

SOUTH VIETNAM- Possible Invasion of NVN & US Support of

NAME: President Richard M. Nixon  
OCCASION: News Conference  
DATE: February 17, 1971

A  
FILE SUBJ.  
DATE SUB-CAT  
2/71

Q. Could I clear up what I think is an important point on Laos? You suggested that the Saigon regime is making the decisions as to what it will do in its own interest, particularly in reference to crossing the DMZ.

Most Americans believe that the decision to go into Laos was made in Washington and decisions like crossing the DMZ would have, necessarily, to be made here as well because of the use of American airpower.

Could you straighten out for us where the line is between the decisions that the Saigon regime will make and that this Government will make?

THE PRESIDENT. Any decision, Mr. Lisagor, that called for American participation would have to be approved in Washington. The decision with regard to Laos was one that was approved in Washington.

I approved the operation and I approved the decision to use American airpower. The operation itself was jointly developed, primarily by the South Vietnamese, but with, of course, very close cooperation and consultation with General Abrams and his staff.

But wherever American participation to any extent is required, you can be sure that that decision will be made here.

Now, when you put it in terms of what would happen in the event the South Vietnamese went into North Vietnam, I am not going to speculate on what they will or will not do. I will only say that any American participation has to be approved here.

If South Vietnam's decision with regard to what they do would depend upon American cooperation, then, of course, it could not be undertaken without our approval.

Reporter: Thank you, Mr. President.