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ROGERS-LAIRD TV INTERVIEW COVERS INDOCHINA ISSUES (EXCERPTS)

WASHINGTON -- INDOCHINA WAS AMONG THE MAIN ISSUES DISCUSSED IN A TELEVISION AND RADIO INTERVIEW WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND DEFENSE MINISTER LAIRD OCTOBER 11.

THE U.S. CABINET OFFICIALS APPEARED ON THE SUNDAY PROGRAM, "ABC'S ISSUES AND ANSWERS." THEY WERE INTERVIEWED BY ROGER PETERSON, ABC NEWS PENTAGON CORRESPONDENT, AND JOHN SCALI, ABC NEWS DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT.

FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE PROGRAM:
(BEGIN EXCERPTS)

MR. SCALI: GENTLEMEN, WELCOME TO ISSUES AND ANSWERS. SECRETARY ROGERS, THE SOVIET NEWSPAPER PRAVDA HAS DISMISSED PRESIDENT NIXON'S NEWEST PROPOSALS FOR PEACE IN VIETNAM AS A GREAT FRAUD. IT SAYS THAT IT FULLY BACKS THE REJECTION, SO FAR, OF NORTH VIETNAM AND SAYS THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSALS SEEK ONLY TO LEGALIZE AND PERPETUATE THE INTERVENTION OF THE UNITED STATES IN INDO-CHINA.

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THIS?

SECRETARY ROGERS: WELL, MR. SCALI, THAT IS STANDARD COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA WHICH WE EXPECTED. I DON'T THINK IT REFLECTS THE VIEWS OF THE GOVERNMENT FULLY. I HAVE A FEELING THAT THE SOVIET UNION AND HANOI WILL BOTH GIVE VERY CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL BECAUSE OF THE TREMENDOUS SUPPORT THAT THE PROPOSALS HAVE RECEIVED NOT ONLY IN THIS COUNTRY, BUT ALL OVER THE WORLD.

IT IS INTERESTING THAT THEY SHOULD MAKE THAT COMMENT BECAUSE

ONE OF THE PROPOSALS THAT PRESIDENT NIXON MADE WAS AN INDO-CHINA PEACE CONFERENCE AND, AS YOU REMEMBER, THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS MADE THAT SAME PROPOSAL. WE DIDN'T CONSIDER IT A FRAUD AT THE TIME HE MADE IT AND I DON'T THINK IT IS A FRAUD. IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT PRESIDENT NIXON IS VERY ANXIOUS TO WORK OUT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. THE RESPONSE FROM THE WORLD COMMUNITY HAS BEEN TREMENDOUS, EXCEPT FOR THESE COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA THRUSTS FROM HANOI AND FROM MOSCOW. THE REST OF THE WORLD HAS REACTED VERY FAVORABLY AND I THINK THAT THE PRESSURE OF WORLD OPINION WILL HAVE A GOOD DEAL TO DO WITH THE ATTITUDES OF HANOI AND THE SOVIET UNION IN THE MONTHS AHEAD.

MR. SCALI: MR. SECRETARY, ARE YOU IMPLYING THAT PERHAPS THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT'S OFFICIAL ATTITUDE IS NOT REFLECTED BY THE PROPAGANDA THAT IS COMING OUT RIGHT NOW.

SECRETARY ROGERS: YES, I THINK THAT IS CORRECT.

THERE IS A STANDARD LINE THAT THE COMMUNISTS TAKE IN OPPOSITION TO ANYTHING THAT WE PROPOSE PUBLICLY. WE UNDERSTOOD THAT WHEN WE MADE THE PROPOSAL.

WE THINK THAT THE PROPOSAL IS SUCH A FAR-REACHING PROPOSAL, SO COMPREHENSIVE AND SO FAIR, AND BECAUSE IT HOLDS OUT HOPE FOR PEACE IN THE AREA, AND BECAUSE OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY'S ACCEPTING THIS PROPOSAL WITH ALMOST UNANIMITY, WE THINK THAT THE TIME MAY COME WHEN THE OTHER SIDE WILL NEGOTIATE.

MR. SCALI: THIS IS PRETTY TOUGH TALK EVEN CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT IS PROPAGANDA, MR. SECRETARY.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE STATE DEPARTMENT CALLED PUBLICLY THIS WEEK ON MOSCOW TO USE ITS CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE WITH HANOI TO GET THEM TO GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THESE PROPOSALS. ISN'T WHAT IS NOW COMING OUT OF MOSCOW PERHAPS A SIGN THAT, INSTEAD OF COOPERATION YOU MAY GET JUST THE OPPOSITE?

SECRETARY ROGERS: WELL, IT IS POSSIBLE. WE WOULD HOPE NOT. WE WOULD HOPE NOT.

MR. PETERSON: SECRETARY LAIRD, LAST FRIDAY YOUR DEPUTY SECRETARY PACKARD SAID THAT HE FELT THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VIET CONG WOULD EVENTUALLY AGREE TO THE CEASE FIRE. DO YOU

AGREE WITH THAT STATEMENT?

SECRETARY LAIRD: THIS IS A VERY FINE PROPOSAL, I BELIEVE; ONE THAT MERITS THE VERY CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE OTHER SIDE. WORLD OPINION, AS THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAS SAID, IN THE FREE WORLD, AS WELL AS IN THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD, SUPPORTS THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL. I DON'T WANT TO MAKE ANY PREDICTION AS TO THE OUTCOME. IT IS IN THE NEGOTIATING STAGE NOW IN PARIS. THE INDO-CHINA PEACE PROPOSAL AND CONFERENCE OF THE PRESIDENT IS A VERY FORTHRIGHT PROPOSAL. WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE OTHER SIDE WILL NEGOTIATE IN GOOD CONSCIENCE ON THIS PROPOSAL. WE ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THE P.O.W. RELEASE. AS YOU KNOW, IN THE P.O.W. RELEASE OUTLINED BY THE PRESIDENT IT IS A RELEASE IN WHICH WE EXCHANGE 15 TO 1. WE, THROUGH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE, HAD OFFERED A COMPLETE RELEASE OF ALL PRISONERS AND THE RATIO OF PRISONERS THAT ARE HELD IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS COMPARED TO THOSE HELD BY THE V.C., AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE IS A RATIO OF ABOUT 15 TO 1 IN FAVOR OF THE OTHER SIDE. THIS IS A VERY FORTHRIGHT PROPOSAL AND WE BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES AND POSSIBILITIES THAT THIS, ALONG WITH THE OTHER FOUR PROPOSALS, WILL RECEIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF THE OTHER SIDE.

MR. PETERSON: PRESIDENT NIXON HAS PROPOSED AN INDO-CHINA PEACE CONFERENCE. WE HAVE GOT NEGOTIATIONS GOING ON IN PARIS FOR TWO YEARS AND IT HASN'T GOTTEN OFF DEAD CENTER DEALING JUST WITH VIETNAM. WHY SHOULD IT WORK ON A BROADER SCALE?

SECRETARY LAIRD: WELL, I THINK THE PRESIDENT HAS FELT THAT THIS IS A MUCH BROADER SUBJECT THAN JUST SOUTH VIETNAM. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO BRING LAOS AND CAMBODIA AND TO BRING PEACE IN THE ENTIRE AREA BECAUSE HE FEELS IT SHOULD BE LOOKED AT AS AN INDO-CHINA-TYPE SETTLEMENT. SO, BY BRINGING IN THE OTHER NATIONS IN THE AREA, BROADENING THE NEGOTIATIONS TO COVER ALL OF INDO-CHINA AND BRINGING IN OTHER ASIAN NATIONS, THAT THERE WAS HOPE FOR PEACE, AND THE PRESIDENT IS EXPLORING ALL AVENUES THAT WOULD BRING ABOUT PEACE IN THIS AREA.

MR. PETERSON: WHEN THE NARROW FOCUS WON'T WORK WHY WOULD A BROAD-BRUSH APPROACH WORK?

SECRETARY ROGERS: WE ARE PROPOSING EITHER ONE OR BOTH WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. ONE OF THE REASONS THE PRESIDENT PROPOSED THE INDO-CHINA PEACE CONFERENCE IS BECAUSE THE SOVIET UNION HAS SUGGESTED IT, THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS SUGGESTED IT, OTHERS HAVE SUGGESTED IT AND PARTICULARLY NOW BECAUSE OF THE CAMBODIAN SITUATION IT WAS FELT THAT IN ORDER TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF SOUTH VIETNAM IT WAS NECESSARY TO INCLUDE CAMBODIA AND LAOS. THE PRESIDENT MADE THAT CLEAR IN HIS PEACE INITIATIVE. HE SAID THAT THE THREE COUNTRIES ARE INSEPARABLE NOW. YOU HAVE CONFLICTS GOING ON IN ALL THREE, AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARE INFILTRATING THEIR TROOPS IN BOTH LAOS AND CAMBODIA, AS WELL AS SOUTH VIETNAM. SO YOU COULDN'T REALLY SETTLE THE SOUTH VIETNAM QUESTION WITHOUT INCLUDING LAOS AND CAMBODIA, SO WE HAVE NOT, AS YOU NOTICE FROM THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT, WE DO NOT GIVE UP ON THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS, BUT, IF THE OTHER SIDE FEELS THAT AN INDO-CHINA PEACE CONFERENCE WOULD BE A BETTER WAY TO DO IT, WE ARE PERFECTLY PREPARED FOR THAT.

IT IS INTERESTING, THE IDEA THAT THIS IS A FRAUD. HOW THE SOVIET UNION HAS THE COURAGE TO MAKE THAT SUGGESTION, I DON'T UNDERSTAND. EVERY SEGMENT OF OUR POPULATION IN THIS COUNTRY SUPPORTS THE PRESIDENT'S PEACE INITIATIVE. IT IS BIPARTISAN IN NATURE. THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT IT. IT HAS TREMENDOUS SUPPORT. THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE HAD TOTAL SUPPORT FOR A PEACE PROPOSAL IN THIS COUNTRY DEALING WITH INDO-CHINA; NOT ONLY IN THIS COUNTRY, BUT ALL OVER THE WORLD.

NOW, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE PUBLIC IS GOING TO PRETTY WELL UNDERSTAND THAT THIS COMMUNIST DIATRIPE IS JUST THAT.

WE HAVE MADE A PROPOSAL THAT PROVIDES A FOUNDATION FOR STOPPING THE FIGHTING, FOR A FAIR POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, FOR A COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF OUR TROOPS FROM SOUTH VIETNAM. AS MR. LAIRD SAYS, AN EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS WHERE WE WOULD RELEASE A GREAT MANY MORE THAN THE OTHER SIDE WOULD RELEASE. WHY THIS IS DEEMED TO BE A FRAUD, I DON'T UNDERSTAND. IT CERTAINLY IS DISAPPOINTING; I HOPE THAT THE SOVIET UNION, IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH US, WILL REACT DIFFERENTLY.

MR. SCALI: SECRETARY LAIRD, YOU MENTIONED A 15 TO 1 RATIO

IN THE PRISONER EXCHANGE. HOW DOES THAT TRANSLATE INTO NUMBERS?

SECRETARY LAIRD: WELL, THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE, OF COURSE, ARE HOLDING THE PRISONERS AS FAR AS THE V.C. AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARE CONCERNED AND THEY HAVE APPROXIMATELY SOME 30,000 PRISONERS. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS INVOLVED IN THE NORTH AND IN THE HANDS OF THE V.C. IS ESTIMATED TO BE SLIGHTLY OVER 2,000. SO THE SITUATION DOES RUN AROUND 15 TO 1, OR IN THAT GENERAL RATIO.

THE PRISONERS TAKEN BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND THE V.C. HAVE NOT BEEN GREAT. WE HAVE TAKEN A GOOD MANY PRISONERS AND WE HAVE PUT THEM UNDER CONDITIONS THAT ARE SUPERVISED BY THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS. THESE PRISONERS ARE HELD BY THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE.

MR. SCALI: IF THEY GET 30,000 PRISONERS BACK IN ONE FELL SWOOP, WON'T THAT HELP SOLVE THEIR MANPOWER PROBLEM?

SECRETARY LAIRD: I JUST WANT TO MAKE THE POINT AS CLEARLY AS I CAN THAT THIS IS A VERY FORTHRIGHT PROPOSAL, AND THE OTHER SIDE, I DON'T BELIEVE, CAN CRITICIZE THE SINCERITY OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND OUR SIDE, THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AS WELL, IN MAKING SUCH A FAR-REACHING PROPOSAL AS FAR AS THE PRISONERS OF WAR ARE CONCERNED. WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS. WE WANT TO STOP THE KILLING IN VIETNAM. ALREADY IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF THIS YEAR THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND THE V.C. HAVE LOST AROUND 86,000 MEN. THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE HAVE LOST ABOUT 3,000. NOW, WE HAVE BROUGHT DOWN OUR CASUALTIES. OUR AMERICAN CASUALTIES ARE LOW COMPARED TO WHAT THEY WERE WHEN WE TOOK OFFICE AND THIS HAS BEEN ONE OF THE PRESIDENT'S OBJECTIVES, TO REDUCE AMERICAN CASUALTIES AND REDUCE ALL CASUALTIES. ONE CASUALTY IS TOO MANY. LAST WEEK WE HAD 38 AMERICAN CASUALTIES. WHEN WE TOOK OFFICE AND WHEN I BECAME SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND SECRETARY ROGERS TOOK OVER IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT, THE CASUALTIES WERE RUNNING JUST ABOUT TEN TIMES THAT AMOUNT. THIS LAST WEEK THEY AGAIN WILL BE UNDER FIFTY. THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT. AS WE HAVE TURNED OVER THE COMBAT RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE FORCES OF SOUTH VIETNAM UNDER OUR VIETNAMIZATION PROGRAM, AS THIS PROGRAM HAS MOVED FORWARD WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REDUCE CASUALTIES.

BUT THE PRESIDENT'S FIVE POINT PEACE PROPOSAL IS A PROPOSAL TO BRING PEACE IN THAT AREA OF THE WORLD AND TO STOP THE KILLING IN THAT AREA OF THE WORLD.

SECRETARY ROGERS: MR. SCALI, COULD I ALSO SAY THERE IS NOTHING ABOUT PRESIDENT NIXON'S PROPOSAL THAT HAS ANY CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO IT. IT IS FLEXIBLE. HE SAID THAT THIS IS A BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION. ONE PART OF IT CAN BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT ACCEPTING ALL. IF THERE ARE COUNTER PROPOSALS, WE WILL BE GLAD TO CONSIDER THOSE.

A TOTALLY FLEXIBLE POSITION AND WE WOULD HOPE THAT IN VIEW OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS SITUATION, IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE UNITED STATES PROGRAM OF VIETNAMIZATION IS SUCCEEDING, WITHOUT ANY QUESTION, THAT THE OTHER SIDE WILL GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION, AT LEAST IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS, TO THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM.

SECRETARY ROGERS: NO, OUR TROOPS ARE NOT GOING BACK INTO CAMBODIA. PRESIDENT NIXON HAS MADE THAT QUITE CLEAR. WE THINK THAT THE CAMBODIAN ARMY AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY, WORKING TOGETHER, CAN HANDLE ANY SITUATION THAT MIGHT DEVELOP THERE. WE ARE QUITE PLEASED ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF THE VIETNAMIZATION. WE ARE QUITE SATISFIED WITH THE FACT THAT THE COMBAT ACTIVITY HAS LESSENERED A GREAT DEAL RECENTLY, SO I DON'T BELIEVE WE HAVE ANY PROBLEMS THERE. OBVIOUSLY THERE WILL BE UPS AND DOWNS IF THE WAR CONTINUES, BUT WE HAVE TO KEEP IN MIND THAT THE CONFLICT HAS LESSENERED A GREAT DEAL IN THE LAST YEAR. THE ENGAGEMENTS ARE VERY MINOR; VERY FEW OF THEM. AS THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE HAS SAID, OUR CASUALTIES ARE WAY DOWN. IN SOUTH VIETNAM ITSELF I SAW A PROGRAM THE OTHER NIGHT INDICATING THE TELEVISION PEOPLE WERE HAVING DIFFICULTY EVEN FINDING COMBAT IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

MR. SCALI: SECRETARY ROGERS, YOU SAID IN YOUR NEWS CONFERENCE ON FRIDAY YOU THOUGHT BEGINNING MAY 1ST BY AND LARGE THE COMBAT AMERICAN OPERATIONS WOULD BE OVER. COULD YOU DISCUSS THAT A BIT FURTHER WITH US AND, MR. LAIRD, TOO, TO EXPLAIN HOW THIS NEXT PHASE THEN WORKS OUT?

SECRETARY ROGERS: I THINK THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SHOULD

ANSWER THIS BUT I SAID WHAT PRESIDENT NIXON SAID BEFORE, THAT WHEN THE REMAINDER OF THE 150,000 AMERICAN TROOPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN OUT OF VIETNAM THAT BY AND LARGE OUR COMBAT ROLE WILL BE FINISHED. WE WILL STILL HAVE COMBAT TROOPS AND UNDOUBTEDLY THERE WILL BE SOME COMBAT, BUT BY AND LARGE OUR COMBAT ROLE WILL BE FINISHED WHEN THE 150,000 HAVE BEEN REMOVED.

MR. SCALI: WHAT DOES THE PHASE THEN LOOK LIKE, SECRETARY LAIRD, AFTER MAY 1ST?

SECRETARY LAIRD: THE MAJOR COMBAT RESPONSIBILITY IS BEING TRANSFERRED NOW TO THE FORCES OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE. THIS IS PART OF OUR VIETNAMIZATION PROGRAM IN PHASE I OF THE VIETNAMIZATION PROGRAM.

NOW, IN PHASE II, WHERE WE STILL HAVE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE AREA OF LOGISTIC SUPPORT, AIR SUPPORT AND SOME ARTILLERY SUPPORT, WE WILL HAVE A COMBAT PRESENCE BUT THEY WILL BE IN THE SECURITY ROLE. I DON'T WANT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WILL NOT TAKE PROTECTIVE ACTIONS IN THE WAY OF SECURITY PATROLS IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF THE AMERICANS THAT ARE PERFORMING THESE IMPORTANT SUPPORT FUNCTIONS.

AS WE GET DOWN TO THE MAY 1ST TROOP LEVEL OF 284,000, WHICH IS THE TROOP CEILING AT THAT DATE, THE MAJOR ROLE AS FAR AS COMBAT WILL HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED. AS A MATTER OF FACT, A MAJORITY OF THE COMBAT ACTIVITY IN VIETNAM HAS ALREADY BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AT THE PRESENT TIME BUT, AS WE GET INTO THE PHASE II PROGRAM ON VIETNAMIZATION, THERE WILL BE FROM 40 TO 60 PERCENT OF OUR TROOPS THAT ARE THERE WHO WILL HAVE THIS IMPORTANT SECURITY ROLE, THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF PROTECTING THE AMERICAN PRESENCE. I WOULD NOT BE FOR HAVING ANY AMERICANS IN THE COUNTRY THAT ARE NOT ADEQUATELY PROTECTED AS FAR AS AMERICAN FORCES ARE CONCERNED AND I BELIEVE THAT THIS IS IMPORTANT AND THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WOULD WANT OUR FORCES PROTECTED IN THIS WAY.

I MIGHT ADD THAT WE DO HAVE A NEW TROOP CEILING COMING UP, A TARGET DATE, ON THE 15TH OF OCTOBER. THE PRESIDENT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT OUR CEILING WILL BE 384,000, A REDUCTION FROM 549,500. ON THURSDAY OF THIS LAST WEEK WE WERE AT 384,600

AND TOMORROW IN SAIGON THE ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE THAT WE HAVE BEATEN THE TROOP CEILING WHICH WAS ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT NIXON TO TAKE EFFECT IN OCTOBER, WHICH IS 384,000. WE WILL BE BELOW THAT TOMORROW.

MR. PETERSON: BY HOW MUCH, MR. SECRETARY?

SECRETARY LAIRD: WE WILL BE BELOW IT BY THE 15TH OF OCTOBER, THE DATE THAT IS EFFECTIVE, BY SEVERAL THOUSAND TROOPS.

MR. PETERSON: YOU ALSO SAID YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD MEET OR BEAT THE 284,000 FOR NEXT MAY. DO YOU STILL HOLD TO THAT PREDICTION?

SECRETARY LAIRD: WELL, THIS IS ONE OF THE THINGS I AM VERY PROUD OF AS FAR AS THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND THIS ADMINISTRATION IS CONCERNED. WE HAVE MADE FOUR OR FIVE MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS CONCERNING THE WAR IN SOUTH VIETNAM, AND ALSO CONCERNING OUR OPERATIONS IN CAMBODIA. DATES HAVE BEEN GIVEN AND TROOP CEILINGS HAVE BEEN GIVEN ON EACH OF THESE FIVE OCCASIONS. THE PRESIDENT HAS GONE TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND ANNOUNCED THOSE FIGURES. I BELIEVE WE HAVE RESTORED THE CREDIBILITY TO THE MANAGEMENT AND THE OPERATIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA BECAUSE EACH TIME IN EVERY STATEMENT THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE WE HAVE DELIVERED ON THOSE STATEMENTS AND WE HAVE MET THOSE GOALS ESTABLISHED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED IN THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA BEFORE.

NOW, WITH THE PRESIDENT'S PEACE PROPOSAL WE, OF COURSE, HOPE THAT WE CAN NEGOTIATE TOTAL WITHDRAWAL AS ONE OF THE POINTS OF THE PACKAGE OF THE PRESIDENT AND ONE OF THE FIVE MAJOR POINTS THAT HE MADE THE OTHER DAY.

IF NEGOTIATIONS FAIL, THE VIETNAMIZATION PROGRAM GOES FORWARD. IT DOES NOT TAKE THE PLACE OF NEGOTIATIONS. IT CAN TAKE THE PLACE OF NEGOTIATIONS, BUT IT DOES REALLY COMPLEMENT NEGOTIATIONS IN MANY WAYS.

MR. PETERSON: PRESIDENT NIXON SAID IN THE NEGOTIATIONS NOW WE WOULD BE NEGOTIATING FOR A POSITION OF STRENGTH. IF WE ARE IN SUCH A POSITION OF STRENGTH, WHAT INCENTIVE DOES THE OTHER SIDE HAVE TO NEGOTIATE?

SECRETARY ROGERS: THE INCENTIVE IS THEY CAN MAKE A MUCH BETTER DEAL FROM THEIR STANDPOINT NOW THAN THEY COULD IF THEY WAITED. OBVIOUSLY SOMEBODY HAS TO BE STRONG AND SOMEBODY HAS TO BE RELATIVELY WEAK.

NOW, WE ARE PERFECTLY PREPARED TO MAKE A FAIR SETTLEMENT AT THE PRESENT TIME AND, AS THE PRESIDENT SAID, WE RECOGNIZE THAT ANY SETTLEMENT, IN ORDER TO LAST, HAS TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE VIEWS OF THE OTHER SIDE, AND HE SAID THAT A FAIR POLITICAL SETTLEMENT HAD TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT, HAS TO REFLECT THE EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS OF POLITICAL FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM. SO WE ARE PREPARED TO MAKE A SETTLEMENT NOW, A FAIR SETTLEMENT, IF THE OTHER SIDE WANTS TO. IF THEY DON'T, WE ARE GOING TO CONTINUE THE PROGRAM WHICH MR. LAIRD HAS JUST POINTED OUT WORKS VERY WELL.

MR. SCALI: MR. SECRETARY, THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO QUESTION THE FEASIBILITY OF A CEASE FIRE IN THE JUNGLES AND IN THE MOUNTAINS OF VIETNAM WHEN THERE ARE NO ESTABLISHED LINES.

WHO POLICES SUCH A CEASE FIRE AND HOW?

SECRETARY ROGERS: FIRST, WE HAVE TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSITION THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT. THE PRESIDENT DID ACCEPT THAT IN HIS STATEMENT, BUT WE DON'T THINK IT IS ALL THAT DIFFICULT IF BOTH SIDES ARE PREPARED TO STOP THE KILLING.

NOW, IF EVERYONE STOPS KILLING, WE WILL HAVE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS MOVED INTO THE AREA.

MR. SCALI: FROM WHAT COUNTRY?

SECRETARY ROGERS: WELL, SEVERAL COUNTRIES HAVE ALREADY INDICATED A WILLINGNESS; JAPAN, FOR EXAMPLE. THERE ARE OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE AREA. MALAYSIA, INDONESIA; OTHERS. WE ARE NOT SURE THEY WILL, BUT WE HAVE A FEELING THOSE COUNTRIES WOULD. IT IS INTERESTING THAT ALL OF THE COUNTRIES IN THE AREA EXCEPT THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES HAVE STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE. EVERY ONE OF THE ASIAN COUNTRIES IN THAT AREA. SO WE THINK IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS COULD INCLUDE NOT ONLY THE ASIAN COUNTRIES, BUT REPRESENTATIVES FROM BOTH SIDES TO GO IN AND POLICE IT. THERE MIGHT BE VIOLATIONS ON A LOCAL LEVEL, BUT WE COULD PATCH THOSE UP. WE DON'T THINK IT IS DIFFICULT IF BOTH SIDES ARE PREPARED TO DO

IT AND THE ONLY WAY YOU COULD DECIDE THAT IS TO HAVE NEGOTIATIONS TO SEE HOW IT COULD BE WORKED OUT AND THAT IS WHAT THE PRESIDENT HAS PROPOSED.

SECRETARY LAIRD: AS THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAS SAID, THERE IS A RISK ALWAYS WITH ANY KIND OF A CESE FIRE PROPOSAL, BUT THE PRESIDENT HAS DECIDED THAT THIS RISK FOR PEACE AT THIS TIME IS NOT A RISK THAT IS TOO GREAT.

NOW, I KNOW THAT GENERAL ABRAMS, TWELVE MONTHS AGO, SIX MONTHS AGO -- EVEN AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, TWELVE MONTHS AGO AND SIX MONTHS AGO HE FELT THAT THE RISK WAS TOO GREAT AT THAT TIME, BUT THEY FEEL THAT THE RISK IS A MINIMUM RISK NOW AND IT IS WORTH THE CAUSE OF PEACE, WORTH FURTHERING THE CAUSE OF PEACE, BY THIS PROPOSAL AT THIS TIME AND THEY FEEL BECAUSE OF THE MILITARY SITUATION, BECAUSE OF THE IMPROVEMENT WITH THE VIETNAMIZATION PROGRAM, BECAUSE OF THE SUCCESS OF THE CAMBODIAN OPERATION, THAT WE CAN TAKE THIS RISK FOR PEACE AT THIS TIME.

MR. PETERSON: MR. SECRETARY, YOU BRING UP CAMBODIA. CAMBODIA RIGHT NOW IS TWO-THIRDS CONTROLLED BY THE COMMUNISTS. I KNOW THAT IS ONLY ONE-QUARTER OF THE POPULATION, BUT TWO-THIRDS CONTROL. WHAT HAPPENS THERE, FROM STAND-STILL?

SECRETARY LAIRD: YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT THE AREA NOT BEING PATROLLED AS FAR AS THE CAMBODIAN ARMY IS CONCERNED. THAT QUESTION OF CONTROL OVER THAT LAND AREA IS MERELY A CONTROL BECAUSE THE CAMBODIAN ARMY IS NOT MAKING A CHALLENGE IN THE AREA.

MR. PETERSON: ARE THEY CAPABLE OF DOING SO?

SECRETARY LAIRD: THEY WOULD BE CAPABLE OF GIVING SECURITY TO THAT AREA BUT THE QUESTION OF CONTROL IN A STAND-PAT, OR AN IN-PLACE CEASE FIRE, I DON'T THINK YOU WOULD FIND THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARE IN A POSITION WHERE THEY WOULD ACTUALLY TRULY CONTROL THAT LAND AREA. THEY ARE CONTROLLING CERTAIN SECTIONS OF THE LAND AREA BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT BEING CHALLENGED AT THE PRESENT TIME EXCEPT ALONG THE VIETNAMESE BORDER. THEY ARE BEING CHALLENGED ALONG THE VIETNAMESE BORDER BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES AND BY SOME CAMBODIANS THAT HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

MR. SCALI: MR. SECRETARY, IN ACCEPTING A CEASE FIRE,

WOULDN'T THE COMMUNIST SIDE MORE OR LESS EXPOSE THAT THEY CONTROL REALLY JUST A SMALL PART OF SOUTH VIETNAM?

SECRETARY ROGERS: WELL, THE CEASE FIRE PROPOSAL IS JUST PRELIMINARY TO A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. NOW WE HAVE HAD A STUDY MADE OF WHETHER A CEASE FIRE IS PRACTICAL OR NOT. WE HAD A TEAM OF EXPERTS GO OUT THERE AND THEY CONCLUDED THAT A CEASE FIRE IS PRACTICAL IF BOTH SIDES WANT IT. THAT WOULD JUST BE PRELIMINARY TO A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. THAT IS WHY THE PRESIDENT PROPOSED AN INDOCHINA PEACE CONFERENCE. IF THAT DOESN'T WORK, CONTINUATION OF THE TALKS IN PARIS TO WORK OUT A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. THE CEASE FIRE IN ITSELF WOULD NOT BE A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. IT WOULD JUST BE A RESPITE IN THE KILLING. IF WE COULD STOP THE KILLING, THEN WE THINK THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE A BETTER CHANCE TO SUCCEED.

I WANT TO ALSO SAY, MR. SCALI, THAT ONE OF THE THINGS THAT THE OTHER SIDE HAS BEEN SAYING FOR A LONG TIME IS THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL NOT ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL. NOW THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID "WE ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF UNITED STATES FORCES FROM INDOCHINA, CONSISTENT WITH A GENERAL SETTLEMENT OF THAT PROBLEM." HE HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT IF WE CAN SETTLE THE PROBLEM WITH A GENERAL AGREEMENT WHICH WILL PROVIDE FOR PEACE IN THE AREA, THE UNITED STATES WILL WITHDRAW ITS FORCES COMPLETELY FROM INDOCHINA.

NOW, THIS IS SOMETHING THE OTHER SIDE HAS BEEN SAYING WE HAVE REFUSED TO DO. WE HAVE DONE IT NOW, AND WE ARE WILLING TO HAVE A CEASE FIRE AND WE ARE WILLING TO HAVE AN INDOCHINA CONFERENCE AND WE ARE WILLING TO EXCHANGE PRISONERS AND WE ARE WILLING TO MAKE A FAIR POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. NOW THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT HAS TO BE MADE, WE THINK, BY THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM, NOT BY THE UNITED STATES OR NOT BY THE RUSSIANS OR NOT BY THE CHINESE, BUT BY THE PEOPLE IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

MR. SCALI: HISTORY HAS SHOWN, MR. SECRETARY, THAT MANY TIMES A CEASE FIRE WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BE JUST A PRELUDE TO A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, WINDS UP REALLY BEING THE SETTLEMENT BECAUSE THERE IS NO SETTLEMENT AFTERWARDS. WON'T THERE BE A RISK OF THIS IN VIETNAM? IN OTHER WORDS, WON'T THIS

PERHAPS LEAD TO A KIND OF DIVISION OF THE LAND, A PARTITION?

SECRETARY ROGERS: WELL, IT COULD, BUT PRESIDENT NIXON HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THAT IS NOT WHAT WE WANT. WE WANT A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT THAT WILL LAST. NOW IF THAT IS WHAT YOU HAD AND THAT IS ALL YOU HAD, IT WOULDN'T LAST, IT WOULDN'T BE PERMANENT. HE WANTS A PERMANENT PEACE IN THE AREA. HE HAS MADE HIS PROPOSAL. THE WORLD IS BEHIND IT. THE ONLY BLOCK NOW, THE ONLY STUMBLING BLOCK IS HANOI ITSELF. IF THEY AGREE TO DISCUSS THESE MATTERS IN PRIVATE SESSIONS WITH US WE THINK IT IS POSSIBLE TO WORK OUT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

MR. SCALI: HANOI, OF COURSE, KEEPS SAYING THAT PRESIDENT THIEU AND VICE PRESIDENT KY AND THE PREMIER MUST GO IF THERE IS TO BE ANY KIND OF POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. WE OF COURSE HAVE CONSISTENTLY DECLINED TO ALLOW THEM TO DECIDE WHO SHOULD RULE IN SOUTH VIETNAM. IS THERE ANY POSSIBILITY AS YOU SEE IT THAT PRESIDENT HIEU OR VICE PRESIDENT KY THEMSELVES, VOLUNTARILY, AS A STEP TOWARD PEACE, OR ANY OTHER REASON, MIGHT VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO STEP DOWN?

SECRETARY ROGERS: NO, WE DON'T THINK SO. BUT WE HAVE SAID FROM THE BEGINNING THAT ANY SOLUTION THAT IS WORKED OUT BY THE PEOPLE IN SOUTH VIETNAM IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE UNITED STATES. WE THINK THE BEST WAY TO DETERMINE WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT IS BY THE ELECTIVE PROCESS, BUT WE ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT IF SOME OTHER SOLUTION COULD BE WORKED OUT THAT WAS FAIR, THAT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO US. WE THINK THE BEST SOLUTION IS AN ELECTION. BUT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARE PREPARED TO TALK, THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO TALK TO THE OTHER SIDE ABOUT A POLITICAL SOLUTION.

MR. PETERSON: SECRETARY LAIRD, WE HAVE BEEN HOPING THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD PUT SOME PRESSURE ON HANOI TO GET THEM TO GO ALONG WITH THIS. ISN'T THERE REASON TO BELIEVE NOW THAT PERHAPS THE SOVIETS DON'T HAVE THAT MUCH INFLUENCE IN HANOI?

SECRETARY LAIRD: NO, I DON'T BELIEVE THAT CAN BE ASSUMED. THE SOVIET UNION STILL IS THE MAJOR SUPPLIER OF NORTH VIETNAM. EIGHTY PERCENT OF THE TONNAGE, THE SUPPLIES GOING INTO NORTH VIETNAM, IF THEY ARE USED IN THIS WAR EFFORT, ARE SUPPLIED BY THE SOVIET UNION. I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS EXERTED ANY GREAT DEGREE OF INFLUENCE ON HANOI AS OF YET TO ACCEPT FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSED THE PRESIDENT'S FIVE-POINT PEACE PROPOSAL. I THINK THEY COULD HAVE SUBSTANTIAL INFLUENCE ON HANOI. (END EXCERPTS)

WB-70-30

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