

From transcript of Nixon press conference 24 Mar 72:

Question 1: In view of the suspension of the Paris peace talks, can you tell us if the hopes are dimming for a negotiated peace settlement and what you assess the situation is?

A. What we are trying to do there, Miss Lewine, and this is being done under my direction, is to break the filibuster. There has been a three-and-a-half-year filibuster on the peace talks on the part of the North Vietnamese. They refuse to negotiate seriously and they use the talks for the purpose of propoganda while we have been trying to seek peace. Whenever the enemy is ready to negotiate seriously, we are ready to negotiate and I would emphasize we are ready to negotiate in public channells or in private channells.

As far as the hopes for a negotiated peace are concerned I would say that the way the talks were going, there was no hope whatever. I am not saying that this move is going to bring a negotiation. I do say, however, that it was necessary to do something to get the talks off dead center and to see whether the enemy continued to want to use the talks only for propoganda or whether they wanted to negotiate.

When they are ready, we are ready, but we are not going to continue to allow them to use this forum for the purpose of bullying the United States in a propoganda forum rather than in seriously negotiating peace, as we tried to do as exemplified by not only our private contacts in the 12 meetings that I discussed on Jan. 25, but also in my speech on Jan. 25, in which I made a very forthcoming offer.

From story by Bernard Gwertzman on press conference:

..... State Department officials had said earlier that the President had decided to suspend the talks because he felt that with the United States continuing to pull troops out of Vietnam, the Paris sessions were losing their value as a means of ending the war. The main value of the talks remains as a forum to work out a possible deal on releasing American prisoners.