

Birmingham Backgrounder
March 22, 1967

Gentlemen, I thought that as long as I was here that if you had some questions you wanted to ask, I would be more than happy to try to answer them. I sort of think we ought to lay down what the ground rules are. Generally what we do on these occasions is to have a sort of off-the-record backgrounder. If that's agreeable with you, we will proceed that way. In other words I did not want to hold any particular press conference as such. I thought there might be some things on the international situation, in other words, that we could talk a little more privately for your background than we can always publicly. If you have any questions along that line I will try to answer them.

Q. Mr. Vice-President, was this government surprised when the north Vietnamese government broadcast the word about the message that President Johnson sent to Ho Chi Minh?

A. Well, we couldn't understand the timing on the message and why they would expose the channels through which the message went. The North Vietnamese have been very, very touchy about any identification of the channels or contacts. Your government has said by the Secretary of State and President a number of times that there has never been any lack of contact with North Vietnam. Now we never explained what we meant by that because had we explained what we meant by this, how the contacts were made, we felt that the contacts would all dry up, and we have been very anxious to keep contact. We have said repeatedly that we not only had contacts through third parties but we have had contacts directly and as such, well-feeling that such were important for the possibilities of any negotiation we jealously guarded any identification as to just with whom we were talking or through what country or what channels we were working. Now Ho Chi Minh came out and said quite frankly that he had received the letter from the President through the channel in Moscow.

Our only way of interpreting this (and this is just a hunch) is that this is a part of the effort made by Peiking on the government in Hanoi to expose Moscow because the Chinese constantly accuse the people in Russia of sort of being allies of the United States. They keep saying that the Soviet Union is not doing enough for North Vietnam . . . that they are not really interested in North Vietnam, etc. This is part of the propaganda war of the Chinese against the Russians, so it would appear to us that about the only reason they would expose their contact or the means by which they received this message was because of Chinese pressure. No other useful purpose that I could see would be served. Because now it is quite evident to one and to all that Ho Chi Minh has not ever really been willing to engage in any negotiation except on his terms. We knew that when the message of February 13 went to the Pope when that letter was made public. You recall that message. Ho Chi Minh's letter to Pope Paul was made public; we had our letters and the earlier letters and the letter of early February in to Ho Chi Minh, and it was our view then that maybe the response that we were getting in public print that we might not get any other response because we had not had response to some other letters and no response to other communications. It was our feeling that possibly the open reply to Pope Paul was sort of a general letter to be read by all of the allies of South Vietnam and this goes for you, too; in other words. That's what he was saying.

Q. Mr. Vice-President, I would like to say that your speech today was the finest and most definitive explanation of the aims of this war that I have ever been exposed to, and I can't imagine anything but 100% support for this action were the entire country exposed to thinking like that.

A. Well, I thank you very much. It gets to be a rather extended operation. This is not a simple struggle. This war is so different than any other that you men have reported on or covered. There are no battle lines. You can't move the map

each day and say that we gained twenty-two miles this last week or that we advanced 17 miles or 17 kilometers to the west and gained six cities such as you have been able to do in World War I and World War II and even in Korea, because this kind of war is what Mao-tse-tung says the people are the sea in which the fish of the Vietcong swim and you never know where the enemy is, and the tragedy of this war, the unbelievable wounds, the physical wounds of this war, come not from the kind of war combat that military men are accustomed to , but from mine fields that are strewn all over every place. It's just no way to know. You may think that it is just a jungle and it is just infested with mines and cross machine gun fire. You just can't believe it. You come into a jungle area, and they have tunnels through the jungle in which they have cross fire of machine guns and they have a Viet Cong machine gunner who will be back, let's say, fifty yards . . . way back, and there is a little thin tunnel about as big around as a water main. You know, about 2 feet in diameter and there will be another tunnel coming in from the other side; there may be another tunnel coming in from an angle and there may be three machine gunners, and when the troops--and you can't tell, there is no way you can see these tunnels--and when the troops march through they just mow them down. The first fellows, the advance parties, they just catch them right in the legs and o- course when they come down it's the same tactic. You know, when they fall down, you hit them in the leg and when they fall down you catch them across the breast or chest. And these are not machine gunners that are in a dugout or in a fox-hole or some place that you can get at. There are two layers of jungle over them. Now, this is why the war is a difficult war to fight. And for the first time we are getting back into the fortresses you might say . . . into the headquarters areas of the Viet Cong. The French never touched in the war with the Viet men. They never touched these base centers and in all of the struggle up to now--up until the last few months--these great Viet Cong underground bases, jungle bases, had gone untouched

and there is just no way that you can really find them except by peasant intelligence, and this is why the military situation is (why we know it is) improved. We know in battle that we just take the measure of them almost every time. But when the peasants start to give you information as to where the secret hideout is (the secret base of the Viet Cong), this is the best sign because in a guerrilla war you cannot win unless you have the peasantry on your side, and the peasantry will be on your side primarily if they think the other side is losing. They are so terrified by the terror tactics of the communists that they will seldom tell anything unless they are sure that the communists are not going to be able to maintain their position and there I won't tell you the numbers but there are numbers of these fortresses. They are not fortresses; they are bases. They are tunnelled. They are underground. They are way back into the jungles. All of these are base centers from where the Viet Cong operate, where they're supplied, where their signal apparatus is--all of that is back in these base areas. Now we have been knocking them out lately as you know, but first of all you have to go in there and blast them out and then you have to go in there tunnel by tunnel, soldier by soldier, foot by foot and clean them out. And that is why it is a long dirty job.

Q. After you have once cleaned them out are they permanently secure then, or do you have a problem of holding them?

A. Then, it is a matter of holding them. Now that is the thing--up to now we have gone into a number of bases like this and cleaned them out, destroyed their network, blown up their tunnels, with these demolition crews and then they would have to leave because you did not have the forces to hold them. This is one of the things that the air borne troops are doing. Of course, we have mixed battalions or mixed groups with the Republic of South Vietnam troops but we want to be sure that they are good troops and you've got to remember that they have suffered terrific casualties,

unbelievable casualties, over the years and therefore we now use the Vietnamese troops, or they have taken on as their assignment. Once the search and destroy operations have taken place, they come in to hold.

Q. Do you foresee the possibility of gradually securing and holding enough of these areas?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Where you can use them now?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Are the South Vietnamese effective militarily; that is, we can depend on them for effective action?

A. Yes, most of their troops are reasonably good. Some of them are very good. Some of their marine forces, for example, some of their paratroops are very, very good. They have all been very well trained of late. We have to do a great retraining program. Now we are having another retraining program. There are sixty battalions of the airborne troops now engaged in pacification--in the sort of thing that we are talking about here--and also in going in and showing the villagers how to rebuild. They are like engineer troops. They are trained as medics. They are trained--some of them--for teaching, some for building and remember that an Asian army has, historically, never ever helped the people. The Asian armies have gone through, and in most instances, pillaged the country and you have had to retrain this whole apparatus and this has gone on. . . now there are sixty battalions of airborne troops that are presently out, have gone out into the country in pacification and rural development. There are four hundred rural development cadre teams of fifty-nine each to a team that are presently out in the villages. These are highly trained Vietnamese that have been trained for public administration, for health, for information, for communication, auto, and set up a little electrical generator, everything that it takes

to run a community. There are teams of 59 and they are trained at two large bases, two large centers and they are recruited, screened, trained. And because there are all sorts of sects and little tribes in Vietnam, you have to be sure of what kind of cadre team that you send into a village. . . the respective villages. A year ago there were none. When I was in Vietnam they had just started the program a year ago. There are four hundred now. Seventy-seven percent of all the roads in Vietnam, the main highways, are now open. . . a year ago about 50% . . . 2 years ago 20%. So if you just stick with it, you see, if you remember this, that in Malaya, the Malaysians and the British fought for ten years--ten years against the communist guerrillas and in the Phillipines the Hucks actually had control of the large areas of the Phillipines and even controlled Manilla in the night when Mackisasi was finally able to lead good forces against them with a lot of help from us.

Q. Is there enough evidence that can be expressed that the communist hold on the south Vietnamese i.e. psychologically, as well as militarily, is being weakened, that we could take action?

A. I doubt that there is much communist hold on the South Vietnamese. First of all the South Vietnamese have been tired of politics as such. They have been victims of poor politics over the years. They were the victims of French colonialism. They were the victims of all kinds of governments that really did not represent them. There has never been really what we would call a united nation. Actually there is more unity in the nation today and I am not trying to delude myself because there isn't enough yet but there is more unity in the nation today in terms of nationhood and national spirit than there has been for a long time and the reason is that for the first time you've started to connect people. Your television has been very effective. We have put television over there. We have put a lot of television sets. We run the television out at the large . . . We have. . . for a long time we used a

connie out there, a four engine connie out there, with a transmitter outfit right above Saigon, right above Da Nong, and above different cities so that you would have an area in which you would cover--and television was fantastic! The people were so excited about it. For the first time they saw their national leaders, and their national leaders could talk to them. For the first time they had textbooks. For the first time they had a road system communication that is open and then, too, their country is in movement. Their government keeps moving people, not all people. . . but I mean like educators, doctors, engineers, etc. So they are beginning to get a spirit of nationhood and yet the local government is very strong. It is like our early days in the American Republic, the provinces are very strong, the districts and the villages-- they are strong local government units and remember they do have elections. This is something that the American people forget. They elect a city council just like you do. They elect a mayor of the city and they have contests for it. They had an election just two years ago this coming May. They have an election coming up on the district and village elections within the next month, and then you will have the election for the President this summer and then the Constituent Assembly, which has written the constitution, has already received the approval from the directorate to promulgate the election laws and it has also received approval from the directorate to act as the parliament until the parliamentary elections can be held. Now I did not discuss this constitution today but it is quite a document. It's part borrowed from ourselves, from the French, and the Koreans. The president is elected in a national election. The congressmen are elected in their districts. The senate is elected from their provinces. And the president appoints the prime minister just like President DeGaulle appoints the Prime Minister of France. The Prime Minister appoints the cabinet officers but the cabinet officers are subject to the approval

of the parliament. The president can veto a law which can be overridden by two-thirds of the senate as in our senate but by 50% of the house, so that they have a closer control over the presidency from the house. The province governors are all elected, not appointed like the French constitution; DeGaulle appoints the province, the department heads. Here they are elected like your Governor, like any governor is elected. So they have a hybrid situation of a government but I think a very good one with a strong presidency, with a prime minister who will essentially be an administrator, with the cabinet officers who are responsible to the parliament. And with a parliament with no unlimited powers over the president. . . in other words, in order to veto you have to get both houses to override a veto and you've got to get two-thirds of their senate to override a veto and 50% of the house. Now they have done this under terrible strain and every group in Vietnam is represented in that Constituent Assembly and the military directorate is not a military directorate alone, there are ten generals and ten civilians and the civilians represent all facets of life. . . in Vietnam and it is a group of twenty and Ky has shown remarkable capacities--he really has. Remember this, fellow's training was a junior air force officer first and then a senior air force officer. He is a young man in his thirties and every time this poor fellow says something, the Americans jump on him. And he said rather plaintively to our President (that is, was rather difficult) that it was rather hard for their people to understand that with all of the problems they have that every or all the comments and all of the complaint comes from the United States about everything that they are trying to do. Now this fellow, by the way, before he came to Guam, got that directorate to approve that constitution. And I want to tell you that the betting was amongst our cynics and intellectuals, that that constitution would never be written and the second betting was that if they did write it, that the directorate would rewrite it and the third one was that the directorate would never let the Constitutional Assembly promulgate the election

laws, that the election laws would be promulgated by the Junta or the director. All of that is proven false, just as most people said (and you read it in your own papers). The columnists who write for the big syndicated columns that the Constituent Assembly would be a fake . . . Well, it wasn't. The other thing that is very encouraging, gentlemen, is that the rate of defection is way up. Last year, it was '66, it was double what it was in '65 and in the last four weeks it has doubled the highest that it was in '66.

Q. You are talking about the defection of . . . ?

A. The Viet Cong; defection from the Viet Cong over to the south. But I would not want my remarks to be interpreted that the war is going to be over in a hurry. We don't know. As a matter of fact, I would predict that it is going to be a long, hard struggle. But you can't tell. Because this last battle that the boys had over there just disseminated that regiment of Viet Cong. The fire power of our troops, the mobility, is fantastic. You know we get a little company pinned down, a platoon, that suffers momentarily some high losses. But just in minutes, five minutes, ten minutes, twenty minutes at maximum, there is a large contingent of troops in with huge, tremendous fire power that moves right in on the enemy because we've got more helicopters in South Vietnam than all of the rest of the free world put together. We have more helicopters in South Vietnam than China and Russia and all of the Soviet block put together. We have fantastic fire power. Now one thing you ought to know is that on these pauses, and we have had these pauses because we thought they were worthwhile endeavors. . . We don't want to get in the position of arguing whether you bomb or whether you shouldn't bomb as a final act. Do you see what I mean? I mean there is one group in America that says 'you've just got to stop all of the bombing.' That's what Ho Chi Minh says, too. There's another group in America who says "We just gotta keep it up.' Bombing ought to be looked upon as to

what it's military and political importance is at any particular time. And not only how much bombing you do but for what purpose and when and where and what's the . . . what are you after? We are just not going to get ourselves in a position of signing off and giving away one of the major elements of power that this country has in order to please Ho Chi Minh who says 'if you do this we might be willing to talk provided that you'll get your troops out of South Vietnam. . . that you will recognize the national liberation, etc. But even if it were just for the basis of, as Ho Chi Minh says, 'permanent unconditional unqualified cessation of the bombing'. . . he doesn't talk about any pause. He said, in fact, a pause he interprets as an ultimatum and said so. He said these pauses are just ultimatims to us. "You have to declare, Mr. Johnson' (he says to our President before the whole world), 'that you will never again bomb North Vietnam.' Well, now we can't afford to take one of the major elements of our military power and cast it aside. Knowing what we do and what we know, we know that every pause, particularly the last one, in this last tet, and by the way we had six days of it, and before the tet we had informed Vietnam by letter from the President that we wanted to talk with him. We had even made some concessions about the talk, saying that we would not move in any more supplies; we would not strengthen our forces and that we were prepared to stop the bombing if they would just cease infiltration or any other single military act of deescalation. They rejected that out of hand. So it wasn't just six days of pause. He asked also for the extension of the tet. They rejected it all. But during that six days when the tet period came on the very first day they had their trucks all mobilized; they had their ships all hidden away back in their little alcoves, and huge amounts of material moved across the border...vast amounts..just hundreds. There were over 1400 ships at one time moving down the coast.

Q. Where did those ships come from?

A. They came in from these estuaries hidden back in this crazy kind of coast line . . . like little florids--they are small ships, they are not big ships--but they only need a small amount of equipment. All of these pieces of artillery and mortars and these rocket guns were moved in during the tet. . . while we stopped military operations.

Q. Did Russia manufacture most of these?

A. Yes. Czech, Chinese, and some Russian, but most of the arms are from China. A lot of the foodstuff is from Russia, and oil. But most of the arms, practically all of the small arms and most all of the mortar and grenades are of Chinese manufacture.

Q. They apparently have no problems in supplies?

A. Well, we think they have some problems. I'll tell you why--we are now capturing, for the first time, large numbers of documents when we go into these bases that we are talking about and get into these tunnels. For some reason or other the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong keep diaries. They write everything. I guess they are all going to write a history about it afterwards or something . . . maybe for some good publisher and/or magazine and also from prisoners we are finding out. By the way, we never -sed to capture a prisoner--a year ago you never heard of a prisoner. Now we capture a lot of them; also we are capturing officers. Here's what you find in the documents now; they are presently pressing into service - kids 12-14 years of age in the Viet Cong. Actually we find in some of the documents where people-- where all of the villagers--have left rather than to let the Viet Cong have any control over them. They have all escaped and run away rather than to stay as they used to and let the Viet Cong sort of just terrorize them. We also find that they are complaining about shortages of medical supplies and about shortage of ammunition up in the demilitarized zone area but when they get further down into South Vietnam and that's why we feel that hitting these bases is really hitting (would you say)

at the solar plexis so to speak, because that's where they have these caves filled with these supplies that they have accumulated over the years and a lot of it has been accumulated way over the years and, remember again, that the war that they fight is the war of terror and surprise. It's the war of the hand grenade. It's the war of small arms and the fast riflemen and the machine gun and it's the war of the mine. All over whole areas--just whole areas--infiltrated with mines. There is no way you can clean them out and no matter where you step you hit on one. You know we've got some mighty good boys who know how to get out and find those mine fields, but in World War II and in World War I when there was a mine field you could find it and you could get around it--there is just no way here because the jungle is so infested and they just infested these jungles with primitive mines but they are killers. Most of them maim you; that's what they do, blow off your foot, blow off a piece back of your leg; they don't always kill you--just blow you. But the hospital and medical attention which you gentlemen know about is fantastic that we have now. We can move them from the battlefield to a base hospital in twenty to thirty-five minutes. The courage of these fellows, these medics, as they move them, is unbelievable. There was a young man from North Carolina who was just given the Distinguished Service Cross. His name was Lawrence Joel (I think that was his name.) He is a professional soldier. He is thirty-nine years old. He is a Negro boy. He came up and the President decorated him. And I want to tell you, my friends, that you would have been proud of him. That fellow looked just so good and his wife was there and his two children. They looked just fine. And that boy was under constant fire for 12 solid hours. He saved the lives of 20 to 25 men. He was wounded. He was shot up two times and he ran out of medical supplies and they tried to get him to leave and he would not leave and when a new company came in to relieve the company that had been caught in the crossfire of the Viet Cong, he stayed and dragged himself on his

elbows with two legs literally ripped apart and he administered morphine for his own pain relief and tied down his own bandages and he got his second kit of medical supplies and administered to thirteen more men on the battle field under fire with machine gun fire going on around and hitting them--unbelievable--and this was the kind of thing that these fellows do and they are doing it! It's really incredible. . . the medic . . . this is an unarmed man you know and they tried to get him to move and he wouldn't move. He just stayed there and did it and when you met and talked to him you knew that was the kind of fellow he was. These professionals - they are unbelievable. One of the real problems is that many of these real professionals are getting chewed up because they are the ones who had to carry the brunt of the struggle too many times.

Q. I heard we had a fine professional force over there.

A. Oh, they're incredible . . . and their spirit is beyond anything that you can even write about. There is no real morale problem at all . . . amongst the troops. The only morale problem they have is that they would like sometimes to do things that the military does not think it is very sensible to do. . . they are a little more anxious to do than proven judgement would call upon you to do. Less than one out of every 100 wounded now dies of the wound. In World War I it was 8. In World War II it was 4. In Korea it was between two and three. And now less than 1. And they have this fast jet transport. Once they move them out of the battlefield they move them right to a base unit and from there right on to the Phillipines, or to Guam or Okinawa and back to the states. I have been on those hospital planes. These guys, the docs, the medics, do a terrific job. So these are things that parents need to know, too you know, when their kids are over there. They need to know the attention that is given . . . and there is wonderful equipment.

Q. I judge there is going to be some build up of American forces over there reading the reports from Guam; would you care to comment on that?

A. Actually, I cannot give you any definitive comment on that. As of this time we don't see any need for more forces than are presently planned. That plan levels off between 475,000 and 500,000. I am not sure just what that figure is. At present there are about 420,000, I think, there. I can only say this: there is a meeting next month of the combatants i. e., of all the allies in Washington, their senior military men, and their defense ministers will be in Washington, and at that time, the military aspects of the war will be given what you might call a professional, serious and in depth analysis, but I don't think I can tell you now that there would be only substantial increase in military manpower there. If it is needed, it will go. I'll just give it that way to you. If it isn't needed, there is no sense of putting it there. One of the things that we need to keep in mind is that the military manpower we have there does the work of almost double its size because of mobility and also because of the fact that we are now able to organize many of the Vietnamese units into much more capable back-up support and logistic support and pacification. One of the real problems that we have had in the military before is that about half of what we had, had to be used just for pacification purposes. And now the Vietnamese are doing a much better job of this.

Q. Can you say, sir, that we control a certain percentage?

A. Yes.

Q. What percentage of control over South Vietnam do we have to get (in your opinion) before we can successfully negotiate and end this war? Or does this have any bearing?

A. Yes, it has some bearing. What is most important is what percent of population is in the government areas. Certain areas are just impenetrable jungle areas. In certain mountainous countries there is no one there--except tigers and elephants and snakes--it's just. . . really there's nobody there and we control now today,

when I say we, the Vietnamese and the allies control the areas in which about 75%-- between 70 and 75%, of the population--that is we have what we call reasonable control, and of that at night you might lose another 15 or 20%. The night operations are very hazardous.

Q. Will our peace feelers cease for the time being as a result of the emphatic refusal of Ho Chi Minh?

A. No, but let me put it this way: most of the peace feelers that you have been reading about are not peace feelers that ever came from Hanoi. I know what your question means and I want to come around to it. When you read in the paper that there is another peace feeler, there is something that somebody from Poland has suggested or the Vice-President of the United Arab Republic or somebody from Hungary has suggested or some senator has suggested, there is always somebody suggesting that he feels a peace feeler. Well, it's as if somehow or another that the government was insensitive to these things that we no longer had a sensitivity for somebody that was touching us or feeling us. We haven't had any peace feelers from Hanoi. None that ever meant anything. . . unless it was on their terms. To be sure they have put out what they call peace feelers and the peace feelers are quite plain. They have never changed. They have said--and their most definitive statement was to the Pope on the 13th day of February, and that statement was backed by their letter to President Johnson on the 15th day of February--their peace feeler is 'permanent, unconditional cessation of the bombing of the North'; secondly, the removal of all U.S. and (as they put it) all satellite troops from South Vietnam; thirdly, the recognition as the sole political instrument of South Vietnam the national liberation front; then we will talk. We can't call those peace feelers. It is a fact that U. Thant . . . that the United Nations keeps trying. It is a fact that the Vatican keeps trying . . . (they have ways and means of being helpful.) It is a fact that the representatives of other countries are meeting with North Vietnam regularly, inquiring and

trying to interpret every word that they say to see whether or not there is any change of attitude or any desire. I can only tell you this and I say this to you with complete integrity and sincerity and beg you to believe us that there is no lack of contact as far as we are concerned with the Viet Cong or North Vietnam. It isn't any lack of contact; it's just that we don't hear anything. It's exactly like when the tet came, the truce period. The North Vietnam had everything ready to go except an ambassador. They had trucks, ships, everything ready to go on the day and the very minute that the truce was declared for their New Year. Thousands of men and tons of materials started to move--and immediately. The only guy that didn't move was an ambassador. We couldn't get a smell much less a feel. And we had people like Harold Wilson and Kosygin try. And as President Johnson (if you will read his letter) said, 'We'll meet in Moscow. We'll meet in Burma. Or we will meet any place. We will appreciate your suggestion as to where to meet - that I am even prepared to talk about further adjustments in our discussions if you are willing to talk.' Read President Johnson's letter without a single word of condemnation of North Vietnam. He never said a mean word. He simply said, 'Look, this war has gone on long enough. There's too much torture, too much pain, too much suffering, too much cost; let's try to bring it to an end.' And then he said we are prepared to stop the bombing. I give you my word. We will stop the bombing. All we ask of you is one meaningful, reciprocal act--then he made some suggestions and he said if these are not acceptable, what suggestions would you make? And we get nothing. All we get--the back of your hand. Now we happen to think that if that is the case, that we should continue to pursue rather than to be rebuffed in our desire for peace but we are not going to beg and as I said today we are not interested in any phony peaces. And, more importantly, I think the worst thing that can happen in this country is that when you are out on a

major hunt, don't go around chasing chipmunk and rabbits off in the corner or some place. We are in very serious business and ever so often, just about the time that we got something really going somebody pops up and says "Well now you ought to stop that 'cause I think they want to talk" and then the whole country gets all diverted over here on a big binge about some kind of talk. Let me show you what you have gone through--for a period of time you went through that these governments in Vietnam were no good and one after another collapsed and not always their fault either, sometimes simply because the attack on the government from the outside, even propaganda from our own side, weakened that government. This government has had great stability and it has gone through an awful lot of trial, but do you ever, as I said just a year ago, it was the Buddhists and I remember the human cry was going up in this country a little over a year ago, no, about two years ago, that you just had to get rid of this government over there. That Ky wasn't the right faith and he was a sort of Buddhist and sort of--an atheist and that Chu was Catholic and we couldn't have him and he wasn't a southerner and that the Buddhists were on the march. Now there were many people in this country . . . that said you got to get rid of Ky--that you've got to take this fellow, Chu, and that you remember this, what was his name . . . ah, Cheauam, the Buddhist monk, the actionist, the militant, that you just had to do business with him. And it went on for weeks. The American newspapers carried it for weeks and there were many people, I heard them, in and out of government, that were saying 'you gotta get ready; you just gotta make concessions to them' and Ky just kept on a straight course. One day he sent his troops on up there. He just took those alters and just moved them back. First they had riots and then they trouble up at Guay De Nung and that's all over. Then there was the big kick about you had to have the bombing pause and then the communists said that was an ultimatum; that's over. Then the next one was that we were killing civilians. You haven't read a story about killing civilians for three months--not a bit. We have bombed more since than we did before. We knew that was coming. I can tell you . . . I can

predict to you. . . what's happening. We know what's going to happen. We know that the change on killing civilians was coming. . . three to six weeks before it ever hit here because we intercepted the communist propoganda. It's all geared up. There's a degree of evidence. You cannot bomb an oil installation. You cannot bomb a railroad yard in North Vietnam when the workers are living right by the railroad and they don't have cars and they don't drive twenty miles to work and they don't have parking lots two or three blocks away from their work; they live right next to the tracks in a little shack so that when you are bombing a rail center you are bound to hit some civilian and what's more they put civilians there. If they haven't got them there they put them there. This is a part of the propoganda war. And so we knew this was coming. Now you don't hear about that at all. For a long time the last one was 'must have permanent cessation of bombing'. Now that one is peeling off. What the next one's going to be . . . but you can just feel them coming. They start right smack bang out of Peking or Moscow or out of Hanoi. You can just feel them coming.

Q. That must be Mr. Salisbury's argument, what he said about the Communist propa-
ganda war . . . ?

A. Well, Mr. Salisbury (when he was there) I think regrettably, like many people that visit, reported what he saw and what they let him see. He did see evidence of civilian destruction. We don't deny that. I think the mistake that our government may have made was that maybe we should have told people before that this was what you were going to find. But you know it's kind of difficult to go around describing, every other morning, just exactly, when you say--well, we attacked a certain military installation this morning but we also want you to know, my fellow Americans, that in the process of attacking we killed three grandmothers and two babies. You just can't expect your Pentagon to do that. You didn't get it in World War II. Now you men here know that. You didn't get it in Korea. In World War II, the Bri-ish Air Force and the American Air Force bombed Dresden and there were 250,000 casualties. . . civilians --they went after

civilians. That was part of the war. It was the labor force. You had to stop those plants, your bomb plants in the war. You didn't just bomb the military. Everything was a military target. In this war our pilots have areas that they can't touch, areas in which they can't even go and if there is any amount of civilian activity, they are to go back even though they may have flat knocked the living daylights out of them. There are a lot of restrictions placed on our pilots because we don't want this to happen. We don't want this bad world public opinion. But Mr. Salisbury saw what had been done. He did not report anything that wasn't true. I'll say that for him. I think the only problem was that it wasn't in balance. And when he got back he testified before the foreign relations committee. Mr. Salisbury didn't testify that we get out of Vietnam. He didn't even testify that we quit bombing. To the contrary, he says I don't think we ought to quit bombing unless they do something of a military nature too and that never got the same kind of copy for some reason or another . . . in the New York Times or any other press. But he testified and it is in the testimony. He said we should not stop the bombing in North Vietnam until and unless North Vietnam performs an act of military deescalation that is significant. This is exactly what Mr. Johnson says and when he got back he said it is a fact and here is the picture: We did bomb places, we did kill civilians. Our government doesn't deny that, and he also said that every one of these places has been bombed with one or two exceptions, where people had just plain miscalculated, had military significance. Every once in a while a plane has got to dump its bombs. Here's a guy up there. Here's your boy. He's the pilot and he's under terrific flak. . . Believe me the anti aircraft defenses in North Vietnam are stronger than any defenses in any place in World War II. It is the worst flak that our planes have ever had to fly through. Here's a guy going through and it is a choice between his life and his machine and getting back to his base or his aircraft carrier and dropping those bombs so he can get back or carry them and he's out. So he's got to drop them. That's his orders. He is getting that piece of equipment back

and he's getting himself back mainly because he's most likely a 20 year pilot. That's what we've been using. These are the best pilots the world has ever know. So the guy has to drop bombs and it may very well be in the process of dropping them he hits it right smack bang upon some little village. And that's what's happened in some cases. But that's a hell of a lot different, fellows, than somebody come on in and blow up a hotel. And what gets me is there seems to be no outrage amongst the moralists in this country about the fact that a person will walk right smack bang into our embassy and blow the hell out of it and kill innocent people--secretaries, workers--go into a hotel and blow it up, go on into a club and blow it up, go on into a school and blow it up. They went out into one village in the Delta Area in South Vietnam and blew up the school and the hospital and not one living word has been said about it. They just forget that. All you gotta do is find some poor American kid who is a pilot that had a choice between his life and those bombs that he had to drop in order to get back to his ship so he's got to drop that rack of bombs in order to get back (and he's under orders to do it), and that means that we're just an indiscriminate, killing bunch of bastards (excuse me) but I get kind of fed up on it. . . because I must say that these fellows are under severe restraints.

Q. Sir, you mentioned mobility. Are we able to use any of our rocket power--short range rocket power?

A. Yes. From our cruisers. As you know, we now have naval gunfire off the coast--both destroyer and cruisers that are used primarily on coastal shipping but also on targets within range on the mainland. Actually most of all of everything that you are after is within twenty to thirty miles inland. And much of it is within five to ten miles right off the coast, so when you have a cruiser out there that's got a 15 mile range or with rockets that have from 15 to 25 miles you've got better control over the artillery than you have over a bomb when you have a plane traveling 1200 to 1400 miles an hour going through flak and in bad weather. It isn't always that you can

be within pinpoint precision even though in the bombing of the oil of the POL's in Hiaphong. That was the most precise job of bombing that any country has ever performed.

Q. Our land troops are not using any rockers, are they?

A. I don't know if they are or not. I really am not sure about it and rather than give you an inconclusive answer, I would rather not say.

Q. Regarding the rest of Southeast Asia, how will that affect this. . . ?

A. Well, that is something that you really ought to know about. If nothing else has happened out of this war, remember that one other war was stopped already. . . the war of Malaysia and Indonesia. And remember that hundreds, in fact thousands of lives had already been lost in that war. That was a real threat and a real danger. Because Indonesia was involving--had with its contacts with Red China and Malaysia with its treaties--commitments from Great Britain. This could have fired into something that was really dangerous. Our presence in southeast Asia has made possible Indonesia's cleansing of the communist regime. They admitted (I don't want to say that we did it on purpose for that) . . I can just tell you that the leaders of South Indonesia had cleaned out Sukarno's regime, and cleaned out the fourth largest communist party in the world. . . with 3 million members - 25 million members of the front in the sixth largest nation of the world then. Those leaders have said publicly that they would never have been able to do what they have done to save the freedom of Indonesia and to save it from complete Chinese communist domination had it not been for the presence of the United States in Vietnam. And I am convinced in my own mind that one of the reasons that China is going through these convulsions today is because of our presence in South Vietnam. China's foreign policy has been a miserable failure. . .because we faced up to it wherever it has been. They have between the Soviet Union as I have tried to say today. . . just imagine, gentlemen, what kind of world it would have been today if when Joe Stalin said after World War I (as he did say) I want the northern provinces of what is _____ in the Iran; I want it. That's what he said. You know what Harry Truman told him?

Harry Truman told him 'I'll give you five weeks (I guess it was five weeks, or five days or something) to get the hell out of there and if you don't I'll send the American Air Force after you and American forces. He was very blunt about it. He didn't mince words. There was no diplomatic language at all. He just said 'get going.' And Joe Stalin left. He withdrew. He meant it because. . . Secondly Mr. Stalin said we want the northeastern provinces of Turkey. Truman said 'I meant the same thing about Turkey.' And they they said, 'We want Greece.' Remember this two-thirds of all of Greece was under communist control and the communists were in the outskirts of Athens before the United States sent in Van Fleet and some twenty thousand military advisors as we call them and vast amounts of supplies, billions of dollars worth of equipment and when Tito and Stalin got into a hassle and Tito closed off the border so that Stalin could not send supplies through any more and that so called civil war dried up. There wasn't any more of that civil war. The gasoline on that fire came right out of the soviet union. We said no. . . to the Soviet Union three times on Berlin--every time there was the danger of a war and if you remember in the winter of 1948 it was questionable whether or not Berlin could survive and I want to remind you of something else most everybody who had been a critic of our policy in Vietnam were the same people who said when Hitler had conquered the lowlands, it's time to make peace with Hitler and they did. Some of the leading columnists who said that Berlin couldn't possibly be saved in 1948--that it wasn't worth the risk. There are always some people who do not think that it is worth the risk but we stayed and we took the chances and John Kennedy, in 1961, called up 250,000 reservists and sent 50,000 more troops to Europe and we appropriated \$6,000,000,000 more in one afternoon in the Senate for defense appropriations and we were right close to a war with the Soviet Union but we faced them right up there and we had those guns right up nose to nose, eyeball to eyeball, and we didn't back down. If the Soviet Union is a more prudent than cautious country today, and I think it is, if it is possible for us to be closer in

our relationships with the Soviet Union today, and I think it is, it isn't because we said take what you want, have it boys, go to it, take Greece, take Turkey, take Iran, take Berlin. . that isn't the way you got it. . you have a more responsible soviet union today because we have said to them that you are not going to use brute force and aggression to work your political will. You have to live in a world in which that kind of tactic is not going to work and we are the only people who have been able to say it. No use asking about the British and the French and others. We are the power and we had to face up to them in Korea. Now remember in Korea we had already said that Korea was beyond the perimeter of our defense which was a foolish statement to me. But when they attacked, Harry Truman moved and he ordered our forces in and by a sheer set o- unbelievable circumstances the Soviet had walked out of a security council before, so we were able to get a vote of the security council to put the United Nations on our side and a resolution in the general assembly which we had to revise. I mean we really had to work the gimic out what we call the resolution for peace in the general assembly to get the general assembly on our side. But we faced up to the communists in Korea, and there were plenty of people, I know because I was in the senate, who said it isn't worth it and by God, everybody was practically against our policy. The letters were pouring in by the thousands and old Harry Truman just stayed with it. Now the fact of the matter is, gentlemen, that presidents aren't generally very popular when these things are going on because nobody likes a war and particularly these limited kind of wars. If you can turn on all the spigots and you can get all the patriotic fervor and you can get all the jingoism going you can be popular but this is dangerous world today. We are not living in the world of cap guns and bows and arrows. We are living in the world of nuclear bombs. And, believe me, I know enough about it to know that that's a scary world, and the best thing that's ever happened to this world is that we have prevented a nuclear war for at least twenty years, since World War II, despite the fact that there are four nuclear powers--five

nuclear powers--and it's a very dangerous world. We are trying to keep this world from exploding and I can tell you right now it could explode. So what we are doing in Vietnam is nothing more or less than an extension of what we have had to do around the world. It just happens to be another part of the world with strange names and different looking people . . . but it's the same threat. Only at this time it's the Chinese Communist threat that is as militant in the 1960's as Soviet Communist was in the 1940's - the same difference and they aren't housebroken. They still think that they should use aggression and force and when people say that all you want to do is be nicer to them, I say, well what evidence do you have that that works--take a look at India; they had K_____ as a defense minister under Nehru. The foreign minister of India, the foreign minister of the defense minister of India did everything they could to accommodate India's policy to China. They even sponsored China in the United Nations. They agreed with everything that China wanted to do--practically everything. K_____ went there many times; they were friends and they were arm in arm but what did China do? They attacked India twice in five years - attacked them - open aggression. It has nothing to do with whether or not you are nice to them. As a matter of fact, when India decided, belatedly, that she could stand up to them and said that we are prepared to fight and die, and started to act like men instead of sheep, China began to have some respect for India. I am convinced, in my own mind, that one of the main reasons for India's and China's trouble today is her utter failure of foreign policy all around the world and the fact that we have resisted it. And I know that Indonesia is free today because we're there. And I know today that Thailand is better and I know that there is a free Malaysia because Indonesia under Sukarno is gone. That kind of an Indonesia. . . and a new Indonesia has made peace with Malaysia. How do I know? Because I know the men that run it bet-er than I know anybody in this room. I've been in touch with these men for years. Adam Malak is a man I have known for twenty years, the foreign minister of Indonesia. He came to my home in Minnesota in September of this last year to tell me

before he told our government, officially, that they wanted to come back to the United Nations and were going to. They had withdrawn from the United Nations. He told me, 'We're going to make peace and I am going to do it. . . with Malaysia.' He said, 'I want you to know it. You have been my friend. You've worked with me over the years when I was an anti-Sarcona (?) man.' And today Indonesia is our friend. Better than a hundred million people. You talk about a victory - that's a big victory and a mighty big one! And we have friends in other parts of southeast Asia. Samonapum of Laos was a neutralist. Samonapum wasn't even looked upon as a friend of the United States--for a long time as an enemy. Samonapum came to see me when President Johnson went in the hospital here a year ago--his first operation--and I sat with him just as we sit here in the lounge. He said, 'I want to tell you something, Mr. Vice-President. There would not be any free Laos today if it were not for the United States and if it were not for your bombing of Vietnam. And Samonapum knows what the Vietnamese are-- the North Vietnamese. They've got several batallions of North Vietnamese regulars in Laos right now. Now what business have they got up there? And when I hear fellow Americans say that they don't think that the North Vietnamese are aggressors all I can say is that there are none so blind that they will not see. North Vietnamese regulars are in Laos. North Vietnamese regulars are in Thailand and they are all supplied out of China. The greatest threat today in Asia is Chinese militant communism. It's less of a threat today because of turmoil in China and the only resistance to that threat today is the United States of America giving leadership to the other free countries in the area. The Prime Minister of Singapore, no friend of the United States--doesn't profess to be.-- Prime Minister Lee said that American presence in Vietnam has given free Asia time to be free. And that is his statement. Every one of the leaders in every free Asian country are for our position in Vietnam--every one of them. There isn't a one of them who thinks that we ought to leave. Some of them are willing to say publicly that we ought not to bomb because they've got problems with the communists

in their own country or their left wing such as in India. But I guarantee you that I was in fourteen of those countries and I know of what I speak--not one of them suggested that we get out--not one. And not one of them suggested that we give in. They've all got a few little suggestions for their own local folks, you know, trying to get re-elected again. And I understand that I've done a bit of that myself in my own lifetime, but what we need, what we've got to do, and I don't need to tell people in Alabama--I know that this is one place where you don't need to tell them--but we've just got to firm our people up not to be belligerent, just to be firm, just to be resolute. We're not trying to conquer anybody. We're not going to drop any atom bombs on anybody. We know what an atomic war means. We're not trying to use all of our military power. What we are trying to do is use just enough to bring this crowd to a recognition that they cannot use force as the means for the obtainment of political objectives. That's all we're trying to do, and we're going to see to it that this little country called South Vietnam has a chance to live. And if you think it can't be done just re-ember what was said of Korea, ten years ago in your own newspapers (I am sure you heard it said by others if not by yourself) that Korea is an impossible mess--fifteen years ago it was a hopeless mess. And remember, fifteen years ago, sixteen years ago, the Americans were within a mile of being driven out of Korea on the perimeter of Pusan . . . being driven out. And there were plenty of people who said, 'we ought to get out.' By God, I wasn't one of them. McArthur wasn't either. No, sir. Neither was Harry Truman. And I'll tell you this thing, I talked to President Johnson the other night and I said, 'Just one man I think you and I ought to try to emulate just a little bit more--as my hero anyway, and I know he had a lot of shortcomings, but what this country respects more than anything else is integrity and guts, courage--and whether you like Harry Truman and what he did or not, he will go down in history for one thing--he didn't fish and run--he didn't cut bait and run--he just stayed there and he said what he thought and when the chips were down you knew where he was. He didn't give you any of

that fancy language that you could give seven interpretations to - it was simple and direct and I think that history will record that that fellow saved the free world. . . as the leader of this country. . . a simple man but he was sufficiently simple to be profound. He didn't get his mind all cluttered up with a lot of ennuedoes and half-baked ideas. He knew exactly what he wanted. . . and what America stood for. . . in its purest form. And that's the kind of people you need to have. That's the kind I admire and I think President Johnson's of that kilt and he's had an awful lot of pressure. The pressure on that man is unbelievable. Remember, every day he has to read newspapers that you don't write. Every day he gets petitions. Every day there are clergymen. Every day there are educators. Every day there are philosophers. Every day there are historians. Every day there are student demonstrations. Every day telling the President or Vice-President how wrong you are. Every liberal friend I have had, with few exceptions, has said that I sold him out. I tell them they've sold themselves out. . . because I don't believe that a political liberal ever ought to ever make peace with any form of tyranny. I don't think that's what you mean by liberalism. . . and I don't think that making peace and being a peaceful man means lying down and playing dead when there's some evil force at work in the world. . . I just don't believe that. Well, I've kept you long enough.

Mr. Vice-President, you've been very considerate. We appreciate it very much. Thank you.



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