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# HANOI ANNOUNCEMENT TAKES SAIGON BY SURPRISE

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[Text] Saigon--The North Vietnamese authorities' decision, announced by Radio Hanoi, to meet the United States halfway and begin a dialogue was learned in Saigon at about 2300 hours in the midst of a curfew. It caused considerable surprise, for all hope of seeing Hanoi answer President Johnson positively had been abandoned.

In American official circles, it was even generally believed that the decision to continue the bombings in a 350-kilometer area from the 17th to the 20th parallels would keep Hanoi, worried about its territorial integrity, from answering President Johnson favorably. Many Americans privately thought that the President had gone too far. This same feeling was shared by South Vietnamese ruling circles, who also thought that Hanoi could not respond favorably without losing face.

Hanoi appears to have succeeded in saving face while beginning a dialogue. Since 2100 hours, representatives of the American Embassy had been informed of Hanoi radio's readiness to broadcast an answer to President Johnson in Vietnamese. The broadcast was scheduled for 2130 hours Hanoi time--2230 hours Saigon time. The monitoring services and the interpreters set to work and U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker was kept informed paragraph by paragraph of Radio Hanoi's official text.

4 April 1968

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SOUTH VIETNAM

"Although there has been no official Hanoi reaction, it will surely be very cautious in making future decisions to avoid becoming a victim of international criticism. All U.S. allies have agreed that peace depends on Hanoi, but if it is unwilling to respond properly. It will be difficult to secure another opportunity for both sides to hold negotiations in honor."

TIEN terms "President Johnson's withdrawal from the presidential election and the suspension of bombing a U.S. internal affair. Of course, this is not a concession to communist aggression but a sign of war deescalation and a manifestation of U.S. good will for peace."

TU DO, reporting Johnson's decision, stresses that "it is high time for Hanoi to seize this last opportunity to save the interests of the communist party and the prestige of the North Vietnamese regime." The paper warns that "if Hanoi, incited by Peking, continues to push the Vietnamese people into the war, a day will come when the international powers such as Britain, the United States, Japan, India, and the USSR will directly intervene to safeguard mankind's peace by dealing a direct blow to Peking."

THOI THE claims that "Johnson's bomb caused a terrible explosion in Saigon. The bombing suspension as announced by Johnson and a reduction in military operations have become less important than his decision not to run for re-election....all recent events in the Vietnam war were, in fact, part of a peace offensive, but if this offensive fails, there will be a big battle... However, Johnson's determination not to run for re-election was a surprise....Some people believe that by this decision Johnson has dodged his responsibilities while guiding U.S. policy for many years. Others say that Johnson has achieved a particular political move and enhanced his prestige by dealing a staggering blow to North Vietnam.... Many confused views exist, but one can be confident that the United States and South Vietnam are determined to win the war in this country."

XAY DUNG says: "Of course President Johnson adopted this decision after a thorough examination of the military and political situations." But noteworthy is: "The United States will continue to bomb DRV provinces bordering the demilitarized zone to reduce Hanoi's efforts to send reinforcements to South Vietnam. But if Hanoi refuses to sit at the conference table, the United States will have to adopt a more resolute attitude, which, according to President Johnson's speech, would certainly be boundless escalation. In this connection, President Johnson did not forget to remind Hanoi that the U.S. armed forces are still invincible."

"To prevent Hanoi from subjective misunderstandings, President Johnson put up his presidential office as bail, saying that he would not run for re-election. This is the very significance of his second decision."

QUYET TIEN, says: "President Johnson's decisions have greatly surprised U.S. political circles and introduced a turning point in the Vietnam problem. Setting aside examination of the consequences of these decisions, we now see that President Johnson has regained the political initiative over his opponents and over Hanoi."