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U.S. FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE 1970's: THE EMERGING STRUCTURE OF PEACE
(President Nixon's Report to Congress, February 9, 1972¹ (Excerpts))

INDOCHINA

VIETNAM

"To end this war—but to end it in a way that will strengthen trust for America around the world, not undermine it; in a way that will redeem the sacrifices that have been made, not insult them; in a way that will heal this Nation, not tear it apart."—Address to the Nation, April 7, 1971.

The essential international challenge when this Administration took office was to shape a new American role in the world, to share responsibilities in creative partnerships with our friends, and to move from confrontation to negotiation with our opponents. But as we set out on this road in January 1969, we faced the hard realities of a seemingly open ended war in Indochina.

¹ Department of State Bulletin, Mar. 18, 1972, pp. 367-379.

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR ON MICROFILM

- Five years of steadily rising American troop levels in Vietnam had brought our authorized strength there to 549,500.
 - American combat deaths during 1968 had averaged 278 weekly.
 - Americans were flying about 33,000 tactical air sorties each month in Indochina, including 18,500 in South Vietnam.
 - U.S. monthly draft call in 1968 averaged over 30,000.
- In mid-1969, roughly 40 percent of South Vietnam's rural population was under government control, with 50 percent contested and ten percent under the control of the other side. As the enemy's general offensives of 1968 demonstrated, the urban population of six million was by no means secure from attack.
- Straining under the burdens of war, the South Vietnamese economy was wracked by inflation running at a rate of 35-40 percent. There was little planning to overcome this problem, let alone to provide for long range economic development.
 - The additional costs of the Vietnam War to the United States had reached \$22 billion a year.
 - There was no comprehensive plan for lowering American involvement and no suggestion that American troop levels could be reduced. Indeed in September 1968, the then Secretary of Defense stated: "We have not yet reached the level of 549,500 in South Vietnam. We intend to continue to build toward that level. We have no intention of lowering that level, either by next June or at any time in the foreseeable future."
 - The expanded Paris peace talks were just beginning and had settled only on procedures. There were no negotiating proposals on the conference table to end the conflict.
 - Our domestic fabric was severely strained by dissent over the conflict, and increasing numbers of Americans were pressing for the extreme solutions of escalation or immediate disengagement.

How we dealt with this issue would be crucial to our efforts to shape a new role for America in the 1970's and beyond. Obviously we wanted to end the war. But we knew that the way we ended the war, or our involvement in it, would fundamentally affect our broader international effort.

There were no easy choices. Further escalation of our military efforts would deepen the divisions in our society, could not assure success in a conflict which was as much political as military, and could risk a wider war.

Continuing on the same path offered no clear prospect either of ending American involvement or of ending the war. Such a course could not have commended American domestic support.

Precipitate disengagement, without regard to consequences, would have made impossible our efforts to forge a new foreign policy. It might have been domestically popular for a short term, but as its consequences became clear, the agony of recrimination would have replaced the agony of war. Overseas, this course would have shaken the trust of our friends and earned the contempt of our adversaries. We could not begin to build new partnerships by turning our back on people who had come to count on our support. And we could not set out to negotiate with adversaries by abandoning allies.

There were, however, two possible courses of action that would be internationally responsible and responsive to domestic opinion. The fastest and most decisive course was to negotiate a settlement to end the war for all participants. We progressively defined the terms of a settlement publicly and privately to Hanoi. This effort culminated in the comprehensive U.S.-South Vietnamese proposal which I made public on January 25, 1972.

However, we could not afford to rely solely on North Vietnamese willingness to reach a settlement. We needed an alternative. Thus we launched the process of progressively turning over defense responsibilities to the South Vietnamese and thereby reducing U.S. involvement. We also hoped this course would stimulate negotiation.

... We have come a long way.

- There has been a steady decline in American forces over the past three years, with over 400,000 of our troops withdrawn. The authorized American troop level on February 1, 1972 was 139,000. On January 13, 1972 I announced a further withdrawal which by May 1, 1972 will bring our forces down to 89,000, or an 87 percent reduction from the authorized level this Administration inherited.
- American combat deaths averaged 278 per week in 1968. In 1971, they were down to an average of 26, and in the last six months of 1971 were 11 per week.

- Close to 60 percent of all U.S. casualties during this Administration occurred in 1969, including 40 percent during the first six months—before our programs had a chance to take hold. Despite its vastly greater role in the war, South Vietnam's casualties have also dropped from the 1968 level.
- In 1971 Americans flew a monthly average of 11,000 attack sorties in Indochina, including only 1,500 in South Vietnam, representing declines of about 70 percent and 90 percent respectively of the comparable 1968 figures.
 - Average monthly U.S. draft calls declined to 7,500 in 1971, one-fourth the 1968 figure.
 - During 1971 the South Vietnamese army, up to 1.1 million from the 1968 level of 800,000, conducted twenty major combat engagements for every one involving U.S. forces. By year's end U.S. forces had shifted essentially to a defensive and base security role.
 - In the countryside, at the close of 1971 approximately 73 percent of the rural population was under South Vietnamese government control, with 24 percent contested and 3 percent still in enemy hands. Added to the now secure urban population of 6 million, this represents over 80 percent of the total South Vietnamese population under GVN control.
 - South Vietnamese economic reforms have reduced inflation to 15 percent annually, turned over more than 800,000 acres of land to tenant farmers, and laid the grounds for long range economic development.
 - The additional costs of the war have steadily dropped and total \$8 billion in the current fiscal year, down by almost 65 percent from the costs three years ago.

This is the record of our Vietnamization policy. It has now effectively concluded the U.S. ground combat responsibility. Our other activities are being transferred to the South Vietnamese. We are ending American involvement in the war while making it possible for those who do not wish to be dominated by outside forces to carry on their own defense.

... I believe the record of secret negotiations and our new peace proposals make unmistakably clear that we have been and are ready to conclude a fair settlement. The stubborn reality is that the North Vietnamese have blocked all possible openings so far. They have continued to insist not only that we withdraw unconditionally but that as we do we replace the present leadership in South Vietnam. They offer no political process except one that will ensure in advance that the Communists rule the South.

In our view, there is only one fundamental issue left—*will we collude with our enemies to overturn our friends? Will we impose a future on the Vietnamese people that the other side has been unable to gain militarily or politically? This we shall never do.*

So long as the other side insists on a settlement that is a thinly veiled formula for their takeover with our assistance, negotiations cannot succeed. If instead they are willing to compete fairly in the political arena in South Vietnam, they will find our side forthcoming in meeting their concerns.

Prisoners of War

No single issue has received greater attention or been the subject of more intense efforts in this Administration than the plight of our prisoners of war in Indochina.

About 1,500 of our armed forces and some 40 U.S. civilians remain captured or missing in territory held by North Vietnam and its allies. The other side is holding the prisoners of war under circumstances which violate humanitarian principles and the Geneva Conventions on POW's agreed to by North Vietnam. The enemy has refused to allow international inspection of its prisoner camps. It has refused to furnish to the International Red Cross or to other impartial agencies complete lists of the prisoners it holds. Moreover, it has provided no lists at all for the prisoners it holds in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It has curtailed the regular flow of mail between the men and their families.

At the end of 1971 the other side finally released a large number of letters. They included the first evidence ever received that some of our men held in South Vietnam were still alive. While we welcomed this development, it also underlined the cruel and unnecessary anguish caused to American families by Hanoi's withholding for so long the fact that these men were alive.

Neither identifying all of our men held by the Communists nor providing their total numbers could have any military significance. It is their suffering and the anguish of their families which give them value as hostages for Hanoi and its

allies. The requirements of international law and decency are clear: the Communist side stands in violation of universally accepted standards. (Their policy has set a grim precedent.

This Administration has moved on many fronts to deal with this problem. Our basic position is that this issue should be treated on a humanitarian basis and separated from other military and political issues in the conflict. As I said in my peace initiative of October 7, 1970:

"The immediate release of all prisoners of war would be a simple act of humanity. But it could serve even more. It could serve to establish good faith, the intent to make progress, and thus to improve the prospects for negotiation."

The plight of our prisoners has aroused the widest concern. There have been hearings and resolutions in the Congress. The International Red Cross has made known its concern. The United Nations has adopted a strong resolution calling for compliance with the Geneva Convention, and specifically proposing that seriously sick and wounded prisoners, and those held for long periods, be interned in neutral nations. Many governments have publicly offered such neutral internment, subject to the agreement of both sides. We regret North Vietnam's failure to respond constructively to these humanitarian moves.

In addition to our formal initiatives, the South Vietnamese have, with our support, taken a long series of unilateral steps in an attempt to prompt the early release of prisoners. Over the past five years they have released over 4,000 POWs in South Vietnam and some 250 to North Vietnam. Just in the last year and a half alone, South Vietnam initiated the following moves.

- On July 8, 1970 it returned 92 North Vietnamese sick and wounded prisoners to North Vietnam, along with 24 North Vietnamese fishermen who had been rescued in South Vietnamese waters.
- On October 8, 1970 the Government of South Vietnam joined in the U.S. proposal for the total and prompt release of all prisoners of war held by all sides.
- On December 10, 1970 it proposed the release of all North Vietnamese prisoners it holds in return for the release of all U.S. and free world prisoners and all South Vietnamese prisoners of war held outside South Vietnam.
- On January 24, 1971 it released 35 more North Vietnamese prisoners of war.
- On January 26, 1971 it offered to repatriate all sick and wounded POW's and called for similar action by the other side.
- On April 8, 1971 South Vietnam proposed that sick and wounded prisoners as well as prisoners held in captivity for a long period of time be interned in a neutral country, a proposal supported by the U.S. Government on the same date at the Paris Peace Talks.
- On April 29, 1971 South Vietnam offered to return 570 sick and wounded North Vietnamese prisoners to North Vietnam and to intern in a neutral country 1,200 North Vietnamese prisoners held four years or longer.
- On November 1, 1971 on the occasion of President Thieu's inauguration, it announced the freeing of almost 3,000 Viet Cong prisoners of war in South Vietnam.

We have reinforced these initiatives: special envoys, such as Astronaut Frank Borman and Postmaster General Blount, have gone abroad to seek support for proper POW treatment; a dramatic rescue attempt was made at Son Tay in November 1970.

We have explored all possible channels and all responsible means of gaining freedom for the men. I have reaffirmed my personal commitment. In meeting with a group of POW/MIA families on September 28, 1971, I told them:

"... I have considered the problem of obtaining the release of our POW's and missing in action as being one that has Presidential priority.

"I can assure you that every negotiating channel ... including many private channels that have not yet been disclosed, have been pursued, are being pursued, and will be pursued. ..."

Despite the other side's behavior this far, this Administration will continue to use every means to press for proper treatment and prompt release of all Americans held in captivity. I have said that Americans in significant numbers will remain in South Vietnam until we secure the release of our imprisoned men.

At the same time, we will continue to work for a responsible settlement to the Indochina conflict which will give the people of that area the opportunity to determine freely their own future and speed the return of all our men to their families.

South Vietnam's Growing Capacity to Protect Itself

... In coming months the enemy can be expected to pose maximum challenges to Vietnamization. At the turn of the year there were many signs that the enemy was preparing for major offensives, especially in the northern half of South Vietnam. As U.S. withdrawals cut our presence down to a minimum level, Hanoi would still like to discredit the record of these past three years and shake the widespread confidence that the South Vietnamese can defend themselves.

Our friends are bound to suffer some isolated setbacks. But these should not distort the overall picture of growing self-sufficiency and security. We and the South Vietnamese are both confident of their ability to handle the North Vietnamese challenge.

By the close of 1971 the U.S. ground combat role was effectively completed. The year saw a constant advance toward the goal I discussed on April 7:

"As you can see from the progress we have made to date and by this announcement tonight, the American involvement in Vietnam is coming to an end. The day the South Vietnamese can take over their own defense is in sight. Our goal is a total American withdrawal from Vietnam. We can and will reach that goal through our program of Vietnamization if necessary."

The Situation in the Countryside

No aspect of the conflict, and no measure of Vietnamization, is more important than the relentless, if unpublicized, struggle for the South Vietnamese living in the countryside, commonly called pacification.

Pacification involves the situation in rural areas in all its dimensions—physical security, popular allegiance, and the military, administrative, and political effectiveness of both sides. A successful pacification effort permits the villager to return to his land and improve his farm, confident that he will be able to harvest and market his crops in security.

During the past year, the South Vietnamese faced a crucial challenge: to keep up the momentum of pacification, while simultaneously taking over an increasing share of combat responsibilities as U.S. and other allied forces rapidly withdrew. In most areas, this challenge was met successfully.

... We did not expect pacification to progress at the same rate in 1971. The remaining contested areas are those in which the other side is most firmly rooted, where the Communist infrastructure has been established for as long as two decades, and where enemy bases and infiltration routes are closest to the rural population. Nevertheless, in 1971 the South Vietnamese Government increased its control over the rural population from 65 percent to 73 percent. At year's end the Government's control was under 60 percent in only seven of the 44 provinces, compared with 15 provinces in December 1970. Government control was over 80 percent in 20 provinces compared with nine a year earlier.

Over 80 percent of the total population of South Vietnam, including the six million urban dwellers and eight million in rural areas, is under effective Government control.

Despite the substantial overall progress in pacification, there were also some setbacks. The percentage of the rural population under uncontested Government of Vietnam control declined in five of the seven most northern provinces, closest to the enemy's staging areas in North Vietnam and Laos. We hope that the formation of an additional division in the northern sector and other recent steps by the Government will reverse that trend.

More South Vietnamese now receive government protection and services than at any time in the past decade. A majority of the population has participated in national and local elections. Rice production has risen to the highest level in history. A major land reform program has resulted in distribution of more than 850,000 acres of land to over 275,000 farm families.

And perhaps most significantly of all, the government has the confidence to hand over nearly 600,000 weapons to peasants who serve as a local militia, the People's Self-Defense Forces. A government unpopular with its people would never dare to arm them.

These are the actions of a government that is increasingly sure of allegiance and taking the steps to deserve that allegiance.

Political Development

In last year's Report I pointed out that the political dimension was crucial for South Vietnam's future and would take on increasing importance as the military

efforts wound down. Noting the upcoming Presidential and lower house elections, I said that, "1971 will show the extent of political development in South Vietnam."

The results this past year have been mixed. There are areas in which political freedom and development still need to be advanced in South Vietnam. And the cohesiveness of the non-Communist political forces remains to be tested.

But this should not obscure some fundamental facts. In just a few short years, South Vietnam has made remarkable progress building toward democracy in the midst of a war. The past four years have been characterized by basic political stability in South Vietnam rather than the turbulence of the previous period. The Constitution is proving effective, and participation in the political process is broadening.

A consistent political evolution has taken place in the period since the election of a Constitutional Assembly in 1966 and of the President and a National Assembly in 1967. The numbers of voters and candidates participating has been exceptionally high in the numerous national and local elections held during the last five years, despite the announced Communist intent to disrupt elections and to attack candidates. Over 95 percent of the elections for hamlet chiefs and village councils have been completed. Councils have been elected in all provinces and municipalities.

The trend was furthered in the August 1971 national elections for South Vietnam's lower house. There was lively competition, and 78 percent of the eligible voters turned out. As in the Senate elections a year earlier, where an opposition slate led the returns, groups critical of the Government won significant victories and increased their substantial representation in the Legislature, a fact that attests to the fairness of these contests.

More international attention was devoted to the South Vietnamese presidential election in October 1971. We hoped that this election would be vigorously contested. We have stressed the concept of free choice in South Vietnam. We believed that a contested election would leave the resulting South Vietnamese Government in a stronger position than an unopposed victory. We had an obligation to make our views known, publicly and privately. We emphasized our view that there should be more than one candidate, and we worked diligently to encourage opponents of President Thieu to remain in the race.

But at this stage in South Vietnam's political development, a contested election depends upon the personal motives and calculations of individuals. South Vietnam lacks well established political parties capable of guaranteeing alternative candidates. The interplay of personalities and circumstances in South Vietnam last year simply failed to produce a contest. Some observers believed that President Thieu's use of governmental powers was primarily responsible. Others believed that opponents deliberately chose to embarrass President Thieu rather than contest an election they expected to lose in any case.

We were disappointed that the election was uncontested; but we rejected the view that we should intervene directly or cut off aid to South Vietnam. In the final phases of American involvement, we were determined to avoid the practices which helped produce our involvement in the first place.

We thus preferred the disappointment of an uncontested election to the probably fatal mistake of attempted manipulation of the South Vietnamese political scene. In the final analysis, it is to the credit of the South Vietnamese—opponents as well as supporters of the regime—that they emerged from a trying and uncertain summer with their political stability and constitutional structure intact. Despite its remaining problems, South Vietnam's political development contrasts favorably, indeed, with North Vietnam, where there are no true elections at all.

Economic Development

A sound Vietnamese economy is crucial for political stability and a viable government. Last year I recounted the successful efforts of the South Vietnamese to brake the rampant inflation that had plagued that nation for years. This effort was continued in 1971. Further actions were taken to lay the groundwork for long range economic development.

The achievements in 1971 were especially striking, in view of the need to support a large military establishment and the dislocations resulting from large U.S. troop withdrawals.

- Domestic tax receipts increased 25 percent.
- Prices increased less than 15 percent.

- Production of rice, lumber, fish and textiles rose.
- New plants were built to produce textiles, plywood, electric power, plastic products and flour.

On November 15, in his first address to the legislature after his inauguration, President Thieu made economic development and eventual economic self-sufficiency major national goals. He announced comprehensive economic reforms to increase savings and investment, to raise domestic tax collections, and to encourage exports, industrialization and private foreign investment. The program included a major devaluation of the piaster, a difficult but essential step.

It is a courageous undertaking to move forward rapidly on development when almost half of the country's able-bodied men are needed for the military effort and the costs of security impose a tremendous burden on the economy. The Vietnamese look to their friends to assist them in their development efforts.

We had hoped to respond promptly by diverting some assistance funds in 1972 to support Vietnamese development. The unwise Congressional reduction of foreign assistance funds has hampered this effort. In the current budget, I am requesting funds specifically for economic development in Vietnam.

South Vietnam will continue to need substantial U.S. support to fill the gap between government revenues and defense costs. This form of U.S. assistance can be reduced over the next several years as the program for internal development takes hold and the economic and tax reforms yield larger revenues. We must not expect instantaneous results, however, so long as the South Vietnamese are forced to devote a major portion of their national effort to defending against North Vietnamese aggression.

South Vietnam has been plagued with war for three and a half decades. It remains a poor country with per capita income of less than \$150. But it has rich potential and an industrious people. The ending of hostilities would allow the full utilization of these resources. We stand ready to assist all Vietnamese in peaceful development.

Remaining Problems

Each of the past three years has shown accelerating progress in Vietnam. However, we are under no illusions about the stubbornness and gravity of the remaining problems.

—*Breaking the Negotiating Impasse.*—A negotiated settlement remains the quickest and most humane way to end the conflict. It holds out the only real promise that the war will soon cease for Asians as well as for Americans, for Laos and Cambodia as well as for Vietnam. However, three years of unilateral moves, secret talks, negotiating proposals, and Vietnamization progress have failed to induce the other side to join with us in settling the struggle at the conference table. We have reduced the issues to a single crucial question: will the political future of South Vietnam be imposed by outsiders or will it be competitively shaped by the South Vietnamese? The other side has consistently been unyielding on this political issue. We will nevertheless continue our efforts, in any promising forum.

—*Retrieving Our Men.*—Either as part of an overall settlement, or through other means, we shall secure the release of American prisoners held throughout Indochina. The other side continues to exploit this issue and to manipulate the sentiments of the American people. Hanoi has demonstrated that it will try to extract maximum advantages by using our men as bargaining pawns. So long as they hold our men there will be American forces in South Vietnam. We will pursue every honorable path until we succeed in returning these prisoners to their families.

—*Completing the Transfer of Defense Responsibilities.*—Last year brought the effective conclusion of the American ground combat role in South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese assumed that burden, and a steadily increasing share of all other responsibilities in the conflict. The remaining problems include completion of the transfer of air and logistic support to the South Vietnamese; improving the pacification situation in the northern provinces; building more cohesive non-Communist political forces; and setting in train the long term development of South Vietnam.

Major tests can be expected in coming months. Only the sustained will of the South Vietnamese can meet that challenge. As we complete the Vietnamization process, we will need the continued understanding of the American people to finish the process which has brought us so far, to redeem our sacrifices, and to contribute to the building of a more stable peace.

LAOS AND CAMBODIA

... The Lao and Cambodian governments have tried to restore their independence and neutrality through diplomatic means; failing that, they have been forced to turn to their friends for support of their defense. The United States and other nations have responded to their requests for assistance. We have supported both diplomatic efforts to bring peace to Laos and Cambodia, and defensive military efforts in the absence of a settlement.

On the diplomatic front, we have always backed the efforts of Lao Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma—the neutralist leader supported by Hanoi at the time of the 1962 Geneva Accords—to reinstitute those Accords. In Cambodia we long tolerated a difficult military situation and we encouraged negotiations when Prince Sihanouk was first deposed by the National Assembly in March 1970.

Our negotiating proposals on Vietnam have consistently been addressed to the broader Indochina context. In the face of North Vietnam's refusal to address these problems at the conference table, we have continued the policies of previous Administrations in extending military and economic support to the Royal Lao Government. We have provided military assistance for Cambodia since the spring of 1970, when North Vietnamese troops moved out of the border sanctuaries and extended their operation into broader areas of Cambodia.

Our constant objectives in both countries have been to ensure the momentum of Vietnamization and our withdrawals, to protect American and allied lives, and to help maintain the precarious balance within these two countries as they fight to restore their independence and neutrality.

In both countries our activities are limited, requested, supportive, and defensive.

Laos and Cambodia Provide for Their Own Defense. In Laos, government forces continue to offer a tenacious defense despite years of combat against a numerically superior enemy. The struggle there ebbs and flows on a seasonal basis. The Laotian conflict is, in effect, two wars. In the north, North Vietnamese troops maintain pressure on the very government which Hanoi helped to create in 1962. In the south, the enemy concentrates on expanding and protecting the Ho Chi Minh trail complex which is vital to its military strength in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

The Cambodian Government, faced with assault on its independence, has rallied the population to the cause of national survival. From a lightly-equipped and largely ceremonial force of 85,000 men in 1970, the Cambodian army has now grown to approximately 200,000, for the most part volunteers.

The army has fought bravely, but it lacks training, equipment, and experience. And it faces over 60,000 well-equipped North Vietnamese troops, hardened and experienced by years of war.

Despite the measures which they are taking in their own defense, these two countries are clearly no match for a much larger North Vietnam, and they must have external assistance to survive. It would be a grim development indeed if these two small nations, so clearly the victims of external aggression, were overwhelmed because of restrictions placed on American and other allied aid while North Vietnam continued to receive the full backing of its own allies.

Neither country has requested the deployment of U.S. troops. They are manning the front lines. Thus, there are not—and there will not be—any U.S. ground combat troops in either country.

Together With Other Countries, We Provide Military And Economic Assistance. In Laos, this remains as outlined in my comprehensive report of March 1970—military aid for regular and irregular Lao forces when requested by the Lao Government; reconnaissance flights and air operations to interdict North Vietnamese troops and supplies on the Ho Chi Minh Trail; logistic and air support for Lao forces when requested by the Government. We also provide economic assistance to control inflation, support essential Government services, and assist economic development.

In Cambodia, we have given military assistance since April 1970 and economic assistance and PL 480 programs since March 1971. With the approval of the government we are also conducting air interdiction missions against enemy personnel and supplies that are, or can be, used in offensives against American and allied forces in South Vietnam.

South Vietnam Has Mounted Defensive Operations Against North Vietnamese Forces in Their Laotian and Cambodian Base Areas. I have already described the purposes of these operations and noted the increasing South Vietnamese capabilities that they have demonstrated. In Cambodia, operations are at the

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request of the Government and serve to relieve enemy pressures against Cambodia as well as South Vietnam. In Laos, the South Vietnamese operations were strictly limited in objective and duration.

It is senseless to claim that these operations against enemy sanctuaries serve to widen the Vietnam war. Not a single South Vietnamese soldier has gone anywhere except where tens of thousands of North Vietnamese troops have been entrenched for years, violating one country's territory to attack another. It is Hanoi which widened the conflict long ago.

As I said in last year's Foreign Policy Report:

"The arguments against South Vietnam's defensive actions suggest that Hanoi has the right—without provocation and with complete immunity—to send its forces into Laos and Cambodia, threaten their governments, and prepare to bring its full strength to bear on South Vietnam itself.

"The choice for South Vietnam is not between limiting and expanding the war. It is between what it is doing in self-defense and passively watching the menace grow along its borders."

The presence and activities of North Vietnamese troops in Laos and Cambodia are indefensible. Nevertheless, we can expect the Lao and Cambodian peoples to be subjected to additional attacks as Hanoi pursues its aims in the region. These countries ask nothing but to be left alone to shape their own destinies. They have demonstrated their courage, and their determination to try to provide for their own defense. Together with others, we shall continue to provide the support that will help to sustain them in their struggle.

* * * * *

I once again appeal to the other side to join in the search for peace in Indochina. Proposals now on the negotiating table could end this conflict on a basis that would respect the sacrifices of all participants.

It is long past time to still the sound of war, to return the men of both sides to their families, and to devote the energies of all to the fruitful tasks of peace.