

Excerpts From Clifford's Testimony Before

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Following are excerpts from the testimony today of Clark M. Clifford, nominated as Secretary of Defense, before the Armed Services Committee:

CHAIRMAN (RICHARD B.) RUSSELL. Mr. Clifford, have you placed any limitation on the period of time that you are willing to serve as Secretary of Defense?

MR. CLIFFORD. I have not, Mr. Chairman. When Mr. Johnson, when President Johnson, asked that I serve, he did not place any limitation, and I might say I am ready and prepared to serve for whatever length of time he chooses me to do so.

Q. You realize better than most of our people that the Congress, if it is to legislate effectively in the field of national defense, it is necessary that we have the full and unimpaired views of the senior military officers, particularly the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Can you assure the committee that these officers will not be discouraged from giving the committee their real views or not be penalized for giving their real views, even when they are in conflict with your views or those of the President?

A. I would intend to make that the policy of the Department of Defense; that when this committee calls upon members of the military to testify before it, they shall be permitted to give their frank and open opinions on those subjects inquired into by this committee.

Q. You have been rather close to the Department of Defense over the last seven years. Do you have any remaining doubt about the authority of the Secretary of Defense to control the decisions of the department or the subdivisions thereof?

A. No sir. These last seven years have been an interesting illustration of the ability of the Secretary to utilize the powers that presently exist in order to make the principal decisions, that is, of course, along with the President of the United States.

Q. Could you give us just a brief statement as to your concept of the proper relations with the committees of Congress in this field and the obligations of a Secretary of Defense to those committees to enable them to perform their function?

A. I would expect that as Secretary of Defense I would have the closest type of cooperation with the appropriate committees of the Congress. I believe that at this particular time in our country's history that close association and coordination is, perhaps, more necessary than ever before.

Some of you have been here longer than I, and I might say only I do not recall perhaps a more perilous time confronting this nation than that which confronts it today.

Opposes Bombing Halt

Senator (Margaret Chase) Smith: Mr. Clifford, do you favor cessation of bombing of North Vietnam?

A. I do not, Senator Smith. I believe that each time the question of the bombing of North Vietnam has come up, I believe it has to be evaluated under the circumstances that exist at that time.

In the past, when it has come up, and on occasion I have been present at some of those discussions, I have suggested that we ascertain what we believe the result of such cessation would be.

Up until now I have felt that it would be damaging to our cause. The time might come, Senator, and I would hope that it would, when it would be presented to us in such a manner that I could agree that it was appropriate for there to be a suspension

Senate Committee

the closest kind of consideration by the President and his chief advisers. He asked that I sit in the meetings yesterday which were held from early morning until late at night. I did so. That subject and a number of others, Senator, are under immediate consideration. If you would permit me to say so, I believe that I would not be at liberty to comment on it at this time.

Q. Under what conditions, if you care to state, do you believe that the reserves should be called up?



Associated Press

Clark M. Clifford, right, President Johnson's nominee for Secretary of Defense, talking with Senator Richard B. Russell, chairman of Armed Services Committee, before hearing.

in the bombing. That time certainly has not yet arrived as far as I am concerned.

Q. Mr. Clifford, in view of the piracy in the capture of the U.S.S. Pueblo, should the reserves be mobilized?

A. The circumstances surrounding the incident, which are considered to be exceedingly grave, are now under

A. My answer would be general in that regard: If we reach the stage where the threat to this nation's safety is substantially increased over that that exists now. It could come about as a result of developments in the Far East. It could come about as result of developments following the incident involving the Pueblo.

At any stage, that this country's safety and security warrants, because of this type of incident which would indicate that additional trouble lies ahead. I think the President could well call up the reserves.

SENATOR (JACK) MILLER.

You participated in the Manila Conference. To refresh my memory on this, is it true that one of the points of the, or the agreement of the Manila Conference was, if North Vietnam withdrew from South Vietnam, withdrew its forces from South Vietnam, that within six months thereafter the United States would withdraw its military forces? Now, if your military advisers told you that we could not withdraw our military forces under such circumstances without the probable loss of South Vietnam to the Vietcong, would it be your purpose to try to obtain a change in that agreement?

A. I believe no change in that agreement would be necessary. There is protective language in there which could be and would be very valuable to us.

The language, as I recall it has been a year or more, it sets up certain condition precedents. One is if the North Vietnamese withdraw; the second condition is if all infiltration of men, material and supplies, that is the significance of it, if all infiltration ceases.

There is a third qualification that is a general one, that if it seems—this is a little too broad, but if it seems safe to do so, that

within six months our forces would withdraw.

So that I am not disturbed by the language because it is guarded, those conditions are such that I assure you if there is any doubt at all about the ability of South Vietnam to defend itself I would certainly cast my vote to the point that we stay until we are sure that they can take care of themselves.

None of us are going to have the sacrifices that we have made there come to naught by that kind of withdrawal.

I say, however, that in that regard one of our major tasks is during the process now to build up the South Vietnamese strength.

Some progress has been made in that regard. I would hope greater progress and more rapid progress would be made, so that my hope is the day will come when they will be able to defend themselves.

Q. Thank you for that excellent answer. Would you please tell us what is your concept of our objectives in the war in Vietnam?

A. Yes sir. First, we have a limited objective. Our limited objective is to assure to the South Vietnamese people the right of self-determination, give them the right to select the type of government they choose and to conduct it in the manner that they wish, without their being forced by the subjugation from within, or by application of force from without, to have another kind of life in their country.

In that regard, it is not and certainly must not be our intention to acquire any territory of any sort. I certainly don't wish to destroy North Vietnam. I wish only, as far as my opinion is concerned, to convince them they will never prevail in their efforts to conquer South Vietnam, and when that point is understood by them, and they realize that we are determined and we are persistent and we are patient, then the day will come when I believe that they find out the game is not worth the candle, and then I think we will have peace.

Q. If those objectives that you have detailed are not attained, if anyone of them is not attained, would you conclude that we have not fulfilled our commitment to South Vietnam?

A. I am not a prophet or seer. I can't look that far into the future. I do not know what is going to take place there. I do not know what our obligations are going to be over the world. I could say that I believe that we shall continue until we have obtained self-determination there, and I do not hear it suggested any place within

the Executive Branch that there shall be any other goal. I don't know any better way to answer your question.

Q. Well, the question comes up about a possible negotiated settlement of this war. It would seem that in view of what you have said our objectives are, that the negotiated settlement must encompass those objectives, otherwise we would have negotiated away one or more of our objectives. And that, therefore, any negotiated settlement must encompass those objectives, otherwise, we would have failed in our commitments.

A. I understand it now. I am in accord with what I understand to be the thought that you are expressing. I am not in favor of negotiations just for the sake of negotiations. I am not in favor of forcing upon the South Vietnamese people any kind of government that they do not voluntarily and independently choose. So that I believe as we enter into that phase. Should we—that we, together with the South Vietnamese, must find the answer which will preserve the independence of South Vietnam. If we do not do that, I believe we have not reached our goal.

Q. There has been much talk about winning the war and there appears to be some confusion over this. Would you say if we attained those minimal objectives we would have won the war insofar as our objectives are concerned?

A. I would say, generally, yes. It is a different kind of

war and that is one reason why it is difficult, perhaps, for the American people to understand it. We are fighting a limited war. We are not fighting to destroy our enemy. We are fighting to persuade our enemy to withdraw from South Vietnam and to leave it alone. But I might say that as far as talking about a military victory is concerned, I believe in a great respect we have already attained a type of victory in South Vietnam. I believe our presence there, our successful presence there, has many times justified the cost to us in our men and in our treasure, for as one travels in Southeast Asia he finds that this is the general attitude. They have no hope in the French. The British are withdrawing from Malaysia and Singapore. If it were not for the United States there would be no hope there, and others will have different opinions, but to me it is not a question of years, it is a question of weeks and months, if we weren't there until Southeast Asia, nation by nation, succumbed, and that is not happening now, and it is not happening, in my opinion, because we are there, and because we have extended this shield, and I believe we must continue to do it.

Q. Mr. Clifford, are you satisfied with the way the war is being conducted now? And I think a yes or no answer would suffice and I don't wish to ask you to go into specifics. I think I can understand why you prefer not to. A.—Well, I thank you for the latter comment because my answer is yes.

Q. There isn't any doubt in your mind, Mr. Clifford, that a cessation of bombing under present circumstances would lead to more casualties on our side and the side of our allies than would otherwise take place, is there?

A. When you preface your question by saying under present circumstances I agree. Under present circumstances when the North Vietnamese are willing to make no concessions whatsoever for a cessation of the bombing I agree. It is my hope that the time will come, and the sooner the better, that the North Vietnamese will indicate some reciprocal action. We have not asked for much. The President has placed it at almost an irreducible minimum. He has said, "If you will agree to talk promptly, if you will also not to take advantage of the suspension we will stop the bombing."

It seems to me this is a minimal requirement. They have chosen not to do it. My hope is that they soon will, and I should be the first, and maybe as happy as anyone, to see the bombing stopped. But in my opinion it can't stop with their present wholly and completely intransigent attitude.

SENATOR (HOWARD W.) CANNON. It has been widely reported that the Defense Department planners have considered several military options that are open to the United States, should the diplomatic efforts to free the Pueblo fail. Among those under most consideration, according to the reports, are an attempt to storm the Wonsan harbor and forcibly retrieve the vessel; seizure or destruction of one or more North Korean ships as retaliation, or for potential bargaining power; aerial bombing and sinking of the Pueblo at the Wonsan docks to deny Communist counter-intelligence teams any further access to any electronic intelligence-gathering equipment that may be on board, or a Naval blockade of Wonsan and, perhaps, other North Korean ports.

Now, do I take it from your answer to Senator Smith that you do not prefer to discuss any of the alternatives that might be available to the United States in view of the fact that they are still under active consideration?

A. Yes, that would be my answer and must of necessity, be my answer, Senator. I would say only that I know the President is making every effort to find a diplomatic solution because if one will analyze those courses of action which you have just enumerated, none of those get our 83 men back, and the President would like very much to get those 83 Americans out of the hands of the North Koreans and get them back, and I believe that he will make every effort along the diplomatic front to achieve that purpose.

Q. Is it a fact, then, that in your opinion any overt military move which we might be able to take now could very likely jeopardize the safety and lives of the men on the Pueblo? A. That is entirely possible, and I think that the President must be convinced that he has exhausted the diplomatic alternative before any other action is taken.

Q. Without getting into possible solutions to the problem, I would like to ask, in view of what has hap-

pend, whether or not it would be your intention upon taking office to immediately review the decision-making process and the authorities granted that would permit a lightly armed U.S. ship, without protection, to sail close to hostile shores even though in international waters?

A. The answer to that would be a simple "yes." I believe that the policy in that regard should be examined with meticulous care and might very well be re-evaluated.

SENATOR (STROM) THURMOND: When you spoke of negotiating, in that case you would be willing to have a cessation of bombing. I presume that that would contemplate that they would stop their military activities, too, if we would be expected to have a cessation of bombing.

A. No, that is not what I said. I do not expect them to stop their military activities. I would expect to follow the language of the President when he said that if they would agree to start negotiations promptly and not take advantage of the pause in the bombing.

Q. What do you mean by taking advantage if they continue their military activities?

A. Their military activity will continue in South Vietnam, I assume, until there is a cease fire agreed upon. I assume that they will continue to transport the normal amount of goods, munitions, men, to South Vietnam. I assume that we will continue to maintain our forces and support our forces during that period. So what I am suggesting is, in the language of the President, that he would insist that they not take advantage of the suspension of the bombing.

Q. How would you keep them from taking advantage if we had a cessation of bombing? A. There is no way to keep them from taking advantage. If they state they are going to refrain from taking advantage, and then refuse to do so, then they have not met their agreement, and the conditions for the negotiations have failed.

Q. And then, if they did violate that, you would favor then resuming bombing, I would presume.

A. I would assume we would have no alternative. If they did not meet their obligations or we do not meet our obligations, then I assume there is absolutely no sense in negotiating. It would be a useless task. To negotiate there has to be good faith if any result is to be achieved, and if, during the negotiations, bad faith is evidenced then there is no need to negotiate.