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Address by Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich)

District of Columbia Young Republicans  
Washington, D. C.  
June 28, 1965

"Why are we in Viet Nam?" the critics ask.

As they question, a United States Ambassador, four other American and South Vietnamese leaders are put at the head of a "death list" prepared by the blood-stained hands of Communist aggressors.

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"Why are we in Viet Nam?"

I answer by asking why were we on the beaches of Normandy, at Iwo Jima, on Guadalcanal, at Midway, crossing the Rhine, in North Africa? We were there on the side of freedom, fighting the good fight, seeking peace on earth.

We are in Viet Nam because:

\*The security of the United States and the entire free world demands an invincible wall of security to halt the advance of Communist imperialism...in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe --- at home.

\*Our moral duty lies where we are asked to help a nation defend itself against Communist subversion, infiltration and aggression.

\*Our assistance was invited by the legitimate government of that Southeast Asian country.



\*Chinese Communist hostility to the United States threatens the entire structure of free world security in the Pacific.

\*The independence and freedom of 240 million people in Southeast Asia and the future of the entire Western Pacific are at stake.

\*An incorrigible Communist aggressor is fanatically committed to the destruction of the free world.

Recently, I recommended that the Administration order devastating air power against all significant military targets in North Viet Nam. And, I advocated that President Johnson toughen our attitude by establishing a naval quarantine to cut off delivery of war materiel that fattens the aggressor's war arsenal.

While there are some proponents of a diplomatic solution that would at this time amount to our surrender, there are others who apparently



quite honestly believe we can arrive at a settlement that would both end the war and preserve the freedom of the South Vietnamese people.

Unfortunately, those who urge a diplomatic solution now for the sake of preventing more conflict may see our Nation compelled to fight the very war they seek to avoid, on a broader and bloodier scale, and from a much more difficult and far more dangerous line of defense.

No loyal American wants our Nation to stand by indifferently watching Communism take over the rest of the world.

I take it for granted that everyone agrees on drawing a line against Communist expansion somewhere, somehow. The question separating us is: exactly where and how such a line should be drawn.

Many times I have reaffirmed my position that President Johnson is right in affirmatively acting on behalf of freedom and against aggression. I do so now, even though the situation would be more hopeful and less perilous today if we had acted differently a year ago. It is appropriate, however, in light of recent developments the past few days, to question



whether the United States is using its air and sea power as effectively as our superiority justifies, and whether the White House is making a maximum effort to recruit military assistance in Viet Nam from Southeast Asian allies who have a vital stake in preventing a Chinese-Communist take-over. Why can't the Administration order that more be done faster in the air and on the sea against the enemy?

The situation in Viet Nam today bears many resemblances to the situation just before Munich. Then, too, there were student protests for peace. Senators and Representatives sponsored resolutions for negotiations. The President campaigned on the premise America would never go to war. Chamberlain wanted peace by one approach. Churchill wanted peace by another route.



Churchill said that if the free world failed to draw a line against Hitler at an early stage, it would be compelled to draw the line under much more difficult circumstances at a later date.

Chamberlain held that a confrontation with Hitler might result in war, and that the interests of peace demanded some concessions to the Nazi ruler. Czechoslovakia, he said, was a faraway land about which he knew very little.

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"Still if you will not fight for the right when you can easily win  
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Chamberlain's policy won out because nobody wanted war. When he came back from Munich, he was hailed not only by the Tories but by the Liberals and the Labor Party.

But, who was right---Churchill or Chamberlain?

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In Viet Nam today we are again confronted by an incorrigible aggressor fanatically committed to the destruction of the free world whose agreements are as worthless as Hitler's. Indeed, even while the Communist propaganda apparatus is pulling out all the stops to pressure us into a diplomatic surrender in Viet Nam, the Chinese Communists are openly encouraging a new Huk insurgency in the Philippines. They have taken the first step in opening a Viet Cong type of insurgency in Thailand through the creation of their quisling Thai patriotic front.





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Now in 1965, we are reminded that three times in this century the United States has gone to war and each time our enemies were surprised that we had the courage, the will and the ability to join as one to meet the challenge of ruthless dictators.

The Imperial German government carefully studied public statements by our Nation's leaders, our student strikes for peace, our signs of irresponsible dissent, and concluded we were afraid of battle. Our ships were sent to the bottom, a revolution was fomented in Mexico on our border, our citizens abroad were killed, the forces of aggression flaunted their strength until finally we took action.



Just 23 years later, Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese militarists repeated the mistakes....their governments vanished and peace returned.

In 1950, the North Koreans and Chinese Communists tested our will and doubted our resolve. They <sup>were</sup> ~~thwarted~~ thwarted in their drive for more territory and greater power.

-more-



I believe the President should remind the leadership of North Viet Nam and the strong-arm masterminds in Moscow, Peiping and Hanoi that history proves our intentions and our capabilities.

America knows the enemy's appetite for tyranny would be whetted by any show of weakness, uncertainty or faltering on the part of the United States.

The power-hungry Communist leaders will continue to dodge the negotiation table until they are convinced the United States will stay in Viet Nam until peace with both honor and meaning is achieved.

Although Congressional Republican leadership today stands firmly with the President in this critical hour, we and the American people must be kept fully informed within the limits of national security.

In the best tradition of the bi-partisan foreign policy championed by the late Senator Arthur Vandenberg, Republicans will continue to support the President, providing we are given all the facts and given the opportunity



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It is appropriate at this point to reiterate that Republicans in the past have opposed massive ground war in Southeast Asia. The Eisenhower-Dulles policy saw the pitfalls of being over-committed in large-scale jungle warfare. To engage in this type of combat is to fight a war on the terms of the enemy. Experience and logic prove there is a better way to impress the enemy with our power, which is in the air and on the sea in these circumstances. By timely and forceful sea and air action against the Communist power in North Viet Nam we can convince the aggressors that their invasion against South Viet Nam too costly.

The swift sword for freedom must deal mightier blows now from the air and sea in Southeast Asia. They must be struck quickly. They must be unleashed to prevent a costly and possibly never-ending land war in the steaming jungles and swamps of Viet Nam.

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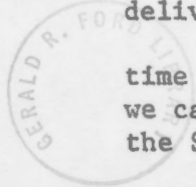
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