

From Nixon news conference 17 Feb 71 (transcript filed Nixon Administration 18 Feb 71):

I am not going to place any limitation upon the use of air power except, of course, to rule out a rather ridiculous suggestion that is made from time to time - I think the latest by Hans Morgenthau - that our air power might include the use of tactical nuclear weapons.

As you know, Mr. Lisagor, this has been speculated on for a period of five years and I have said for a period of five years that it is not an area where the use of nuclear weapons, in any form, is either needed or would be wise.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17 — Follows is a transcript of President Nixon's news conference today:

THE PRESIDENT: We will make this on the record today.

The mike is for the purpose of a transcription which will be available, I think, rather soon after we complete the conference because it will be run simultaneously by the stenographers.

Are there any questions which you want to ask?

(Original filed Nixon Administration)

1. Next Step in Indochina

Q. Mr. President, the next logical step in Southeast Asia would seem to be South Vietnamese forces moving into the southern part of North Vietnam for the same reasons that they moved into the Laotian Panhandle. Would our policy rule out support for this type of move — air support for it?

A. I won't speculate on what South Vietnam may decide to do with regard to a possible incursion into North Vietnam in order to defend their national security. However, I will restate our policy. I stated that policy on Nov. 3 and have restated it at least nine different times publicly since that time.

I stated then that — a time we are withdrawing our forces — that if I found that the enemy was stepping up his activity through infiltration in a way that would threaten our remaining forces that I would take strong action to deal with the new situation.

On Dec. 10, as you recall, I reiterated that statement and said that this action would include the use of air power against the infiltration routes, military complex supply depots.

That is our policy, and the policy of the President taking action if he finds that the North Vietnamese are undertaking actions which threaten our remaining forces in South Vietnam.

2. Limitations on Forces

Q. Mr. President, under that guide, is there any limit to what we might do to protect our forces in South Vietnam?

A. We have indicated several limits. For example, we are not going to use ground forces in Laos. We are not going to use advisers in Laos with the South Vietnamese forces. We are not going to use ground forces in Cambodia or advisers in Cambodia, as we have previously indicated, and we have no intention, of course, of using ground forces in North Vietnam. Those are limitations.

Q. I had reference to our use of air power.

A. I am not going to place any limitation upon the use of air power except, of course, to rule out a rather ridiculous suggestion that is made from time to time — I think the latest by Hans Morgenthau — that our air power might include the use of tactical nuclear weapons.

As you know, Mr. Lisagor, this has been speculated on for a period of five years and I have said for a period of five years that it is not an area where the use of nuclear weapons, in any form, is either needed or would be wise.

As far as our air power is concerned, it will be directed against — and I ought to be as precise as I was on Dec. 10 — against those military activities which I determined are directed against and thereby threaten our remaining forces in South Vietnam.

INCLUDES GROUND COMBAT WEAPONS? DEMOLITION? LAND MINES?

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