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REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO NORTHEASTERN EDITORS AND BROADCASTERS

AT 1:30 P.M. EDT

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I know that you have already had a briefing by Dr. Kissinger and Assistant Secretary Sisco on some of our current problems and also some of our long-range goals.

I thought that in closing this session before I had the opportunity to meet all of you personally -- as a matter of fact, not to meet you for the first time. As I looked over the list, I think I met two-thirds of the people in the room on other occasions -- but that I might try to put the foreign policy of this Administration in perspective and to talk not simply about our immediate problems, the problems in Vietnam, the problems in the Mideast, the problems of east-west relations in Europe, but how it looks in the long haul, perhaps looking ahead 25 years.

It is very difficult to look ahead that far and for reasons that I will mention in a moment. If we look at those who were attempting to predict immediately after World War II where we would be today, none of them proved to be good prophets. It is no fault of theirs. The situation just changed so drastically in that time.

But I think we can learn from that experience and perhaps can make our plans with a better evaluation of the future than has been the case in the past.

With regard to the two immediate problems of Vietnam and the Mideast, I have comments to make on those subjects that are I think appropriate on this occasion. You will in April of last year, or April of this year I should say, I announced that we would withdraw another 150,000 Americans over the period of a year to be completed during the Spring of 1971.

Under that withdrawal schedule, you will recall also that we have withdrawn, 50,000 of the 150,000 effective October 15. As a matter of fact, Secretary Laird pointed out Sunday on his broadcast that we were ahead of schedule and that 2,000 more had been withdrawn of the 150,000 that had been originally projected.

In evaluating the three criteria that we used for our withdrawal program, the level of enemy activity, the Vietnamization program, and the training of our forces, we have now reached the conclusion that we not only can continue with the withdrawal program, but within the overall figure of 150,000 that we can move to an accelerated pace for this year.

So consequently, I am announcing today -- and it will be

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released immediately after our meeting here -- that between now and Christmas we will withdraw 50,000 more Americans.

Let me be quite precise. I do not mean that we are withdrawing 50,000 over the 150,000. The figure of 150,000 by the Spring of next year, during the Spring of next year, still stands. But through the announcement that we are making today, we will have withdrawn by Christmas of this year a total of 90,000, whereas our original schedule called for a withdrawal of 60,000; 60,000 this year and then 90,000 next year.

We have been able to accelerate it, due in great part to the success of the Cambodian operation, the reduction of casualties and the improvement in the training of the South Vietnamese forces and their increased capabilities.

Henry Kissinger handed me a note. I misspoke myself when I reversed the 40,000 and the 50,000. We have withdrawn 50,000 effective October 15. We will withdraw 40,000 more effective by December 25, making a total of 90,000 from the period of April 20, leaving 60,000 more to be withdrawn during the Spring of next year, during that period of time.

Moving from that to the broader subject of the peace initiative that I know has already been discussed, we have made a proposal that we think is reasonable, fair to both sides, and one that ought to be the basis for negotiation. We await of course the reaction, the official reaction, and also the unofficial reaction in private channels in the event they do not want to react officially -- the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong.

It was not and should not be surprising in this kind of negotiation any more than it would be in a labor negotiation, which some of you of course have had, to have the first offer rejected flatly. The first offer is rejected flatly. I don't mean to suggest that within a matter of time that there will be an acceptance. But what I am saying is that we have not made this offer in a contrived effort to put the North Vietnamese and the VC on the defensive propaganda-wise, and the rest. There has been enough of that in this very difficult war.

But we have thought the whole matter through. That is why we have offered the cease-fire. That is why we have offered a political settlement, or at least principles for a political settlement that we think is reasonable and that is why we offer total withdrawal.

I am sure this has been covered before I got here. But it is very significant to note with regard to the statement that I am making today on withdrawal of our forces that what incentive the North Vietnamese and the VC have to accept our proposal is very simply this:

After we have completed our 150,000 withdrawal, there will still be over 200,000 Americans in Vietnam. They can get a total withdrawal of all Americans from Vietnam within the space of a year, if they are willing to sit down and talk about a cease-fire, a political settlement, and of course a mutual withdrawal of forces.

For this reason, we think there is some incentive for

the North Vietnamese, in the event that they have confidence that they could handle the South Vietnamese by themselves, to make an agreement.

This also indicates, incidentally, something very significant about the South Vietnamese. You understand they have supported this proposal. A year ago, even six months ago, I would say before the Cambodian incursion, the South Vietnamese would not have had the confidence to offer a total withdrawal within a year.

Now they are so confident of their own strength -- and I think justifiably so; what is more importantly, our military leaders think justifiably so -- that now the South Vietnamese are able to say to the North Vietnamese, "If you are willing to withdraw, the United States will withdraw and then we can determine what the future of South Vietnam will be."

So much for that in the general sense with regard to the peace proposal.

I would simply summarize on South Vietnam, and its future, in this respect: When we came into office, it was quite apparent that we in order to have any chance for negotiation had to create more of an impression of unity within the United States. Over and over again, North Vietnamese statements publicly in press broadcasts indicated that they were counting upon division in the United States to gain for them the political objectives that they were unable to gain militarily.

By reason of the peace initiative, while of course there are still many who would call for an instant withdrawal or immediate withdrawal without regard to the consequences in South Vietnam, it is quite apparent that a great majority of the American people support this peace initiative.

This is the first time that we have had that kind of unified support in Vietnam, at least the first time in the last three or four years from the time that the number of American forces came in there.

I would say on that point that a great deal is owed to the bipartisan spirit in which Democrats joined Republicans in this respect. When anything gets through the Senate unanimously, that is quite an accomplishment.

When a resolution is passed unanimously supporting a peace initiative, that is a major accomplishment, particularly on this very difficult war.

So unity in the United States, the fact that the South Vietnamese now have developed the ability to meet their opponents equally on the field of battle, and finally the fact that the North Vietnamese do not have the strength that they once had I think indicates that the outcome is one that we can look forward to with some confidence in either one of two ways:

We prefer the short way. The short way is to negotiate a cease-fire, to end the killing now, a political settlement and a total withdrawal of Americans. That is what we would prefer.

But if the North Vietnamese and the VC do not agree

to go the short way, we are prepared to go the long way. That is the only way, incidentally, to make the short way even possible or negotiable: We must be prepared to go the long way -- we are prepared to--the way in which we will continue to withdraw our forces, in which our combat forces will be withdrawn and the South Vietnamese take over the major share of the fighting and then eventually the matter is brought to a conclusion in that way.

So with this two-track approach, we believe that the end of the American involvement in this war can be clearly predicted, something I couldn't have said certainly a year ago, maybe not even six months ago.

With regard to the Mideast, this is such a confused, complex situation that I will simply add to the complexion of the confusion by saying this: It is difficult enough to handle foreign policy when you are dealing with governments. It is almost totally impossible to handle it when you are dealing with non-governments. That is the problem in the Mideast.

We are dealing there with situations in Egypt, in the UAR, Jordan and other areas, where the leadership is so unstable and thereby perhaps even so unpredictable that all of the negotiating rules go by the boards.

There were many who thought that Nasser was the one that was blocking the road to peace in the Mideast. It was true that he was a very difficult man for the United States and a very difficult man in terms of stirring up the radicals in the Mideast over a period of time. But it is very different from dealing with Nasser,who at least was in control and able to make his own deal and keep it,than it is to deal with, shall we say, a man who is part of a consensus or a collective leadership where it moves much, much more slowly.

Having indicated those difficulties, however, on the plus side as Joe Sisco undoubtedly has already pointed out, is this fact: That there is nothing to be gained by either side, not by on the one side Israel's neighbors or by Israel to break the cease-fire, because if they break the cease-fire, they will not have the support of the world community, of the United States, or in my opinion on the other side, the Soviet Union.

With these things in mind, I think we cannot look to the future in the Mideast with any degree of sureness that it is going to be all smooth. I think we are still going to have hijackings. We are going to have threats of revolutions, coups, and there will be difficult times, we hope not quite as difficult as the week involving Jordan or as the hijacking involving the four American planes.

But that is inherent in this situation. It is inherent in the situation for a number of reasons: The one I have just mentioned, the fact that the governments in the area are so unstable. The revolutionary elements are so strong.

Secondly, it is inherently unstable because the animosities are so deep. Nobody is going to make peace in that area in which the Israelis and their neighbors are going to like each other, not now, not ten years from now, not 100 years from now, maybe not 1,000 years from now, and yet they may be people

who don't necessarily like each other who sometimes have to learn to live together. So that is the hope.

The other reason that it is unstable rises far above this and brings me to my major and last point that I want to make: What is involved in the Mideast far more than in Vietnam and Southeast Asia is an area in which the major powers, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union, but all the European major powers as well, have a vital interest.

What happens to the oil supply for 80 percent of Europe, and 90 percent of Japan's oil supply, what happens to that is of course vitally important. What happens to the future in the Mideast, therefore, affects the Soviet Union, it affects the United States and, therefore, when we have these outbursts, these wars, rumors of wars, radical elements moving here and there, the danger is because the area of interest is so important to the major powers that major powers may be drawn into confrontation without desiring it to happen.

That is why I have the greatest commendation for the members of our whole Administration team, the Secretary of State, Joe Sisco and his group, Henry Kissinger and his group, for working out up to this point, in an area where there was no hope before, some hope that at least we can have a cease-fire, and that it can continue.

As far as negotiation is concerned, settlement by negotiation, your columns should write very properly that it looks very dim, that we don't have very great hopes at the moment. But you should also write that we are going to continue to try.

So it will be in Vietnam, because in both of those areas, the alternative is, it seems to us, unacceptable.

Now we come to what is really the major question. I am preparing at the present time a speech for delivery at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations, which comes next week. I am delivering it, as a matter of fact, on Saturday of next week.

In preparing that speech, I went through the usual number of suggestions with regard to speech material to the effect that the United Nations was the world's last best hope for peace, that the major powers should submit their differences to the United Nations and so forth on down the line.

I could say all of that. However, it would be far less relevant to the situation today than it was to the situation when the United Nations was brought into being 25 years ago, because while the United Nations can be and has been an extremely useful vehicle for resolution of conflicts involving minor powers, the United Nations has never been, is not now and cannot be a vehicle for the solution of those great issues involving major powers.

That is one of the reasons the veto was agreed to by both the United States and the Soviet Union. The major powers, neither major power, no major power, is going to submit its fate where its major interests are concerned to 150 nations. That is the weakness of the United Nations.

But having spoken to that weakness, that does not mean any lack of confidence in what it can do in the many areas in which it has rendered very significant service. Also, it does not mean that we shall not work to strengthen it, strengthen it to deal with a number of other areas where even the major powers can cooperate. The major powers can cooperate with regard to hijackings, they can cooperate with regard to the environment, they can cooperate even in the aid to under-developed countries of the world, in health programs and the rest, finding those areas where their major interests do not come into conflict and where world organizations can even bring the major powers together.

But now back to the fundamental point: At this time, the future of peace in the world as far as a major conflict is concerned depends upon whether the United States and the Soviet Union will be able to resolve their difficulties in a peaceful way. Let me give you my philosophy quite directly and quite candidly.

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I know I have the reputation for being a very strong anti-Communist. I am. I don't like the Communist system. I prefer ours. When I visit Communist countries and see the grayness that that imposes upon the people of those countries, I prefer free societies of whatever degree.

On the other hand, let us look at their side of it. The do not like our system. As far as their view of the world is concerned, what we both have to realize is that the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union are so deep and so profound that they are not going to be resolved by the two top leaders of the countries sitting down and getting to know each other better, not by smiles, not by handshakes, not by summit conferences.

I do not mean that summit conferences may not serve useful purposes under certain circumstances. But the idea that getting down to it, the real divisions between us have been exaggerated and that it is a question of our not understanding them or their not understanding us, that is not true.

They understand us. Perhaps we have not understood them as well as we might. But perhaps we do now. And if we start with that fundamental proposition where we do understand that we are different, that we are competitors, that we are going to continue to be competitors as long as this generation lives, then we can have a sound basis for a meaningful settlement of major differences.

Let us look at a few areas in that respect. The Soviet Union differs with us with regard to settlement in Vietnam. They differ because they would prefer to see the Communists prevail there in South Vietnam. That does not mean, however, that the Soviet Union and the United States, because we differ as to how it should be settled, will allow that difference to drag us into a major power confrontation.

The Soviet Union, getting to a more important area of difference, the Mideast -- a vitally important difference -- very strongly differs with the United States about the Mideast. They want the opening to Africa, they want to turn the Southern hinge of NATO, they want the opening to the Mediterranean and they have made tremendous gains over the past ten years in all of these areas; we want peace in the area, we want to deny to any expansionist power domination of that critical area of the world.

So here are our differences, in conflict. That does not mean that as the Jordan crisis indicated that when the chips are really down the Soviet Union or the United States will allow themselves to be dragged, even in this important area, into a major confrontation leading to war.

Now we come to the blue chip. We have a very great difference of opinion about Europe. NATO was set up for a number of reasons: because Europe was too weak to defend itself, because of the threat of the danger from the East, but it was set up, a third reason, because of the need to find a home for the Germans.

Germany is still the heart of the problem of Europe. The German settlement, future of NATO, is all wrapped up in there. The Soviet Union's ideas about the future of Germany, the future

of NATO, the future of Europe are diametrically opposed to ours.

But there again the question is do we allow those differences to reach the point where we are drawn into a major confrontation?

I have talked up to this point, I suppose, like a Cold-War rhetoric man. I do so only because I am trying to point out what all of you know, as sophisticated observers. Let us see what the facts really are and not obscure them, not say the differences in South Vietnam are only a matter of semantics and getting to know each other, or in the Mideast that we can work all of those things out because in the end people will sit down and live together.

That is not true. So be it with Europe as well. The sooner we recognize that the Soviet Union and the United States have a very different view about their role in the world and particularly in certain areas in the world -- I haven't mentioned the Soviet Union's different attitude toward places like Cuba and Chile or Africa or the rest of Asia -- as soon as we recognize that, then we can build a sound basis for an enduring settlement.

What are the great elements that I believe, and I think all of us in our official family believe, are working against a confrontation in any of these areas, no matter how vitally important they are, a confrontation that would lead to a nuclear explosion. The are perhaps in this order, three;

First, neither major power, knowing as it does that whoever pushes the button may kill 70 million approximately, and the other side will also kill 70 million approximately of his own. The figures can be rounded off, maybe it is 40, maybe it is 50 or 60. But that is enough of a magnitude, 40 to 70 million. Neither major power is likely going to make that kind of a decision.

In other words, the United States and the Soviet Union have a common interest in avoiding a nuclear confrontation. That is a powerful, powerful interest working against all of these things which pull us apart.

The United States and the Soviet Union also have a common interest in stopping the rise in defense expenditures. We know how hard it is for us. We think that a $70 billion defense budget is pretty tough with our huge GNP. The Soviet Union's defense budget -- look at what burden it puts on the Soviet economy; at least twice, maybe two and a half to three times as great as ours because their economy is not as strong to begin with and their budget is probably larger.

Finally, there is another factor I would put at several magnitudes lower, but still very important, on the plus side: It could serve the interest of both the United States and the Soviet Union to have increased contact, including trade, because we are the two major industrial powers of the world, and at the present time the trade between us is virtually miniscule. They want things from us. There may be some things we can get from them in the trade area.

So there they are: avoid war, reduce defense expenditures -- at least don't see them go up -- and third, the whole area of trade.

It seems to me that in that particular area we then come to the point where the United States and the Soviet Union have good, strong, compelling reasons to sit down and talk and to work out the differences in these selected areas of the world.

I have not mentioned the fact that we have other problems at home. They too have other problems: They have the problem of China, where they have more divisions lined up against the Chinese border than they do against Western Europe. They have the problems of Eastern Europe and problems in their economy. We have problems that I have mentioned.

But with all of these factors working together, we can see where looking at the long haul, not instantly but looking ahead, that the United States and the Soviet Union could work together in certain areas on a live-and-let-live basis. That is putting it quite bluntly, but it is the only sound basis for the two powers, who have so many areas in which we are diametrically different in our national goals, in our national and international aspirations, and with areas where we can be together.

Now I come finally to what role the United States plays in this respect. It would be less than forthright not to admit before this group that there are many Americans -- I do not believe a majority, but a very substantial number of Americans -- who are very tired of America's playing an international role. They want to get out of Vietnam; they want to bring the divisions home from Europe; they don't want to be involved any place in the world. It isn't just a case of avoiding war. But it is a case of looking at the enormous problems at home -- the problems of the cities, the problems of the country, the problems of the environment, the problems of the educational system, the problems of taxes, the problems of prices -- and a number of American people say, "Look at all we have done since World War II. Let's concentrate on our problems at home, build a strong America, not worry about the rest of the world."

None of you would, of course, advocate such positions, but that is a strong underlying current. There is a new isolationism growing in this country. The old internationalists, many of them, have turned isolationists because of the same motivation that made them internationalists in the first place: A feeling of compassion for people who were downtrodden around the world now makes them nationalists, turning inward at this time, looking at the problems at home and saying, "Away with the problems in the world. We haven't been able to do much about them. Let's turn homeward."

So we now come to what decision we make. I said we would look ahead maybe 25 years. Who would have predicted at the end of World War II when the United Nations was founded that within a space of 25 years Germany and Japan, the two defeated nations, crushed economically and militarily, would be number three and number four in the world industrially, partly and perhaps substantially because of our help?

The United States first, the Soviet Union second, Japan third, and Germany fourth. All of this has happened. Who can predict what will happen in the next 25 years? Certainly China will become a major power.

Today Japan out-produces China. The 100 million in Japan produce more than the 700 million in China. That will change, because the Chinese are Chinese, not because they have a Communist system. So China looms as a great power, militarily, economically, 10, 15, 20 years ahead.

Japan, a major power, whether it will be a military power remains to be seen. Japan, China, Western Europe, unity in Western Europe is inevitable certainly from the economic standpoint, the Soviet Union, the United States. Those are the great five power centers.

What role does the United States play in this period?

It would be, and frankly is, quite tempting to say that what the United States should do is to turn into basically a national posture, away from all of this international responsibility. But what we must realize, of course, is very simply this: That is we if we are going to the sidelines that there are going to be only two major contestants left on the field. The one will be the Soviet Union and the other will be Communist China moving up. We must recognize that there is no other nation in the free world that can play a role, play a role not to defeat the Soviet Union, or Communist China, but to at least be a counter balance against the expansionist efforts of Communist China and the Soviet Union in the years ahead.

Basically, we can be very proud of the fact that the United States with all of its faults in this century, in World War I, World War II, Korea and again in Vietnam, has had as its goal not expansion, but simply the defense of freedom and independence around the world.

Sometimes we have done it clumsily. Sometimes we have not gotten credit for it. But that is what we believe as Americans.

So as you travel around the world, the reason that you find that small nations and even those nations that used to be strong in Western Europe, -- much as they have kicked the Yankees around at times in public forums -- the reason they are petrified at the thought of the United States turning away from its world responsibilities, is they know that the United States in a world role will respect their independence.

No nation in the world among the smaller nations fears that the United States will compromise its independence or dominate it. That is a matter of fact. I say no nation. I am not referring now to publicists and intellectuals, so-called, in the institutions abroad and the rest. I am referring to national leaders, not Tito, none of those that we have talked to.

This cannot be said of the two other major powers in the world, the Soviet Union and Communist China. That is why the United States' playing a role is important to the world.

I think in the long run, of course, this is important to the United States, because if we retreat to the sidelines -- as we could with justification do after all that we have done and the sacrifices that we have made -- it would mean that we would leave the field to those who do have a great thrust of power, and who would move onward to expand their role wherever they possibly could.

This finally comes down to whether we can do it or not. That is really a question of leadership at the national level. But it is also a question of leadership in the nation's universities, in its intellectual community, in the nation's press, in the nation's television.

I do not and would not want, and none of us would want unanimity of opinion on foreign policy, domestic policy, or any other area. But it is important that the United States continue in the next 25 years, when -- not because we asked for it but because of the acts of history -- leadership in the free world is still ours. Only we can do this. Only we have the power, only we have the wealth to play this role.

The question whether we can do it and will do it depends upon whether our people develop the stamina, the patience, the wisdom, the character, to see it through. That will not be easy.

We Americans like instant solutions. We like dramatic conferences. We like some kind of formula which will bring peace and then everybody will live happily ever after.

The world has never been like that. It isn't now, it isn't going to be. But the United States can play in my opinion, and must play in these years ahead, a responsible strong role, strengthening the structure of peace around the world, looking at the world as it is, not as we would want it to be, combining our idealism with the realism which is essential to make it work.

It is the kind of policy that the United States needs. And it is this kind of character that the American people are going to have to have in these years ahead if we are going to meet that responsibility.

Incidentally, you know that this concludes our area briefings. We are going to do this on at least an annual basis, maybe more often in the event that there is a major issue to be discussed.

One of the reasons for this is that we believe that the foreign policy role of the United States in this particular period of our history is so important that it must be understood. Only when it is understood will the American people give the support that they must to bringing a very difficult war to a conclusion which is a just peace, peace for a generation rather than just peace for the next election or peace so that we end a war.

I remind all of you, we have ended three wars in this century. We have ended World War I, we have ended World War II, we have ended Korea. We have never had a generation of peace. What we are trying to do is to end this war and to avoid other wars in a way that we can have a goal that all Americans want, a generation of peace for the balance of the century.

END 2:08 PM EDT