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UNITED STATES OBJECTIVES IN VIET-NAM

President Nixon on October 7, 1970 announced a major new initiative for peace in Indochina. He proposed a "cease-fire-in-place" throughout Indochina, an Indochina peace conference, an agreement on a timetable for troop withdrawals, a search for a political settlement and the immediate release of all prisoners of war. These proposals, which have the support of the governments of the Republic of Viet-Nam, Cambodia, and Laos, represent a far-reaching effort to bring peace to Southeast Asia.

Over a year earlier, in May 1969, the President had advanced a comprehensive program for peace, which was presented at the Paris peace talks. This detailed program laid out basic principles for settlement of the conflict, including our essential objective: the opportunity for the South Vietnamese people to determine their own political future without external interference. Our position remains the same. The remarkable success of our Vietnamization policy since May 1969 has enabled us to take the new initiative which enhances the possibility of ending the fighting and of bringing about a just peace in Viet-Nam.

President Nixon's New Peace Initiative

On October 8, 1970 we formally presented in Paris the new peace proposals enunciated by President Nixon in his October 7 address to the nation. The President outlined the following measures:

1. Immediate negotiation of a cease-fire in place throughout Indochina, without preconditions but involving effective supervision by international observers. This cease-fire should not be a means for either side to increase its forces, should cause all kinds of warfare to stop, including bombing and terrorism, and should be part of a general move to end the war in Indochina. A cease-fire-in-place would undoubtedly create a host of problems in its maintenance, but an agreement to stop the shooting can set the stage for agreements on other matters.
2. An Indochina peace conference. The war in Indochina is of one piece. An international conference is needed to deal with the conflict in all three Indochinese states. Meanwhile, we will continue negotiations in Paris. The essential elements of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 remain valid as a basis for settlement.

3. Negotiation of an agreed timetable for complete withdrawal of foreign forces as part of an over-all settlement. We are prepared to withdraw all our forces as part of a settlement based on the principles spelled out in the President's new and previous proposals. The President reported: "In the past twenty months, I have reduced our troop ceilings in South Viet-Nam by 165,000 men. During the spring of next year these withdrawals will total more than 260,000 men--about one-half the number that were in South Viet-Nam when I took office. As the American combat role and presence have decreased, so have American casualties. Their level since the completion of the Cambodian operations was the lowest for a comparable period in the last four and a half years."

4. Search for a political settlement that truly meets the aspirations of all South Vietnamese. We stand firm for the right of all the Vietnamese people to determine for themselves the kind of government they want. The President stated that our approach is governed by three principles:

"--We seek a political solution that reflects the will of the South Vietnamese people.

"--A fair political solution should reflect the existing relationship of political forces.

"--We will abide by the outcome of the political process agreed upon."

5. The immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of war held by both sides. All journalists and other innocent victims of the conflict should be released immediately as well. The immediate release of all prisoners of war would be a simple act of humanity. More, it could serve to establish good faith, the intent to make progress, and thus improve prospects for fruitful negotiation.

Essential Points of US Position

President Nixon's proposals of October 7, 1970 reiterated the basic US position stated by the President in his peace plan of May 14, 1969. At that time, in addition to insisting on the right of all South Vietnamese people to determine for themselves the kind of government they want, the President outlined the essential points of our position as:

"--We seek no bases in Viet-Nam.

"--We insist on no military ties.

"--We are willing to agree to neutrality if that is what the South Vietnamese people freely choose.

"--We believe there should be an opportunity for full participation in the political life of South Viet-Nam by all political elements that are prepared to do so without the use of force or intimidation.

"--We are prepared to accept any government in South Viet-Nam that results from the free choice of the South Vietnamese people themselves.

"--We have no intention of imposing any form of government upon the people of South Viet-Nam, nor will we be a party to such coercion.

"--We have no objection to reunification, if that turns out to be what the people of South Viet-Nam and North Viet-Nam want: we ask only that the decision reflect the free choice of the people concerned."

South Viet-Nam Willing to Discuss Political Solution with NFL

President Thieu of the Republic of Viet-Nam has gone far toward opening the way to a political settlement. On July 11, 1969 President Thieu said: "The only way for the people of South Viet-Nam to exercise their right of self-determination, to participate in public affairs, and to determine the future of the country, is through elections in which they can genuinely express their choice, free from fear and coercion." President Thieu proposed that all political forces, including the National Liberation Front (NLF), participate in such elections and in an electoral process. He also suggested that the voting be supervised by an international body. There would be no reprisals or discrimination in the post-election period. Finally, he pledged that his government would respect the election results, no matter how they turned out, and challenged the communist side to do likewise.

South Viet-Nam Assumes Increasing Share of Combat

In June 1969 the increasing military effectiveness of the South Vietnamese enabled us to begin redeployment of our troops. In announcing his program of redeployment, President Nixon set three criteria: progress in the training and equipping of the South Vietnamese forces, progress in the Paris peace talks, and the level of enemy activity. The progress of Vietnamization alone was responsible for the President's announcement on April 20, 1970 that further redeployment through the spring of 1971 would bring the troop ceiling down to 284,000, as compared to the ceiling of 549,500 at the beginning of 1969.

Regardless of whether or not the Paris negotiations are successful, we will continue our Vietnamization program, which has as its objective the replacement of US forces with those of South Viet-Nam. If all of our proposals are accepted, the three criteria of President Nixon's withdrawal plan will be satisfied, and complete withdrawal of US troops could take place within twelve months. If only the cease-fire proposal is accepted, then at least the criterion of the level of enemy activity will have been met. This would be reflected over a period of time in the rate of our withdrawal. If none of the proposals is accepted, we will maintain our withdrawal policy as part

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