

USIS

EPF-2

AGNEW PRESS CONFERENCE (TEXT) (1,250)

SAN CLEMENTE, CALIFORNIA--FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE PRESS
CONFERENCE OF VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW SEPTEMBER 1 AT THE WESTERN WHITE
HOUSE:

(BEGIN TEXT)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I HAVE JUST FINISHED DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT IN WHICH I MADE MY REPORT ON THE RECENT TRIP TO ASIA, AND BEFORE THAT IN THE GENERAL MEETING WHICH CONCERNED ITSELF WITH TWO PHASES: FIRST, MY REPORT, AND ALSO A DISCUSSION OF THE MIDDLE EAST.

I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT IN SUMMARY OF THIS TRIP WHAT I HAD TO SAY TO THE PRESIDENT WAS THAT I FIND, AND I HAVE FOUND, A GREAT ACCEPTANCE FOR THE NIXON DOCTRINE AMONG THE ASIAN LEADERS THAT I VISITED.

I THINK THAT WITHOUT ANY QUESTION THEY WERE UNIFORMLY REASSURED BY THE CAMBODIAN OPERATION AND UNANIMOUSLY FELT THAT THIS WAS A TREMENDOUS BENEFIT TO THEM IN ACCEPTING THE CONCEPT THAT THEY WOULD UNDERTAKE THEIR OWN DEFENSE WITH AMERICAN MATERIAL ASSISTANCE.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAN AS THE NIXON DOCTRINE PROGRESSES AND OUR FORCES DISENGAGE FROM ASIA THAT THE GOVERNMENTS THERE WHO HAVE BEEN DEPENDENT UPON US FOR SECURITY HAVE INCREASED MATERIAL ASSISTANCE OF BOTH A MILITARY AND ECONOMIC NATURE.

PROBABLY ONE OF THE GREATEST BOOSTS TO THE NIXON DOCTRINE AND TO THE FEELINGS OF STABILITY IN ASIA WAS YESTERDAY'S DEFEAT OF THE MCGOVERN-HATFIELD AMENDMENT. I THINK, WITHOUT QUESTION, THIS WILL HAVE A SALUTARY EFFECT ON OUR PROGRESS IN ASIA.

THE CAMBODIAN SITUATION SEEMS TO BE DEVELOPING VERY WELL. A NATION THAT HAD VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE BEFORE THE CLEANING OUT OF THE SANCTUARIES NOW HAS AT LEAST A FIGHTING CHANCE FOR SURVIVAL.

AND I WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH LON NOL AS A LEADER AND AS A MILITARY PLANNER. HE WENT OVER HIS PLANS IN SOME DETAIL. I FOUND THAT HE HAS A GOOD GRASP OF THE SITUATION AND THAT HIS PLANS ARE REASONABLE. HE IS NOT RPT NOT LOOKING FOR A GREAT UNDERTAKING IN THE WAY OF SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT. HE CAN IMPLEMENT WHAT HE WANTS TO DO. HE IS PROVIDING FOR THE ORDERLY DEFENSE OF HIS COUNTRY AND CERTAINLY FOR THE PACIFICATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE.

I WILL TAKE QUESTIONS, GENTLEMEN.

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QUESTION: MR. VICE PRESIDENT, TODAY 14 SENATORS ARE REPORTED TO HAVE SENT A NOTE TO PRESIDENT NIXON PROPOSING A STANDSTILL CEASE FIRE. SOME OF THESE PEOPLE INCLUDE SENATOR GOLDWATER, SENATOR JACKSON, SENATOR DOLE. WAS THAT DISCUSSED TODAY AND WHAT IS THE FEELING HERE ABOUT SUCH A PLAN?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: LET ME SAY FIRST ABOUT THE MEETING ON THE MIDDLE EAST, IT WOULD BE IMPROPER TO DISCUSS WHAT TOOK PLACE IN THAT MEETING. I KNOW YOU ARE REFERRING TO THE VIETNAM SITUATION. BUT I WANT TO CLEAR THE AIR ABOUT THE MIDEAST MEETING. THAT IS PROPERLY HANDLED THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS AND NOT THE PUBLIC MEDIA.

WITH RESPECT TO THAT QUESTION ADDRESSED TO ME GENERALLY, I WOULD POINT OUT THAT PROPOSALS FOR A CEASE FIRE HAVE BEEN MADE. THEY ARE ON THE TABLE IN PARIS. THEY HAVE BEEN MADE BY THE PRESIDENT IN HIS PUBLIC REMARKS. THEY HAVE BEEN MADE BY PRESIDENT THIEU. AND I DON'T SEE ANYTHING PARTICULARLY NEW ABOUT THIS SITUATION.

QUESTION: THE LETTER IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE ALSO SAID NO FORMAL OFFER OF THAT SORT HAS BEEN MADE.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I THINK IF YOU LOOK AT THE RECORD YOU WILL SEE THAT THESE PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN MADE PUBLICLY AND THEY ARE ON THE TABLE. THE PRESIDENT HAS INDICATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS ANYTHING OF THIS TYPE DEFINITELY UNDER THE PROPER CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT THE OPPOSITE SIDE HAS REMAINED INTRANSIGENT. WE HAVE NOT HEAD ANY ENCOURAGEMENT. IF WE GET SOME ENCOURAGEMENT, THAT IS ANOTHER MATTER.

QUESTION: YOU ARE REPORTED AS SAYING ON YOUR TRIP, MR. VICE PRESIDENT, THAT THE COMMUNIST FORCES IN CAMBODIA NOW ARE ABOUT 50 PERCENT OF WHAT THEY WERE WHEN THE U.S. OPERATIONS

BEGAN. THIS IS A BIT AT VARIANCE WITH SOME ASSESSMENTS WE GOT ON A BACKGROUND BASIS FROM AN WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS WHO SAID THAT OF THE 40,000 COMMUNIST TROOPS BELIEVED THERE TO BEGIN WITH THERE ARE ABOUT 6,000 LESS. COULD YOU CLARIFY THAT FOR US; WHAT YOU ARE BASING YOUR STATEMENTS ON?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: MY FIGURES ABOUT THE STRENGTH IN CAMBODIA ARE BASED ON THE BEST ESTIMATES OF LON NOL AND HIS PEOPLE. AND HE PROVIDED US WITH SOME FAIRLY DEFINITIVE INFORMATION WHICH WOULD INDICATE THE FIGURE I HAVE GAVE YOU IS ACCURATE.

IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO GET SOMETHING YOU CAN NAIL DOWN IN THIS RESPECT, BECAUSE THERE IS A CONSTANT SUPPLY AND RE-SUPPLY OF FORCES THROUGH LAOS AS A CONSTANT SHIFT OF STRENGTH, RELATIVE STRENGTH, IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA.

AND BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT IT IS VERY EASY TO MAKE THESE MOVEMENTS--WE ARE NOT ENGAGED IN A MILITARY SENSE THERE WITH GROUND FORCES--IT IS VERY EASY TO MAKE THESE TRANSFERS ON ANY GIVEN DAY. WE MAY FIND SOME DISAGREEMENT WITH FIGURES, BUT I WOULD STICK WITH THE ESTIMATE I GAVE YOU.

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QUESTION: IS THIS GOING TO BECOME THE ACCEPTED ESTIMATE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION, DO YOU KNOW, MR. VICE PRESIDENT?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: THE ADMINISTRATION WILL HAVE TO MAKE THAT REPLY THROUGH THE PRESIDENT. I MENTIONED THAT FIGURE TO HIM. HE HAD NOTICED A FIGURE ANYHOW. I TOLD HIM WHY I MADE THE ESTIMATE OF THAT FIGURE AND HE HAS NOT MADE ANY COMMENT AS TO WHETHER THIS WILL REMAIN THE OFFICIAL ADMINISTRATION ESTIMATE. THIS IS THE FIGURE I BROUGHT BACK FROM THE BEST JUDGMENT I COULD GET IN ASIA.

QUESTION: MR. VICE PRESIDENT, IS LON NOL SATISFIED WITH THE AMOUNT OF AMERICAN MILITARY AID THAT HE IS GETTING AT THE PRESENT TIME, OR DID HE ASK YOU FOR MORE?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: HE SEEMS TO BE SATISFIED THAT WE ARE GIVING HIM AS MUCH AID AS HE CAN SUCCESSFULLY UTILIZE AT THE MOMENT. HE WAS VERY GRATIFIED AT THE PROJECTED 140 MILLION IN MAPF, MILITARY ASSISTANCE FUNDS. HE MADE A FEW SPECIFIC REQUESTS FOR HELICOPTERS, PATROL BOATS, BUT ALL OF HIS REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE ARE QUITE MODEST.

AGAIN, I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE IN RESPONDING TO THAT QUESTION THAT AS WE MOVE OUT OF OUR ASIAN INVOLVEMENTS, IN THE SENSE OF TROOP PRESENCE, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE NOT RPT NOT CUT BACK ON OUR MATERIAL ASSISTANCE TO OUR ALLIES.

IT IS UNBELIEVABLE TO EXPECT THAT THEY CAN SUSTAIN DIMINUTIONS -- I AM NOT TALKING ABOUT CAMBODIA, BUT VIETNAM AND CERTAINLY KOREA -- IN OUR TROOP PRESENCE ALONG WITH THE ATTENDANT ECONOMIC DISABILITY THAT THAT BRINGS ABOUT DUE TO TROOPS SPENDING, WITHOUT HAVING INCREASED ASSISTANCE.

WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE COST OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM, FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE REDUCED OUR COSTS FROM ROUGHLY 128 BILLION TO 114 BILLION, AND SOME SUGGEST IT WILL BECOME A FEW BILLION DOLLARS LESS THAN THAT, AND CONSIDER THAT AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE MILLIONS THAT YOU UTILIZE IN MATERIAL ASSISTANCE, IT IS A PRETTY GOOD SAVING TO KEEP THE LEVEL OF FIGHTING DOWN THROUGH MAINTAINING A VERY STRONG ALLY.

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QUESTION: MR. VICE PRESIDENT, IF I COULD FOLLOW THAT UP, DOES LON NOL NOW CONSIDER HIMSELF AN ALLY OF THE UNITED STATES?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: LON NOL CONSIDERS HIMSELF A NEUTRAL. HE CONSIDERS CAMBODIA A NEUTRAL NATION. THE CAMBODIANS ARE NOT RPT NOT VERY HAPPY ABOUT HAVING FIGHTING GOING ON IN THEIR COUNTRY,

BUT THEY HAVE MADE VERY CLEAR IN THEIR REMARKS TO ME, AND THEY HAVE MADE CLEAR IN THEIR OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS, THAT THEY HAVE BEEN INVADED, THAT THIS IS NOT RPT NOT A CIVIL WAR IN CAMBODIA, THAT THIS IS AN OUTRAGEOUS AGGRESSION BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE.

LON NOL ALSO POINTED OUT THAT BY HIS JUDGMENT, AT LEAST, THREE-QUARTERS OF THE TROOPS OPPOSING HIM ARE NOT INSURGENTS OF VIET CONG, BUT ARE NORTH VIETNAMESE REGULARS.

QUESTION: DO YOU CONSIDER LON NOL AND HIS GOVERNMENT TO BE NEUTRAL, MR. VICE PRESIDENT?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: TO BE NEUTRAL?

QUESTION: YES.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: YES, I DO. I CONSIDER THEM TO BE NEUTRAL IN THE SENSE THAT THEY ARE NOT RPT NOT COMMITTED TO A WAR EFFORT. THE ONLY THING THEY ARE INTERESTED IN IS THE PROTECTION OF THEIR COUNTRY. YOU CAN FIGHT PRETTY HARD IN THE PROTECTION OF YOUR OWN HOME AND STILL BE NEUTRAL WITH RESPECT TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

THE PRESS: THANK YOU, MR. VICE PRESIDENT. (END TEXT) ITEM 9-1-70-740PM