



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

September 21, 1970

Dear Fellow American:

President Nixon has asked me to reply to your comments about our policy in Southeast Asia. We would like to send you a personal reply but hope you will understand that the volume of our mail sometimes forces us to use form letters.

One of the President's first acts after assuming office was to review US policy on Viet-Nam. He significantly changed that policy to put us on the road to peace. Increasing South Vietnamese military effectiveness enabled us to begin redeployment of our troops in mid-1969. A total reduction of 115,500 men was made in the troop ceiling by April 15, 1970. On April 20 the President announced his plans for the withdrawal of 150,000 more American troops to be completed during the spring of 1971. He subsequently ordered the attacks on enemy forces in the Cambodian sanctuaries. The rapidly changing nature of the threat from the enemy based in Cambodia made it necessary for the President to act promptly to maintain our "Vietnamization" policy. I am sure that all Americans, including dissenters to the war, share a common desire for the success of this policy.

The operation in Cambodia was highly successful, and our troop withdrawals from Viet-Nam are continuing. The impressive progress of our program to further strengthen the South Vietnamese armed forces is putting Hanoi on notice, even as we bring our troops home, that our basic objective remains unchanged and that the communists have nothing to gain by persisting in their aggression against South Viet-Nam.

I am enclosing statements about the war and the President's initiatives for peace. I hope you will give these your full consideration. Perhaps you will then conclude as we do that the only real alternative for the United States is the fulfillment of our commitment to South Viet-Nam while pursuing our efforts to achieve a just and honorable peace.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Collins
Assistant Secretary
for Public Affairs

Enclosures.

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Department of State

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VIET-NAM: THE DIALOGUE WITH DISSENTERS

A democracy cannot function without effective and free communication in both directions between government and people. And the citizen's fundamental right of free speech must extend to criticism of government policy as well as to support for it (though not, of course, to violence in the expression of either). President Nixon has said that government, in turn, must be responsive: "We would bring dissenters into policy discussions, not freeze them out; we should invite constructive criticism, not only because the critics have a right to be heard, but also because they have something worth hearing."

Dissent Takes Various Forms

Dissent from United States policies in Southeast Asia takes various forms. Some Americans are troubled by what they feel are moral considerations; in their view the loss of life in the war cannot be justified. Others believe that Viet-Nam is at the root of our domestic and economic problems. A much smaller group is using the war as a pretext for a radical attack on our values and our system of government, to which they are fundamentally opposed. (A leader of this element observed in a recent book: "We are protesting Western civilization. . . If there had been no Viet-Nam war, we would have invented one.") While there is evidence that the majority of Americans support President Nixon's efforts for a just peace in Viet-Nam, it is also clear that dissent from this policy embraces a significant fraction of our people.

President Opens Channels of Communication

Dissenters often complain that their voice is not heard. But the President, recognizing the urgency of their feelings, has acted repeatedly to open new channels of communication to them:

The opening of the Federal Information Center in Philadelphia on October 28, 1969 also marked the establishment of the first President's Listening Post, to encourage citizens to make suggestions and direct their ideas about the Government to appropriate agencies.

Since the Philadelphia opening, 13 new Federal Information Centers have been opened and two more are nearly ready -- for a total of 25.

On June 13, 1970 the President named a Commission on Campus Unrest, to look into causes of unrest, to suggest ways to protect academic freedom and the right to dissent, and to propose practical steps for avoiding campus violence.

A White House Conference on Youth is scheduled for early 1971, to look for new approaches to the major issues concerning young people today, including international peace and security.

State Department Listens to Dissenters

During the "Moratorium" demonstrations in October 1969, Secretary of State Rogers said: "On the whole, it seemed to me that a great many of the demonstrators wished principally to register dramatic but dignified expressions of their deep concern for peace in Viet-Nam. And we listened to these voices with respect -- because we, too, have a deep concern for peace in Viet-Nam."

During the May 1970 protest of the Cambodian sanctuaries operation, we in the State Department, like other government agencies, made a determined effort to discuss the issues with all who wanted to speak with us. Secretary Rogers and other Department officials met with delegations from more than 70 schools and colleges. Still other State Department representatives, under a State Department sign on the Mall, met with any and all demonstrators who wanted to talk with them. We continue actively to seek such contacts today.

State Department Efforts for Greater Public Contact

In working to enlarge our channels of communication with the public, we are concerned not only to strengthen public understanding of foreign policy, but also to make sure that the individual officers of the Department are fully exposed to the views of their fellow citizens. As Secretary Rogers has said: "I am . . . counting on my colleagues throughout the Department to join in getting to know our fellow Americans and their concerns better, listening to them more, talking with them more, and giving straight answers to their questions."

The Department accepts invitations to fill some 3,000 speaking engagements each year throughout the nation as well as in

Washington before varied audiences. Our officers visited 300 campuses to listen and to talk to students last year, and we hope to be invited to twice that many this year. * We sponsor and provide speakers for conferences, seminars and community meetings. We respond to hundreds of thousands of letters from Americans each year. Over the past six years we have assigned a total of 51 senior Foreign Service officers to American colleges and universities for a full academic year as diplomats-in-residence.

The Viet-Nam Issue

The dialogue with dissenters today focuses primarily on Viet-Nam. One of the President's first acts after assuming office was to review every aspect of United States policy in Viet-Nam. Since then, he has substantially changed that policy. In May 1969 the President's comprehensive program for peace was presented at the Paris talks. A month later he announced the first withdrawal of US troops from Viet-Nam; the troop ceiling, 549,500 at the beginning of 1969, was reduced by a total of 115,500 men by April 15, 1970. On April 20 the President announced his plans for the withdrawal of 150,000 more American troops by the spring of 1971. At the same time, we are helping the South Vietnamese to train and equip their own forces to take the place of those being withdrawn. The success of the Cambodian operation in May and June assured the continuing pace of our withdrawal. Meanwhile, we remain ready to negotiate peace whenever Hanoi is willing, on simple basic terms: mutual withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces and free choice for the citizens of South Viet-Nam.

Defense Spending Down

Dissenters criticize defense spending because the country's social needs are great. On June 17, 1970 the President told the nation of his program to deal with inflation while the United States converts from a wartime to a peacetime economy. He noted that defense spending is on the way down: "For the first time in 20 years, the Federal Government is spending more on human resource programs than on national defense. This year we are spending \$1.7 billion less on defense than we were a year ago; in the next year, we plan to spend \$5.2 billion less. This is more than a re-direction of resources. This is an historic re-ordering of our national priorities."

* To invite a State Department officer to meet with your organization or group, write the Office of Public Services, Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520, or Mr. Edward Blakely, Special Assistant for Youth and Student Affairs, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520.

US Goal: World Peace

On the larger scene, the fundamental objective of the United States is a world of enduring peace and justice, in which differences between nations can be resolved short of war. Our immediate purpose is to leave behind the "era of confrontation" and to enter an "era of negotiation." The United States has continually sought to reach understandings and agreements to control the arms spiral and eliminate the possibility of thermo-nuclear war.

Agreements have already been reached on nuclear weapons tests, a "hot line" communications link with the Soviet Union and a non-proliferation treaty. Current negotiations at the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee in Geneva are centered on a treaty to prevent emplacement of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction on the ocean floor. In other forums treaties have been promulgated to prevent the orbiting of mass destruction weapons in outer space and the deployment of weapons in Antarctica. And bilateral US-Soviet talks have taken up the problem of limiting and eventually reducing nuclear arsenals.

During the past several years, we have taken the lead in efforts to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to deal with threats to the peace. The United Nations has had long experience in damping down conflict in such places as the Congo, Cyprus and the Middle East. For the current crisis in the Middle East, we believe the UN Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967 charts the way to a settlement. Addressing the UN General Assembly in September 1969, President Nixon said, ". . . those of us who have the responsibilities for leadership in the world have an overwhelming world mandate from the people of the nations we represent to bring peace, to keep the peace, and to build the peace. "

President Needs Support of All Americans

To achieve these goals, the President needs the support of all Americans, including those who dissent from his policies in one respect or another. He has invited everyone to join the effort to bring our nation together. Our problems may be persistent, but we are confident that the innate good sense of the vast majority of the American people will see us through this difficult period of rapid social progress at home and transition from leadership to partnership abroad.

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THE UNITED STATES ROLE IN ASIA

The United States role in Asia was defined by President Nixon in his report to the Congress of February 18, 1970 on foreign affairs. Selected parts of the "Asia and the Pacific" section of this report, including the Nixon Doctrine, follow:

"What we seek for Asia is a community of free nations able to go their own way and seek their own destiny with whatever cooperation we can provide -- a community of independent Asian countries, each maintaining its own traditions and yet each developing through mutual cooperation. In such an arrangement, we stand ready to play a responsible role in accordance with our commitments and basic interests."

Statement by the President at Bangkok, Thailand,
July 28, 1969

Three times in a single generation, Americans have been called upon to cross the Pacific and fight in Asia. No region of the world has more engaged our energies in the postwar period. No continent has changed more rapidly or with greater complexity since World War II. Nowhere has the failure to create peace been more costly or led to greater sacrifice.

America's Asian policy for the 1970's must be based on the lessons of this sacrifice. Does it mean that the United States should withdraw from Asian affairs? If not, does it mean that we are condemned to a recurring cycle of crisis and war in a changing setting beyond the understanding or influence of outsiders?

Our answers to these questions provide the concepts behind this Administration's approach to Asia.

First, we remain involved in Asia. We are a Pacific power. We have learned that peace for us is much less likely if there is no peace in Asia.

Second, behind the headlines of strife and turmoil, the fact remains that no region contains a greater diversity of

vital and gifted peoples, and thus a greater potential for cooperative enterprises. Constructive nationalism and economic progress since World War II have strengthened the new nations of Asia internally. A growing sense of Asian identity and concrete action toward Asian cooperation are creating a new and healthy pattern of international relationships in the region. Our Asian friends, especially Japan, are in a position to shoulder larger responsibilities for the peaceful progress of the area. Thus, despite its troubled past, Asia's future is rich in promise. That promise has been nurtured in part by America's participation.

Third, while we will maintain our interests in Asia and the commitments that flow from them, the changes taking place in that region enable us to change the character of our involvement. The responsibilities once borne by the United States at such great cost can now be shared. America can be effective in helping the peoples of Asia harness the forces of change to peaceful progress, and in supporting them as they defend themselves from those who would subvert this process and fling Asia again into conflict.

Our friends in Asia have understood and welcomed our concept of our role in that continent. Those with whom the Vice President, the Secretary of State and I spoke during our visits there agreed that this was the most effective way in which we can work together to meet the military challenges and economic opportunities of the new Asia.

Defense

Our important interests and those of our friends are still threatened by those nations which would exploit change and which proclaim hostility to the United States as one of the fundamental tenets of their policies. We do not assume that these nations will always remain hostile, and will work toward improved relationships wherever possible. But we will not underestimate any threat to us or our allies, nor lightly base our present policies on untested assumptions about the future.

At the beginning of my trip last summer through Asia, I described at Guam the principles that underlie our cooperative approach to the defense of our common interests. In my speech on November 3, I summarized key elements of this approach.

- The United States will keep all its treaty commitments.
- We shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us, or of a nation allied with us, or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security and the security of the region as a whole.

-- In cases involving other types of aggression we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.

This approach requires our commitment to helping our partners develop their own strength. In doing so, we must strike a careful balance. If we do too little to help them -- and erode their belief in our commitments -- they may lose the necessary will to conduct their own self-defense or become disheartened about prospects of development. Yet, if we do too much, and American forces do what local forces can and should be doing, we promote dependence rather than independence.

Economic and Political Partnership

The partnership we seek involves not only defense. Its ultimate goal must be equally close cooperation over a much broader range of concern -- economic as well as political and military. For in that close cooperation with our Asian friends lies our mutual commitment to peace in Asia and the world. Our goal must be particularly close cooperation for economic development. Here, too, our most effective contribution will be to support Asian initiatives in an Asian framework. Our partnership will rest on the solid basis of Asia's own wealth of human and material resources. Acting jointly, its peoples offer each other a wide range of energy and genius. Their benefits shared, its land and products can overcome the unmet needs which have often sparked conflict.

While I was in South Asia, I stated our view of the method and purpose of our economic assistance to Asia. These words were spoken in Pakistan, but they express our goals as well for India and all of Asia:

"I wish to communicate my Government's conviction that Asian hands must shape the Asian future. This is true, for example, with respect to economic aid, for it must be related to the total pattern of a nation's life. It must support the unique aspirations of each people. Its purpose is to encourage self-reliance, not dependence."

Issues for the Future

The fostering of self-reliance is the new purpose and direction of American involvement in Asia.

-- While we have established general guidelines on American responses to Asian conflicts, in practice the specific circumstances of each case require careful study...If we limit our own involvement in the interest of encouraging

local self-reliance, and the threat turns out to have been more serious than we had judged, we will only have created still more dangerous choices. On the other hand, if we become unwisely involved, we risk stifling the local contribution which is the key to our long-run commitment to Asia.

- The success of our Asian policy depends not only on the strength of our partnership with our Asian friends, but also on our relations with Mainland China and the Soviet Union. We have no desire to impose our own prescriptions for relationships in Asia. We have described in the Nixon Doctrine our conception of our relations with Asian nations. We hope that other great powers will act in a similar spirit and not seek hegemony.
- Just as we and our allies have an interest in averting great power dominance over Asia, we believe that peace in the world would be endangered by great power conflict there -- whether it involves us or not. This characterizes our attitude towards the Sino-Soviet dispute.
- Asian regional cooperation is at its beginning. We will confront subtle decisions as we seek to help maintain its momentum without supplanting Asian direction of the effort.
- A sound relationship with Japan is crucial in our common effort to secure peace, security, and a rising living standard in the Pacific area. We look forward to extending the cooperative relationship we deepened in 1969. But we shall not ask Japan to assume responsibilities inconsistent with the deeply felt concerns of its people.
- In South Asia, our good relations with India and Pakistan should not obscure the concrete dilemmas we will face. How can we bring home to both, for example, our serious concern over the waste of their limited resources in an arms race, yet recognize their legitimate interests in self-defense?

All these issues will confront this Administration with varying intensity over the coming years. We are planning now to meet challenges and anticipate crises. Our purpose in 1969 has been to make sure none was ignored or underestimated. The task ahead -- for Asians and Americans -- is to address all these issues with the imagination, realism and boldness their solutions demand if lasting peace is to come to Asia.

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THE UNITED STATES AND CAMBODIA

On April 30, President Nixon announced the launching of combined US-South Vietnamese attacks against major enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia. This military operation was limited in extent, purpose and duration. Its objective was to capture enemy stores and supplies, and to prevent the enemy from building his forces in the sanctuary areas for attacks on our and allied troops in South Viet-Nam. It was carried out during May and June, and on June 30 the President reported that all US forces had withdrawn from Cambodia in accordance with the schedule announced at the start of the operation.

Results of the Operation

From a military standpoint the operation was highly successful. Our major military objectives in Cambodia were achieved, and most of the communist forces were obliged to evacuate the sanctuary areas. Approximately 15,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops were killed or captured. Huge stores of war materiel and food were taken. In the month of May, in Cambodia alone, our and South Vietnamese forces captured a total amount of enemy arms, equipment, ammunition and food nearly equal to what we captured in all of Viet-Nam all last year.

In view of these achievements, the communist war effort in South Viet-Nam has been seriously set back. We have gained time for further strengthening the South Vietnamese forces, and by destroying communist ammunition and supplies we have saved many American lives.

US Action Protects US Forces in Viet-Nam

In making his decision to attack the enemy's sanctuaries in Cambodia, President Nixon carefully considered all of the alternatives. He stated that this action was indispensable for the continuing success of our program of withdrawal of US troops from Viet-Nam. This operation was undertaken to protect American forces in South Viet-Nam. As far as we are concerned, this was not a war in Cambodia or primarily about Cambodia. Our action must be viewed in light of our policy toward Cambodia, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong use of the sanctuaries, and our program for redeploying US troops from Viet-Nam.

United States Policy toward Cambodia

In April 1969, the United States Government issued a declaration that, "In conformity with the United Nations Charter, the United States of America recognizes and respects the sovereignty, independence, neutrality and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Cambodia within its present frontiers." This continues to be our policy.

From 1965 -- when Prince Sihanouk broke relations with us -- until August 1969, when a Charge d'Affaires reopened our embassy in Phnom Penh, we did not have a diplomatic mission in Cambodia. The United States Government did not participate in, nor was it involved in any way with, the deposal of Sihanouk by the Cambodian parliament. The question of who governs Cambodia is for the Cambodians to decide. Our Charge has continued to transact business with the Cambodian Government, as have most diplomatic missions in Phnom Penh. The Cambodian Government, following the removal of Prince Sihanouk as Chief of State, indicated its intention to follow a foreign policy of neutrality and to promote friendly relations with all countries on the basis of reciprocity.

North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Violate Cambodian Neutrality

The war in Viet-Nam, however, has imposed severe strains on Cambodia's neutrality. For five years, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces occupied military sanctuaries along the Cambodian frontier with South Viet-Nam. Some of these extended up to 20 miles into Cambodia in flagrant violation of that country's territorial integrity. These communist-occupied areas were bases for hit-and-run attacks on American and South Vietnamese forces in South Viet-Nam and were major logistic and training centers. About 40,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regulars used the sanctuaries in Cambodia for base areas, infiltration of personnel and shipment of supplies. They also procured arms, food and other supplies from Cambodian sources. Large quantities of heavy weapons and bulk supplies moved through the port of Sihanoukville (now Kompong Som) and along roads to enemy forces in South Viet-Nam.

Use of Cambodia Important to Hanoi

The utility of Cambodia to Hanoi became crucial in 1969, when the North Vietnamese decided after the defeat of their Tet offensive and two subsequent offensives in 1968 that they would shift to a strategy of "protracted struggle." This strategy, as outlined in detail in a document issued in August 1969 by COSVN (the "Central Office for South Viet-Nam," Hanoi's main headquarters for operations in South Viet-Nam), called for the withdrawal of the bulk of the communist main forces into the Cambodian base areas, from which

they would wait out the US troop withdrawals under Vietnami- zation, stage occasional forays, or "high points," to maintain military pressure on the allies, and support the communist in- frastructure and local forces left behind in South Viet-Nam.

Communists Move in April to Enlarge Sanctuary Areas

After Sihanouk was deposed by the parliament, the Cambodian Government tried to enforce Cambodian neutrality more strictly by closing Sihanoukville to communist traffic and seeking negotia- tions to obtain a North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong withdrawal from Cambodian territory. In April the North Vietnamese began moving more actively out of their sanctuaries and deeper into Cambodia in an effort to establish a solid communist-held zone reaching to Sihanoukville and the sea along 600 miles of the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border. This would have given them a far stronger position in Cambodia than they had ever had; it would have assured them of potentially unlimited supply and re- placement capabilities; and it would thus have posed a critically increased threat to remaining US forces nearby across the South Vietnamese border. This would have called the feasibility of continuing the President's policy of withdrawal of US troops from South Viet-Nam -- Vietnamization -- into serious question.

US Troop Replacement Progressing

On April 20, President Nixon told the nation about his plans for the withdrawal from Viet-Nam of 150,000 American troops to be completed during the spring of 1971. Less than a year earlier, in June 1969, the President ordered the initial withdrawal of US troops. This and subsequent replacements of US forces by the armed forces of the Republic of Viet-Nam lowered the troop ceil- ing by a total of 115,500 men by April 15, 1970. The redeploy- ment of the additional 150,000 men will bring the ceiling down to 284,000.

The rate of withdrawal of our troops from Viet-Nam depends on the three criteria set by President Nixon when he first outlined his program for the redeployment of US forces: progress in the training and equipping of the South Vietnamese forces, progress in the Paris peace talks and the level of enemy activity. The President's April 20 decision was based entirely on the progress of Vietnamization. It was made after consultation with US com- manders in the field and has the approval of the Government of Viet-Nam. The timing and pace of the new withdrawals in the over-all schedule will be determined by our best judgment of the current military and diplomatic situation. The President has stressed that, as replacements of the US forces take place, no actions will be taken which endanger the attainment of our ob- jective, the right of self-determination for the people of South Viet-Nam.

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PROGRESS IN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH VIET-NAM DESPITE WARTIME DIFFICULTIES

Some critics of our assistance to South Viet-Nam point to political problems in that country and claim that the Government of South Viet-Nam is unrepresentative, repressive and corrupt. They argue that such a government invalidates the US position in Viet-Nam and that we should either force political changes there or withdraw immediately.

We believe this view is much too negative. It focuses on South Viet-Nam's acknowledged political difficulties and shortcomings while overlooking the impressive progress the South Vietnamese are now making -- under extremely trying wartime conditions -- to develop viable political institutions of their own choice and responsive to their own needs.

Major Steps in Political Development

Nor, it seems, would the South Vietnamese people agree with this negative assessment of their government. The great majority of the people of South Viet-Nam have shown that they are determined to build their own political institutions. In the last four years, South Viet-Nam has taken major steps to establish a more effective and responsive government. On September 11, 1966, a Constituent Assembly was elected to draft a new constitution. The new constitution was promulgated on April 1, 1967, and national elections for President and Vice President and the Upper House of the National Assembly followed on September 3, 1967.

Some 4.8 million people -- representing 83 per cent of South Viet-Nam's registered voters and nearly 60 per cent of the country's entire adult population -- cast ballots despite Viet Cong and North Vietnamese efforts to terrorize voters into staying away from the polls. These elections were freely observed by the large press corps in South Viet-Nam and by numerous international observers. Nearly as many voters also participated in the elections a few weeks later, on October 22, for the Lower House of the National Assembly. President Thieu was inaugurated on October 31, 1967, and the new government assumed full responsibilities under the constitution.

In a parallel development, elections for local officials have been taking place in South Viet-Nam since April 1967. Today more than 90 per cent of the hamlets and villages in South Viet-Nam have elected officials. The country has had several years now of political stability which has been characterized by the continuing growth of Vietnamese political leadership and of viable political institutions. With this political growth and its firm electoral base at both national and local levels, the Vietnamese Government has a justifiable claim to be representative of the people -- a claim which the Hanoi-controlled and directed "Provisional Revolutionary Government" has no comparable basis for making.

Efforts to Broaden Base of Popular Support

Vietnamese Government leaders have been criticized for not making an effort to broaden the government further by adding more leading political figures to the Cabinet. The new Cabinet named in September 1969 includes several civilian political figures of significance as well as an over-all regional and religious balance. Other important political personalities remain outside the Cabinet, however, and many ministries continue to be run by men chosen for their technical efficiency rather than political qualifications. President Thieu has made clear that, as the elected Chief Executive directly responsible for the government's effective functioning, he must weigh both technical and political considerations in choosing his ministers.

Going beyond the Cabinet itself, President Thieu is moving to coalesce the various political groupings now backing him into a single party under his leadership. At the same time, he has called for a unified "loyal opposition" to offer responsible and constructive criticism within the constitutional framework. In addition, he has delegated more power and authority to elected village and hamlet officials and has begun to build a closer following for the government among these local leaders.

Finally, the government has undertaken social and economic reforms designed to win further popular support. In July 1969, for example, President Thieu submitted to the National Assembly a bill for a sweeping new land reform program which, when approved by the Assembly and put into effect, should contribute greatly to stability in the countryside and a stronger political base for the government.

Government Striving to Remedy Shortcomings

There is some lag in the development of democratic institutions and practices in South Viet-Nam. The causes include the long history of a mandarin administrative tradition; the period of alien rule under French colonial government; the absence until recently of a constitutional system with an independent legislature and judiciary; and, above all, the prolonged state of war which has disrupted the normal functioning of government and has forced the Vietnamese authorities to undertake strong measures to combat communist infiltration and terrorist tactics. All branches of the Vietnamese Government appear to be aware of these shortcomings, however, and a number of measures have been taken or are under way to remedy many of them.

Political Prisoners and Known or Suspected Enemy Agents

There seem to be some current misconceptions about the numbers and kinds of prisoners and detainees in South Viet-Nam, and the matter itself must be placed in perspective to take into account the unusual wartime conditions the South Vietnamese face.

The Vietnamese Government is of course in a difficult position as it attempts to distinguish between legitimate dissent and subversion -- to separate those individuals engaging in purely political activity and those who are known or suspected to be active on behalf of the enemy's efforts to overthrow the government by violence and terror. The vast majority of prisoners (aside from common criminals) in South Viet-Nam are not "political prisoners" in the usual sense of the term but are people in the latter category. The number of those in the former category is believed quite small in comparison.

Vietnamese authorities acknowledge that some mistakes and abuses have occurred in their efforts to control subversion, and they are working to correct these. Vietnamese National Assembly members have criticized Executive Branch officials for specific abuses and have apparently obtained corrective action in many cases. The Assembly is also taking legislative action on its own -- e.g., a pending bill to exempt civilian offenders from the jurisdiction of military courts.

Steps Toward Elimination of Corruption

Corruption is a serious problem in Viet-Nam. President Thieu and other high Vietnamese officials have acknowledged this and over the past two years have taken measures to reduce or eliminate corruption in government ranks. For

US Military Assistance to Cambodia

In April the communists drove Cambodian troops and administrative officials out of the border areas. The communists then moved westward and began encircling the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, at the same time moving to consolidate their sanctuaries on the eastern border and also threatening Sihanoukville. Although they still deny the presence of their troops in Cambodia, the North Vietnamese thus stripped away all pretense of respecting the sovereignty or neutrality of Cambodia. The Cambodian Government requested assistance from the United States and all other countries.

We deeply sympathize with the plight of the seven million Cambodians whose country is being invaded by the communists. President Nixon has stated we will encourage other countries of the region to give diplomatic support to the independence and neutrality of Cambodia and we will support the efforts of third countries that wish to furnish Cambodia with troops or materiel.

Guidelines for our own assistance to Cambodia were outlined by the President on June 30. There will be no US ground personnel in Cambodia except for the regular US Embassy staff in Phnom Penh, and there will be no US advisers with Cambodian units. We will conduct air missions to interdict the movement of enemy troops and materiel in Cambodia when such operations will enhance the safety of US and allied personnel in Viet-Nam. We will also provide military assistance to the Cambodian Government in the form of small arms and other equipment suitable for their army. We have already supplied about \$8.9 million of these items, principally in the form of small arms, mortars, trucks, aircraft parts, communications equipment and medical supplies. On August 24 we announced our intention to provide an additional \$40 million for similar equipment and for training costs during fiscal year 1971. In addition, we have turned over materiel captured in the enemy base areas in Cambodia to the Cambodian Government to help it defend its neutrality and independence.

example, the Inspectorate, an autonomous fourth branch of government provided for in the constitution, began operations in November 1968 and is making its influence felt. Its investigations have led to the dismissal, transfer, or disciplining of a number of civil and military officials. The Executive has on its own taken action against corrupt and ineffective officials, including trial and imprisonment of several officials (up to and including the rank of province chief). These punitive actions have, we believe, been salutary.

Equally important are the procedural and technical means of fighting corruption. With the help of our advisors, for instance, the Government of Viet-Nam has been able to revise and simplify its import-licensing procedures, reduce port congestion and customs clearance time, and improve tax administration. The Vietnamese authorities have also simplified administrative procedures for various public services. All these measures appear to have reduced the opportunities for, and incidence of, corruption.

US Attitude

We recognize the imperfections and shortcomings noted above. We also recognize the considerable progress the South Vietnamese have already made and the additional efforts they are now undertaking despite enormous difficulties. The Vietnamese Government has moved energetically and effectively to mobilize the population in their own self-defense and to upgrade its armed forces to enable them to take on an increasing share of the fighting. It has offered serious and forthcoming concessions toward a peaceful settlement with Hanoi, including President Thieu's offer of July 11, 1969 to stake his government's future on internationally supervised elections in which the other side can openly participate. In addition, the government has restored security and prosperity to a large part of the countryside and has begun to undertake serious social and economic reforms. We believe that on balance the record of the constitutional government and institutions of South Viet-Nam has been an impressive and encouraging one.

The political problems the government still faces are of course internal ones for the South Vietnamese themselves to resolve. We cannot impose on them our own ideas of how their political system should be run. Indeed, this would run counter to our basic objective in Viet-Nam of helping assure that the South Vietnamese people are able to determine their own political future free of outside interference. We do not necessarily agree with every action they take in this regard, but we will continue to provide support and assistance whenever we usefully can to help them overcome difficulties and remedy shortcomings which may exist.

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THE LEGAL NATURE OF THE UNITED STATES OBLIGATIONS IN INDOCHINA

The central fact so far as President Nixon's authority is concerned is that the war in Viet-Nam had been long underway when he took office. He is doing his best to bring it to an end. We believe that he has the authority under Article II of the Constitution, as Commander-in-Chief and Chief Executive, to take all reasonable measures to protect US forces in the field and to provide for their withdrawal from Viet-Nam under circumstances that will contribute to a durable peace.

Collective Self-Defense Authorized by UN Charter

Under international law we are allowed to act in this way in the collective self-defense of a country against armed attack. These actions are fully consistent with our obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. No declaration of war is required prior to our taking these measures of self-defense.

No Objection to Repeal of Tonkin Gulf Resolution

The previous Administration viewed the President's powers as Commander-in-Chief, the Tonkin Gulf resolution, and the Southeast Asia Collective Defense (SEATO) Treaty as the sources of legal justification for our involvement in Viet-Nam. As a functional matter we believe that, even before it was repealed, the Tonkin Gulf resolution had no current significance in our policy formulation process. We neither opposed nor supported Congressional efforts to repeal the Tonkin Gulf resolution; we felt that the Congress itself should decide if the resolution should be repealed, if it should simply be allowed to fade away, or if it should be replaced.

US Actions in Viet-Nam Consistent with SEATO Treaty

The SEATO Treaty has not been formally invoked with respect to Viet-Nam, though the previous Administration did on several occasions describe our actions there as responsive to our SEATO obligations. SEATO has served as a rallying point for free world forces in Southeast Asia, and we believe it is in the best interests of the United States and the other member nations that the Treaty continue in effect. US actions in Viet-Nam have been consistent with our obligations under the SEATO Treaty.

US Supports Lao and Cambodian Neutrality

We favor the continued neutrality of Laos and Cambodia, and we agree with the decisions of those countries to remain outside the SEATO framework. In the 1962 Geneva Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos, we and its other signatories agreed to "respect the wish of the Kingdom of Laos not to recognize the protection of any alliance or military coalition, including SEATO." The Government of Cambodia in 1964, and again in 1965, expressly renounced SEATO protection.

Communist Use of Cambodia Justified US Operation

While we recognize the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia, we believe that, because Cambodia was unable to prevent the use of its territory by North Viet-Nam for attacks in South Viet-Nam, we were justified in attacking communist sanctuaries within Cambodia in self-defense, to protect US and allied forces in South Viet-Nam. There is general recognition by scholars and governments of the need to provide a lawful and effective remedy to a belligerent whose troops come under direct attack as a result of its enemy's violations of a neutral's rights. These authorities recognize that, within the limits of the United Nations Charter, a belligerent may take action on a neutral's territory to prevent violation by another belligerent of a third country's neutrality which the neutral cannot or will not prevent, provided such action is required in self-defense.

US Military Assistance to Laos and Cambodia

Laos and Cambodia have requested military assistance from the United States and a number of other countries. We have provided each of them with military assistance for use against the immediate communist threat which they face. In addition, we conduct aerial reconnaissance and attempt to interdict the flow of troops and supplies into Viet-Nam, and we fly combat support missions for Lao forces when requested by the Royal Lao Government. These actions are taken by the President as Commander-in-Chief under his responsibility to protect the US forces in the field.

Public Information Series



Department of State

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UNITED STATES POSITION ON TROOP REPLACEMENT IN VIET-NAM

On April 20, 1970, the President told the nation about his plan for the withdrawal from Viet-Nam of 150,000 American troops to be completed during the spring of 1971. Less than a year earlier, in June 1969 when the troop ceiling was 549,500, the President ordered the initial withdrawal of US troops. This and subsequent replacements of US forces by the armed forces of the Republic of Viet-Nam (RVNAF) lowered the troop ceiling by a total of 115,500 men by April 15, 1970. The redeployment of the additional 150,000 men will bring the ceiling down to 284,000.

Reductions are carefully carried out so as not to endanger other American troops or those of our allies. The redeployment program, however, does not mean that US troops will no longer be sent to Viet-Nam. The regular troop rotation system will continue to provide men to take the place of individual servicemen who complete their one-year tour of duty in Viet-Nam.

Rate of Withdrawal Depends on President's Criteria

The rate of withdrawal of our troops from Viet-Nam depends on the three criteria set by President Nixon when he first outlined his program for the redeployment of US forces: progress in the training and equipping of the South Vietnamese forces, progress in the Paris peace talks and the level of enemy activity. The President's April 20 decision was based entirely on the progress of Vietnamization. It was made after consultation with US commanders in the field and has the approval of the Government of Viet-Nam. The timing and pace of the new withdrawals in the over-all schedule will be determined by our best judgment of the current military and diplomatic situation. The President has stressed that, as replacements of the US forces take place, no actions will be taken which endanger the attainment of our objective, the right of self-determination for the people of South Viet-Nam.

Cambodian Operations Assure Continued Withdrawal

In March and April of this year, communist troops used their long-held bases in Cambodia to move against the Government of Cambodia in a way which increased the long-term threat to US and allied forces in South Viet-Nam as well as to the future of our Vietnamization and withdrawal programs. On April 30 the President announced his decision to launch attacks, in cooperation with the RVNAF, for

the limited purpose of cleaning out the major enemy sanctuaries on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border and destroying his supplies and equipment. Two months later, on June 30, the President reported that all American troops had withdrawn from Cambodia in accordance with his timetable for the operation. He stated that the success of the operation will save American and allied lives in the future, will assure that our withdrawal and Vietnamization programs can proceed on schedule and should enhance the prospects for a just peace. The President also affirmed that 50,000 men of the 150,000 withdrawal announced on April 20 will be home or on their way home by the 15th of October.

RVNAF Improvement Exceeds Expectations

In his April 20 address, the President noted that progress in training and equipping the South Vietnamese forces had substantially exceeded our original estimates and that very significant advances had been made in pacification. The Cambodian operation was visible proof of the success of Vietnamization as the South Vietnamese performed with skill and valor and competence far beyond our expectation. The morale and self-confidence of the RVNAF are higher than ever before. Although we recognize that problems remain, these are encouraging trends. As the South Vietnamese have assumed more of the burden of battle, American casualties have declined. In the first seven months of 1970 the number of Americans killed in action dropped to less than half of the number of US combat deaths in the same period last year.

No Progress in Negotiations

The President, in reporting on the Cambodian operation, reviewed the record of the US efforts to achieve peace in Viet-Nam. Hanoi, however, has ignored our unilateral gestures and rejected every offer of serious negotiations. The enemy still demands the unconditional withdrawal of all American forces and the overthrow of the elected Government of South Viet-Nam. These proposals are not a basis for negotiation; they are a demand for surrender. For the United States to accept these conditions would make negotiations meaningless. The President told the nation on June 30: "To the leaders in Hanoi, I say the time has come to negotiate. There is nothing to be gained in waiting. There is never an ideal moment when both sides are in perfect equilibrium. . . The other side cannot impose its will through military means. We have no intention of imposing ours. We have not raised the terms for a settlement as a result of our recent military successes. We will not lower our minimum terms in response to enemy pressure."

Negotiations Are Best Path to Peace

The decision to withdraw 150,000 more men from Viet-Nam means that we finally have in sight the just peace we are seeking. But there is a better, shorter path to peace -- through negotiations. We shall withdraw more than 150,000 men if we make progress at the negotiating table. The United States took initiatives -- the partial

bombing halt of March 31, 1968 and the total bombing halt of November 1, 1968 -- to bring about the Paris peace talks. We accepted the National Liberation Front as one of the parties to the negotiations. In Paris, from January until early May 1969, we put forward concrete proposals for bringing an end to armed conflict in Viet-Nam on the basis of mutual withdrawal of forces and restoration of military respect for the demilitarized zone.

President's Program for Peace

On May 16, 1969 we formally presented in Paris the comprehensive new program for peace enunciated two days earlier by President Nixon. The President proposed the withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces from South Viet-Nam under circumstances that would permit the South Vietnamese people to determine freely their own political future.

Specific Points of US Proposal

The President, on the basis of full consultation with President Thieu, outlined the following specific measures:

- withdrawal from South Viet-Nam over a period of 12 months, by agreed-upon stages, of the major portions of all US allied, and other non-South Vietnamese forces;
- movement, at the end of the 12 months, into designated base areas of the remaining US, allied, and non-South Vietnamese forces, which would not engage in combat operations;
- withdrawal of the remaining US and allied forces as the remaining North Vietnamese forces are withdrawn and returned to North Viet-Nam;
- creation of an international supervisory body, acceptable to both sides, for verifying withdrawal and for any other agreed purpose;
- beginning of operations of the international body in accordance with an agreed timetable and its participation in arranging supervised cease-fires;
- holding of elections under agreed procedures and under the supervision of the international body;
- release of prisoners of war on both sides as soon as possible; and
- agreement by all parties to observe the Geneva Agreements of 1954 regarding Viet-Nam and Cambodia and the Laos Accords of 1962.

US Proposal Consistent and Reasonable

We believe that this proposal is consistent with our decision not to seek a military solution on the battlefield. At the same time it rules out either a one-sided withdrawal from Viet-Nam or the acceptance in Paris of terms that would amount to a disguised American defeat. We are willing to withdraw our troops immediately and simultaneously with the North Vietnamese. If Hanoi agrees, a relatively rapid end of the war is possible.

Hanoi's Demand for Unilateral US Withdrawal Unreasonable

However, the other side, in the "ten points" of the National Liberation Front (NLF), continues to demand that United States forces leave unconditionally while the North Vietnamese forces stay to do as they please. The intransigence of the communist side convinced us that we had to take other positive measures to lower the level of violence in the conflict and to induce the other side to cooperate in bringing the war to an end. We therefore accelerated our program to build up the RVNAF so they could take over their country's defense. The continuing success of our program to further strengthen the RVNAF is putting Hanoi on notice, even as we bring our troops home, that our basic objective remains unchanged and that the communists have nothing to gain by persisting in their aggression against South Viet-Nam.

US Willing to Discuss Other Proposals

On numerous occasions since May 1969, President Nixon has reiterated our desire to bring about genuine negotiations in Paris. All of our proposals, public and private, remain on the conference table to be explored. In the final analysis, progress toward peace can be accelerated significantly if the other side is prepared to get down to practical negotiations on the basis of the President's proposal outlined above. We and the Government of South Viet-Nam are prepared to discuss its details with the other side. Our proposal is not offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. We are willing to talk about anybody's program -- Hanoi's four points, the NLF's ten points -- provided it is consistent with our few basic and simple terms: mutual withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces from South Viet-Nam and free choice for the people of South Viet-Nam. The long-term interests of peace require that we insist on no less.