistance to the Executive Branch because we are all striving for the same thing. And although we may differ at times, I don't think we have had any very major difficulty with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and I am going to do all I can to keep it that way.

(Question) Could you -- excuse me, sir.

(The Secretary) Yes.

(Question) Could you refer specifically to the question on the repeal of the Tonkin Gulf resolution?

(The Secretary) Well, as you know, on the surface -- I mean, we have indicated preliminarily that we do not think it would be useful to repeal it, but we want to consider that fully. We certainly don't -- we have not relied on the Tonkin Gulf resolution, particularly. I was asked this when I testified.

We were faced with a situation when we came in office on Vietnam, and I am not sure the legalities are all that significant. I wonder at the moment -- maybe in so far as future situations are concerned -- but at the moment, I'm not sure. I think it would be very harmful if the Tonkin Gulf resolution discussion suggested a lack of support for the President's policies. I think that the public supports his policy on Vietnam. I think the Congress does. And I think any discussion that weakens that support would not be in the public interest.

On the other hand, I can see why there is some dissatisfaction with the Tonkin Gulf resolution, and I would be very happy to talk with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about it. We will prepare, I am sure, a lengthy statement on our position later on.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, a number of other Administrations have tried to get the South Vietnamese to do more on their part -- you have partly answered this question -- but what gives you the confidence that you can achieve what others have failed to do, given the political and military history of that country?

(The Secretary) Well, I think the caveat that you suggest is a valid caveat. I am not sure your premise is quite correct. I don't think that previously very much was done to turn over the responsibility to the South Vietnamese. A good deal was said about it. I don't believe the preparations were made sufficiently, and I don't think an effort was begun. And I think the Secretary of Defense pointed that out. We have made a very serious, concentrated effort to do that. And our objective in Vietnam is to permit the South Vietnamese to handle their own affairs and to determine their own future, and obviously, that has to be done sometime. And we think that they are taking hold. I think that they are developing what appears to be a national interest, a will to take over the responsibility. And we have every reason to be cautiously optimistic.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, it's been charged in Congress that although Libya has kicked us out of the Wheelus Air Force Base ahead of the expiration of the release, that there will be a "give-away," as it was phrased in Congress, of some \$100 million worth of radar, electronics, workshops and other equipment when we abandon that base.

(The Secretary) I don't want to make any comment on the negotiations that we now have under way in connection with Wheelus Air Base. We expect an agreement will be reached before the day is out, and at that time, I think it will be more appropriate to discuss the solution.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, there have been reports of a split in Hanoi between soft-liners and hard-liners. Have you received any reports to that effect, and do you believe that this might be affecting the course of the negotiations in Paris?

(The Secretary) Well, of course, we have received reports to that effect, just as I'm sure the press has. We don't draw any conclusions one way or the other from it. I think it's too early.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, as you know, there has been an increase in North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam. How seriously do you regard this?

Do you think this is more an effort to replace losses, or is it a prelude to a new offensive?

(The Secretary) Mr. Scali, I don't believe you can answer that question. I think that there was a rather significant increase of infiltration in November, but as the President said in his last press conference, it is too early to determine how large that would be. Actually, for the last three weeks, it has tapered off again, so that it is more comparable to the rate in October. I think it is too early to tell what the significance of it is. It could be either.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, returning to the Middle East --

(The Secretary) Could I just make one further comment? I think it is fair to say that the infiltration this year compared to last is significantly down. On a conservative basis, I would say it is down by 60 percent. That includes the increase in November.

(Question) Sir, would you comment on the thesis that the two main parties to the conflict in the Middle East are the Israelis and the Palestinians, and that if they could get agreement, the Arab states would eventually disengage?

(The Secretary) I think that over-simplifies the problem a great deal. I would not agree with that.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, in regard to the new partnership with Latin America, does this mean that we have decided to give economic aid to military governments? The President was inferring, or was clear that we were going to give diplomatic recognition. But what is the policy going to be on economic aid?

(The Secretary) Well, the two principal things in our new policy relate to general preferences for Latin America, and we are actively discussing that with the other developed nations now. If we can't work out something, then we will have to work out some preferences that will apply to the hemisphere.

We also have removed some of the restrictions on tie-in provisions which we think will improve the climate for trade.

Now, in connection with aid, we are considering both multilateral and bilateral efforts. As you know, the Peterson committee has the whole subject of aid under consideration now.

On the question of military assistance, I don't want to generalize on that. The President has made it clear that we are going to try to take a long view in Latin America, and not necessarily determine every decision we make on the make-up of the government at that moment.

It is interesting to me that we have had a study made of how many times we have been able to influence the policy of another government by withholding military aid, and we find that it has not been successful in any instance.

(Question) Mr. Secretary, in connection with the Paris peace talks, if the Communists do not respond in some way with some sort of new program or proposal, is it possible that we would keep Ambassador Lodge's position unfilled indefinitely?

(The Secretary) I don't want to speculate on that. As you know, Ambassador Habib is an extremely capable man, is well able -- he and his staff -- to handle any negotiations that might occur.

Now, if we find that there is need for another ambassador to work with Ambassador Habib, then the President will make that decision. But at the moment, we have no plans.

(The Press) Mr. Secretary, I have been authorized by my colleagues to wish you a very merry Christmas, hope you will come back soon, and thank you, very much.

(The Secretary) Merry Christmas to all of you!

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