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ACTING SECRETARY BALL'S NEWS CONFERENCE OF JULY 6, 1966

The following is the State Department's release of Acting Secretary of State George Ball's News Conference, which is authorized for direct quotation:

ACTING SECRETARY BALL: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I have no set pieces to speak this morning. Secretary Rusk, as you know, is expected to return to Washington on late Saturday afternoon. In the meantime, we have no problems.

Q Ready for questions, Mr. Secretary?

A Yes, please.

Q As you know, President Johnson said yesterday that diplomatic reports indicated that the Communists no longer expect to achieve a military victory in Viet-Nam.

Would you be able to tell us whether this conclusion is based on any specific instances of hard intelligence, or is it just a general impression gathered through diplomatic contacts?

A As you know, we have a good many sources of

information about the situation in North Viet-Nam, about the attitude of the leaders of the Hanoi regime -- through intelligence sources, some hard, some not so hard, through diplomatic channels of other nations that do have representation in Hanoi.

I think it is only natural that the leaders in Hanoi would at some point come to the conclusion that their chances of succeeding in the military field were not very good.

Certainly what we have seen is a very convincing demonstration that American military power can be applied under the extraordinarily difficult conditions of terrain in South Viet-Nam, and we have seen clear indications that the bombing against military targets in North Viet-Nam has very materially raised the cost to the North Vietnamese regime in carrying on their aggression.

So that we were not surprised that there has been information coming back through several channels from North Viet-Nam within the past few weeks and more particularly within the past few days, which indicates that the North Vietnamese at long last are coming to the realization that they are not going to have military success

in the South.

So far as we are concerned, the sooner they come to that firm decision, the better, from their own point of view, as well as from the point of view of the rest of the world.

Q Mr. Secretary, the North Vietnamese have committed a number of their torpedo boats to action in the last few days, and today 27 to 29 missiles. I wonder, sir, do you see this as a political decision to commit what remaining military strength they have to battle at this time, or perhaps as acts of desperation?

A Well, I suppose that it does reflect a sense of increasing pressure -- the fact that they have defensive military equipment, that they want to use it, because they feel that the actions which have been taken against North Viet-Nam are beginning on a cumulative basis to hurt them very much -- and therefore they are committing more and more of what they have and committing it not very successfully, either, as the events of the past few days would testify to.

Q Mr. Secretary, I was intrigued about your remark about the last few days we are getting information.

Does this mean there is some truth in the report in the French magazine yesterday about Ho Chi Minh saying that North Viet-Nam did not expect to continue to fight alone through mid-1966?

A We have no confirmation at all of the Enterprise story. When I say in the last few days, that does not necessarily mean there have been decisions taken in the past few days, but it does mean we have been receiving some information in the past few days, which does not necessarily reflect any decisions or any abrupt change in mood, but simply a kind of result of a cumulative process.

Q Mr. Secretary, can I change the subject for a minute. Now that Professor Bowie and Mr. Owens are in rather key posts in the State Department, does this mean sort of a reaffirmation of the Administration's interest in Atlanticism and perhaps the Multilateral Force?

A Well, there certainly has been no diminution of the Administration's interest in the development of strong institutions for cooperation within the Atlantic world.

As far as the Multilateral Force is concerned, I think we have made our position clear on that. That was one of several proposals that have been put forward as

possible arrangements to permit the non-nuclear powers in NATO to have some participation in their own nuclear defense.

The question as to how that should be accomplished remains unfinished business. It is a matter upon which we are continuing to work.

But I would not read anything special into Mr. Bowie's appointment. He is a man of high competence who has been serving as an advisor, a consultant to the Department of State. We are delighted that he is going to come on board.

Q Mr. Secretary, Senator Thruston Morton is suggesting a blockade be established of oil tankers going to North Viet-Nam -- not a blockade of food or clothing or medicine and the likes of that, but of easily identifiable oil tankers.

Do you think this proposal has merit?

A Well, there are many proposals for additional actions that we might take in an effort to raise the cost to the North Vietnamese of obtaining necessary supplies to conduct the war. This is one of them.

I would not want to comment on the military advantages or disadvantages of it. Obviously it raises some very big political questions.

Q Mr. Secretary, reporters in Texas have been led to understand that the President's reference yesterday to a compromise on the non-proliferation treaty was notice to the Russians that we were prepared to modify the language of our draft treaty.

I wonder, sir, is the State Department preparing a new draft treaty?

A Well, we have tabled a draft at Geneva, as you know. The British have tabled a draft. We are constantly looking at what might be done in the way of changes in language that would facilitate an agreement at Geneva.

At the same time we are very determined that we are not going to invite the Soviet Union to sit at the NATO table and determine NATO nuclear policy.

So that we have -- this is a matter which we are not going to decide on a unilateral basis. Whatever kind of agreement is tabled there, draft agreement, is going to be one which is fully satisfactory to the other nations which are particularly interested.

Q Do you foresee certain concessions on either the European clause in the draft treaty or on the nuclear hardware sharing clause?

A I think we have made quite clear our interest in meeting what seemed to us to be legitimate interests on the part of the non-nuclear countries in Europe in having a share in the management of their nuclear defense. The exact ways in which that may be accomplished are not finally determined, and meanwhile we do not want to foreclose possible options.

What is quite clear -- and this is something that we must insist upon -- is that the draft treaty that we have now tabled does not in any way permit proliferation, because, as we see proliferation, it means adding to the number of nations that have national nuclear deterrents -- and this we are not proposing to do.

So that we find no legitimate objection to the language that we have tabled.

To the extent that the objections to it may stem from a desire to interfere in other arrangements within the NATO organization among the NATO countries that do not constitute proliferation, we have made it clear that we are not proposing to acquiesce in that.

At the same time, if problems can be cured by some modification of language, obviously this is something

that we will work at, and we are continuing to work at. And it may well be that we will have some suggestions, further suggestions, to make.

Q Mr. Secretary, some of the critics are charging that the Administration, by bombing the oil installations, is now committed to a policy of total military victory in Viet-Nam. What can you say about this?

A Well, I would say that the efforts that we have been making and are continuing to make to probe every possible avenue whereby a political solution might be achieved directly negates those charges.

The President made clear yesterday that what we are doing is looking for the ways and means to find a political solution which will be consistent with the objectives that we have set for ourselves in South Viet-Nam and which have been set for us by the commitments that we have made there.

We will continue to do so.

We have always regarded the military effort as in aid of a political solution, and that is the position today.

Q Mr. Secretary, could you tell us what the purpose of Secretary McNamara's visit is to Honolulu.

A It is just one in a long series of consultations on all aspects of the struggle in South Viet-Nam -- not merely the military aspect, but progress that is being made on the economic side; and also to have a report on the progress which the South Vietnamese are making in the political process which they are carrying forward looking toward the development of a broadly-based government.

Q Mr. Secretary, are these political intelligence reports you are getting from Hanoi as hazy as you make them sound, or is there some intimation that there may be a willingness to negotiate?

A I would not read too much into them. What I said was that we had many channels by which we were able to gain information about prevailing attitudes.

Now, a prevailing attitude is one thing. Its translation into a political decision is another. And I would not read too much into these things. But they are encouraging; they are not only encouraging, but they are quite to be expected, because it seems to us rather extraordinary that the regime in Hanoi has not recognized even long before this that there was no future in its military operations in the South and that ^{they} could not have military

success there.

Q Does this mean a change from the view that has been so prevalent here -- that Hanoi expects the President is going to be repudiated at the polls and that the war will collapse in Washington as it once collapsed in Paris? Have we abandoned that theory?

A I think that one of the elements that may be delaying a political decision in Hanoi is its misreading of the situation in the United States. After all, the leaders in Hanoi are scarcely familiar with the operation of an open society such as ours, of a society in which democratic process does prevail, in which there is a very high measure of free speech. And consequently I think that they do tend to misread this, and that this has been one of the problems in their coming to a full realization of what the prospects were that they faced.

Q Mr. Secretary, there are several unresolved questions concerning Latin America. One of them is the recognition of the Argentine military government and the other is whether we favor or not the removal of the Conference from Buenos Aires and the pending Summit Conference. I wonder if you would address yourself to those?

A First, on the question of recognition, as you know following the change of government in Brazil, at the conference, the Rio conference in November of 1965, there was a resolution, Resolution 26, which provided for consultation among the OAS countries on the question of recognition when there was a change in government. This consultation is now going forward. Some governments have recognized, or may recognize within the next few days. We are continuing our consultations and when that process is completed, we will make our own decision.

Now, on the question of the Foreign Ministers Conference, we continue to favor a Foreign Ministers Conference. The Foreign Ministers Conference has been set I think for the, what, 29th of August?

MR. PHILLIPS: The 29th.

A And where that will be held is a matter for the OAS to decide and we are not expressing any opinion on that today.

As far as the Summit Conference is concerned, you will recall that President Johnson said yesterday that he thought that there might be very useful possibilities of a Summit Conference and therefore we look with favor upon a well-prepared Summit Conference at some point later on.

Q Mr. Secretary, just another try at that new attitude in Hanoi. Could you tell us how this is being expressed? We don't see it in what they are saying out loud. Are these private attitudes? Is it evidence of dissension among them, or are they appealing for help from Peiping?

A No, no, these are the reports of observers in Hanoi, who are there in different capacities, the impressions that they have from the conversations that they have with people within the regime and outside of it.

Q Is one of the elements feeding this impression a sort of desperate call for help, or is it

dissension among the North Vietnamese leaders about--

A I have no very clear information as to what form it may be taking as far as the internal workings of the regime are concerned. But, all I'm reporting to you today is that we do have a quite clear impression, from the information that is coming back through many channels, that there is a change in sentiment not only within the government but it's reflected in a greater war-weariness among the people and a greater concern that the bright hopes that they had been led to have earlier are frustrated, have been frustrated.

Q Has this set us to thinking about trying to hold out a carrot as well as the stick?

A We have from the beginning in our diplomatic probing tried to explore all the possibilities for a political settlement of this. We will continue to do so.

Q Mr. Secretary, how do you evaluate reports of possible Chinese Communist intervention on the ground in Viet-Nam and Laos and Cambodia?

A Reports that it has occurred or will occur?

Q No, that it may occur.

A We see no evidence that it's likely to occur. I think that it's well enough known that there are in North Korea some construction battalions working on the railroads, Chinese. I mean, I beg your pardon-- in North Viet-Nam, some construction battalions working on the railroads and performing other tasks of that kind. They are not combat forces. We see no evidence that there is likely to be under present circumstances a decision by the Chinese to intervene in any other way.

Q Mr. Secretary, can you tell us anything about the bilateral talks in Paris between the United States and France, the bilateral agreements, and in this connection what Mr. Bohlen and Mr. Cleveland are doing here?

A Well, Mr. Bohlen and Mr. Cleveland are coming back--I think they are here today--for some conversations about just how we are going to continue to carry on these bilateral discussions which are largely on the--so far as the bilaterals are concerned, on the rather technical basis of arrangements for moving our own men and facilities out of France.

But also we must also discuss with them the question of the conduct of the multilateral talks which will concern not only us but the other NATO members in a very direct way. And I think it's only natural that at this point we should have this kind of a conversation to make sure that we are all on the same wicket, as far as this is concerned.

Q Mr. Secretary, do you see--did you see any results from President deGaulle's Moscow visit which you thought further damaged the unity of the Atlantic Alliance?

A Not so far. The impression we have had of the visit was that President de Gaulle expressed his views and the Soviet Union expressed its views. There did not seem to be a wide measure of agreement on any new initiatives or new policies in the declaration that--the communique that was issued after the visit.

Q Did you--would you give us your interpretation of that portion of their communique in which they talked about in the first instance European participation in a European settlement? How do you interpret that?

A I don't think this is anything very new.

There have been expressions before, both on the part of the French Government and the Soviet Government, along this line. The impression we had is that General de Gaulle made very clear, however, that he didn't think that there could be any final settlement in Europe unless the United States were involved because of the extent of our interests there. And certainly this is the feeling, I know, which is shared by the other members of NATO.

Q Mr. Secretary, do we have any reason for believing that Soviet or other Eastern European tankers may be on the way to Haiphong to unload fuel, and do we have any thoughts as to how they can unload that fuel if we have destroyed those facilities?

A If they can't unload in Haiphong, they may unload in Chinese ports and have the fuel brought in by railroad. This is one of the possibilities. But I have no specific information of the kind you asked about.

Q Mr. Secretary--

A Yes, sir?

Q To return to the disarmament question, do

you see more hope for progress on a comprehensive test ban treaty than on a nonproliferation treaty?

A A comprehensive test ban treaty has always suffered from the same problem, which is the problem of how there can be adequate inspection in order to provide adequate safeguards. This is a problem we keep working at continually to see to what extent technological developments may have given us ability to obtain that assurance with less on-the-spot inspections. But we haven't anything that we are prepared to put forward at this point along this line. And when you talk about comparative rates of progress on these, I think it's very difficult to hazard a view.

So far as we are concerned on the nonproliferation agreement, we have put forward a draft treaty in Geneva which meets any reasonable standard with regard to the prohibition of proliferation. And we have a feeling that it's largely extrinsic, extraneous political considerations on the part of the Soviet Union that are influencing them not to agree. However, as I said a moment ago, we will continue to examine the possibility that there may be some language that might be found which

would facilitate an agreement on their part.

Q Mr. Secretary, Fidel Castro was back making a speech recently and holding an interview and he says the State Department's questioning of his political status is ridiculous. What is your impression of his political status at the moment in his own country?

A I think it's very hard for me to hazard any guess. He is probably a pretty good judge of what his own political status may be.

Q Mr. Secretary--

A Yes, sir?

Q Mr. Secretary, can you tell us what is it exactly that has brought about this reported change in attitude that you speak of in North Viet-Nam?

A Well, I think that if you were in North Viet-Nam and looked at the total situation, it would be rather surprising if you didn't come to that view. In the first place, there has been, at least for the time being, very serious progress made in bringing about a reconciliation of the different groups in South Viet-Nam who were competing politically and where the competition was resulting in turbulence. That turbulence has been

eliminated and the groups seem to be working together.

So that if I were in North Viet-Nam, looking at this situation, I would say there doesn't seem to be any real prospect of a collapse of the political base for the effort that the South Vietnamese are making.

Then if I looked at the rate of attrition of the Viet Cong forces, I would be very depressed, indeed. And then if I looked at the increased cost, which was being imposed upon North Viet-Nam in order to continue to supply and support the effort in the South, I would be even more depressed.

So, as I say, if you add up these cumulative sources of depression, it seems only reasonable that you would expect this kind of an attitude. And particularly if they were beginning to lose hope of a failure of will on the part of the United States. And I think that the vigorous expressions and the vigorous actions by the United States, the magnificent, truly magnificent, display of valor and ability on the part of the American Armed Forces in the South, that they wouldn't expect that we would come to any national decision to quit. Therefore, why shouldn't there be a change in attitude? This is perfectly normal and natural to expect.

Q Then it was not the by-product of the raids at Hanoi and Haiphong?

A I think that is only one further step in a cumulative building up of pressure by raising the cost of conducting the war in the South.

Q Mr. Secretary, --

Q By inference, Mr. Secretary, --

A Yes, this gentleman here, please.

Q Coming back to this question of NATO and France's withdrawal from it, do you feel that NATO should now be carried on on the same basis and with the same responsibilities and tasks as before with 14 members or do you feel that there is a need and a willingness on the part of the United States to adapt NATO to the changed conditions in Europe, or otherwise do you prefer the European Allies to come forward with sort of a suggestion in this respect?

A Well, this isn't a decision for us alone. Obviously, we are one of 14 nations that are working together within NATO at the moment, within the organization, and I think that there has been a very clearly expressed determination on the part of all of the 14 to carry forward.

Now, this doesn't mean that there may not be changes in the command arrangements, the structural arrangements, within the organization. I think there certainly will be a greater emphasis as a result of the Brussels meeting on the utility of NATO as an instrument for bringing about a common purpose, looking toward the ultimate solution of the East-West problems. And this is, if you like, not so much a new element as a shift in emphasis, a greater emphasis on this particular aspect of NATO policy.

Q If I may just follow this up, Mr. Secretary, you see no possibility then of coming forward with any kind of revision that might in any way meet the point of view of the French with regard to NATO's obligations and operations?

A I see no possibility of that.

Q Mr. Secretary, the other pact over there, the Warsaw Pact, could you discuss some of their discussions going on now? How you see it at this point?

A Well, as you know, they have been having a meeting which has not yet produced a Declaration. When we see it, we may know more about what their decisions

may be.

Q Well, could you tell us some of the elements of their problems as you see them from here?

A Well, I think we can see the problems from our point of view. The problems from their point of view may look rather different. That there has been a development of dissension within the NATO ranks, within the Warsaw Pact ranks, I think has been clear. But I don't think it is particularly useful for us to comment on it because these are highly sensitive problems and I think that for us to inject ourselves into an argument of that kind isn't very helpful.

Q Mr. Secretary, --

A Yes, sir.

Q -- is there any evidence that this war-weariness or the depression is having an effect on their war effort?

A I don't think it is for me to comment on that. I think Secretary McNamara might have some impressions. Certainly, up to this point, the monsoon offensive which had been rather expected has not come off. But to

what extent this may be related to psychological factors of this kind, I don't think I should try to suggest.

Q Mr. Secretary, you pointed out earlier that this is a general attitude that you are speaking about in Hanoi and that a political decision, based on the general attitude, is another matter.

A That is right.

Q I am sure that you are hopeful that there would be such a political decision soon. But the question I'd like to ask you is whether you are optimistic that there will be such a decision soon.

A Well, I don't know quite what "soon" means and I think it is very dangerous to try to be a prophet in this situation. I don't want this morning to create an overly optimistic picture. I am merely suggesting that there are some elements which we are perceiving which we haven't perceived before. You are quite right in emphasizing the point I made earlier, that there is a substantial difference between a psychological attitude or mood and a political decision. When that political decision will come; what form it will take, how it will come, it is not for me to say. It may be quite a long time off.

Q Mr. Secretary, isn't it -- I am trying to understand the reasons why there should be an expression of even limited optimism. I was wondering whether it is not possible that that kind of expression, coming from Washington, might become a political factor in Hanoi, leading them away from any kind of political decision?

A That is the reason I have been so very discreet this morning.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

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