

Ford Urges Americans

To Remain Optimistic

By Lou Cannon

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LAS VEGAS, April 7.—President Ford ended a troubled nine-day working vacation today with an appeal to Americans not to become disheartened by continuing recession or by the near-collapse of American-backed governments in Southeast Asia.

"There are some who see nothing but a grim future of depression at home and disintegration abroad," Mr. Ford told delegates to the convention of the National Association of Broadcasters. "I reject that scenario. My vision is one of growth and development worldwide through increasing interdependence of nations. . . . My vision is one of peace."

The President's speech here was the final event of a holiday week in which he alternated hard work with golfing relaxation. On Tuesday he will meet the National Security Council to hear its recommendations on what, if anything, can be done to salvage the embattled government of South Vietnam.

Mr. Ford will report his final proposals for assisting Vietnam in a televised foreign policy speech Thursday night. The President is expected to emphasize the need for humanitarian aid to the victims of the war, a key element in what Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger last Saturday called the United States' "Moral obligation" to Vietnam.

"I will certainly put high on my agenda a firm American commitment to provide humanitarian aid for the helpless civilian victims—including orphaned children—of the war," Mr. Ford said in his address.

Although a final attempt at obtaining some of the military aid that Congress has thus far refused to give South Vietnam has not been ruled out by the President, it is believed in the White House that there is far broader support in Congress for non-military assistance to aid the refugees.

At a reception for White House reporters in Palm Springs, Calif., on Sunday night, Betty Ford spoke of the personal commitment that both she and the President feel for the refugees, especially for the war orphans.

The living room of the \$355,000 home that the Fords rented during the President's stay in Palm Springs was decorated with photos of refugees taken by White House photographer David Kennerly during a recent visit to Vietnam.

In California speeches during the past week, and again today, Mr. Ford persistently referred to himself as "an optimist" and urged Americans not to lose their faith in themselves because of world events.

He returned to that theme today, praising the broadcasters fore their accounts of mercy flights of Vietnamese orphans and adding, "the news is hopeless only if we give up hope."

"America will not give in to self-doubt nor paralysis of willpower," Mr. Ford declared. "Americans will not dismantle the defense of the United States. And we certainly will not adopt such a naive vision of this world in which we live that we dismantle our essential intelligence-gathering agencies."

Insisting that the United States will not turn inward because of recent events in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, Mr. Ford said:

"During my administration, Americans will neither resign from the world nor abandon hope of peaceful and constructive relationships with all peoples."

As he did last week at San Deigo, Mr. Ford pledged to allies and adversaries that American commitments will be honored.

"Now or in the future, let no potential enemy of the United States be so unwise to wrongly assess the American mood and conclude that the time has come when it is safe to challenge us."

While the preoccupation of Mr. Ford and Kissinger, who was sitting at the head table, is now with Southeast Asia, the President's remarks were also directed to the Soviet Union and to U.S. allies in Europe.

High-ranking White House officials said Mr. Ford is considering calling a meeting of the heads of state of members of the North Atlantic Treaty



Associated Press

Ford waves good-bye in Las Vegas as he boards plane for return to Washington.

Organization in an effort to emphasize NATO unity. Such a European meeting could come as early as May.

The President also used the occasion of his speech to warn Congress once again of the dangers of increasing a federal budget deficit that will already run to \$50 billion under the administration's own proposals.

Speaking in a city that is considered the legal gambling capital of the United States, the President said that "the inflationary odds go against us" if Congress increases the deficit by even a few billion dollars.

"Running a deficit of some \$100 billion is gambling with the nation's economic strength," he added.

Mr. Ford's remarks were greeted with only light applause by the 3,000 delegates who attended the luncheon meeting.

But the broadcasters laughed when Mr. Ford kidded them for holding their vacation in Las Vegas and added, "There are some games you just don't play without a helmet."