

Feb 14

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

February 12, 1968

TO: The Vice President

FROM: Ted Van Dyk 

SUBJ: Metromedia Interview - Wednesday, February 14.

Please see attached for this interview with college students:

1. Draft questions and answers on foreign policy;
2. The President's Messages to date.

Suggested Talking Line re: Vietnam and the Recent Actions There

I think it very important that you be measured and prudent in your interpretation of events of the past couple of weeks in Vietnam, as well as in predicting what may happen in the days immediately ahead.

There has been a tendency for our spokesmen to interpret this as largely a VC setback, in light of the fact that:

1. High casualties have been dealt the VC in relation to our own casualties;
2. No general popular uprising resulted, as called for by the VC;
3. GVN forces in the large majority of cases held firm and fought well.

All this is true. However, from the enemy's point of view the following is also true:

1. The pacification program has been all but brought to a standstill;
2. City dwellers have been shown that they are far less secure than they thought;
3. VC fighting capacity has been dramatically demonstrated;

4. Thousands of U.S. troops have been tied down along the DMZ -- and pulled away from city and other populous areas -- to await an offensive that may or may not come.

The fact is this: Until we see what happens at Khe Sanh, if anything ... until we see the long-term effects on morale and confidence among the South Vietnamese people ... until we see the capacity of the Thieu government to rally and rebuild ... until we see how the enemy's negotiating stance may or may not have been affected, this can't really be called a plus or a minus for either side.

Even in the areas where we make favorable interpretation --- i. e., high VC casualties and failure of popular uprising to materialize -- we may be entirely misreading the enemy's intent. Since when did Communists begin to value human life over its expenditure for political or psychological gain? And who seriously believes that the calls for popular uprising were anything more than the usual cynical propaganda? Our previous experience with Ho Chi Minh has shown him to be far more sophisticated than that.

My own instinct is that these attacks were undertaken for the specific purpose of disrupting the South, of shaking confidence in the Thieu government, and of setting a psychological mood prior to entering into a "fighting-and-negotiating" stage - nothing more or less. The losses were probably expected.

What Should We Say?

I think we should take a cool, objective stance. I think we should leave the American people with the clear impression that what we say can be believed ... that we are not self-persuaded ... and that events and not words will in the final analysis tell the tale.

Suggested Statement

It is very difficult to say just what the events of the past two weeks may mean. I think, above all, we should be neither over-optimistic nor over-pessimistic about them. We know certain things as facts: Namely, that the Viet Cong have taken enormous losses ... that they have been repulsed everywhere ... and that their calls for a general uprising were certainly not heeded by the South Vietnamese people. At the same time, it seems

clear that both the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces possess considerable fighting capacity. And, a regrettable number of human and material resources have been lost, and are now necessarily being diverted, which would otherwise have been used in the pacification and economic development programs.

I think we would do well not to overlook the callous disregard which our enemy has once more shown both for the lives of his own soldiers, and for the lives and property of innocent and ordinary people in Vietnam. All of us have been dramatically reminded of the nature of our Communist adversary.

I think the job now -- rather than rejoicing in the high enemy losses or despairing in the destruction and bloodshed -- is to patiently get on with our work: To meet and defeat enemy forces ... to help in economic development ... to care for the refugee ... to help the South Vietnamese people build their country until the time may come when our adversary is willing to come on honest terms to a conference table. It is a trying task. But we have little choice. Our hope and our objective remain an early and a just peace.

Q. "Don't you think our whole Selective Service system needs an overhaul? Shouldn't there be a more just and broadly-based system?"

A. As you know, I had the honor to sponsor the legislation creating the Peace Corps. I have worked closely also with VISTA, with voluntary service agencies here and abroad and am privileged to head the President's Council on Youth Opportunity. I have also favored the vote for 18-year-olds. In short, I am especially aware of the need for greater participation of our young people in society. I think that -- in addition to the valuable experience of military service -- our young people should have wider opportunities for true national service.

Our present system was designed for another era. It is not perfect.

A lot of study has been undertaken into how it can be more just and effective.

We need your ideas too. Yes, there should be a better system. In time I am sure we will have it. In the meantime, I think our young people should make the best of the opportunities available to them.

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EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

PRESS BRIEFING PAPER

Subject: Exploring VN Peace Prospects

Q: What progress can you report in our weighing of the proposal for peace talks made by North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh? Do we consider the enemy's Tet offensive a conclusive repudiation of that proposal? Have our explorations ceased?

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

1. Our efforts to find a peaceful solution to this tragic war are unremitting.
2. We should not lose sight of the fact that it is the United States that has been trying, since April 7, 1965, to get unconditional peace talks started and it is the other side which has posed the conditions.
3. Foreign Minister Trinh's changing of "could" to "will" has been noted by us, as has been his more recent interview with a Western newsman in Hanoi in which he appeared to refine North Viet-Nam's position further. Many questions, however, still remain open.
4. In particular, Hanoi, in demanding that we unconditionally cease the bombing of the North, refuses to give any assurance on whether or not they will take advantage of this restraint, as they have done in the past. As a matter of fact, they continue to insist that the bombing halt be unconditional.
silence
5. We find this/quite meaningful in the light of the major offensive which they unleashed at most of South Vietnam's urban centers at the height of the Lunar New Year--the country's traditional holiday. And let us not forget the enormous buildup of North Vietnamese Army forces in and around the Demilitarized Zone--forces poised to strike our own and other Allied troops in the Northern part of South Viet-Nam.

6. At the same time, the San Antonio formula remains valid.
We will continue the search for peace. And, as the President said the other day, if the other side will just tell us that Geneva is the place and tomorrow is the time, we will be there to talk peace.

"We would like to do it that way," he said, "but if we cannot go to the conference table, we are not going to walk out on our word and our allies in that area of the world."

PRESS BRIEFING PAPER

SUBJECT: Ratification of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Consular Convention

QUESTION: Do you see any prospect for early Soviet ratification of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Consular Convention?

SITUATION REPORT:

1. The Consular Convention was signed on June 1, 1964, and approved by the Senate on March 16, 1967. The Soviet Union has not yet ratified the convention. This could be done by them at any time by action of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.
2. At various times Soviet officials have been asked informally as to when the convention will be ratified. The response has been that the matter is under consideration. We have no indications of their intentions.

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

1. We assume that the Soviets will ratify the Consular Convention, but do not know when they will do so. They have only stated that the matter is still under consideration.

SUBJECT: Vance Mission

You may be asked if you think Mr. Vance's mission to South Korea will produce any marked change in our relations with that country, and whether we would be willing to accept a request by the South Korean Government for revision of our defense treaty.

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

1. Ambassador Porter and General Bonesteel have maintained the closest contact with President Park on every aspect of this crisis. Sometimes, however, a personal emissary of this sort can be a useful supplement to our normal diplomatic relations.
2. Our Mutual Defense Treaty with the ROK (entered into force November 17, 1954) contains provisions regarding US assistance to meet attack which are similar to those contained in our treaties with our SEATO and ANZUS allies, and with Japan, the Philippines and the Republic of China. Our commitment to Korea's security is demonstrated by the continuing presence of American troops there. We are well aware of our commitments, and the President has made it clear that we will honor them. As I said when I visited Korea last summer, as long as there is one American soldier on the line of the border, the demarcation line, the whole power of the United States of America is committed to the security and defense of Korea.

Clearances: KTF - Mr. Fleck
EA/P - Mr. Armstrong

EA/P:DVKillion:bd

Subject: PUEBLO

You may be asked why we identified the Soviet Union as one of those whom we asked to intercede in our behalf in the Pueblo seizure, since some say this made it all the more difficult for the Soviets to act.

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

1. Given the urgency of our concern for the ship and its crew, I think it would have been out of the question for us not to have approached the Russians on this issue. Under these circumstances, and given the very strong press interest in the various measures we were taking to secure release of the ship and its crew, I doubt that it would have been feasible or advisable to have attempted to conceal our contacts with the Soviets on this question for very long.

Subject: PUEBLO

You may be asked where we stand in our efforts to get back the Pueblo and her crew, and what we will do if the Panmunjom talks get nowhere.

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

1. We have taken prompt diplomatic action to seek the return of the Pueblo and her crew. You are also aware that we have taken certain precautionary military moves. Our diplomatic action has included a request to the Soviet Union to use its good offices with North Korea to have the men and the vessel released, approaches in the UN Security Council and talks with the North Koreans at Panmunjom, both at a regular MAC meeting and in private meetings between the UNC Senior Member of the MAC Admiral Smith and the North Korean Senior Member. We have also pursued other diplomatic channels which I am not at liberty to reveal. We have asked the International Committee of the Red Cross for information on the crew's welfare, and we have been given by North Korea the names of the one dead and the three injured members of the crew. We intend to continue our efforts to seek a peaceful solution to this situation. While our efforts are going on I don't think it would be appropriate to go into specific details of the steps we have taken or might take in the future. Our main concern is the prompt release of the ship and the crew.

SUBJECT: Pueblo Confessions

You may be asked what is the significance of continuing outpouring of alleged confessions by the Pueblo crew.

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

1. I don't give much credence to alleged confessions from men now being held captive by the North Koreans.

Clearances: KTF - Mr. Fleck
EA/P - Mr. Armstrong

EA/P:DVKillion:bd

VIET-NAM: ENEMY OFFENSIVE

You may be asked to comment on the enemy offensive in Viet-Nam, on what damage it caused, and on what the GVN and the US are doing to deal with the situation.

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

1. The enemy attacks on the cities were carefully planned and executed and **caused** considerable damage and disruption. The intent behind the enemy attacks is not completely clear. We do know that the enemy used its radio to call for an "uprising" of the people and for ARVN personnel to go over to the enemy side, and we know that this did not happen. We can assume that a segment of the Vietnamese who heard the enemy broadcasts and witnessed the events are aware of this. We can also assume there is considerable **resentment** among the Vietnamese against the enemy for breaking the Tet truce and engaging in the violence which has caused so much destruction and suffering in Viet-Nam.
2. Although we know the problems caused by the enemy attacks in the cities are serious, we do not have complete assessments of civilian casualties and physical damage.
3. The GVN has come to grips with the situation. Operation Recovery has been initiated and a joint GVN-US Task Force, with the GVN side under the leadership of Vice President Ky, has been established. Among other things, the GVN has marshalled its resources, distributed food, is dealing with the large number of refugees and civilian casualties, and is conducting an intensified information program to keep the Vietnamese people informed.
4. Ambassador Bunker has appointed Ambassador Komer to represent the US on the Joint Task Force and to guide the US effort. The US Mission is giving special attention to the requirements of the situation in Viet-Nam at the present time.
5. On pacification, again it is too early to reach a conclusion on how pacification and security in the countryside has been affected by the enemy violence. We are constantly looking at the pacification program and, in the light of events, constantly looking for ways to improve it or adapt it more effectively to the situation prevailing in the country.

Subject: U.S. Aid to Africa

QUESTION

In Africa you said that you would fight for additional foreign aid for that continent. Have you taken any concrete action yet on this point or made any suggestions?

ADVISORY

Approximate AID figures for Africa recently have been: \$202 million in FY 1967, \$139 million for FY 1968, and in the President's AID message, which went to Congress a few days ago, we are requesting \$179 million for FY 1969. Accordingly, it is not advisable to cite figures or to be drawn into a discussion of more or less aid in comparing one year with another.

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY

1. Yes, in my report to the President and in contacts by those who accompanied me with the U.S. business community we have stressed the need for more assistance to Africa. This aid can take several forms. President Johnson has asked Congress to appropriate \$2.5 billion for U.S. economic aid this year worldwide, which is substantially more than the \$1.9 billion the Congress appropriated last year. The 1969 figure includes a modest increase for Africa, which we feel is necessary to complement the substantial self-help efforts of the Africans themselves.
2. The President also said in his Foreign Aid Message to Congress that the U.S. must be prepared to contribute its fair share to a special development fund being set up by the African Development Bank.
3. In the private sector, several businessmen who accompanied me to Africa are considering whether to organize a business Council for Africa to work with the African nations to encourage more U.S. investment and trade there. In Ghana, the Congo, and all the other countries I visited there are many opportunities for U.S. private investment, and there is a great eagerness on the part of the Africans to attract more U.S. private enterprise.
4. We are also working closely with the United Nations' Economic Commission for Africa, with the African Development Bank and with new regional groupings like the East African Community to help them attract greater aid from international organizations, private investors and other donor nations.
5. It is essential that the US and the other free nations respond to the Africans' development needs with sympathy and understanding.

Subject: AFRICAN BUSINESS COUNCIL

QUESTION:

What did you mean when you recently said that the U. S. would establish an African Business Council?

ADVISORY:

The idea for an African Business Council was proposed by members of the business community who accompanied the Vice President on his trip to Africa. In line with his encouragement of American private enterprise in Africa, the Vice President accepted the suggestion as a possibly useful device to explore with a view to expanding such activities. He did not endorse a particular type of council and the matter remains in the exploratory stage as a private initiative.

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

1. As you know from my own record and experience and from other comments I have made on my African trip, I favor the active expansion of American private enterprise in Africa.
2. I recently spoke of the possible formation of a private African Business Council, an organization to be formed on the initiative of the business community. While its exact organization and activities have not been worked out, I believe the idea is one well worth exploring, and I believe members of the business community are doing so.
3. Since anything of this sort that might develop would be a private initiative, it would not be appropriate for me to suggest how the business community should proceed. I would assume, however, that such a group would want to talk to other very useful organizations dealing with Africa, such as the African-American Chamber of Commerce, as well as to African organizations - to ensure close cooperation and to avoid duplication of effort.

NOTE

Included with the memo were the following White House Press Releases:

Jan. 17, 1968. Addrss of the President on the State of the Union.

Jan. 24, 1968. Message to Congress on Civil Rights.

Jan. 30, 1968. Our Pride & Strength: America's Servicemen & Veterans.

Feb. 5, 1968. Message to Congress: The Fifth Freedom.

Feb. 6, 1968. Message to Congress: To Protect the Consumer Interest.

Feb. 8, 1968. Message to Congress: To Build The Peace.

Feb. 7, 1968. Message to the Congress on Drugs & Narcotics.

Feb. 7, 1968. Message to the Congress: To Insure The Public Safety.

The above items were discarded when the files were processed. April, 1977.

Kathryn A. Johnson
Division Archives/Manuscripts



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