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# MEET THE PRESS

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*The National Broadcasting Company Presents*



# MEET THE PRESS

*America's Press Conference of the Air*

*Produced by LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK*

*Guest*  
**WILLIAM P. BUNDY**  
Assistant Secretary of State  
for East Asian and Pacific Affairs

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*Panel:*

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ROBERT GORALSKI, *NBC News*  
DAVID K. WILLIS, *The Christian Science Monitor*  
LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK, *Permanent Panel Member*

*Moderator:*

NEIL BOGGS, *NBC News*

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## MEET THE PRESS

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**MR. BOGGS:** Our guest today on MEET THE PRESS is the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, William P. Bundy. His area of responsibility includes South Vietnam, which next Sunday elects a President and Vice President.

Before coming to the State Department, Secretary Bundy held important positions in the CIA and the Defense Department. We will have the first question now from Lawrence E. Spivak, permanent member of the MEET THE PRESS panel.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Bundy, you and other administration officials have said it is vital to have a fair and free election in South Vietnam.

Why is it so important to have a fair and free election while a country is at war?

**MR. BUNDY:** To show that the people are supporting the government, to put the government on a constitutional basis and to open up the possibility of a broadened government that can do a great deal more effective job fighting the war and be a major step forward toward the kind of stable and self-governing South Vietnam that the war is about.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Is it so important that we consider it our duty to insure a fair and free election?

**MR. BUNDY:** Mr. Spivak, this election has got to be run by the South Vietnamese. We have made clear, of course, how im-

portant we think it is, but they know and they want it to be fair and free. It is their job to see that it is.

**MR. SPIVAK:** We have already gotten involved in this election in a very important way by the things you have said, what the President has said, what a great number of others in the administration have said.

**What will our position be if the election isn't fair and free? What can we do?**

**MR. BUNDY:** That is a speculative question, Mr. Spivak. I think there is every hope at the present time, and, of course, there is a week to go. There may be troubles and difficulties. I think one just can't foresee what would happen if the election isn't reasonably fair and free. We have every hope it will be.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Bundy, do you think that the elections or the results of the election can make an important contribution towards ending the war?

**MR. BUNDY:** Yes, I do. I think above all, in the sense that the resulting government, with a constitutional base and a demonstration of popular support, will be in a stronger position to do all the things that need doing, not just those measures that directly affect the war, but dealing with the problem of corruption, dealing with such questions as land reform, building the country. Secondly, I think—and this is the very strong feeling out there which you get in the speeches of the candidates—the candidates are talking a great deal about peace, and what all of them are saying, the civilian candidates, Thieu and all the rest, is that the government that emerges from this election will be in a stronger position to speak for South Vietnam. They have got the feeling that we have been doing too much talking about the negotiating issues.

After all, it is their country that is at stake, and this election could put a new government in South Vietnam in a much stronger position. This is the way they look at it, and we do too.

**MR. SPIVAK:** With eleven candidates for President and Vice President in the field, do you see much likelihood that next week's election will produce a majority?

**MR. BUNDY:** That may or may not happen. The provision is that—it is decided by a plurality, that is, the man who gets the most votes, with no run-off. The present best thinking is that it is quite likely that the winner will not have a majority. However, you then look beyond that to the question of the government that is formed, and I think it is entirely possible that whoever wins in

the election will bring in leading members from the other major tickets so that you will have a very much broader government that will speak for a very, very high percentage of the people.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Would this government of ours like to have the new government deal directly with North Vietnam towards peace? Would we be happy about that?

**MR. BUNDY:** We would be entirely happy to see that. This is something that all candidates have spoken of and, indeed, have mentioned the possibility of bombing pauses if it would assist in that. This is a matter on which they are entitled to speak and that we would take very seriously, indeed. That is certainly one of the possibilities, direct dealings between the South Vietnamese Government and Hanoi.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Does that mean the United States would be willing to stay out of negotiations?

**MR. BUNDY:** We could if they were ready to resolve it between them. This would be an entirely possible route.

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(Announcement)

**MR. EVANS:** Mr. Secretary, one of the major criticisms of the war in Vietnam in this country is that it is becoming Americanized. Casualties for the last two months, as you know, have been higher among American fighters than among the South Vietnamese Army. As a result of the election that you spoke of a moment ago, you said that they would be in a stronger position, the new government in South Vietnam.

Does this mean that we can look forward to a reduction of U.S. military forces and a gradual assumption of the military role by the South Vietnamese, particularly for instance up along the DMZ where our casualties have been so high?

**MR. BUNDY:** Mr. Evans, I think a great deal depends on the pace that Hanoi forces the military side. If they keep boring down in the DMZ area as they have done roughly since last spring, that will confront us with a continuing military situation. I wouldn't say that our share can go down. We have got to increase forces, as the President has already announced we have plans to do, by 45,000, while the South Vietnamese are going up by 65,000. I think the major thing is that a new South Vietnamese government will be in a position to strengthen the vital role of the South Vietnamese armed forces in what might be called local security, getting on with the pacification job. Incidentally,

their casualties in the last two or three weeks have been significantly higher than ours. In terms of men in combat, it about balances out.

**MR. EVANS:** Mr. Bundy, on the diplomatic front you mentioned the possibility of talks with Hanoi. Would we be in a position to try to get this new government in Saigon to open talks with the National Liberation Front?

**MR. BUNNDY:** That is a matter they would have to work out, and the major candidates have all spoken on this issue.

**MR. EVANS:** How do we feel about that in Washington?

**MR. BUNNDY:** I think this is a matter that they could resolve for themselves. What they have said is that they would not talk formally with the Liberation Front. They have spoken of other forms of contact. This would be something for them to work out.

**MR. EVANS:** You feel then that the new government, whenever is elected next Sunday, will be in a position, if they choose to, to open negotiations with the Viet Cong and the NLF and possibly arrive at some arrangement, political arrangement with the Communists? Would this be all right with us?

**MR. BUNNDY:** If they did it and could do it. Now, frankly all of them feel as we do that the National Liberation Front is basically controlled from Hanoi. The question is whether there may be individuals in it who are more Southern than they are Communist and all that kind of thing, and I think that is the sense in which the South Vietnamese are talking about. They say flatly, the civilian candidates, as the military ones, have said that they will not treat with the NLF as an independent thing or much less as the representatives of the South Vietnamese people, which it plainly is not.

**MR. WILLIS:** Mr. Bundy, isn't it altogether possible that once talks begin with even representatives of the National Liberation Front, that the constitutional government in South Vietnam as well as the government in Washington will find themselves a lot nearer to recognizing the NLF as an entity?

**MR. BUNNDY:** It could be taken that way, Mr. Willis. I think that is not the way they look at it. They look at it as a question of honest Southerners working out the future. Incidentally they have rejected the idea of a coalition. All the candidates have rejected that. Just what could be talked about would be something they would have to look into.

**MR. WILLIS:** You foreshadowed my next question, and that is that what we have spoken about so far seems to point towards some kind of coalition, because it would be pointless talking to the NLF and perhaps to Hanoi if there is going to be no prospect for either side to get into a future government. So don't you think that some kind of coalition would have to come out of those talks?

**MR. BUNNDY:** No, I can think of a great many other things they might talk about if they got together with individuals in some informal fashion, and that appears to be what they are talking about. They could talk about ways in which the people who are now in the Viet Cong or the Liberation Front could participate in the political process. Whether they would be free to organize in some form, and thereby to participate in some political election in the future, that kind of thing, whether they could assume positions of responsibility that wouldn't necessarily at all mean a coalition government. There would be lots of things to talk about, and of course the first and more immediate thing would be whether they were prepared for a cease fire, or a cessation of hostilities.

**MR. GORALSKI:** Mr. Bundy, I wanted to ask you a question about the charges by the civilian candidates for President about illegal campaigning on the part of the military officers who are running for office. It seems to me that when the Ambassador of the United States in Saigon, the President and Vice President of the United States and the Secretary of State defend the military rulers on this point, that we are interfering in South Vietnam's elections by opposing the civilian candidates.

**MR. BUNNDY:** That charge was made very briefly by one of the civilian candidates. It hasn't been pushed, and it obviously hasn't been taken up by the people out there, Mr. GoralSKI. I think they understand that particularly with a lot of the comment that was taking place in this country ten days, two weeks ago, that it was vitally important for our Ambassador and for the high officials here to express what in our eyes was the fact, and incidentally remains the fact, that there are lots of rumors, there is the possibility that there is some kind of rigging going on, but to this point there is no evidence of any significant activity of that sort at all. I think to make that clear was a job that the Vietnamese understood our officials had to do.

**MR. GORALSKI:** Premier Ky himself said that he wondered whether South Vietnam was ready for democracy. What are your views on that, Mr. Bundy?

**MR. BUNDY:** I think they want it desperately, and they have done a remarkable job in moving since January of '66 when it was Ky, actually, who announced the whole plan for a constitution and for elections. There is a tremendous aspiration for a constitutional and democratically-elected government in that country.

Of course they are not experienced in it, and they are going to have problems, as we have seen in this campaign. I think those problems, like the incident of landing at the wrong airfield, don't reflect anything in the way of illegal interference or anything of the sort by the government. There are charges made as there are in any campaign, as there would be in a campaign here, but to date, nobody has brought forward any evidence of real wrongdoing during this thing. We have a week to go and we will see. We have got to suspend judgment, I think, but at this point one can be hopeful that it is going to be a reasonably fair and free election, and that is a remarkable achievement.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Bundy, there have been some stories to the effect that a new government would call again for a bombing pause. If a new government does, would we go along with that?

**MR. BUNDY:** I think we would take it very seriously indeed, Mr. Spivak. I think we would want to go over with them what was expected in the way of any indication from Hanoi about actions it might take, restraints it might take, so that they couldn't take advantage of the situation—what the realistic possibilities were that it would contribute to the opening of some kind of useful discussions.

The same questions are on their minds that are on ours about this, but we would take it very seriously indeed.

**MR. SPIVAK:** You are saying then that our position on bombing North Vietnam can be changed by the new government?

**MR. BUNDY:** We would consult with them very closely on this. We have never excluded a pause, if you will. We have seen major elements, the question of whether the other side would take military advantage of it, whether it would be used to string out the situation. Their own—the Hanoi view has been pretty well spelled out, for example, in their captured documents, that a negotiating situation, as they see it, is one where you take the maximum possible advantage on the fighting front to get your ends through negotiation. We would have to be assured that that wasn't going to be the case, and I think the South Vietnamese feel the same way.

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**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Bundy, The New York Times today reports that North Vietnamese Mig fighters were using Communist Chinese air bases, according to informed sources. Does the U. S. have any evidence of that?

**MR. BUNDY:** Yes, we do. Secretary McNamara, in testifying in the Senate Committee and giving a full explanation of the whole bombing situation on Friday, referred to the fact that we now believe there are only on the order of 20 Migs in North Vietnam. The inventory we believe is higher, and it is therefore a reasonable inference that the balance are in Chinese bases.

That doesn't change anything. We are not threatening China. Those aircraft are no present military threat, but that does appear to be the fact.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Is that one of the reasons why we are bombing so close to the Chinese border now?

**MR. BUNDY:** That has nothing to do with it, Mr. Spivak. Those attacks have been against clearly marked rail yards and concentration points for the supply route running to the south. What you have had has been a bunching-up and then a sprinting down from these installations that are up to ten miles from the border, and we have conducted a series of attacks which we think have been very effective and which have not led to any intrusions into China.

We have had in the last week two intrusions into China and lost two aircraft as a result of operations considerably further south where the pilots appear to have been under heavy air attacks, there was a weather problem and they strayed into China. We have had incidents of that sort over a long period but none connected with the attacks near the border.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Why is it then that we have only recently attacked so close to the border? Why haven't we done it in the two years that we have been bombing?

**MR. BUNDY:** Two reasons. First, that the military payoff, the gain in knocking out rolling stock and assembled supplies was getting steadily greater as they concentrated and bunched up for this sprinting-down process that I have spoken of on the northeast rail line and, secondly, that we have become progressively more confident with the experience of our pilots and other elements that have come into the picture that we could do the precise job that we set out to do. This we seem to have done.

**MR. EVANS:** Mr. Secretary, General McConnell, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, told Congress that in his view 800,000

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additional U. S. troops would have to have been sent to South Vietnam to fight in the ground war had it not been for the bombing. Two days later Secretary of Defense McNamara said in his view the bombing had not cut—it had made more difficult but had not provably reduced the infiltration of manpower. Who is right?

**MR. BUNNDY:** Those are two judgments on a matter nobody can resolve, Mr. Evans. We don't know whether they would have sent a lot more down without the bombing. We do have indications, but they are certainly not conclusive. For example, we have a high level North Vietnamese leader who said that they weren't getting all the stuff they needed in the area just north of the DMZ, and in the south, but you can't be positive of it. I, myself, am inclined to think that they would have sent substantially more without the bombing.

**MR. EVANS:** You don't agree with Mr. McNamara on that point?

**MR. BUNNDY:** He was talking capabilities and he was talking present levels. He didn't get into the question—which nobody can answer—on what would Hanoi have done without the bombing.

**MR. EVANS:** Mr. Bundy, along those same lines, what makes the administration in this country so sure that if we could control infiltration and there were no infiltration, that the South Vietnamese Government and Army could control the insurgency in the South? Our Manila declaration, of course, is based on that proposition.

**MR. BUNNDY:** We said at Manila that we would withdraw as the North Vietnamese subversive and military forces were withdrawn and so on, and we felt that in a situation of that sort the Northern leadership, the whole Northern control of this thing, as well as the major and very important fighting input of the regular North Vietnamese—and it is growing proportionately all the time—that if you pulled that out, you would be left with a Southern movement that would be not only much less numerically but would have a serious morale factor to contend with. I think it is still valid that in this case you put, of their really pulling out, the North Vietnamese, the South Vietnamese could cope with that.

**MR. WILLIS:** Mr. Bundy, if I may broaden the focus just for a minute: one hears it said in Washington up and down Embassy Row and indeed in some offices in the State Department that the United States is preoccupied in its diplomatic outlook with Viet-

nam, that Vietnam takes an undue amount of time of officials such as yourself, and even those on a higher level, that perhaps policy failures that these critics see in other parts of the world have been caused by this excessive concentration on a small corner of the world. Is that true?

**MR. BUNNDY:** I don't think so at all, Mr. Willis. Just from my own job, I can say that while I spend a substantial percentage on Vietnam, I am equally concerned with relations with Japan, with our relationships in the Philippines, with the tremendous importance of doing our part in the multilateral effort to assist Indonesia. I can assure you that on my plate Vietnam takes its place alongside a great many other things, and I am sure that is true at senior levels where they have to look at the whole world.

We have got problems elsewhere, but it is not for lack of focusing on them that we are having problems. I think on the whole we have managed to carry forward basic policies very successfully.

**MR. WILLIS:** This is one of the matters one also hears it said—that while officials such as yourself who deal with that area of the world are, of course, concentrating on these problems, when one gets to the executive decisions in the State Department, the seventh floor, the Secretary of State and other officials are almost in the position of being Vietnam desk officers. I take it you wouldn't agree with that?

**MR. BUNNDY:** I certainly wouldn't. Of course, they are intimately involved in all the major decisions, but by no means in the way you suggest.

**MR. GORALSKI:** Mr. Bundy, I am not sure that you answered one of Mr. Evans' questions and that is, if infiltration is stopped from the North, why can we assume the South Vietnamese can fight subversion in the South? They were losing the war in February of 1965 without any North Vietnamese regulars in the South.

**MR. BUNNDY:** Mr. GoralSKI, the question I did answer, I think, was the question of whether the South Vietnamese could handle it if the Northerners got out, not merely a question of infiltration.

**MR. GORALSKI:** They couldn't do that in 1965.

**MR. BUNNDY:** Yes, but in '65 you already had 40,000 men who were sent from the North who were North Vietnamese citizens, although they happened to have been born in the South; they were the so-called returnees. The cutting edge—the leadership. A lot of the equipment—those things were even then coming from

the North, and an impetus was added by regular North Vietnamese who started to come in units in late '64. So that I don't think the fact that the situation was going downhill in '65 at all argues against the conclusion I would reach, which is a case where the North really pulls out.

**MR. GORALSKI:** In taking into account the attitude of Communist China and Vietnam—the possibility of intervention—what part does the turmoil on the mainland of China contribute to U. S. thinking today? How serious is it in terms of Vietnam?

**MR. BUNDY:** It is something that is very hard to analyze, Mr. Goraliski. It does seem to be becoming somewhat more serious all the time. It has not interfered, as far as we can tell, with the flow of military equipment which for the most part does move through China and over these same rail lines that we have been hitting. It has not had that direct effect. Whether it has had any effect behind the scenes is a matter one can speculate on. One doesn't see any evidence that it has to this point.

**MR. BOGGS:** Gentlemen, we have about four minutes.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Bundy, when you were on this program almost exactly a year ago you saw no signs that Hanoi was prepared to negotiate. Do you see any change at all today in the attitude of Hanoi?

**MR. BUNDY:** No, I don't, Mr. Spivak, as of now. We keep getting reports; it is a steady thing all the time. We are following up every lead we can get through third countries, and we have continually held out the possibility of direct contacts. At this point we have nothing. Hanoi has shown no sign of being ready to call it off. The election could affect that, of course.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Senator Mansfield was reported as saying the other day that he expected President Johnson to push for U.N. action on Vietnam after the election in South Vietnam. Do you expect that too?

**MR. BUNDY:** I think this is a matter that we have always been anxious to follow up if we could and if it could be done effectively. As you know, the Security Council at the United Nations did inscribe the Vietnamese item in, I think, late February of 1966, and there was some consultation among the Security Council members.

We are always interested in finding out whether something more effective can be worked out. I don't know just what will in fact be done by ourselves or by others.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Are we right then in concluding that the Ad-

ministration will start some new initiatives towards peace after the election?

**MR. BUNDY:** I think this is a matter that we will certainly be looking at—as we are all the time, though, Mr. Spivak. I don't want to set a particular date when you start thinking harder about peace. We are thinking as hard as we know how all the time.

**MR. EVANS:** Mr. Bundy, you spoke about the benefits that would come out of this election, even if it is a good election. What about the difficulties that will come out of it? Won't the new government have more power? Won't it try to emphasize and influence us more in the future than it has in the past on such issues as bombing Haiphong, as increasing U.S. troops in the South, as possibly even invading the North? A sovereign country built on a constitutional base will have more influence on us than it does today, is that not right?

**MR. BUNDY:** It isn't that it will have more power on the face of things, but it is the fact I think that this election, if it comes off successfully—and I do hope that it will, and the indications are that it will today; again I say one must suspend judgment—but if it does, I think there is no doubt that any Vietnamese government, whoever it is, will be more self confident, more with the sense of speaking for the South Vietnamese people, and that could affect our relationship.

**MR. EVANS:** Make it more difficult for us—

**MR. BUNDY:** In the long run this is what it is about. It is to get this country standing on its own feet, and therefore I would view it net as a clearly constructive development.

**MR. WILLIS:** Mr. Bundy, the Administration has been very firm that the downing of our planes in China and the flights near the border will not bring Communist China into the war. Has this government been in any private communication with Peking? Has it sent or received any messages to make you confident of saying that?

**MR. BUNDY:** I wouldn't want to comment on any private messages—which doesn't mean anything one way or the other, Mr. Willis. We look to the broader picture of whether they could possibly misunderstand what we are doing. We don't believe they have. We don't believe they should, as long as we are doing very clear things, in clearly defined areas.

**MR. BOGGS:** I am sorry to interrupt, but our time is up. Thank you for being with us today on MEET THE PRESS.