

Excerpts From the Transcript of Secretary Rogers

Following are excerpts from a transcript of the testimony by Secretary of State William P. Rogers at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings in Washington yesterday, as recorded by The New York Times through the facilities of A.B.C. News:

SENATOR J. W. FULBRIGHT—It is ironic and tragic that today, six years later, after hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost, after much of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have been ravaged and destroyed, after the economic and social fabric of our own nation has been seriously undermined, we're still discussing the war in Vietnam with members of the Cabinet even though we have a President who came into office in January of 1969 promising to end the war either through negotiations or through Vietnamization.

Instead, three years after that President took office, we find the largest force of combat aircraft and naval vessels the United States has ever assembled in Southeast Asia, massive bombing of North Vietnam resumed, and the port of Haiphong and the capital of Hanoi under attack at the risk of grave international complications.

I, for one, Mr. Secretary, cannot understand what possible national interest has dictated these military measures. Surely considerations of prestige would not warrant such drastic steps. Surely we are no longer under the illusion that a military victory can be achieved by bombing or that a renewal of bombing will improve the chances of negotiating a settlement or recovering our prisoners of war.

Five Questions Posed

I hope that you will enlighten us this morning on the reasons for these recent actions and I would begin by asking these five questions:

1. What is the purpose you seek to achieve by the intensified bombing of North Vietnam?

2. Why was the decision made to bomb Haiphong at this particular time?

3. Why was the Congress—and of course especially, we think, this committee in the Senate—not consulted in any fashion whatever in advance?

4. Does the policy of Vietnamization include the assumption that the United States will continue indefinitely to provide unlimited air and naval support whenever South Vietnamese ground forces are under military pressure?

And, finally, what do you suppose would happen to the United States if we just let them fight it out—win or lose—with no further American interference?

SECRETARY ROGERS—I'll take them one at a time, please.

SENATOR FULBRIGHT—What is the purpose you seek to achieve by the intensified bombing of North Vietnam?

SECRETARY ROGERS—Well, we have three purposes in mind, Mr. Chairman. First we are doing it to protect American troops that are in South Vietnam—protect the lives of those troops while the President's withdrawal program continues.

We are doing it to make certain that the withdrawal program that the President has announced can continue.

And we're doing it to give the South Vietnamese a chance to defend themselves against the massive invasion by the North Vietnamese. As you know, Mr. Chairman, for a long time the North Vietnamese have been able to peddle—to sell—a cruel hoax to a segment of the American people that somehow the war in Vietnam was a civil uprising.

Now, it is quite clear—and I don't believe anyone can

deny it—that this is a major invasion, offensive action by the North Vietnamese in South Vietnam.

Attacks Called Essential

It comes at a time when its purpose is to disrupt the withdrawal program, to endanger American lives—the lives of Americans who are still in South Vietnam—and the enemy has committed outside of North Vietnam 12 of its 13 combat divisions.

So we think it's essential to conduct the attacks that the President has ordered to be conducted against military targets wherever he decides to make these attacks to protect the American lives, to permit the withdrawals to continue and to give South Vietnamese forces a chance to defend themselves.

He's taken that action. And he intends to continue to take whatever action is necessary to achieve those purposes.

SENATOR FULBRIGHT—Well, now, you've properly said that our troops are largely withdrawn. I've seen nothing to indicate that our troops such as are left have been under any great threat.

SECRETARY ROGERS—Well, if the Communists took over the country militarily, we have 85,000 men still there.

SENATOR FULBRIGHT—Well, they could be withdrawn very easily, could they not?

SECRETARY ROGERS—Well, as you said yourself, Mr. Chairman, on "Issues and Answers," you would not favor any such proposal. You said it would be ridiculous to do that.

SENATOR FULBRIGHT—No. I said that we ought to settle it by negotiated settlement, is what I said. Nobody ever just runs, and turns tail, and runs out.

SECRETARY ROGERS—But you also said it would be ridiculous to have an immediate withdrawal.

SENATOR FULBRIGHT—It would. And I don't think that is in the cards at all. What I'm trying to understand is what is the interest of the United States in view of all that we have suffered from this war and the conditions that we now contend with—what is the United States' interest?

I have a great interest—all of my constituents do—in the moves to normalize relations with China and Russia. But I can't see what interest of the United States is served by this continuation of this war. I just don't see from what you said, except the lives of our soldiers—I don't think that's a serious one. I don't believe that that is any longer of significance. That is, that there's a significant threat. It's significant that we save them, of course; just as it is the war prisoners. But we were in negotiations and, according to the press, we broke off negotiations. Would you say—is it possible that these bombing raids are intended to force back negotiations?

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to, if I may, address the first part of your question, then I'll come to the last part next. You were commenting about you don't understand why we've taken this action in view of the recent decisions that the President made vis-a-vis the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union.

Well, as you see, Mr. Chairman, the President's decision was right. We had a very successful visit to the People's Republic of China; we are continuing to plan for the visit to the Soviet Union, and I think the President's judgment has been sound. Now, I think the decisions that we have made recently to bomb military targets in North Vietnam make it clear to the other side that the United States

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is going to take whatever military action is necessary to achieve the purposes I've mentioned.

Now I can remember some of the members of this committee in the past criticizing the policy of the United States for not making attacks on military targets in North Vietnam. Now, we're doing everything we can to prevent civilian casualties, but as long as the North Vietnamese have mounted a major invasion of the South, and it's clear for everyone to see now—there's no doubt about it—and it's clear that they have been lying through their teeth when they claimed there were no North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam—so you have a major military offensive, an invasion of South Vietnam, and we have indicated all these years that we were going to continue to support the people of South Vietnam and their right to determine their own future.

We're going to do it with South Vietnamese troops. We're going to do it with the use of American air power. We are not going to reintroduce any American ground combat troops in South Vietnam. But we're going to see that this major offensive attack on South Vietnam does not succeed.

SENATOR FULLBRIGHT— Why was the Congress not consulted?

SECRETARY ROGERS— Well, I think that the reason, of course, was that, Mr. Chairman, that the secrecy of this type of thing is very important.

SENATOR FULLBRIGHT— Why was the decision to bomb Haiphong made at this particular time? What was about the timing that was significant?

SECRETARY ROGERS— Well, because of the major invasion that has occurred. And because the military targets in Haiphong—and I

might say that the harbor itself was not bombed, the military targets in the area, of course, some of them were near the harbor, but the harbor itself was not bombed—but it was decided to make these attacks to slow down this major offensive that's under way in South Vietnam. The attacks included petroleum storage dumps, places where heavy equipment is stored, warehouses and other such places of that kind which contribute, of course, to the offensive in the South.

SENATOR FULLBRIGHT— Does the policy of Vietnamization include the assumption that the United States will continue indefinitely to provide unlimited air and naval support whenever South Vietnam forces are under pressure?

SECRETARY ROGERS— I think in that connection, it should be pointed out that the South Vietnamese are flying a good many of the tactical missions in South Vietnam. And they are doing quite well. And we have every reason to think that they'll be able to continue the building up of their air force.

SENATOR FULLBRIGHT— What do you think would happen if the United States did remove its forces—as we have been in the process of—and let the Vietnamese settle these matters themselves?

SECRETARY ROGERS— Well, I think that an immediate withdrawal of American forces would be ridiculous. It probably would result in a blood bath.

Secondly, I think it would destabilize that whole area. There are other nations in that area that we have treaty commitments with that have been negotiated and ratified over a period of a great number of years. And it's not a partisan matter in any sense of the word—these treaties received bipartisan support.

'Useless Talks' Ruled Out
SENATOR FRANK CHURCH— Mr. Secretary, last week I

believe the press reported that Secretary Laird had said that the bombing of North Vietnam would continue until the North Vietnamese had withdrawn above the DMZ. Is that the policy?

SECRETARY ROGERS— Senator, the policy is that we are not going to engage in useless talks with North Vietnam. We think that the talks we have had over the last several years have provided them with a propaganda forum that has not been useful at all.

Now negotiations are quite different from talks, as you know. Negotiations require a serious purpose on both sides to try to resolve differences.

SENATOR CHURCH— During the Johnson years there was very extensive bombing of North Vietnam. It was also directed toward military targets and it went on for years. Now my question is, why do you think a resumption of bombing of military targets that you have now undertaken will succeed now when it failed then?

SECRETARY ROGERS— Well, because the facts are entirely different. First, we do not have 535,000 Americans in South Vietnam. Secondly, we have trained and equipped the South Vietnamese to defend their own country so that a lot of them are well-trained and equipped. Three, the enemy has never committed all its forces outside its country before.

New Military Situation Seen

Before we were fighting what was sort of a guerrilla war, and there was infiltration and sapper attacks and so forth. Now it's a totally different concept militarily. There is a major invasion and they've committed all of their divisions except one outside of North Vietnam. Now that's quite a different military situation, Senator.

SENATOR FULLBRIGHT— If in order to defend against the present offensives it's

necessary to mass such tremendous American air power, air power that the South Vietnamese alone will never possess themselves, then how can you conclude that in the future the South Vietnamese will be able to defend themselves without the interposition of American air power? Certainly they won't have the kind of aerial armada that we have now assembled, and if that is necessary how can you say that Vietnamization is going to succeed and that they'll become self-sufficient?

SECRETARY ROGERS— Well, if these offensives are unsuccessful and these combat divisions, 12 of the 13 that are outside of North Vietnam, are defeated, then the possibility of renewed massive invasions by the North Vietnamese in the future is going to be greatly diminished. We think in the meantime that the South Vietnamese will build up their air power.

Now we have said from the beginning, every time I've testified here I've said, that as we withdraw our troops from South Vietnam we're going to continue to use air power. We're going to continue to use the air power that's necessary to prevent a take-over by the Communists of South Vietnam. I believe that can be done.

We're not going to make any announcements about what we're not going to do. We think that there's been altogether too much of that in this war. The only two announcements that I will make about what we are not going to do are these: we are not going to reintroduce American ground combat troops to South Vietnam and we are not going to use nuclear weapons in South Vietnam or in North Vietnam. But short of that, we are not going to make any announcements of what we are going to do or not going to do.