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# KENNEDY ASSERTS U. S. CANNOT WIN

## In Broad Indictment of War, He Calls Johnson Claims of Progress 'Illusory'

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Excerpts from Kennedy speech  
are printed on Page 12.

By TOM WICKER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8—Senator Robert F. Kennedy of New York attacked today every important facet of the Johnson Administration's policy in Vietnam. He called the President's claims of progress "illusory" and denied that there was "any prospect" of an American military victory.

"The history of conflict among nations," Senator Kennedy said, "does not record another such lengthy and consistent chronicle of error" as that brought about by first the French and then the United States in Vietnam.

"It is time for the truth," he said. "It is time to face the reality that a military victory is not in sight and that it probably will never come."

Senator Kennedy said nothing to change his refusal to oppose President Johnson for the Democratic Presidential nomination. He did not even mention Mr. Johnson by name.

Instead, in a speech to a book and author luncheon at the Ambassador East Hotel in

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Chicago, copies of which were released here, the brother of John F. Kennedy delivered the most sweeping and detailed indictment of the war and of the Administration's policy yet heard from any leading figure in either party.

Sources close to Senator Kennedy said the speech in no way signaled an intent to enter the Presidential campaign, but instead reflected his feeling that his refusal to run had set him free to speak his mind. Just yesterday, in New Hampshire, Theodore C. Sorensen, an adviser to Senator Kennedy, said Mr. Kennedy did not want anyone to vote for him in that state's Presidential primary.

Mr. Sorensen said today that the Senator hoped to keep his name off the ballot in primaries in Nebraska and Oregon. He has already succeeded in

keeping off the Wisconsin primary ballot.

The first reaction to the speech today among members of Congress and others here was that so strong an attack was nevertheless bound to have political significance. This was particularly so since the speech followed a spectacular Vietcong offensive against South Vietnamese cities that has deeply disturbed many who have supported, as well as those who have doubted, the Administration's war policy.

### Sees 'Illusion' Shattered

Mr. Kennedy said the Vietcong offensive had "finally shattered the mask of official illusion" about the war because it had demonstrated that "no part or person of South Vietnam" was secure against attack.

"Half a million American soldiers with 700,000 Vietnamese allies, with total command of the air, total command of the sea, backed by huge resources and the most modern weapons, are unable to secure even a single city from the attacks of an enemy whose total strength is about 250,000," the Senator said.

Denying that it was possible to "win a war which the South Vietnamese cannot win for themselves," Mr. Kennedy indicted the Saigon regime for "the enormous corruption which pervades every level of South Vietnamese official life."

The government of President Nguyen Van Thieu, he said, is "an ally in name only" and a "government without supporters" that could not last a day without American protection.

But Mr. Kennedy went beyond criticism of the course of the war and denied as well the fundamental reasons that the Johnson Administration—and the Kennedy Administration before it—have given for waging it.

He said he himself had "participated" in policy-making and optimistic predictions during the Kennedy Administration.

But it can no longer be pretended, he said, that it serves the interests of the South Vietnamese people to devastate their country with air power, artillery and "war raging in their streets." Nor is it in the American interest, he said, to wage a war so destructive and so cruel as to cause "our best and oldest friends to ask, more in sorrow than in anger, what has happened to America?"

### Says War Can't Halt Reds

The war cannot even end the threat of Communism in Asia, he said, because "the outcome in each country depends and will depend on the intrinsic strength of the government, the particular circumstances of the country, and the particular character of the insurgent movement."

Finally, he said, the United States has fully lived up to any commitment it had in South Vietnam because "with all the lives and resources we have poured into Vietnam" a competent government supported by the people could have crushed any insurgency—even one supported by North Vietnam.

Mr. Kennedy accused the Administration of having hardened its terms every time there was a chance for a political settlement. He said any negotiations would have to include the Na-

tional Liberation Front, the political parent of the Vietcong.

In such negotiations, he said, "we must be willing to foresee a settlement which will give the Vietcong a chance to participate in the political life of the country."

"Not because we want them to, but because that is the only way in which this struggle can be settled," he said.

A source who knows Mr. Kennedy's intentions said the speech was the first in what probably would be a steady criticism by the Senator of the Administration's war policy. The source said Mr. Kennedy would speak more frequently and more strongly than he has in the past, although only "when he has something to say."

This course is not inconsistent with his refusal to run for President, the Senator is said to believe, because if he were a candidate he could be accused of trying to make political capital of his criticism of the war and of the President.

Some Administration supporters accused Mr. Kennedy of trying to have it both ways. They said he was trying to please one set of advisers by not running for President and to placate another group by speeches like today's. These

sources said he was endangering party unity without being willing to enter an open contest with President Johnson.

### Tass Reports on Speech

MOSCOW, Feb. 8 (AP)—The Soviet press agency Tass reported today on Senator Kennedy's speech criticizing the Administration's handling of the war. Tass said the speech "contained very serious criticism of the Vietnam policy of the United States Government."

### Casualty Figures Defended

HONOLULU, Feb. 8 (AP)—The Marine Corps commander in the Pacific defended today United States estimates of the number of enemy killed in the recent Communist attacks in Vietnam cities.

Lieut. Gen. Victor H. Krulak, just returned from a tour of the combat area, told newsmen Communist losses in recent weeks were above 25,000.

Asked to comment on criticism of United States estimates by Senator Kennedy, General Krulak said Vietnam war experience had shown that one weapon was captured for every four Communists killed.

He said 7,500 weapons had been recovered in the recent attacks, indicating, he said, about 25,000 Communists killed.

### 2 Newsmen Hurt in Saigon

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 8 (AP)—An Associated Press photographer, Dang Van Phuoc, and Howard Tuckner, a correspondent for the National Broadcasting Company, were wounded today by rocket fragments while covering street fighting in Saigon. Mr. Phuoc, suffered a concussion and Mr. Tuckner, whose home is in New York City, was hit in the left leg by fragments and was treated and released.