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VIETNAM - ONLY THREE MORE YEARS?

Q: In your interview with the Chicago Tribune, you said you would be willing to accept a 3-year terminal date for aid to Saigon if Congress would vote enough funds to insure its survival that long. Will you formally propose such a program? How much will it cost?

A: My comments to the Tribune represent an attempt to respond constructively to the concerns of Congress about the extent and duration of the American involvement in Indochina. I am willing to work with the Congress in exploring all responsible strategies for ending that involvement in a way consistent with our commitment to give South Vietnam the means to defend itself. I am confident that ways can be found to meet Congressional fears of unending involvement without abandoning a brave ally which has made remarkable economic and political progress while defending its freedom against a determined aggressor.

My comments were also based upon my belief that South Vietnam has the will to defend itself and a viable economy which give that country the potential to feed its people and purchase its own arms if only it can survive in the short run.

NEWSPAPERS CLOSED IN VIETNAM

Q: The South Vietnamese Government recently revoked the publishing licensing of five opposition papers for printing stories critical of President Thieu. A number of editors and reporters have been jailed in conjunction with this on charges that they are Communist cadre. Doesn't this really confirm that the Thieu government is a dictatorship and not worthy of continued American support?

A: In looking at these events it is important to take into account the circumstances in which they took place. The South Vietnamese society is on a war-time footing, fighting for its life. Notwithstanding these difficult circumstances, in which virtually all countries have historically imposed some degree of controls, the actions of the South Vietnamese Government present some impressive anomalies. For example, in Saigon the Viet Cong is permitted to hold a completely open press conference each week. In what other country being attacked by foreign forces would spokesmen for those very forces be offered a press podium.

-- Far most dissent is permitted in South Vietnam than would be permitted in any dictatorship. South Vietnam certainly has more freedom of all kinds than it would have under Communist rule.

-- American assistance is necessary to help the South Vietnamese defend themselves and the freedom they are fighting for today. To stop our aid would guarantee that the South Vietnamese people would lose all their freedoms in a victory of Hanoi.

MILITARY OFFENSIVE IN VIETNAM

Q. Will the US intervene militarily if the current wave of fighting in South Vietnam increases?

A. North Vietnam has consistently violated the peace agreements by sending men and material into South Vietnam in large quantities. The North Vietnamese now appear to be attempting to expand their control in South Vietnam. However, the spirit and capability of the South Vietnamese armed forces are high and they do not lack the will to defend themselves. We have noted this in requesting adequate military and economic aid to the Republic of Vietnam.

I would not try to predict in advance what the US would do in the event of a North Vietnamese massive offensive against South Vietnam. Any action, would, of course, be fully in accordance with our Constitutional process. But my firm belief is that this question need not arise if we give South Vietnam the military and economic assistance that it needs to defend itself.

MORE MONEY IS A NEW COMMITMENT TO VIETNAM

Q: It has been argued that your request for supplemental assistance for South Vietnam represents a new commitment which could lead us back to direct involvement to Indochina. How do you react to this?

A: We are not moving toward a greater involvement in Indochina. Rather, we are pursuing a policy which will enable us to reduce and end our involvement -- and in a way which does not sacrifice those who have put their trust in us.

The question is whether -- after all the sacrifices we have made -- this country will deprive a brave ally of the means for its own self defense. The amounts we are seeking have already been authorized by the Congress. The funds appropriated, however, fall short of the authorization and of the minimum required to permit the South Vietnamese to defend themselves. The South Vietnamese are brave and determined and, if we do not abandon them, they can defend themselves.

The need is urgent and immediate. A substantial weakening of the South Vietnamese could very well encourage the North Vietnamese to further escalate the level of fighting. As the South finds itself increasingly low on ammunition and shells, Hanoi may be tempted to go all out to seek a military solution.

MORE MONEY MEANS MORE KILLING

Q: Senator Mansfield and others say they will oppose your request for supplemental aid because the killing has to stop and more money just means more people dying. What is your reaction to that?

A: I certainly agree with Senator Mansfield that the war in Indochina has to stop, but I do not agree that providing the South Vietnamese with insufficient aid to defend themselves is the way to do it.

The previous Congress thought it could encourage an end to the fighting and a political settlement by cutting the level of our military assistance. Instead, the opposite has occurred. Seeing South Vietnam in a weakened position, the Communist broke off negotiations and have attacked in force.

The hard fact is that when firepower is reduced something must take its place. What usually happens is that casualties go up. The recent experience in Cambodia and South Vietnam confirms that. For example, the total number of South Vietnamese soldiers killed and wounded in 1974 was higher than at any other year of the war except 1972 (the year of Hanoi's all-out Easter offensive).

Those who argue that by cutting aid we will end the killing must face this brutal fact: Reducing aid increases the suffering and dying by the brave people who rely on us to support them in their efforts to

LEGAL RESTRICTIONS ON U. S. MILITARY FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM

General Restrictions

Several legislative acts, beginning with PL 93-50, the Second Supplemental Appropriation Act for FY 1973 and PL 93-52, the Continuing Appropriations Act for FY 1974 (both of July 1, 1973) prohibit the use of funds:

"to support directly or indirectly combat activities in or over Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam and South Vietnam by United States forces..."

A slightly different formulation appears in PL 93-126, the Department of State Appropriations Authorization Act of 1973 (October 18, 1973) which prohibits funds to finance:

"the involvement of United States military forces in hostilities in or over or from off the shores of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia, unless specifically authorized hereafter by the Congress."

The legality of involving U. S. military forces in South Vietnam is also affected by restrictions on U. S. military manpower there. PL 93-559, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 (December 30, 1974) limits to 2,500 the number of personnel in Vietnam at any one time who are "members of the armed forces or direct hire and contract employees of the Department of Defense." This limit is set at 1,500 by December 30, 1975.

Specific Combat Activities Prohibited

A letter of March 20, 1974 from Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Dennis Doolin to Senator Hughes specified the specific activities prohibited in Cambodia and Laos under PL 93-50 and 93-52 as perceived by the Department of Defense as follows:

"a) bombing, strafing, rocketing or other expenditure of ordnance; b) forward air control operations, c) armed reconnaissance; d) helicopter gunship operations; e) comparable hostile actions by U. S. naval and ground forces directly engaged as American units against the enemy; f) activities by individual personnel in support of indigenous forces...."

Similar prohibitions would appear to apply in South Vietnam.

The War Powers Resolution

The War Powers Resolution of November 1, 1973 provides that:

"The President shall in every possible instance consult with the Congress before introducing U. S. Armed Forces into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances." The President must also consult with the Congress prior to substantially augmenting any U. S. combat troops already located in a foreign nation.

-- The President must report any such steps within 48 hours to the Speaker of the House and the President pro-tempore of the Senate.

-- The President's report must be in writing and must set forth the circumstances, the Constitutional and legislative authority, and the estimated scope and duration involved.

-- If, when the President's report is submitted, the Congress has adjourned, the Speaker and President pro-tempore (if they deem it advisable or if petitioned by at least 30 percent of their respective houses) shall jointly request the President to convene Congress to consider the report and take appropriate action.

-- The President's report is referred to the House Foreign Affairs and the Senate Foreign Relations Committees.

The President is required to end the troops' involvement within 60 days unless the Congress has declared war or authorized the troops' role, or unless the Congress cannot meet as a result of an armed attack against the U. S.

-- Extensions of the involvement require new Presidential reports and new Congressional authorization every 30 or 60 days.

-- In the absence of a declaration of war or specific statutory authorization, such forces shall be removed by the President if the Congress so directs by concurrent resolution.

7. Do we have any additional information or reaction on the situation in South Vietnam and Cambodia? Does the President plan to ask Congress for a supplemental to increase aid to Indochina?

7. GUIDANCE: I have nothing more to give you today on the situation in Indochina. As I said Tuesday, we are watching developments there closely. As you will recall, I pointed out that in his signing statement for the Foreign Aid Bill the President noted the inadequate levels of assistance for South Vietnam and Cambodia and said that he would discuss this with the Congressional Leadership when Congress reconvenes. I have nothing specific to give you today on a supplemental request, but the President has it under intensive consideration.

FYI: Refer any questions on the current location of the Enterprise or other ship movements to the Pentagon. End FYI.

*Fyi: We don't discuss military movements.
Refer questions to Defense.*

4. ~~Has the President in fact abandoned any ideas of reconstruction funds to North Vietnam as Secretary Kissinger is reported to have said to the Senate Finance Committee?~~

Guidance: We are not prepared to go to Congress to request funds for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of North Vietnam until we are satisfied that North Vietnam is prepared to fulfill its responsibilities under the Paris Agreement. I would refer your more detailed questions to the Department of State.

*MIA - not helped get mbo on,
Arms to SVN
Preparing for offensive.*

3. Do you have anything more to tell us concerning U. S. reconnaissance over North Vietnam?

GUIDANCE: I have nothing to say on the subject of reconnaissance. I simply will not discuss reconnaissance activities from here.

FYI: You can point out that Amb. Anderson discussed the subject on Tuesday at the State Department, as did Secretary Schlesinger in his Tuesday press conference. Neither confirmed U. S. reconnaissance, but each pointed out that Hanoi cannot selectively and unilaterally violate the Paris peace agreement.

6. Do you have anything new on U. S. plans for additional assistance to Indochina? Has the U. S. approached the PRC and the Soviet Union to restrain their flow of weapons to Hanoi? Do you have any comment on the Washington Post Editorial which called on President Thieu to fulfill the Paris accords?

GUIDANCE: I have nothing more to give you today on the subject of U. S. assistance to South Vietnam beyond what I said yesterday. With regard to approaches to the PRC and the USSR, I am not in a position to comment on the details of our exchanges with other nations, however, I can assure you that the need for peace in Southeast Asia is always high on the agenda in the President's contacts with world leaders.

I would also point out that on several occasions the South Vietnamese government has proposed full implementation of the Paris accords, including elections, I would remind you that on the 21st of November, President Thieu called for a resumption of the talks with the other side to work out the implementation of the political provisions of the agreement. Unfortunately, the Communist side chose to increase its military actions rather than return to the

conference tables in Paris and Saigon.

*If S. U. N. gets additional
US will the PRC believe the odds strongly favor that
will be able to maintain their economic, political &
military position*
(Refer details on this subject to State).

FYI: If asked about reports the U. S. is making emergency shipments from Thailand to South Vietnam, refer questions to DOD. DOD will say that shipments from Thailand are routine shipments of ammunition destined for Cambodia.



*Additional
as requested*

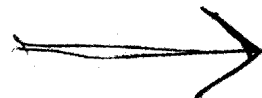
Q. Are there not still Americans being held prisoner in Vietnam?
What are we doing now to get them released?

A. We know that there are eight Americans who were captured at Ban Me Thuot in early March and are being held prisoner. We are continuing efforts to obtain their release. We are also aware of private efforts being carried out by missionary organizations for whom some of these people worked. A number of Congressmen have written to representatives of the other side in Paris seeking information on these people. To date, we have received no response to our approaches and we are not aware of any responses to these other efforts.

We, of course, are continuing our efforts to account for our MIA's and recovering the remains of those men we know to have died. We are checking into the possibility of other U.S. citizens who may be unaccounted for and who may be held against their will.

Q. First, do our efforts involve contacts with the PRG? Second, can you tell us exactly who is missing and under what circumstance

A. For detailed replies to questions on who is missing, you should go to the Department of State. As to diplomatic contacts, you are



aware, of course, that these cannot be discussed, especially
in this delicate situation where lives are at stake.

VIETNAM FUNDS

Q. An NBC reporter asserted this morning that Congressman Leggett (California) had raised the question of a supposed \$700 million in DOD funds available for Vietnam without additional appropriation by the Congress. Can you comment on this accuracy of that report?

A. I have heard the same reports and I understand that the Pentagon is looking into this matter. I would refer your questions to DOD.

FYI ONLY: Pentagon officials are checking this story out and at this time believe that a computer bookkeeping error is responsible for the confusion. In any case, it appears most likely that there is no additional \$700 million available for Vietnam assistance.

ENDING THE FIGHTING IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Q: Senator Sparkman recently said the Administration will have to report on what steps have been taken or are contemplated to bring about President Thieu's compliance with the political provisions of the Paris Agreement. What are we doing to force Thieu to carry out the Agreement and thereby end the fighting?

A: I reject the notion that it is the Thieu government that is refusing to implement the political portions of the Accords.

-- On three separate occasions, the Government of South Vietnam has made specific, concrete offers to implement all political provisions of the Paris Agreement completely. They proposed definite dates to hold elections.

-- They have formally requested direct talks between North and South Vietnam to begin discussion of reunification.

-- All of these offers have been rejected and for over six months the Communists have boycotted all talks with the Government. During this period, President Thieu's government has tried to get talks started again. On at least ten separate occasions they have called for an unconditional resumption of negotiations. These have been answered by the current North Vietnamese attacks.

Let me remind you of the blatant violations of the Agreement by the Communists. Tanks, artillery and tens of thousands of men have been sent into South Vietnam; large-scale attacks against South Vietnamese cities and towns have increased; the Communists walk

away from the conference tables in Saigon and Paris; they refuse to pay their share of the International Cease-fire Supervision teams; they refuse to let us search for our men who are missing in action. It is in these actions by the Communists that the difficulties with implementation of the Paris Agreement lie.

Q: Did U.S. know in advance of what South Vietnam planned to do?

A: No, ~~w~~ the State Department has said we were not ~~z~~ aware in advance, nor can I confirm that ~~x~~ an actual withdrawal has taken place. The situation in the highlands is very fluid and we do not have full information. We understand that some ARVN troops are still fighting. (This info from State spokesman)

Q: What can you say about the Americans in Ban Me Thuot?

A: The last contact we had with them was at 11:30 p.m. EDT March 11. (Last Tuesday). We do not know their whereabouts. State has declined to reveal identity until we know what facts are.

Q: 55

RELATIONS WITH SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA

Q: South Vietnam and Cambodia now have new governments that call themselves revolutionary and that claim to be independent. Would it not be to our advantage to recognize those governments in order to minimize North Vietnamese influence and to maintain some presence in Indochina?

A: It is premature to speculate at this time on future developments in Indochina or on possible U. S. attitudes toward those developments.

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AFTER VIETNAM

Q. It now looks as though South Vietnam will be lost militarily within a matter of weeks and perhaps days. Now, where do we go from here? Will we revise our world-wide policies or will we keep them? Will we avoid other entanglement or will we want to rush into it? Why are you talking so much about the Domino Theory and about the decline in American influence -- will that not bring about precisely that decline that you fear?

A. As I said in my speech to the Congress, our national unity is a priceless asset, and one of the most tragic consequences the situation in Vietnam could have would be to use it to pit Americans against other Americans. Some Americans have believed throughout this conflict that the war and our involvement in it was a mistake. Many others lost a member of their family or a friend, or must watch a wounded veteran trying to make a new life. And countless others grieve for our frustrated attempts to help a small, brave country preserve its independence. The Vietnam war has touched too many American and Vietnamese lives for there not to be an effect on our country. The important point is what we learn from our experiences. What expectations for the future will we have and how do we envision our role in helping to shape that future?

We have a sound foreign policy structure and we must keep that in mind as we try to put an end to our self-inflicted wounds.

If we can respond to adversity with dignity and demonstrate to all that we can and do intend to continue our role as a major force for peace throughout the world, then our commitments to our allies and our warnings to potential adversaries will be heeded and will be believed. We have no choice but to play a major role in world affairs; therefore, we should resolve not to shrink from the duties of leadership on complex issues of our interdependent world.

There is so much to be done: We have allies who have relied upon our cooperation and support for more than a generation. We have adversaries with whom we have begun to lessen tensions and seek common grounds of cooperation in the interest of reducing the dangers of war. We must meet the challenges of hunger, lead the way for technological advancement while preserving the environment and help to assure that the oceans are used as a basis of peaceful cooperation rather than conflict. In sum, American leadership is needed in the creation of new institutions and practices for worldwide prosperity and progress. A new order is emerging which all nations must have a part and in which American will have a leading role as long as I am President.

On equipment in Thailand that was transferred to the Midway,
Joe Laitin will say:

The Midway was loaded up with equipment -- all she could take -- and she sailed with it. We have received a formal request from the Thai Foreign Minister and are honoring it. There still is some equipment left, and we are discussing with the Thais the final settlement of the problem but we believe we have every legal right to the equipment.

(Basically what he is trying to downplay is the discrepancy in our viewpoints)



PHAM VAN DONG'S STATEMENT

Q: What is your reaction to Premier Pham Van Dong's statement the other day offering diplomatic relations and normalization with the U.S.? Do we plan to resume relations with Vietnam shortly?

A: I believe the State Department addressed this matter yesterday. As for diplomatic relations with Vietnam, it is premature to speculate on future developments in Vietnam or possible U.S. attitudes toward those developments at this time.

Q: Yesterday, the State Department said that we consider the Paris Agreements in force insofar as any particular clauses are still applicable. What portions of the agreement are still relevant and how do we respond to Article 21 which provides for "healing the wounds of war"?

A: I think you should go back to State for specific clarification on this matter.

Q. In San Diego you said the war in Vietnam would not be in vain if we provided assistance to South Vietnam for it to defend itself. Since that did not happen and South Vietnam has fallen do you now think the war was in vain?

A. We went into Vietnam initially and stayed there because of *our* *strong & deep rooted COMMITMENT TO* the preservation of individual freedom. Those who fought in Vietnam and those Americans who supported that struggle believe deeply, ~~that~~ as I think all Americans do, in that struggle for individual liberty. ~~While this experience has ended for the American people there will be other tests in~~ *the* ~~our future.~~ I am confident that the American people and its designated leaders, while mindful of our mistakes in the *past* ~~pursuit of freedom,~~ will continue to offer support and assistance *which believe in liberty and freedom,* to other countries ~~consistent with our national desires and Congressional constraints and support those countries who are fighting for~~ ~~liberty and freedom.~~ Our American ideals will let us do no less.

Q Mr. Secretary, a follow-up question on that. What is the current relationship of the United States to the South Vietnamese political grouping, whatever you would call it?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We will have to see what grouping emerges out of whatever negotiations should now take place between the two South Vietnamese sides. After we have seen what grouping emerges and what degree of independence it has then we can make a decision about what our political relationship to it is. We have not made a decision on that.

Q Would you say diplomatic relations are in abeyance with the government in South Vietnam?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think that is a fair statement.

Q Mr. Secretary, looking back on the war now, would you say that the war was in vain, and what do you feel it accomplished?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think it will be a long time before Americans will be able to talk or write about the war with some dispassion. It is clear that the war did not achieve the objectives of those who started the original involvement, nor the objectives of those who sought to end that involvement, which they found on terms which seemed to them compatible with the sacrifices that had been made.

What lessons we should draw from it, I think we should reserve for another occasion. ~~But I don't think~~ that we can solve the problem of having entered the conflict too lightly by leaving it too lightly, either.

Q Mr. Secretary, looking toward the future, has America been so stunned by the experience of Vietnam that it will never again come to the military or economic aid of an ally? I am talking specifically in the case of Israel.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: As I pointed out in a speech a few weeks ago, one lesson we must learn from this experience is that we must be very careful in the commitments we make, but that we should scrupulously honor those commitments that we make.

I believe that the experience in the war, can make us more mature in the commitments we undertake and more determined to maintain those we have. I would therefore think that with relation to other countries, including Israel, that no lessons should be drawn by the enemies of our friends from the experiences in Vietnam.

MORE

16. How many endangered South Vietnamese would have to be evacuated? Where would they be taken?

South Vietnamese Evacuation - This is dependent upon the situation which remains very much in flux. It would be premature to speculate beyond that at this point.

114 INSTRUCTIONS TO TROOPS

19. If Congress gives permission for American troops to be used for the evacuation of Americans and Vietnamese would these American troops be authorized to shoot back if shot at? Could American air power be used as part of an evacuation plan?

U.S. forces - Evacuation - The terms under which U.S. forces would operate remain under consideration. It is the President's expectation that the Congress would not restrict the ability of the forces involved to carry out their mission, or place American lives in jeopardy.

VIETNAM
THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM AND
EVACUATION CONTINGENCIES

Q. In view of the gravity of the situation in Vietnam and the large numbers of people both Vietnamese and American who would have to be evacuated, why don't you simply order the beginning of an evacuation plan now and avoid the possibility of large scale U.S. military support action?

A. There has been some thinning out of Americans whose services are no longer needed in Vietnam. However, the Americans who remain in Vietnam do so because they have jobs, positions and responsibilities for which they are accountable and which they intend to carry out as long as they are needed.

As you know, we always have contingency plans when the lives of Americans are at stake, but I am working with the Congress this week in a wholehearted effort to secure the aid I consider so necessary for Vietnam; as I stated in my speech last Thursday, it is my hope that such contingency plans would not have to be effected.

FYI ONLY: Any further on evacuation should be referred to the State Department. END FYI.

AMBASSADOR MARTIN'S PERFORMANCE

Q: Do you believe that Ambassador Martin acted properly in his conduct of the evacuation, waiting as long as he did and then bringing out so many Vietnamese as well as Americans?

A: I believe that Ambassador Martin has accomplished an extraordinarily difficult task under very trying circumstances and has accomplished it well. He was responsible for the lives and safety of Americans in Vietnam and at the same time for maintaining the operation and function of our Mission there. The results I think speak for themselves. Not only did he bring out our Americans safely but his management made it possible to evacuate tens of thousands of Vietnamese who had worked or were associated with us and whose lives were therefore endangered.

MORE MONEY MEANS MORE KILLING

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away from the conference tables in Saigon and Paris; they refuse to pay their share of the International Cease-fire Supervision teams; they refuse to let us search for our men who are missing in action. It is in these actions by the Communists that the difficulties with implementation of the Paris Agreement lie.

U.S. VIOLATIONS OF THE PARIS ACCORDS

Q: There are reports from Saigon that U.S. airmen are being flown in from the Philippines to give assistance to the South Vietnamese in contravention of the 1973 Paris Peace Accord which prohibits military advisors. Do you have any reaction to this?

A: It is my understanding that from time to time technicians and specialists visit South Vietnam to assist in administering certain specialized aspects of our military assistance program. This is done in the interest of good management and a more effective supply program.

We do not consider this in any way a violation or a contravention of the Paris Accords.

HUMANITARIAN AID

6. The President says that he will work with the Congress in the days ahead to develop additional humanitarian assistance. Is the President speaking of a bilateral program or would he be willing to channel these funds through international organizations?

The President is most concerned with relieving the suffering of the Vietnamese people and has expressed his willingness to cooperate with the Congress in defining the mode in which U.S. assistance will be provided. The needs in Vietnam are such that we consider our primary and immediate responsibility is to provide for those Vietnamese whose needs are the greatest and to whom we can get our assistance in the most effective and expeditious manner. We will be concentrating on that aspect at this time and will consider other possibilities later on. Our present assessment of the situation leads us to believe the requirements will be great and we must move quickly to sustain and shelter those victims of the North Vietnamese onslaught who are in a destitute state and who are in great need and are accessible to us.

US POSITION ON SETTLEMENT

4. President Ford spoke of "permitting the chance of a negotiated political settlement between the North and South Vietnamese." Are we promoting or arranging such a settlement and does this mean that we are prepared to agree to an arrangement, if necessary, for the removal of President Thieu?

A: We have always supported the proposals of the GVN to negotiate a peaceful and political settlement between North and South Vietnam. Thus far these calls have gone unheeded by the North. We remain committed to supporting peaceful arrangements between North and South Vietnam.

The following responses may be offered if you are asked today why you did not bring up the lengthy Vietnam aid discussion at yesterday's Cabinet meeting:

1. The President's Message to Congress requesting the additional aid had not been released at the time you were briefing.
2. Secretary Kissinger was going to discuss the aid requested at his noon conference and he is a more qualified spokesman on the subject.
3. Senator Byrd and Senator Scott talked about the aid request to reporters outside the White House and Secretary Schlesinger and Chairman Brown were visible to the pool reporters.
4. None of the reporters at the briefing really asked about the aid request.
5. Your discussion of the energy and economy proposals took so much time that you found it necessary to finish your daily announcements and then go back to the Leadership Meeting report, but the briefing ended.

Attached are the references in yesterday's briefing to the Vietnam aid question.

1/29/75

5. When will the bills requesting an additional \$722 million for emergency military assistance and an initial sum of \$250 million for economic and humanitarian aid for South Vietnam be submitted to the Congress?

Today, possibly .

MILITARY OFFENSIVE IN VIETNAM

Q. Will the US intervene militarily if the current wave of fighting in South Vietnam increases?

A. North Vietnam has consistently violated the peace agreements by sending men and material into South Vietnam in large quantities. The North Vietnamese now appear to be attempting to expand their control in South Vietnam. However, the spirit and capability of the South Vietnamese armed forces are high and they do not lack the will to defend themselves. We have noted this in requesting adequate military and economic aid to the Republic of Vietnam.

I would not try to predict in advance what the US would do in the event of a North Vietnamese massive offensive against South Vietnam. Any action, would, of course, be fully in accordance with our Constitutional process. But my firm belief is that this question need not arise if we give South Vietnam the military and economic assistance that it needs to defend itself.

ALLEGED BOMBING RAIDS
DURING SAIGON EVACUATION

Q. The Press has just learned this last weekend that American airplanes conducted massive bombing raids in South Vietnam in connection with the evacuation of American personnel from there. Why did we do that? Wasn't it illegal?

A. I can state categorically that the American forces did not conduct massive air raids in South Vietnam in connection with the evacuation effort. During the evacuation, there was one tactical air strike (two F-4's) against an anti-aircraft position, and one helicopter returned gunfire on an enemy gun position that was firing on it. These reactions were necessary to ensure the safety of American lives and the success of the evacuation. They obviously did not constitute massive air strikes suggested in newspaper reports.