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STATEMENT BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT¹
NOVEMBER 26, 1968

This statement is designed to answer the questions which have been raised by the Government of the Republic of Vietnam about new meetings in Paris.

Prior to the President's announcement of October 31 of the stopping of bombing against North Vietnam, agreement had been reached in Paris between North Vietnamese and U.S. negotiators that a meeting to discuss a peaceful settlement in Vietnam should be convened in Paris.

During the earlier discussions with the North Vietnamese representatives, U.S. spokesmen made clear that the stopping of bombing and the holding of such a meeting would not be possible without agreed provision for the participation of the Republic of Vietnam as a separate delegation forming with the U.S. delegation one side of the meeting. U.S. negotiators made clear to Hanoi that it might bring on its side of the table any persons it wished.

The North Vietnamese representatives in Paris accepted this proposal and indicated that they would bring to the meeting members of the so-called National Liberation Front.

In the light of these facts the arrangements agreed in Paris provide in essence for a two-sided meeting. Hanoi clearly understands that our side will be constituted as separate delegations of the Republic of Vietnam and the United States.

Whatever others may claim and however they may organize their side, the United States has not agreed and will not agree that the meeting is, or can correctly be described as, a four-sided or four-party conference.

Consistent with our view of the nature of the so-called National Liberation Front, we will regard and treat all the persons on the other side of the table—whatever they might claim for themselves—as members of a single side, that of Hanoi, and for practical purposes as a single delegation.

In the discussions between the United States and North Vietnamese negotiators it was made clear throughout that, whomever Hanoi chose to bring on its side the arrangement involved no element of recognition whatever.

The U.S. Government has repeatedly made clear, publicly and privately, that it does not recognize either the National Liberation Front or the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). Concerning the so-called National Liberation Front in particular, the U.S. Government has at all times regarded it as a creation of

¹ Department of State, press release 264, Nov. 26, 1968.

North Vietnam and an agent of Hanoi's aggression against the Republic of Vietnam. The National Liberation Front is not in any sense a separate entity, much less a government.

Following the stopping of the bombing of North Vietnam, if Hanoi fulfills its repeated undertakings to enter into serious talks—undertakings repeated throughout the contacts between North Vietnamese and American representatives in Paris—the North Vietnamese delegation must talk directly and seriously with the Republic of Vietnam's delegation.

In the Paris meetings, the Republic of Vietnam delegation will play a leading role, as was explicitly affirmed in the Honolulu communique of July. The Republic of Vietnam will take the lead and be the main spokesman on all matters which are of principal concern to South Vietnam.

The new Paris meetings will be expected to explore all avenues to end Communist aggression against the Republic of Vietnam and to reach a peaceful settlement. They will start with a clean slate. The sole agreements that have been reached in the earlier Paris talks between North Vietnamese and U.S. representatives have concerned the stopping of bombing and the convening of a new meeting. The United States considers that there cannot be productive talks in an atmosphere where the cities are being shelled and the DMZ is being abused.

In the new meetings the U.S. Government will operate in the closest cooperation with the Republic of Vietnam, and in continuing consultation with the nations that have contributed military forces to the defense of South Vietnam.

The substantive position of the U.S. Government will be based on respect for the sovereignty of the Republic of Vietnam, and on the joint communiqes of Manila and Honolulu. In particular, there has been no change whatever, and will be no change, in the position of the U.S. Government toward a so-called coalition in South Vietnam. The United States does not believe aggression should be rewarded and will not recognize any form of government that is not freely chosen through democratic and legal process by the people of South Vietnam. The imposition of any coalition government would be in conflict with this principle.
