

SECRETARY LAIRD: There is no disagreement as far as the Department of State and the Department of Defense in this area. There is no disagreement between the President's Scientific Adviser and the Department of Defense in this area. We follow and we have all taken the position that toxins are in the field of chemical warfare. This is the position taken by the 14-Nation Commission that advised the Secretary General of the United Nations concerning chemical warfare and the whole field of biological agents. In that report to the Secretary General, which is the position which has been taken before the U.N., toxins are a chemical agent.

It should be pointed out, I think, that this whole program is under review. The chemical warfare and biological research study that was ordered by the President was ordered at my request, and I believe it is one of the most substantial studies that has been undertaken by the Security Council, and one of the most important. I would like to point out that no such study had been undertaken since 1958, except by the committee on which I served in the Congress, which undertook such a study in 1964. The Executive Branch of our government had not undertaken such a study since 1958, but there is no disagreement.

Now, as far as the interpretation of the U.K. Convention, that is a matter that we will consider separately when we get into negotiations and not before negotiations.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, can I ask one question to clarify your answer to an earlier question. It is a very important point.

SECRETARY LAIRD: I don't want to break you off but I think we have really had enough, but go ahead.

QUESTION: The one point is in answer to your question about whether it is possible that all combat troops might be taken out of Vietnam by the end of 1970, your answer seemed to be partially facetious and I would really like to understand whether you do still consider that a serious possibility?

SECRETARY LAIRD: I just want to make it very clear that I will not engage in putting out any timetables as far as troop reductions are concerned. We have our timetable; we have a plan approved by the President of the United States, and those announcements will be made by the President of the United States. I don't know how I can state that anymore firmly or any stronger than I have, not only here but in my testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. They are good at asking questions and I made it very clear that as far as the timetable was concerned, I did not believe and I did not recommend to the President a timetable being announced in advance. These announcements will be made by the President from time to time based upon the progress which we make.

THE PRESS: Thank you, sir.

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(11:17 A.M. EST)