

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

I stand before you  
today after many agonizing  
hours, & solemn prayers  
for guidance by the  
alright.



WE LIVE IN A TIME OF TESTING AND A TIME OF CHANGE.

OUR WORLD -- A WORLD OF ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY, POLITICAL

UNREST, AND THREATS TO THE PEACE -- DOES NOT ALLOW US

THE LUXURY OF ABDICATION OR DOMESTIC DISCORD.



I RECALL THE WORDS OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN TO THE  
CONGRESS WHEN THE UNITED STATES FACED A FAR GREATER CHALLENGE  
AT THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR:

*quote*

"IF WE FALTER IN OUR LEADERSHIP, WE MAY ENDANGER

THE PEACE OF THE WORLD -- AND WE SHALL SURELY ENDANGER

THE WELFARE OF THIS NATION."

*unquote*



PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S RESOLUTION MUST GUIDE US TODAY.

OUR PURPOSE IS NOT TO POINT THE FINGER OF BLAME; BUT TO BUILD

UPON OUR MANY SUCCESSES; TO REPAIR DAMAGE WHERE WE FIND IT;

TO RECOVER OUR BALANCE; TO MOVE AHEAD AS A UNITED PEOPLE.

TONIGHT IS A TIME FOR STRAIGHT TALK AMONG FRIENDS ABOUT

WHERE WE STAND, AND WHERE WE'RE GOING.



INDOCHINA

A VAST HUMAN TRAGEDY HAS BEFALLEN OUR FRIENDS

IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA.



TONIGHT, I SHALL NOT TALK ONLY OF OBLIGATIONS  
ARISING FROM LEGAL DOCUMENTS. WHO CAN FORGET THE  
ENORMOUS SACRIFICES IN BLOOD, DEDICATION AND TREASURE  
THAT WE MADE IN VIETNAM? UNDER FIVE PRESIDENTS AND  
TWELVE CONGRESSES, THE UNITED STATES WAS ENGAGED IN INDOCHINA.  
MILLIONS OF AMERICANS SERVED, THOUSANDS DIED, AND MANY MORE  
WERE WOUNDED, IMPRISONED, OR LOST. OVER ONE HUNDRED  
AND FIFTY BILLION DOLLARS HAVE BEEN APPROPRIATED FOR THAT WAR  
BY THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.



AND AFTER YEARS OF EFFORT, WE NEGOTIATED UNDER THE MOST  
DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES A SETTLEMENT WHICH MADE IT POSSIBLE  
FOR US TO REMOVE OUR MILITARY FORCES AND BRING HOME WITH  
PRIDE OUR AMERICAN PRISONERS. THIS SETTLEMENT, IF ITS  
TERMS HAD BEEN ADHERED TO, WOULD HAVE PERMITTED OUR SOUTH  
VIETNAMESE ALLY, WITH OUR MATERIAL AND MORAL SUPPORT,  
TO MAINTAIN ITS SECURITY AND REBUILD AFTER TWO DECADES OF WAR.



THE CHANCES FOR AN ENDURING PEACE AFTER THE  
LAST AMERICAN FIGHTING MAN LEFT VIETNAM IN 1973 RESTED ON  
TWO PUBLICLY STATED PROMISES:





FIRST, THAT IF NECESSARY, THE UNITED STATES

WOULD HELP SUSTAIN THE TERMS OF THE PARIS ACCORDS IT

SIGNED TWO YEARS AGO; AND SECOND, THAT THE UNITED STATES

WOULD PROVIDE ADEQUATE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE

TO SOUTH VIETNAM.

LET US REFRESH OUR MEMORIES FOR A

MOMENT.



*Late 1972*

THE UNIVERSAL CONSENSUS IN THE UNITED STATES AT THAT TIME  
^  
WAS THAT IF WE COULD END OUR OWN INVOLVEMENT AND OBTAIN  
  
THE RELEASE OF OUR PRISONERS, WE WOULD PROVIDE ADEQUATE  
  
MATERIAL SUPPORT TO SOUTH VIETNAM.



THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, FROM THE MOMENT THEY SIGNED  
THE PARIS ACCORDS, SYSTEMATICALLY VIOLATED THE CEASE-FIRE  
AND OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE AGREEMENT. FLAGRANTLY  
DISREGARDING THE BAN ON INFILTRATION OF TROOPS, THE NORTH  
VIETNAMESE ILLEGALLY INTRODUCED OVER THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND  
MEN INTO THE SOUTH. IN DIRECT VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENT,  
THEY SENT IN THE MOST MODERN EQUIPMENT IN MASSIVE AMOUNTS.  
MEANWHILE, THEY CONTINUED TO RECEIVE LARGE QUANTITIES OF  
SUPPLIES AND ARMS FROM THEIR FRIENDS.



IN THE FACE OF THIS SITUATION, THE UNITED STATES --  
TORN AS IT WAS BY THE EMOTIONS OF A DECADE OF WAR -- WAS  
UNABLE TO RESPOND. WE DEPRIVED OURSELVES BY LAW OF  
THE ABILITY TO ENFORCE THE AGREEMENT -- THUS GIVING NORTH  
VIETNAM ASSURANCE THAT IT COULD VIOLATE THAT AGREEMENT WITH  
IMPUNITY.



NEXT, WE REDUCED OUR ECONOMIC AND ARMS AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM.

FINALLY, WE SIGNALLED OUR INCREASING RELUCTANCE TO GIVE

ANY SUPPORT TO THAT NATION STRUGGLING FOR ITS SURVIVAL.



ENCOURAGED BY THESE DEVELOPMENTS, THE NORTH  
VIETNAMESE IN RECENT MONTHS BEGAN SENDING EVEN THEIR  
RESERVE DIVISIONS INTO SOUTH VIETNAM. SOME TWENTY  
DIVISIONS, VIRTUALLY THEIR ENTIRE ARMY, ARE NOW IN  
SOUTH VIETNAM. THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM,  
UNCERTAIN OF FURTHER AMERICAN ASSISTANCE, HASTILY  
ORDERED A STRATEGIC WITHDRAWAL TO MORE DEFENSIBLE POSITIONS.



THIS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT MANEUVER, DECIDED UPON WITHOUT  
CONSULTATIONS, WAS POORLY EXECUTED, HAMPERED BY FLOODS  
OF REFUGEES, AND THUS LED TO PANIC. THE RESULTS ARE  
PAINFULLY OBVIOUS AND PROFOUNDLY MOVING.



IN MY FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT ON THIS TRAGIC  
DEVELOPMENT, I CALLED FOR A NEW SENSE OF NATIONAL UNITY AND  
PURPOSE. I SAID I WOULD NOT ENGAGE IN RECRIMINATIONS  
OR ATTEMPTS TO ASSESS BLAME.





IN THE SAME SPIRIT, I WELCOMED THE STATEMENT OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE  
EARLIER THIS WEEK THAT: (QUOTE) "IT IS TIME FOR THE CONGRESS  
AND THE PRESIDENT TO WORK TOGETHER IN THE AREA OF FOREIGN  
AS WELL AS DOMESTIC POLICY." (UNQUOTE)



LET US START AFRESH.

I AM HERE TO WORK WITH THE CONGRESS. IN THE  
CONDUCT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PRESIDENTIAL INITIATIVE AND THE  
ABILITY TO ACT SWIFTLY IN EMERGENCIES ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR  
NATIONAL INTEREST.



WITH RESPECT TO NORTH VIETNAM, I CALL UPON HANOI

-- AND ASK THE CONGRESS TO JOIN ME IN THIS CALL -- TO

CEASE MILITARY OPERATIONS IMMEDIATELY AND TO HONOR THE

TERMS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT. THE UNITED STATES IS

URGENTLY REQUESTING THE SIGNATORIES OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE

TO MEET THEIR OBLIGATION TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE TO HALT THE

FIGHTING AND ENFORCE THE 1973 ACCORDS.



DIPLOMATIC NOTES TO THIS EFFECT HAVE BEEN SENT TO ALL MEMBERS  
OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE, INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION AND  
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA.

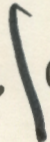
THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA  
HAS REACHED A CRITICAL PHASE REQUIRING IMMEDIATE AND  
POSITIVE DECISIONS BY THIS GOVERNMENT.



THE OPTIONS BEFORE US ARE FEW, AND TIME IS SHORT.

-- ON THE ONE HAND, THE UNITED STATES COULD DO  
NOTHING MORE; LET THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM SAVE ITSELF  
AND WHAT IS LEFT OF ITS TERRITORY IF IT CAN; LET THOSE  
SOUTH VIETNAMESE CIVILIANS WHO HAVE WORKED WITH US FOR  
A DECADE SAVE THEIR LIVES AND FAMILIES IF THEY CAN; IN SHORT,  
SHUT OUR EYES AND WASH OUR HANDS OF THE WHOLE MATTER --  
IF WE CAN.



-- OR,  ON THE OTHER HAND, I COULD ASK THE

CONGRESS FOR AUTHORITY TO ENFORCE THE PARIS ACCORDS WITH

OUR TROOPS AND OUR TANKS AND OUR AIRCRAFT AND OUR ARTILLERY,

AND TO CARRY THE WAR TO THE ENEMY.



THERE ARE TWO NARROWER OPTIONS:

-- FIRST, STICK WITH MY JANUARY REQUEST THAT

THE CONGRESS APPROPRIATE THREE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS

FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR SOUTH VIETNAM AND SEEK

ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES.



-- OR, INCREASE MY REQUESTS FOR BOTH EMERGENCY  
MILITARY AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO LEVELS WHICH BY BEST  
ESTIMATES MIGHT ENABLE THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE TO STEM THE  
ONRUSHING AGGRESSION, TO STABILIZE THE MILITARY SITUATION,  
PERMIT THE CHANCE OF A NEGOTIATED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT  
BETWEEN THE NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE, AND, IF THE VERY  
WORST WERE TO HAPPEN, AT LEAST ALLOW THE ORDERLY EVACUATION  
OF AMERICANS AND ENDANGERED SOUTH VIETNAMESE TO PLACES OF  
SAFETY.





LET ME NOW STATE MY CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:

I HAVE RECEIVED A FULL REPORT FROM GENERAL WEYAND,  
WHOM I SENT TO VIETNAM TO ASSESS THE SITUATION. HE ADVISES  
THAT THE CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION IS CRITICAL, BUT THAT  
SOUTH VIETNAM IS CONTINUING TO DEFEND ITSELF WITH THE RESOURCES  
AVAILABLE.



HOWEVER, HE FEELS THAT IF THERE IS TO BE ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS  
FOR THEIR DEFENSE PLAN, SOUTH VIETNAM NEEDS URGENTLY AN  
ADDITIONAL SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO MILLION DOLLARS  
IN VERY SPECIFIC MILITARY SUPPLIES FROM THE UNITED STATES.  
IN MY JUDGMENT, A STABILIZATION OF THE MILITARY SITUATION  
OFFERS THE BEST OPPORTUNITY FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION.



I MUST, OF COURSE, CONSIDER THE SAFETY OF NEARLY  
SIX THOUSAND AMERICANS WHO REMAIN IN SOUTH VIETNAM,  
AND TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES OF THE  
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, OF NEWS AGENCIES, OF CONTRACTORS  
AND BUSINESSES FOR MANY YEARS WHOSE LIVES, WITH THEIR  
DEPENDENTS, ARE IN GRAVE PERIL.



THERE ARE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF OTHER SOUTH VIETNAMESE  
INTELLECTUALS, PROFESSORS AND TEACHERS, EDITORS AND  
OPINION-LEADERS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE  
CAUSE AND THE ALLIANCE WITH THE UNITED STATES, TO WHOM  
WE HAVE A PROFOUND MORAL OBLIGATION.



I AM ALSO MINDFUL OF OUR POSTURE TOWARDS THE  
REST OF THE WORLD, AND PARTICULARLY ON OUR FUTURE RELATIONS  
WITH THE FREE NATIONS OF ASIA. THESE NATIONS MUST NOT THINK  
FOR A MINUTE THAT THE UNITED STATES IS PULLING OUT ON THEM  
OR INTENDS TO ABANDON THEM TO AGGRESSION.



I HAVE, THEREFORE, CONCLUDED THAT THE NATIONAL  
INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE CAUSE OF WORLD STABILITY  
REQUIRE THAT WE CONTINUE TO GIVE BOTH MILITARY AND HUMANITARIAN  
ASSISTANCE TO THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE.



ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH VIETNAM AT THIS STAGE MUST BE

SWIFT AND ADEQUATE.

DRIFT AND INDECISION INVITE FAR

DEEPER DISASTER.

THE SUMS I HAD REQUESTED BEFORE THE

MAJOR NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE AND THE SUDDEN SOUTH

VIETNAMESE RETREAT ARE OBVIOUSLY INADEQUATE.

HALF-HEARTED

ACTION WOULD BE WORSE THAN NONE.

WE MUST ACT TOGETHER

AND DECISIVELY.



I AM ASKING THE CONGRESS TO APPROPRIATE WITHOUT  
DELAY SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO MILLION DOLLARS FOR  
EMERGENCY MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND AN INITIAL SUM OF  
TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS FOR ECONOMIC AND  
HUMANITARIAN AID FOR SOUTH VIETNAM.





THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM IS CHANGING RAPIDLY

AND THE NEED FOR EMERGENCY FOOD, MEDICINE AND REFUGEE RELIEF

*By the hour*  
IS GROWING. I WILL WORK WITH THE CONGRESS IN THE DAYS

AHEAD TO DEVELOP ADDITIONAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO MEET

THESE PRESSING NEEDS.



FUNDAMENTAL DECENCY REQUIRES THAT WE DO EVERYTHING  
IN OUR POWER TO EASE THE MISERY AND PAIN OF THE MONUMENTAL  
HUMAN CRISIS WHICH HAS BEFALLEN THE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM.  
MILLIONS HAVE FLED IN THE FACE OF THE COMMUNIST ONSLAUGHT  
AND ARE NOW HOMELESS AND DESTITUTE.        I HEREBY PLEDGE  
IN THE NAME OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAT THE UNITED STATES  
WILL MAKE A MAXIMUM HUMANITARIAN EFFORT TO HELP CARE  
FOR AND FEED THEM.



I ASK THE CONGRESS TO CLARIFY IMMEDIATELY ITS  
RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF U.S. MILITARY FORCES IN SOUTHEAST  
ASIA FOR THE LIMITED PURPOSES OF PROTECTING AMERICAN LIVES  
BY ENSURING THEIR EVACUATION, IF THIS SHOULD BECOME NECESSARY.  
I ALSO ASK PROMPT REVISION OF THE LAW TO COVER THOSE  
VIETNAMESE TO WHOM WE HAVE A SPECIAL OBLIGATION AND WHOSE LIVES  
MAY BE ENDANGERED, SHOULD THE WORST COME TO PASS.



I HOPE THAT THIS AUTHORITY WILL NEVER HAVE TO  
BE USED, BUT IF IT IS NEEDED THERE WILL BE NO TIME FOR  
CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE.

BECAUSE OF THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION, I ASK  
THE CONGRESS TO COMPLETE ACTION ON ALL THESE MEASURES NOT  
LATER THAN APRIL NINETEENTH.



IN CAMBODIA, THE SITUATION IS TRAGIC.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT HAVE EACH

MADE MAJOR EFFORTS -- OVER A LONG PERIOD AND THROUGH

MANY CHANNELS -- TO END THAT CONFLICT. BUT BECAUSE

OF THEIR MILITARY SUCCESSES, STEADY EXTERNAL SUPPORT,

AND THEIR AWARENESS OF AMERICAN LEGAL RESTRICTIONS,

THE COMMUNIST SIDE HAS SHOWN NO INTEREST IN NEGOTIATION,

COMPROMISE, OR A POLITICAL SOLUTION.



AND YET, FOR THE PAST THREE MONTHS THE BELEAGURED  
PEOPLE OF PHNOM PENH HAVE FOUGHT ON, HOPING AGAINST HOPE  
THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT DESERT THEM, BUT INSTEAD  
PROVIDE THE ARMS AND AMMUNITION THEY SO BADLY NEED.



I HAVE RECEIVED A MOVING LETTER FROM THE NEW ACTING  
PRESIDENT OF CAMBODIA, SUKHAM KHOY. (SOCK-HEM KOY).



"DEAR MR. PRESIDENT," HE WROTE. "AS THE AMERICAN CONGRESS RECONVENES TO RECONSIDER YOUR URGENT REQUEST FOR SUPPLEMENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE KHMER REPUBLIC, I APPEAL TO YOU TO CONVEY TO THE AMERICAN LEGISLATORS OUR PLEA NOT TO DENY THESE VITAL RESOURCES TO US, IF A NON-MILITARY SOLUTION IS TO EMERGE FROM THIS TRAGIC FIVE-YEAR-OLD CONFLICT."





"TO FIND A PEACEFUL END TO THE CONFLICT WE NEED TIME.

I DO NOT KNOW HOW MUCH TIME, BUT WE ALL FULLY REALIZE THAT THE  
AGONY OF THE KHMER PEOPLE CANNOT AND MUST NOT GO ON MUCH LONGER.

HOWEVER, FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, WE NEED THE RICE TO FEED THE  
HUNGRY AND THE AMMUNITION AND WEAPONS TO DEFEND OURSELVES

AGAINST THOSE WHO WANT TO IMPOSE THEIR WILL BY FORCE OF ARMS.



"A DENIAL BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE OF THE MEANS FOR US TO CARRY ON WILL LEAVE US NO ALTERNATIVE BUT INEVITABLY ABANDONING OUR SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION WHICH WILL GIVE OUR CITIZENS SOME FREEDOM OF CHOICE AS TO THEIR FUTURE. FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS NOW THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE HAVE PLACED THEIR TRUST IN AMERICA. I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT THIS CONFIDENCE WAS MISPLACED AND THAT SUDDENLY AMERICA WILL DENY US THE MEANS WHICH MIGHT GIVE US A CHANCE TO FIND AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO OUR CONFLICT."



THIS LETTER SPEAKS FOR ITSELF. IN JANUARY,

I REQUESTED FOOD AND AMMUNITION FOR THE BRAVE CAMBODIANS.

I REGRET TO SAY THAT AS OF THIS EVENING, <sup>soon</sup> IT MAY BE TOO LATE.  
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MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS, MY FELLOW AMERICANS,

THIS MOMENT OF TRAGEDY FOR INDOCHINA IS A STIME OF TRIAL

FOR US.

IT IS A TIME FOR NATIONAL RESOLVE.



IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES IS OVEREXTENDED;  
THAT WE HAVE TOO MANY COMMITMENTS TOO FAR FROM HOME; THAT WE  
MUST RE-EXAMINE WHAT OUR TRULY VITAL INTERESTS ARE AND SHAPE OUR  
STRATEGY TO CONFORM TO THEM. I FIND NO FAULT WITH THIS AS  
THEORY, BUT IN THE REAL WORLD SUCH A COURSE MUST BE PURSUED  
CAREFULLY AND IN CLOSE COORDINATION WITH SOLID PROGRESS TOWARD  
OVERALL REDUCTION IN WORLDWIDE TENSIONS.



WE CANNOT IN THE MEANTIME ABANDON OUR FRIENDS WHILE  
OUR ADVERSARIES SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE THEIRS. WE CANNOT  
DISMANTLE OUR DEFENSES, OUR DIPLOMACY ~~OR~~ OUR INTELLIGENCE  
CAPABILITY WHILE OTHERS INCREASE AND STRENGTHEN THEIRS.



LET US PUT AN END TO SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS.

LET US REMEMBER THAT OUR NATIONAL UNITY IS A MOST PRICELESS

ASSET. LET US DENY OUR ADVERSARIES THE SATISFACTION OF USING

VIETNAM TO PIT AMERICANS AGAINST AMERICANS.



AT THIS MOMENT, THE UNITED STATES MUST PRESENT  
TO THE WORLD A UNITED FRONT.

ABOVE ALL, LET US KEEP EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA  
IN THEIR PROPER PERSPECTIVE. THE SECURITY AND PROGRESS  
OF HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE EVERYWHERE DEPEND IMPORTANTLY  
ON US.



LET NO POTENTIAL ADVERSARY BELIEVE THAT OUR DIFFICULTIES  
OR OUR DEBATES MEAN A SLACKENING OF OUR NATIONAL WILL.

WE WILL STAND BY OUR FRIENDS.

WE WILL HONOR OUR COMMITMENTS.

WE WILL UPHOLD OUR COUNTRY'S PRINCIPLES.





THE AMERICAN PEOPLE KNOW THAT OUR STRENGTH,  
OUR AUTHORITY AND OUR LEADERSHIP HAVE HELPED PREVENT A THIRD  
WORLD WAR FOR MORE THAN A GENERATION. WE WILL NOT SHRINK  
FROM THIS DUTY IN THE DECADES AHEAD.



LET ME NOW REVIEW WITH YOU THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF OUR  
FOREIGN POLICY, SPEAKING CANDIDLY ABOUT OUR STRENGTHS AND OUR  
DIFFICULTIES.



WE MUST FIRST OF ALL FACE THE FACT THAT WHAT HAS  
HAPPENED IN INDOCHINA HAS DISQUIETED MANY OF OUR FRIENDS,  
ESPECIALLY IN ASIA. WE MUST DEAL WITH THIS SITUATION  
PROMPTLY AND FIRMLY. TO THIS END, I HAVE ALREADY SCHEDULED  
MEETINGS WITH THE LEADERS OF AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, SINGAPORE  
AND INDONESIA, AND I EXPECT TO MEET WITH LEADERS OF OTHER ASIAN  
COUNTRIES AS WELL.

