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SECRETARY RUSK'S NEWS CONFERENCE OF DECEMBER 21, 1966

The following is the State Department's release of Secretary of State Dean Rusk's news conference, which is authorized for direct quotation:

SECRETARY RUSK: My season's compliments to the distinguished and talented members of the press corps that covers and sometimes discovers the Department of State. And I hope you have a very prosperous and successful new year.

Yesterday afternoon the 21st General Assembly concluded.

As you by now are well aware, a General Assembly constitutes a major review of most of the international issues of the day.

You might be interested that with 98 items on the agenda, and 121 members through most of the Assembly -- one country was added at the end -- that that meant that there were almost 12,000 primary votes cast in the General Assembly this year.

We are very grateful to Ambassador Goldberg for his distinguished leadership. He was ably assisted

by Senator Church of Idaho and Senator Case of New Jersey, and a very competent delegation up there.

Ambassador Goldberg just shortly -- just a few minutes ago made an extended comment on the work of this General Assembly. And you will be interested in reviewing that. We will try to have copies of his statement for you in the course of the afternoon here.

I must say that I was very much encouraged that the General Assembly was able to bring the space treaty to a conclusion as far as international discussions are concerned. We believe that this was a very positive step forward, as a result of President Johnson's initiative earlier in the year.

Outer space may seem a long way away, but its activities very much involve us here on this earth, and the application of the general principles of the Antarctica Treaty to outer space I think is a substantial step forward and may help us in the never-ending task of trying to put some ceiling on the arms race.

We are very pleased that the Secretary General consented to accept an additional term and carries with

him into his new term the solidarity of the support of the membership of the UN. And we wish him the very best of success in his new term of office.

Viet-Nam was discussed in many ways at the General Assembly -- although it was not formally on the agenda. It was discussed at the table and in the corridors. And it obviously is the major and most dangerous issue in building a durable peace.

We have regretted that the United Nations has not been permitted to take hold of that question and try to find a solution to it. That results primarily from the attitude of Hanoi and Peking, who have repeatedly insisted that this question is not an appropriate matter for the United Nations to deal with. That attitude on their part has led many delegations to believe that formal action by the United Nations might get in the way of a settlement of the matter by other means -- for example, the use of the Geneva machinery or through other types of discussion or negotiation.

We, as you know, have suggested to the Secretary General that he use his utmost effort to

bring this matter into a forum of discussion, and we hope very much that some progress can be made in that direction.

By and large, it was a constructive meeting of the General Assembly, and we were pleased and encouraged by the general results -- although obviously there is still some unfinished business, both in the house-keeping of the UN itself, the unfinished business of making proper arrangements for peace-keeping.

But nevertheless, we were pleased by the course of the Assembly as a whole.

Now I am ready for your questions.

Q Mr. Secretary, since Secretary McNamara last month disclosed that the Russians are deploying some anti-ballistic missiles, there has been considerable speculation that this was likely to touch off another spiral in the arms race, and there has been speculation as to what the United States can do about this in its discussions with Russia.

Would you care to address yourself to that subject for a moment?

A Well, there is not very much that I can

say on that today. You have seen what Secretary McNamara has said.

We would regret very much the lifting of the arms race to an entirely new plateau of major expenditures.

As you know, we made earlier to the Geneva Conference proposals for freezes and limitations on the further production of offensive and defensive nuclear weapons.

We would like to see some means developed by which both sides would not have to go into wholly new and unprecedented levels of military expenditure, with perhaps no perceptible result in the total strategic situation.

This is a matter that is before the Geneva Conference. We and the Soviet Union are co-chairmen.

I presume that there will be further contacts on this matter. But I cannot go into that in more detail at this point.

Q Mr. Secretary, on that point, is one possible means to deal with this problem to approach the Soviet Union on a moratorium on deployment of ballistic missile defense systems?

A Well, implicit in the idea of a freeze is that there will be an agreement that certain limitations will be accepted, that those limitations could be relied upon with assurance by all sides, and that in that way both sides could be relieved from the burdens of moving to wholly new and major levels of expenditure.

But this has been before the Geneva Conference. There has been no progress on it thus far in that conference. The two co-chairmen, we and the Soviet Union, have reviewed the agenda from time to time to see where we might make progress. That conference will be meeting again in February. I just cannot anticipate at this point just what might be the result of the contacts that are implicit in a matter of that sort, in a conference of that sort.

Q Mr. Secretary, to go back to what Ambassador Goldberg said, in his letter to the Secretary General, he made -- he used some rather sweeping language in saying that he requests "that you will take whatever steps you consider necessary to bring about the necessary discussions".

Does this represent any policy change as far as the United States is concerned in that one might read it as wide enough to allow for some negotiations with the National Liberation Front?

A I would not read detail into it. When seventeen non-aligned nations last year indicated that they thought there should be negotiations without pre-conditions, we said yes, we thought that was a good idea. The other side turned it down.

We are prepared to talk about the problem without pre-conditions of any sort from either side. We are prepared to have preliminary discussions with the other side about pre-conditions, if they want to talk about those. We are prepared to come to a conference. We are prepared to have bilateral discussions. We are prepared to use intermediaries. We are prepared to have discreet and private contacts.

But it is very hard to find someone on the other side who is prepared to talk seriously about bringing this matter to a peaceful conclusion.

The Secretary General has a new term of office,

with the overwhelming unanimous support of the United Nations.

As you know, he is very much concerned in this major problem affecting the peace of the world.

And so we would be glad to see the Secretary General use the widest powers available to him to probe the possibilities of a serious discussion about a peaceful conclusion of this matter.

Q Do you use the term "other side" exclusively to mean Hanoi, or does it include the National Liberation Front?

A Well, we have not talked about pre-conditions of any sort with the Secretary General, and so I don't suppose I need talk about them here.

President Johnson has made some comments in July of last year about the Liberation Front.

But let's see what the Secretary General might be able to accomplish in his contacts with those who are directly involved in this and might bring it to a conclusion.

Q Mr. Secretary, there are some keen observers

of this situation that think that so long as Russia and Communist China are on opposite sides, with their split, it would be very difficult for Hanoi to sit down at the conference table, with this conflicting advice on either side of them.

Do you think this is a factor in holding up peace talks?

A I would prefer not to comment precisely on your exact question.

I think that undoubtedly the various capitals in the Communist world tend to look over their shoulders at each other in a matter of this sort, and this somewhat complicates the problem of responsible contacts and responsible discussions with a view to winding this matter up.

In that sense, there is no single place, there is no single point of view with whom one can enter into talks in order to bring it to a conclusion.

So I think the complexity on the other side does complicate the technical procedures, the diplomatic procedures, by which one can establish contact and move this thing forward.

Q Do you see any interest, Mr. Secretary, on the part of Hanoi or the National Liberation Front in arriving at a longer Christmas truce, or talking about conditions for an extended truce running into the new year?

A No, I have not. From the statements they made, it would point rather in the other direction.

Q Mr. Secretary, is there anything that the United States Government can do to try to effect the release of Mr. Wortham, who was convicted to three years of labor today by a Leningrad court?

A Well, we will continue to pursue this matter. We did feel that although these two young men acknowledged the offenses for which -- with which they were charged, that the punishment was more harsh than the violations themselves would seem to warrant.

There are procedures of appeal and clemency that are available, and we expect that those will be utilized.

I do not myself wish to condone these particular actions, but I think as the Soviet Union moves into a period in which they are trying to encourage tourism

and have maximum contacts with other countries, that they might recognize that on occasion minor incidents of this sort may occur, and that it will be in their interest to resolve them in accordance with the general practice of most governments when temporary foreign guests pull pranks of this sort, or whatever you want to call it, that would be a violation of local law.

I would hope that the Soviet authorities would take cognizance of this sort of thing and take action to mitigate the punishment that has been meted out to these two men.

Q Mr. Secretary, in that connection, Buel Wortham's mother has expressed the hope that he might be exchanged for the man named Igor Ivanov, who is being held in this country under a 20-year sentence. Has anything been done to negotiate such an exchange?

A No.

Q Mr. Secretary, going back for a moment to your comment about the Secretary General, where you say that he has a new mandate, and that you would be very glad to see him use the widest powers available to probe the prospects of peaceful negotiations, does that mean that if he should succeed in doing what he did once before, in arranging for the other side to send representatives to Rangoon or someplace else, that we would this time accept the offer, and also go ourselves?

A Well, I don't want to go into the question of whether or not there was a previous incident of the sort that you talked about in exactly those terms.

Q He has said so.

A Well, I think that when the full record is out some day that will take on a somewhat different context, and I think it is not good for the future for me

to intrude into the past on that particular point.

But he has a maximum latitude here, as far as we are concerned in the situation, to see what can be worked out on the other side in terms of responsible discussions.

Q Mr. Secretary, there seems to be some misunderstanding of our motives in seeking a truce or an extended armistice, while, at the same time, we seem to tighten the noose and hit harder with bombs in North Viet-Nam. Could you put this in perspective for us?

A Well, we have a military interest in hitting military targets in North Viet-Nam to try to impede, slow down, or interfere with the steady movement of men and supplies into the South. We have had nothing in the way of reciprocity from the North in terms of pulling back on their violence in South Viet-Nam.

We have tried over many, many months now, since the pause of January, to try to get some indication from the other side as to whether they would be willing to talk about de-escalation, or enter into de-escalation, in fact, without any formal agreements, on some basis of reciprocity. We have not been able to do that.

These particular incidents, I think, have to be looked at against the background of what is responsible for the fighting, and who would be glad to see it wound up. As far as we are concerned, we regret every person that has been lost in South Viet-Nam, and in North Viet-Nam. And there should not have been any of these casualties, if these people in North Viet-Nam had undertaken to live at peace with their southern neighbors, and not have launched their Liberation Front, for which they are now celebrating the sixth birthday, and not sent their cadres and their men and their arms and their regiments into South Viet-Nam to seize that country by force.

Now, all of this is unnecessary, from our point of view. And it could be brought to conclusion very quickly if that central ambition on the part of Hanoi were abandoned. Now, that's what is lacking here in this situation.

Now, in a struggle of this sort, there are going to be those who are injured by accident, or otherwise, or going to be those who suffer from the struggle. But I should think we ought to concentrate on why it started,

and how it could be brought to a conclusion. And, on that, I think the responsibility rests very heavily with Hanoi.

Q Mr. Secretary, in the event no negotiations for peace are upcoming, are we prepared for a military victory in both North and South?

A Well, our objectives there have been very clearly defined. We are trying to protect South Viet-Nam, under treaty commitments, from this aggression by means of armed attack from the North, from the infiltration of these men and arms into the South. We have no desire to destroy North Viet-Nam, or insist upon changing their regime, or any of those things. We are trying to meet our commitments to South Viet-Nam. And, on that basis, this matter could be wound up very quickly.

Q Mr. Secretary, could you assess for us, please, the last week's NATO conference? The reports from Paris were rather favorable. The French appear to be cooperative. Brandt's debut got favorable reviews.

I wonder how you feel about it?

A This was my 12th NATO meeting of Ministers and I must say I thought it was one of the most business-like and most productive of those that I have attended for some time. I think there has been a rather broad understanding between the 14 on the one side and France on the other as to the boundaries that now arise between the 14 and France as to who would take care of what kind of business.

The 14 met as the defense committee and transacted a good deal of business affecting the military arrangements in the Alliance, including the nuclear committee that was established. Those were referred to, I think, in paragraphs 15 to 21 of the Communique. In the Communique France pointed out that they had not participated in those discussions and did not associate themselves with it. But as far as the other discussions concerned, France was present and we had a good exchange

among all 15 on such questions as the East-West relations.

I must say that there was a general feeling that two of our eminent new members among the Ministers, Mr. George Brown of Britain and Mr. Willy Brandt of Germany, both made very strong impressions on the Council. So I think on the whole it was a very, very encouraging and a very good meeting.

Q Mr. Secretary, coming back to the question of a missile freeze, Secretary McNamara has also told us that the Administration plans to ask Congress for appropriations for the Poseidon missile and improvement on the Polaris missile. Would the Administration be willing to put off deployment of this missile if there could be some agreement?

A No, I wouldn't want to get into that kind of question. That is a problem for the Secretary of Defense, and these are matters that the Administration is considering in connection with his presentation to the Congress. It's a matter on which there will be full discussion with the appropriate Congressional committees. I wouldn't want to point to the future in that way today.

Q Mr. Secretary, on two food decisions facing the Administration, will the shipments to Yugoslavia that Congressman Findley has objected to be released, and will grain be released for India in the near future?

A As far as India is concerned, very substantial quantities of grain will be arriving in India during January. As you know, we have been concerned that this food problem be taken up as a general international problem in which all countries who are in a position to contribute will do so. It is not true that we have been putting pressure on particular countries, as I have seen reported in the last day or so. But, nevertheless, we are glad that some other countries are taking up this matter seriously and are making some significant contributions.

The prospect is that over the next decade there is going to be a major crisis in the food situation and all countries, including those who are going to need the food and those who are in a position to contribute in whatever way, must make a concerted and sustained effort to deal with it. Otherwise, there is going to be considerable hunger in the world.

You saw Secretary Freeman's remarks yesterday on that subject, and I would expect and hope that appropriate international action will be taken to assist the Indians in their critical problem.

At the present time I am not actually sure just what the situation is with Yugoslavia, and I wouldn't want to comment on that today.

Q Mr. Secretary, how do you interpret the current upheaval in China in terms of the possibility of change in our relationship with Peiping?

A Well, we have not tried to analyze the significance of what is going on in China. We have the feeling that it is important, these events there. But I think we would be fooling you if we said that we fully understood exactly what is happening. My guess is that some of the leaders in China don't know exactly what is happening. So our present ignorance doesn't embarrass us too much.

But we have seen no indications thus far that what is happening there has any significant bearing on their relations with us or their attitudes towards us.

Q Mr. Secretary, is it your appraisal that

the Soviet Union has made a commitment to an all-out deployment of the antiballistic missile system?

A No. I have no information on that one way or the other. We just don't know that.

Q Mr. Secretary, now that it's getting toward the close of the year, I wonder if you could summarize what you think have been the main gains and setbacks during the year and what do you see in the year ahead?

A Well, I would almost need some notice on that question because that is a rather comprehensive question.

I think that during this past year we have seen continuing increase of contacts between the East and West as far as Eastern Europe is concerned. We had in front of us at NATO a little summation of the East-West contacts in the last few months among the NATO countries, and I think there were about a hundred eighty-five items on that list, which is available to you.

There seems to be an interest in trying to keep these East-West divisions under control and to try to find points of agreement if possible, whether in the arms

field or in the trade field, or cultural exchanges or whatever. I would hope that that represents a trend which will continue and that we can begin to see some reduction of tension on a more permanent basis between these two great systems of states.

I think out in Asia we know now that South Viet-Nam is not going to be overrun by force by North Viet-Nam. And we see a recovery of confidence and hope among the free nations of Asia.

I think this past year has seen a very exciting demonstration of the intention of the free nations of Asia to get on with their jobs, not only nationally but in groups, in cooperation with each other. We have had such dramatic developments as the founding of the Asian Development Bank and the formation of the ASPAC group that recently met in Seoul, Korea. We have a feeling that free Asia is on the move. They are demonstrating a capacity to move ahead economically and socially and with more competence in the political field. Those are all very much to the good.

We have been encouraged by the performance of the Alliance for Progress and the discussions which have

been anticipating the meeting of the Foreign Ministers in February and a meeting of the Heads of Government in April here in this Hemisphere. I think in the broadest terms the general trends have been in a constructive and promising direction.

The most significant failure in 1966 has been the failure to find a means to bring this Vietnamese problem to the conference table or to a peaceful solution. And I would hope very much that the year 1967 would be a time when that will become possible.

A Well, we have raised this food problem in such organizations as the OECD. We did that here in Washington. And in the FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The Indian Government, itself, is in touch with a considerable number of governments to find out what assistance might be forthcoming, not only from the food producers but from those who might contribute fertilizer or funds or other types of assistance.

I do think that a group of nations will have to do what is necessary in a situation of this sort. Whether it would be a formal consortium or simply an informal arrangement by governments dealing directly with the Indian Government, I wouldn't want to say at this point, but the OECD organization and the FAO and other bodies will have to give systematic and serious attention to the food problem if, in fact, the problem is going to be met here over the next few years and we strongly urge that they do so.

Q Mr. Secretary, has there been any progress on the nonproliferation treaty in the last couple of months?

A I think what we last said on that remains the situation, that certain underbrush has been perhaps cleared away, but there still are important problems to

Q Mr. Secretary, in connection with that and in connection with the recent statement to Secretary General U Thant, are we saying that we will accept a cease-fire, a simple cease-fire, which is lengthy or semi-permanent?

A Well, we are saying that we believe that the Secretary General should exercise his office to the fullest to explore all possibilities of a responsible discussion with the other side to bring this matter to a peaceful conclusion. I wouldn't want to elaborate that matter in detail any more than is contained in Ambassador Goldberg's letter, because the Secretary General himself ought to have a maximum freedom of maneuver at this point.

Q Mr. Secretary, with respect to this India food problem which has got to the point, as I understand it, where the United States can't carry the burden alone, in handling their financial and development problems, why, recourse was had to a consortium with the machinery to bring this cooperation on the problem. I think its Senator McGovern that is advocating the possibility of some sort of thing like that to work on food. What do you think of this?

A I believe some announcements have already been made from some other governments, and Secretary Freeman indicated that there would be a million tons of wheat arriving in India in January.

Q In January? But what about February?

A Well, that would be for distribution in the month, presumably during the month of February and arrangements are being discussed about what might be done beyond that. But there is no specific word today about action taken beyond those already announced, and when the action --when any decisions are made on this, they will be announced.

Q Mr. Secretary, we wish you a Merry Christmas and we hope you will be able to take the whole day off.
Thank you very much.

A Thank you.

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be resolved. This is a matter in which allies on both sides presumably are in touch with each other. I would hope that this next year, that we are not too long delayed in the next year, that we might find some way to resolve this matter. It would be a major step forward if it could be brought to a conclusion, but I cannot today report that we have reached that point. It is a matter of discussion among many governments at the present time and we would hope some progress could be made.

Q Mr. Secretary, to get back to the India food problem for a moment, there is still pending on the President's desk the request of India for two million additional tons of food grains beyond the very large quantities that we have committed ourselves to send, and I believe they wanted this to arrive in February to tide them over until the March harvest has come in.

I think in the past you have said that this request was under urgent consideration by our government. Does what you have just said now indicate that we would hope that other countries would share this burden with us so that we would not have to supply all the two million tons by ourselves?