

Ford: U.S. Will 'Continue

President Ford gave a news conference yesterday in San Diego in which the issue of Indochina was the dominant theme. Following are excerpts from the news conference:

...I have a short opening statement. We are seeing a great human tragedy as untold numbers of Vietnamese flee the North Vietnamese onslaught. The United States has been doing and will continue to do its utmost to assist these people. I have directed that all available naval ships stand off Indochina to do whatever is necessary to assist. We have appealed to the United Nations to use its moral influence to permit these innocent people to leave and we call on North Vietnam to permit the movement of refugees to the area of their choice.

While I've been in California I have been spending many hours on the refugee problem and our humanitarian efforts. I have directed that money from a \$2 million special foreign aid children's fund be made available to fly 2,000 South Vietnamese orphans to the United States as soon as possible.

I have also directed American officials in Saigon to act immediately to cut red tape and other bureaucratic obstacles preventing these children from coming to the United States. I have directed that C-5A aircraft and other aircraft especially equipped to care for these orphans during the flight be sent to Saigon. I expect these flights to begin within the next 36 to 48 hours. These orphans will be flown to Travis Air Force Base in California and other bases on the West Coast and be cared for in those locations.

These 2,000 Vietnamese orphans are all in the process of being adopted by American families. This is the least we can do and we will do much, much more.

The first question from Mr. George Kissinger of the San Diego Tribune:

Q: Mr. President, are you ready to accept a Communist takeover of South Vietnam and Cambodia?

A: I would hope that would not take place in either case. My whole congressional life in recent years was aimed at avoiding it. My complete efforts as President of the United States were aimed at avoiding that.

I am an optimist despite the sad and tragic events that we have seen unfolded. I will do my utmost in the future, as I have in the past, to avoid that result.

Q: But Mr. President I understand that you're soon going to ask Congress for new authority to extend humanitarian aid in Southeast Asia. I wonder if you stand by your request, though, for more military aid for South Vietnam?

A: We do intend to ask for more humanitarian aid. I should point out that the administration request for \$135 million for humanitarian aid in South Vietnam was unfortunately reduced to \$55 million by congressional action. Obviously we will ask for more. The

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precise amount we have not yet determined. We will continue to push for the \$300 million that we have asked for and Congress had authorized for military assistance to South Vietnam, and the possibility exists that we may ask for more.

Q: Mr. President, how and why did the U.S. miscalculate the intentions of the will of the South Vietnamese to resist?

A: I don't believe that we miscalculated the will of the South Vietnamese to carry on the fight for their own freedom. There were several situations that developed that I think got beyond the control of the Vietnamese people. The unilateral military decision to withdraw created a chaotic situation in Vietnam that appears to have brought about tremendous disorganization.

I believe that the will of the South Vietnamese people to fight for their freedom is just evidenced by the fact that they are fleeing from the North Vietnamese, and that clearly is an indication they don't want to live under the kind of government that exists in North Vietnam.

The will of the South Vietnamese people still exists. They want freedom under a different kind of government than has existed in North Vietnam. The problem is how to organize that will under the traumatic experiences of the present.

Q: A unilateral decision by whom?

A: It was a unilateral decision by President Thieu to order a withdrawal from the broad exposed areas that were under the control of the South Vietnamese military.

Q: Mr. President, what is your response to the South Vietnamese ambassador to Washington's statement that we had not lived up to the Paris peace accord and that the Communists are safer allies?

A: I won't comment on his statement. I will say this: that the North Vietnamese repeatedly and in massive efforts violated the Paris peace accord. They sent North Vietnamese regular forces into South Vietnam in massive numbers—I think around 150 to 175,000 well-trained North Vietnamese regular forces in violation of the Paris peace accord moved into South Viet-

nam. We have objected to that violation.

I still believe that the United States, in this case and in other cases, is a reliable ally, and although I am saddened by the events that we've read about and, too, it's a tragedy unbelievable in its ramifications.

I must say that I'm frustrated by the action of the Congress in not respond-

ing to some of the requests, both for economic and humanitarian assistance to South Vietnam, and I'm frustrated by the limitations that were placed on the chief executive over the last years.

But let me add very strongly: I am convinced that this country is going to continue its leadership. We will stand by our allies and I specifically warn any adversaries they should not under any circumstances feel that the tragedy of Vietnam is an indication that the American people have lost their will or their desire to stand up for freedom any place in the world.

Q: Well, Mr. President, can you explain why President Thieu with our close military ties as ally, did not tell you what he was going to do in terms of the retreat?

A: I think the only answer to that can come from President Thieu.

Q: Mr. Ford, recently you said the fall of Cambodia could threaten the national security of this country. Considering the probable fall of South Vietnam to Communist forces, do you feel that will threaten our national security? And if so, how?

A: At the moment I do not anticipate the fall of South Vietnam and I greatly respect and admire the tremendous fight that the government and the people of Cambodia are putting up against the insurgents who are trying to take over Cambodia. I believe that in any case where the United States doesn't live up to its moral or treaty obligations it can't help but have an adverse impact on other allies we have around the world. We read in European papers to the effect that Western Europe ought to have some questions.

Let me say to our Western European allies: we're going to stand behind our commitments to NATO and we're going to stand behind our commitments to other allies around the world. But there has to be in the minds of some people a feeling that maybe the tragedy of Indochina might affect our relations with their country.

I repeat—the United States is going to continue its leadership and stand by its allies.

Q: Are you in fact a believer of the domino theory that if Southeast Asia falls that perhaps some of the other countries in the Pacific are next?

A: I believe that there is a great deal of credibility to the domino theory. I hope it doesn't happen. I hope that other countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand, the Philippines, don't mis-

read the will of the American people and the leadership of this country to believing that we're going to abandon our position in Southeast Asia. We are not.

But I do know from the things I read and the messages that I hear that some of them do get uneasy. I hope and trust they believe me when I say we're going to stand by our allies.

Q: Mr. President, as you are well aware, there are about 7,000 Americans still in Saigon. They are in danger not only from Communist attack but from South Vietnamese reprisals. There are reports that the South Vietnamese are in a bad temper toward Americans. Do you feel that under the war powers act, that also under limitations voted by Congress in 1973 on combat by Americans in Indochina, that you could send troops in to protect those Americans and would you if it came to that?

A: I can assure you that I will abide totally with the war powers act that was enacted by the Congress several years ago. At the same time I likewise assure you that we have contingency plans to meet all problems involving evacuation if that should become necessary. At this point I do not believe that I should answer specifically how those contingency plans might be carried out.

Q: Can you tell us, however, if you do believe that you do have the authority to send troops—but do you have the authority?

A: My interpretation of that legislation is that any President has certain limited authority to protect American lives. And to that extent I will use that law.

Q: Mr. President, despite your statement here this morning about war orphans there apparently is a lot of red tape in Washington. A San Diego man is trying to get four Vietnamese children out of that country and he's received hundreds of calls from people all over the Western United States trying to help, even adopt children.

But despite this outpouring of compassion by the American people he only gets in Washington, "No way. There's nothing that can be done." Why does he keep running into this problem if we're trying to help?

A: Having had some experience in the affairs of federal bureaucracy when we had a similar problem involving Korean orphans I understand the frustration and the problem. I am assured that all bureaucratic red tape is being eliminated to the maximum degree and that we will make a total effort as I communicated in my opening statement to see to it that South Vietnamese war orphans are brought to the United States.

Q: Do you think it could be done before it's too late for any of them?

A: I can only say that we'll do what has to be done; what can be done as a practical matter. I can't guarantee that every single South Vietnamese war orphan will get there but I can assure you that we intend to do every-



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President Ford listens to question at news conference.

thing possible in that humanitarian effort.

Q: Mr. President, the Gallup Poll shows that the, a very healthy majority of the American people, 60 per cent of the American people, are more concerned about the high cost of living than they are about any other issue, including the recession and international developments.

I'd like to ask in view of that if Congress does not respond to your repeated appeals to hold down spending and not exceed a level that would produce a deficit of \$60 billion; if they don't do that and government borrowing increases to cover the deficit, do you have any plans, is there anything you can plan to do beyond just these appeals to Congress to prevent a resurgence of inflation?

A: As I clearly indicated last Saturday night when I approved the Tax Reduction Act I have drawn a line on additional federal spending—that's as far as we dare go. If we go beyond that, we amplify the potentiality for a resurgence of double-digit inflation. I intend to appeal to the Congress to hold

the lid, and I intend to appeal to the American people to get their members of Congress, Senators and Congressmen, to stop coming to the White House with one spending bill after another.

In addition I am asking the Congress to enact a provision that would make applicable for fiscal year 1976 the budget control act that was enacted last year by the Congress.

Under the present law the budget control act which forces Congress to set its ceiling doesn't actually come into effect until fiscal year 1977. It seems to me in the crisis we face today that the Congress ought to amend the budget control act and make it applicable to fiscal year 1976 so they will impose on themselves, the individual members of Congress, House and Senate, a staying limitation.

They're going through a sort of practice session on it. I wish they would abandon the practice session and get down to the ball game, and they themselves set a spending limit at the level I indicated.

Q: What I'm asking, Mr. President, is, did you have any strings to your bow other than these congressional strings. In other words, what I'm asking you is do you plan any executive action to try to curb a resurgence or prevent a resurgence of inflation?

A: Well, the executive action will be directives to the various departments of the government to limit their spending within the appropriate amount that Congress has made available. We're expecting every department to spend as little as possible to carry out their programs and their mandates and this includes holding the line on federal personnel; it includes the limitations on spending for anything that cannot be justified. Under the law that's the maximum that I can do in an executive capacity.

Q: Mr. President, if it would alleviate the refugee problem in South Vietnam and bring about something of a temporary cease-fire would you urge President Thieu to resign?

A: I don't believe that it's my prerogative to tell a head of state elected by the people to leave office. I don't believe whether there's one head of state or another makes any difference in our efforts to help in the humanitarian program.

We're going to carry it on, I hope, with the full cooperation of the South Vietnamese government. And I don't feel it appropriate for me to ask him under these circumstances to resign and I don't think his resignation would

have any significance on our humanitarian efforts.

Q: In that regard, is there is any plan underway by the U.S. government plan underway by the U.S. government to accept large numbers of Vietnamese refugees in this country other than the 2,000 orphans you talked about.

A: Under existing law, an action by the Attorney General can permit refugees who are fleeing problems in their own country to come to the United States. This authority was used after World War II; this authority was used after the Hungarian invasion by the Soviet Union; this authority has been used on a number of other occasions.

I can assure you that that authority is being examined and, if it will be helpful, I certainly will approve it.

Q: Mr. President, what is your judgment now on when you expect the recession to end and recovery to begin—is it the third quarter of this year, or is it later?

A: Our best judgment is that the recession will turn around the third quarter of this calendar year. We are already seeing some significant changes in the statistics that give us more certainty that the recession will end and that economic recovery will begin in the third quarter of this calendar year.

Q: Can you tell what those signs are, please, sir?

A: Yes, they're, the latest report shows there has been an increase in the ordering of manufactured goods, the first time, I think, in some six months that there has been an increase rather than a decrease. Interest rates are dropping; more money for borrowers is being made available; the inflation is receding, or at least the rate of inflation is receding.

As of last report, it would annualize at about 7.2 per cent subtracted with 12 or 13 per cent rate of inflation in 1974. [When] we add up all these variant economic indicators, it does show that the recession is receding, and there, economic conditions, will get better in the third quarter of 1974, '75, excuse me.

Q: Mr. President in line with the spending question. Last year when you campaigned in California you asked voters to help defeat the big spenders in Congress and if they happened to be Republicans, well, so be it.

Do you plan to use the same philosophy in campaigning next year and to the extent we'll openly hear being against Republicans whose philosophy contradicts yours? And if so how does this fit with your statement that the Republican Party is broad enough for all views?

A: I expect to be campaigning very hard for my own re-election, or election, in 1976. I will of course urge that voters in every state support those candidates who believe as I do that we've got to hold the line on and restrain excessive federal spending.

My enthusiasm for an individual

candidate will, of course, depend on his strong support for my policy in fiscal restraint. But I'm not going to pass judgment today and individuals with one party or another.

Q: Does this mean, then, that there is a possibility that during that campaign you could come out and openly support of a Democrat as opposed to a Republican?

A: I believe in the needs of the country to have individual members of the House and Senate who believe that these massive federal spending programs are bad for America. And I certainly will look with favor on anyone who believes as I do that we cannot spend ourselves into prosperity, a tax cut approach is the far better way, and

that massive spending programs are not good for America.

Q: Mr. President you are now head of an administration which came to power on a strong law and order platform, but the crime rate since 1969 has done nothing but go up, and the statistics include crimes of the highest level of government, and my question is whether you think it would be fair for the Democrats to charge that this administration is soft on crime or at least is incapable of dealing with the problem?

A: Well, unfortunately for the country, the crime rate has been increasing for the last 10 or 15 years, whether it was under a Democratic administration, under President Kennedy or President Johnson, or except for, I think, one year under the former President, the crime rate has been going up. I don't think it's a partisan issue.

It's my judgment that we have to maximize our efforts—the federal government, state government and local units of government—to try and have proper enforcement of the law, which includes the prosecution of people who violate the law, and I can only assure you that to the extent that the federal government can do something about it, we, this administration, will do it.

The facts of life are that most law enforcement is the local responsibility. Now, through the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, the federal government has been spending, for the last several years, around \$800 million to help local units of government, state units of government, in the upgrading of their law enforcement capability or helping police departments, helping sheriff's departments, helping the courts, and we'll continue to do it. But the principal responsibility rests at the local level.

Q: Will you be able to spend any more money under your proposition that the line has to be drawn somewhere on fighting the crime problem?

A: I think in the budget I have submitted there is ample money for a federal effort to carry out the federal rules in the area of law enforcement.

Q: Mr. President, you spoke a few

minutes ago about being frustrated by the limitations of the War Powers Act. If it were not forbidden now, would you like to send American planes and naval forces and possibly ground forces into Vietnam to try and turn the situation around?

A: I have said that there are no plans whatsoever for U. S. military involvement in Vietnam. On the other hand, I think history does prove that if a chief executive has a potential it to some extent is a deterrent against aggressors.

Q: So that is your frustration, because you do not have that power to at least threaten the possibility . . .

A: I didn't use the word threat. I said the potential for power, I think over the years, has indicated that that potential is a deterrent against aggression by one country against another.

A: We are in the process of putting together our timetable and our plan. I have said repeatedly that I intend to be a candidate but I have made no categorical announcement to that effect. The matter is not being neglected.

Q: Mr. President, in light of current concerns regarding the assassination of President Kennedy and the recent showings of the Zapruder film, do you still have the same confidence in the findings of the Warren Commission that you had as a member of that commission?

A: I think you have to read very carefully what the Warren Commission said and I, as a member of the Warren Commission, helped to participate in the drafting of the language. We said that Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin. We said that the commission had found no evidence of a conspiracy foreign or domestic. The words were very carefully drafted. And so far I have seen no evidence which disputes the conclusions to which we came. We were most careful because in 1963 and '64 when we most carefully analyzed all the evidence available there was none of the involvement of anybody or anybody as a group in the assassination.

It's my understanding that the Rockefeller Commission may, if the facts seem to justify it, take a look at it, at the problem, and I suspect that the House and Senate committees that are currently investigating the CIA history may do the same, but the commission was right when it made its determinations and it was accurate at least to this point and I want to reemphasize that as to the evidence we saw.

Q: Mr. President, some people are saying this week that our massive aid to Vietnam and all the lives that were lost there, that the whole thing has come to nothing. Now how do you feel about this and do you think there is anything to be learned in what has been happening over there?

A: I believe that the program of the previous four or five presidents, President Kennedy, President Johnson, President Nixon and myself were

aimed in the right direction. That we should help those people who are willing to fight for freedom for themselves. That was a sound policy.

Unfortunately, events that were beyond our control as a country has made it appear that this policy was wrong. I still believe that policy was right if the United States had carried it out as we promised to do at the time

of the Paris peace accord, where we promised with the signing of the Paris peace accord that we would make military hardware available to the South Vietnamese government on a replacement one-for-one basis. Unfortunately we did not carry out that promise.

Q: Well, are you blaming Congress for this?

A: I am not assessing blame on anyone. The facts are that in fiscal year 1974 there were a substantial reduction made by the Congress in the amount of military equipment requested for South Vietnam. In fiscal year 1975, the current fiscal year, the administration asked for \$1,400,000,000 in military assistance for South Vietnam. Congress put a ceiling of \$1 billion on it and actually appropriated only \$700 million. Those are the facts. I think it's up to the American people to pass judgment on who was at fault or where the blame may rest. That's a current judgment. I think historians in the future will write who was to blame in this tragic situation.

But the American people should know the facts, and the facts are as I've indicated. I think it's a great tragedy what we're seeing in Vietnam today. I think it could have been avoided, but I am not going to point a finger. The American people will make that judgment. I think it's more important for me, the American people, and the Congress in the weeks and months ahead to do what we can to work together to meet the problems of the future. And that's what I intend to do and I'll go more than halfway with the Congress in seeking to achieve that result. I think we have the capability in America. I think we have the will to overcome what appears to be a disaster in Southeast Asia. To the extent that I can, I hope to give that leadership.

Q: Mr. President, regardless of what caused the defeat, apparently for the first time in our nation's history, the enemy is about to win a war where Americans fought and died. Do you think that those 55,000 lives were wasted?

A: I don't think they were wasted providing the United States has carried out the solemn commitments that were made in Paris at the time American fighting was stopped in South Vietnam. At a time when the agreement provided that all of our troops should be withdrawn, that all of our POWs should be returned. If we had carried out the commitments that were

made at that time, the tragic sacrifices that were made by many, those who were killed, those who were wounded, would not have been in vain. But when I see us not carrying through then it raises a quite different question.

Q: Is that a yes then, sir?

A: I still think there's an opportunity to salvage the situation in Vietnam and if we salvage it giving the South Vietnamese an opportunity to fight for their freedom, which I think they are anxious to do if given an honest opportunity, then there is . . . there was not a sacrifice that was inappropriate or unwarranted.

Q: Good afternoon, Mr. President. In a speech you delivered here in San Diego this afternoon you warned against fatalism, despair and the prophets of gloom. And yet as I look back over the past eight months or a year, I don't mean to suggest that these are in any way your responsibility or your fault. I have a laundry list which cites Portugal as having a leftist government, and NATO, Greece and Turkey are at each other's throats, threatening the southern flank of that alliance. We are familiar that Secretary Kissinger's mission failed in his peace talks with Egypt and Israel and we don't need to rehash the situation in Cambodia and South Vietnam. That being the case, sir, how can you say that the world outlook, and particularly as you just—in your speech next week on the state of the world—is anything but bleak for the United States, when many of the minuses for us are actually pluses for the Soviets?

A: Well the speech that I'm giving to Congress and to the American people next week will deal with many of the problems that you have raised. I think we do face a crisis. But I am optimistic and if the Congress joins with me and the American people support the Congress and me as President, we can overcome those difficulties. We can play a constructive role in Portugal. Not interfering with their internal decisions, but Portugal is an important ally in Western Europe. We can find ways to solve the problem in Cyprus and hopefully keep both Greece and Turkey strong and viable members of NATO. We can despite the difficulties that transpired in the Middle East in the last several weeks find a way to keep a peace movement moving in that very volatile area. It may mean, and probably does, that we will have to take the problem to Geneva. I would have preferred it otherwise. But the facts are that if Congress, the American people and the President work together, and I suspect they will, that in my judgment, those disappointments can become pluses.

Q: But sir, can you cite any specific reason for the optimism you express.

A: The historical character of the American people. That's the main ingredient that in my judgment will take America from the disappointments of the present to the optimism of the future.