

# DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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FOR RELEASE AT 3:30 P.M., E.D.T., SATURDAY, MAY 21, 1966. NOT TO BE  
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ADDRESS OF THE HONORABLE U. ALEXIS JOHNSON,  
DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE,  
AT DYESS AIR FORCE BASE, ABILENE, TEXAS,  
ON THE OCCASION OF ARMED FORCES DAY,  
SATURDAY, MAY 21, 1966, AT 1:30 P.M., C.S.T.

It is a real pleasure and honor to have been asked to join you here in Abilene to celebrate this especially significant Armed Forces Day of 1966. It is good to be in the land of Travis, Bowle, Crockett and Sam Houston. There is, of course, always a personal pleasure, especially for someone with the name of Johnson, to visit this magnificent State. However, beyond that I appreciate this opportunity to discuss Viet-Nam with you. The problem of Viet-Nam has so long engaged not only my official duties but also my deep personal interest and involvement that I always welcome the opportunity to discuss it with any who will listen. It is also now properly a matter of great national concern.

On this 21st of May, 1966, our Armed Forces are engaged in a struggle which is absorbing an increasing share of our energies and resources. It is thus appropriate on this occasion to address ourselves to the questions of why we are in Viet-Nam; what we hope to accomplish by our effort there; the problems in achieving our objectives; what we have going for us; how far we have come; and how far we still have to go. I want briefly to discuss with you each of these questions as frankly as I know how.

#### I. Why we are in Viet-Nam.

First, why are we in Viet-Nam?

The real question is not whether Viet-Nam, or indeed Southeast Asia, is of such political, strategic or economic importance in itself as to justify the expending of American lives and treasure.

Rather, the question is the world-wide issue of preventing the Communists from breaking by force any of the lines that were drawn in the various post-war settlements, and thus maintaining that stability out of which a more enduring peace can be built.

Since 1945 we have committed the integrity of our nation to a variety of agreements in Europe, the Near East and Asia specifically designed to maintain that stability. As far as Viet-Nam is concerned, the 17th parallel is just as fundamental to that stability as is the 38th parallel in Korea or Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin.

Acting through our representatives, we in effect committed ourselves to defense at the 17th parallel by a Senate vote of 82 to 1 in the SEATO Treaty of 1954, reaffirmed by a vote of 502 to 2 in Congress as a whole in 1964. No amount of legalistic hairsplitting can change these facts. It is late in the day to say that we did not know what we were doing or that we really did not mean it. Our ability to honor those commitments is critical to the well-being of every American man, woman and child --

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for failure to honor our commitments one place cannot but call into question our commitments elsewhere. This is not just a question of keeping faith with our allies. Perhaps more importantly it is a question of not dangerously misleading our enemies into thinking that we may also pick and choose which of our other commitments we will honor if we are challenged. This could only lead to danger of wider and greater conflicts.

II. What are our aims?

We must make clear to ourselves and to the world at large, including our friends, our enemies and those who still have not committed themselves, just what we are expecting to accomplish with this major effort we are making in South Viet-Nam. Perhaps we should first say what aims we do not have. President Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk, and Secretary of Defense McNamara have all said time and time again that our aims are limited in South Viet-Nam. We are not seeking the unconditional surrender of the North Vietnamese. We are not seeking the overthrow of the North Vietnamese Government. We are in no way seeking to threaten the Chinese Communist regime or a conflict with that country. What we are insisting on is that North Viet-Nam stop trying to impose its system by force on South Viet-Nam. We should be clear that our forces are in Viet-Nam only in response to forces introduced, supplied, supported and directed by the Communist regime of North Viet-Nam.

Beyond this primary aim to which we are so firmly committed, we would hope to cooperate with the Government of South Viet-Nam, and even with North Viet-Nam if it chooses, to help rebuild this wartorn land so that its people can live in peace and achieve that prosperity of which they are capable. For this is a rich land with great economic promise -- a land which has traditionally fed and supplied much of eastern Asia and can do so again.

It should be entirely clear that we have no ambitions for ourselves in Viet-Nam. We have no desire for, or interest in military bases or any special position there. We would hope that the representative government which will ultimately be freely established in South Viet-Nam will be a stable and responsible one, but we do not expect that this government will necessarily view world events in exactly the same light as we do. We have no desire that South Viet-Nam be our political satellite. The interests of the Vietnamese people may at times be different from our own and we would expect the government of the country to represent those interests truly and honestly. We do not believe that such government would voluntarily adopt communism, for none of the 53 new countries established since World War II have done so. I am sure that South Viet-Nam will not be an exception. While the political forces there vigorously contend with each other as to which of them is going to lead the country, none have ever proposed abandoning the struggle against the Viet Cong. The commitments which the government ultimately decides to make must be its own, and we have no intention of dictating them.

III. What are the problems?

The problem that Viet-Nam faces in building a nation and the political structure to operate it is very similar to the problem faced by many newly independent countries, particularly those such as Viet-Nam which were not given any real preparation for independence during the colonial period. Viet-Nam has done no worse, and in many ways a better job in this regard, than some other countries, especially when one considers that Viet-Nam has to make this effort in the face of an outside invasion

invasion precisely dedicated to preventing its success. Looking back on our own history, even we Americans know how long it takes and we know how much trial and error is involved in dealing with problems of sectionalism and regionalism. To develop firmly based political institutions having what our forefathers called "the consent of the governed" is not quickly or easily accomplished.

Throughout much of its history Viet-Nam has been divided into three quite distinct regions -- Tonkin, or the northern part of the country, Annam, or the central part of the country, and Cochinchina, or the southern part of the country. These regional differences were strengthened and accentuated during the colonial period, and are still very strong elements in the political picture. For example, Hue and Danang, where many of the present difficulties have centered, are traditional centers of what was Annam. Much of the leadership in the present and former governments in Saigon has consisted of persons who fled Communist rule in North Viet-Nam, and in the background of some of the past and present controversy is the effort of the Annamese and Cochinchinese to obtain a larger voice. There is also the unfortunate fact that religious and political lines tend to coincide, so that what are essentially political questions assume a religious coloration. In addition to these problems, there is the problem of racial minorities. Besides those of the Vietnamese race, the population of the country includes large minorities of ethnic Chinese, Khmers (Cambodian), Chams, Nungs and the so-called mountain peoples. In addition, if my French friends will pardon my saying so, I fear that the large number of Vietnamese educated in France also inherited some of the tradition of French political factionalism of that time.

Add to this the complication of the ever-growing refugee population. Even without the present fighting, South Viet-Nam was already faced with caring for nearly 1,000,000 refugees who fled to the non-Communist South from Communist North Viet-Nam following the 1954 Geneva Agreement. In recent months hundreds of thousands of other refugees have left Viet Cong-controlled areas, particularly in the central part of the country.

All these difficulties should not blind us to the essential non-Communist commitment of the great majority of the people of South Viet-Nam.

This commitment is often confused in this country and elsewhere by the exaggerated importance given to the so-called National Liberation Front. Statements are made that what is going on in South Viet-Nam is a purely internal revolt against an unpopular government by a discontented population represented by this Liberation Front. It seems at times that some are even comparing the Viet Cong and the Liberation Front to our heroes of 1776.

What are some of the facts?

Before 1960 no one in or out of Viet-Nam had even heard of the National Liberation Front. It was in that year that Hanoi radio announced its formation. Perhaps a bit of history is in order here.

In bringing about the termination of hostilities in Viet-Nam, the Geneva Agreement of 1954 separated North and South Viet-Nam from each other by a five-mile demilitarized zone. The northern part of the country, with its capital at Hanoi, was under the control of the Communist Viet Minh, while Saigon became the capital of what had been central and South Viet-Nam -- internationally recognized by more than 50 other governments. The two separate entities were obliged not to interfere with each other until agreement could be reached between them on when and how they could be unified. In this, the situation was very similar to that of Germany and Korea.

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However, we have since learned quite dramatically that Ho Chi Minh's government in Hanoi never had any intention of allowing the South Vietnamese freely to choose their own government and run their own affairs until agreement could be reached on unification. There were areas of South Viet-Nam nominally under Communist Viet Minh control at the time of the 1954 Agreement. These Viet Minh were ordered by Hanoi to hide their arms and to do what they could to frustrate the attempts at administration made by the South Vietnamese Government. Ho Chi Minh was reasonably convinced that the South Vietnamese Government would easily crumble with the help of the subversion which he directed.

The South Vietnamese Government refused to participate in a rigged version of the free reunification elections called for in the Geneva Agreements between the North Vietnamese and the French. South Viet-Nam continued to make progress and to strengthen its position. By 1956 Ho had realized that he would be unable to subvert the Saigon-led government without military action.

Southern-born former Vietnamese who had gone North for intensive training and political indoctrination were returned to South Viet-Nam to serve as the hard core of the so-called "indigenous force" of the Viet Cong.

By 1959-1960, Hanoi had built up a military capability in the South which enabled them to step up their actions considerably beyond the small-scale guerrilla activity to which they had confined themselves up to that time.

In 1960 the Communist regime in the North made some far-reaching decisions which they made no effort to conceal.

At the Third Lao Dong (Communist) Party Congress in Hanoi in September 1960, Ho Chi Minh said that the North must "step up the national democratic people's revolution in the South." Other similar speeches were made, and at its conclusion the Party Congress called for the formation of a "National United Front" in the South.

Three months later, that is in December 1960, Hanoi radio announced the formation of a "Front for Liberation of the South." This is the origin of the so-called "National Liberation Front" (NLF) in South Viet-Nam.

It was then, and still is, a pure creature and tool of the North Vietnamese regime. Its so-called leadership contains not a single nationally-known figure. In a true sense, it is as faceless to the outside world as it is to the Vietnamese people. Thus it is not a "National Front" and it is certainly not a "Liberation Front" for its purpose has nothing to do with "liberation" -- quite the opposite.

Of real significance on this point is the fact that no South Vietnamese political figure of any note has ever associated himself with the NLF. No member of any Saigon government has ever defected to the NLF. And religious, labor and student leaders have consistently refused to associate themselves with the movement. This is as true of the present political controversy in Viet-Nam as it has been of past controversies. What is being disputed is not whether the struggle against the Viet Cong is to be continued, but by whom, and how it can best be carried on.

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It is also important that we understand the distinction between the NLF and the Viet Cong armed forces. The NLF has little or nothing to do with the command of the Viet Cong, especially the main force, or regular Viet Cong battalions and regiments in the South. These main force units and other Viet Cong elements are supported, supplied, and controlled from Hanoi, and only Hanoi can direct them to cease their aggression. The NLF is purely the political facade or, as the name plainly states, the political front for Hanoi. It cannot bring about an end to the fighting. This can be done only by Hanoi itself.

The movement of military personnel from North Viet-Nam into the South became so flagrant after 1960 that it was noticed and publicized by the Legal Committee of the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICC), which, as you know, is composed of India, Poland and Canada.

The Legal Committee, with only Poland objecting, reported in 1962:

"There is evidence to show that arms, munitions and other supplies have been sent from the zone in the North to the zone in the South with the objective of supporting, organizing and carrying out hostile activities, including armed attacks, against the armed forces and administration of the zone in the South.

"There is evidence that the PAVN (i.e., the North Vietnamese Army) had allowed the zone in the North to be used for inciting, encouraging and supporting hostile activities in the zone in the South, aimed at the overthrow of the administration in the South."

To those who allege that in some mysterious way the United States is somehow responsible for these actions of the North and has a share of guilt, I would note that at the time of this ICC report there was not a single American combat soldier in Viet-Nam or elsewhere on the mainland of Southeast Asia.

In the three-year period from 1959 to 1961 the North Viet-Nam regime infiltrated 10,000 men into the South. In 1962, 13,000 additional personnel were infiltrated. And by the end of 1964 North Viet-Nam may well have moved over 40,000 armed and unarmed guerrillas and cadres into South Viet-Nam.

Today we have every reason to believe that in addition to these elements at least twelve regiments of regular North Vietnamese forces are fighting in organized units in South Viet-Nam. Again I would note that the first of these units was introduced prior to the commencing of air action against the North.

Our whole involvement in South Viet-Nam is thus based on the fact that the Viet Cong is not an indigenous revolt -- quite the contrary.

It is as much a case of outside aggression as if Hanoi had boldly moved those twelve regiments in marching formation across the 17th Parallel. It is no less aggression because they moved by stealth under jungle cover and in the dark of night.

That is the heart of our involvement.

IV. What are

IV. What are our assets?

Though the problems we are facing in Viet-Nam appear formidable, there are also some very powerful forces working in our favor. By far the most important of these is the strong commitment of the Vietnamese people to remain free of communism and to continue this struggle until its true independence is assured. In this sense the government of South Viet-Nam and its people are just as surely fighting against the forces of colonialism--Communist colonialism--as were the Vietnamese who struggled for independence from the French prior to 1954. In the five years from 1960 to 1965 before a single American had been committed to combat in Viet-Nam, 35,000 men in the armed forces were killed in action; about 8,000 government officials and civilians were assassinated and over 40,000 kidnaped. Put in relative terms of our population here in the United States this would mean about 500,000 soldiers and 112,000 government officials and civilians killed, and 560,000 government officials and civilians kidnaped. A record such as this is not made by people who do not feel strongly about that for which they are fighting. I am sure that your sons, husbands and fathers fighting alongside these people in the provinces of Viet-Nam have no doubt of their commitment. My own experience has been that the strongest doubts expressed on this point are among those furthest removed from the scene of action.

The determination of the Vietnamese people themselves to protect their independence is being matched by an increasing awareness by other countries besides the United States that their interests too are involved in Viet-Nam. This has been particularly true of neighboring countries in Southeast Asia. All but two members of SEATO are substantially and directly contributing to the cause, and one non-member, Korea, has already contributed more than one full division and is now in the process of contributing another division of ground forces. Indeed, in proportion to its population the total Korean commitment will be greater than is our own today. The Australians have committed 4,500 men to Viet-Nam, and the New Zealanders also have a small military force. Thailand is making a significant contribution, and the Philippine Government is now seeking approval from its Congress for a substantial contingent. About thirty-five other countries of the Free World are cooperating with the government of South Viet-Nam in non-military fields.

V. What progress has been made?

Together with our own, these various efforts have led to significant progress. In brief, we and the South Vietnamese by no means stand alone.

One significant but relatively unpublicized development in recent months has been the success of the Chieu Hoi, or "open arms" amnesty program of the South Vietnamese Government. This is a program designed to persuade the Viet Cong and their supporters to return their loyalties to the Government.

While this program has been nominally conducted since 1963, it has this last year begun to enjoy the kind of success that had been hoped for.

During the last half of 1965 the number of Viet Cong defecting under this program was more than double the rate in 1964, and in the first months of this year the rate has again doubled. For example, last month 1,510 Viet Cong, a substantial part of whom were full- or part-time guerrillas, defected, as compared to an average of about 1,000 a month

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in the last half of 1965 and only about 450 a month in 1964.

VI. The non-military effort.

No one in your Government believes that the real victory in Viet-Nam is primarily to be a military victory. For we know that any significant, lasting peace -- the kind of peace that will permit individual and social growth -- is so intricately woven into the complex patterns of political, social, religious and economic life as to make reforms in these areas mandatory, even while the necessary military action is taking place.

You are all familiar with President Johnson's oft-repeated pledge of \$1 billion in economic aid to the Southeast Asian region, including the rebuilding of the war-torn land of South Viet-Nam and North Viet-Nam. You know of the provisions recently made through the Asian Development Bank to further similar goals.

In fact, even our programs and personnel are taking every opportunity to try to improve the economic and social conditions under which so many of the Vietnamese people live. Just as a few examples: United States armed forces had given medical treatment to 4-1/2 million Vietnamese. They have distributed tens of thousands of tons of foodstuffs and other commodities. New hospitals are being built in many parts of the land. The United States Aid Mission is rapidly expanding its medical assistance programs. During the past year these programs included training some 270 Vietnamese doctors and nurses, providing serum for the inoculation of 7 million persons, mostly children, and furnishing logistical support and medical supplies for Army medical teams operating in six provincial hospitals. Fifteen more are planned by the end of August.

A significant portion of our cooperation with Viet-Nam is in the area of education. School enrollment has dramatically increased so that now over 2,000,000 students are enrolled in Government schools as compared to just over 1.3 million in 1960. With assistance from Australia and the Republic of China, we have produced some 8-1/2 million school textbooks written in Vietnamese by Vietnamese educators for the benefit of these and future students. By the end of this year we hope that 14 million texts will have been distributed -- at least four books for each child in school.

The Vietnamese recognize that economic growth and land reforms are imperative. Since 1957, 600,000 acres of farm land have been distributed to 115,000 farmers, and the Prime Minister recently inaugurated a new phase of the program which will distribute a further 650,000 acres to some 150,000 farmers.

In general, the leaders of South Viet-Nam are very much aware that the battle they fight is only partially a military one. They realize that if they are to gain and hold the political confidence of an ever-increasing portion of the population they must assure that a real social and economic revolution takes place successfully in Viet-Nam. This is the problem they primarily discussed with us at Honolulu in February. In our own government President Johnson has given a powerful impetus to seeing that maximum effort is also made in the non-military aspects of the struggle. He has appointed a Special Assistant in his own office to head a group of some of the ablest men in Washington whose job is to work full time at the Washington end of this problem.

VII. How

VII. How far do we have to go?

If I were to look ahead today on this 21st of May, 1966, I would be forced to say that the road has too many possible turnings and ups and downs to be able clearly to see its exact end. However, this is almost always true of any great enterprise. It was true of Greece in 1946, of Korea in 1950, of the Berlin crisis in 1961, and of the missile crisis in 1962. But in each of these situations calm, patient determination won the day even though at times we could only darkly see the road ahead. I am confident that the same qualities can bring the same result in this situation.

With respect to the political picture within South Viet-Nam, it is perhaps worth recalling that, during the first two years of our cooperation with the Greek Government in its struggle against Communist subversion, there were no less than five changes in the government of that country. And during the first two years of the Marshall Plan there were six changes of the government in France. But I am encouraged when I look back over the great distance we have already come and realize the substantial progress which has been made, especially when I look back on the dark days that country faced in the latter part of 1964 before American and other allied power was directly engaged. I can do no better than repeat what President Johnson said a little over a year ago:

"We will not be defeated.

"We will not grow tired.

"We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement. . . .

"We hope that peace will come swiftly. But that is in the hands of others besides ourselves. And we must be prepared for a long continued conflict. It will require patience as well as bravery -- the will to endure as well as the will to resist."

These words are as appropriate today as they were in April 1965. Peace can quickly come when Hanoi is convinced that our will to endure, that is, our patience and determination, is no less than theirs. The brave men that we honor here are today demonstrating that patience and determination in Viet-Nam. We can do no less than demonstrate the same qualities here at home. With the support of people such as yourselves, I am confident that we will do so.

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