

The original documents are located in Box 122, folder “4/5/75 - Evacuation of Vietnamese Refugees (1)” of the John Marsh Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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4/2/75

4:30 Yul Brynner called from his dressing room
and would appreciate a call back.

(617) 426-9291

He is with an organization called "Friends for
All Children" ADRR Dept. of State

Said they had a donation from AID for \$100,000 ??
for orphans of Vietnam. The situation is desperate
for Saigaon. They have 500 kids already adopted
waiting for the legalization of papers. Supplies
are at the minimum.

He said you and he talked about this at lunch at the
Swedish Embassy?? and you said if there was ever
anything ~~he/could~~ you could do to help to let him know.

He said what they really need is an airlift by a 747 from
Saigon to the United States -- to Oakland or Denver --
with even temporary visas for the kids who are to be
adopted by Americans, Europeans, Canadians, etc.
They're looking for places for the kids.

He would appreciate a call.



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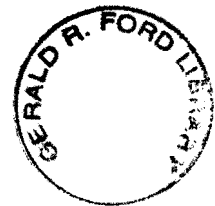
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OF COUNSEL
STEPHEN C. GLASSMAN

April 2, 1975

HAND DELIVERY

Philip W. Buchen, Esquire
Counsel to the President
The White House
Washington, D. C.



Dear Mr. Buchen:

I am writing at your suggestion, made in your telephone conversation yesterday with my partner, Bruce Lane, and myself. The deterioration of the military situation has progressed so rapidly in South Viet Nam that since our conversation, Camranh City, the home of the little girl of whom we spoke, has in fact been captured by the North Viet Nameese and clearly any evacuation of the girl is most likely impossible at this time.

For your information, I thought I would explain in more detail the circumstances that prompted our telephone call. My brother-in-law, Anton Anderegg of Boring, Oregon, served as a para-medical in Viet Nam in the years 1970 and 1971. During that time he was stationed at Camranh Bay and made the acquaintance of the young girl named Vuong Le Thu who lived in the Camranh Bay Christian Orphanage. In the course of his tour of duty there he undertook to help the young girl both personally and financially and continues today to pay her support in the orphanage. About a year ago, Mr. Anderegg began corresponding with Mr. Ha, the director of the orphanage, in an attempt to adopt the little girl and have her brought to the United States to live with his family. For a variety of reasons he was unable to make any progress toward this goal.

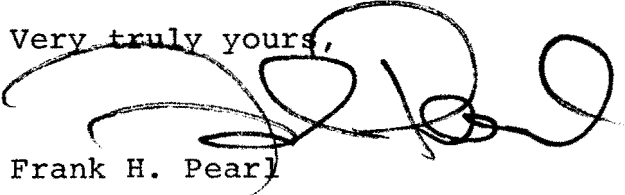
We had hoped, when we spoke to you, that some steps might be taken to expedite her transfer to the United States and the adoption by the Andereggs. We, of course, understood that many Americans and other South Viet Nameese who were in imminent danger had to be evacuated from South Viet Nam on a priority basis, and we did not expect that Vuong would preempt any air accommodations.

Philip W. Buchen, Esquire
April 2, 1975
Page Two

Unfortunately, the problem seems to have become moot, due to the capture of Camranh Bay by the North Viet Nameese this morning.

The Andereggs join Bruce Lane and me in thanking you for the consideration you have shown in this matter.

Very truly yours,


Frank H. Pearl



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 2, 1975



MEMORANDUM FOR RON NESSEN

FROM: LOU THOMPSON

SUBJECT: Summary of Secretary Schlesinger's April 2 Press Conference

Before the Secretary began his press conference, Joe Laitin said the four ships are off Nha Trang and will be moving and he will give the precise location later.

Secretary Schlesinger gave an over-all assessment of the combat situation as follows:

Continued deterioration in the highlands, Cam Ranh Bay still under government control, some reduction in combat activity around Saigon and Tay Ninh, some increase in combat activity in the delta but the delta remains relatively stable. Two-thirds of the country is under Communist control and it is a situation of historic and tragic proportions.

Schlesinger said he expects the Saigon defenses will be tested within the next four weeks or less. Said there is a possible defensive area around Saigon and the delta which can be held with the present forces, however, should North Vietnam decide to move its uncommitted divisions south, the defense of Saigon will be severely tested. Relatively little movement from North Vietnam but some southward movement of NVN strategic reserve positions.

Estimated equipment losses to be \$2 billion.

Any one-for-one replacement of equipment would be what we perceive the present needs would be to stabilize Saigon and would be contingent on the President's decisions after he receives his report from General Weyand.

Concerning re-introduction of American forces, Schlesinger referred to the President's March 6 statement and said that position stands. Said he could not rule out the President asking Congress to use air power but considered the probability of such a request to be relatively low.

The Department of Defense position on the use of U. S. Marines is to adhere strictly to the law of August 15, 1973 concerning the cut-off of all combat activity in Southeast Asia. That law states that participation is not permitted and if U. S. forces were placed in a situation where they could be drawn into combat, we would be in violation of the law.

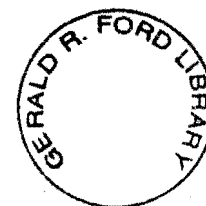
The Secretary was asked about plans to evacuate Saigon and he said that the United States government has emergency evacuation plans for all capitols around the world and there is, of course, a plan to evacuate Saigon. He further stated that the forces of the United States are available for emergency evacuation if requested by the Ambassador through the Department of State.

Schlesinger said he is not planning to go to Palm Springs this week and said he is in daily contact by phone with the President.

He was asked if U. S. intelligence was faulty concerning the events up to this point, and Schlesinger replied that the basic intelligence problem was one in which the presence of the South Vietnamese forces and their will to fight was underestimated, our intelligence concerning Hanoi's intentions was relatively accurate in that while a major offensive was not planned until 1976, Hanoi said that if other opportunities presented themselves, they would take advantage of them.



NEWS CONFERENCE
WITH
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JAMES R. SCHLESINGER
AT THE PENTAGON
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 1975 -- 12:30 P.M.



Secretary Schlesinger: Gentlemen, I recognize that there is widespread interest and concern around the country with regard to the evolving situation in Vietnam. So I thought I would take a few minutes to answer some questions that you might have.

Generally speaking there is a continued deterioration in the Highlands. Only four major locations have not as yet been taken over by the Communist forces. Cam Ranh Bay at this point continues under the control of the government. In MR III, in the area around Saigon, there has been some reduction in the amount of combat activity. The situation around Tay Ninh has eased somewhat. There is some increased level of activity in the Delta but the situation in the Delta continues to be stable. Generally speaking, I would say that the conditions in Vietnam are serious. Two thirds of the country are now under control of the Communists. It has been a defeat of historic and tragic proportions for the Government to this point. Whether or not a line can be stabilized north of Saigon to permit the areas around Saigon and in the Delta to continue is something that remains to be seen. We should have a testing of that in the next four weeks or possibly less.

Q: Can we have a reading on the extent, the dollar value, of the material which was lost, thrown away, destroyed, etc., by the retreating South Vietnamese forces?

A: The cost of that is not available to us at this time. As I mentioned the other day, the data that we have available indicate that at least \$600 or \$700 million worth of equipment and supplies have been lost but the sum could go to a billion dollars. I should emphasize, however, that the major losses in that connection are equipment losses and that this in no way interferes with the need for material support for the combat forces that continue to support the government in the area of Saigon and the South.

Q: Mr. Schlesinger, there's a report out of Saigon that some of the commanders over there, I believe some people high in the government, are saying that they are being betrayed by the United States, that they had an assurance that if the Communists had flagrantly violated the Paris Accords that the United States would intervene. Is there any truth to that? Do you know anything about that?

A: I think that in 1973, as Dr. Kissinger observed the other day, the United States entered into certain moral commitments; they were not legal commitments. It was plain at that time that the United States intended to support the agreements. We have not been in a position to exercise American power to support those agreements. Until January or February of this year, Hanoi in its calculations included as a very liably prospect the re-introduction of American

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power. That is a waning influence and, as you know, under the law we are not permitted to utilize American power which is the only sanction that could be effectively employed for that purpose.

Q: Do you know of any such arrangement though with the South Vietnamese government? Was there that kind of talk?

A: As I indicated earlier, I think that it was strongly stated to the South Vietnamese government that the United States Government intended to see to it that the Paris Accords were indeed enforced.

Q: Mr. Secretary, what's your reaction to the rapid deterioration of the South Vietnamese military?

A: I think that this process of unraveling is one that we all find disturbing. It is not surprising in a historical sense. Armies that have been defeated before have tended to come apart. If one reviews history, going back to the Roman Empire, one discovers that in retreat armies do have a tendency to degenerate. A retrograde operation of the sort that was ordered by President Thieu a few weeks ago is, of course, the most difficult operation to be carried out even by seasoned, disciplined, well-trained troops that are well led.

Q: If the North Vietnamese army keeps up its push southward, does the ARVN have the means to stabilize the military situation?

A: As I indicated before, that remains to be seen. If the North Vietnamese continue to move their forces to the Saigon area, that would be a very severe test of the forces remaining to the government.

Q: Does the United States have any plans to cut off the airlift to Phnom Penh?

A: The United States plans to continue the airlift to Phnom Penh so long as there is funding available for the airlift and for the supplies.

Q: But if Saigon is under siege, will you still attempt the airlift?

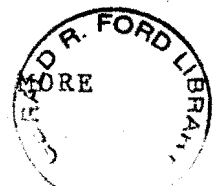
A: The airlift, part of it comes out of Thailand, as you know.

Q: How long do you believe President Thieu can remain in power?

A: That is a subject for the Vietnamese to determine amongst themselves. They have a constitutional system, and if there are any changes to be made in the government, of course that is something that will be determined by the Vietnamese themselves.

Q: Mr. Secretary, will you recommend to the President that he go to the Congress and ask for permission to reintroduce U.S. airpower or any other way to put U.S. forces back into Vietnam, or to use them in some way in Vietnam?

A: I think that the President's statement of March 6 is quite definitive on that subject. He indicated at that time that there would be no reintroduction of U.S. military power.



Q: Including air power?

A: U.S. military power I believe was the gist of what he said.

Q: Mr. Secretary, sir, there isn't any ambiguity in your earlier reply to the question of what kind of commitment we had to South Vietnam at the time of the peace accords; you repeated Secretary Kissinger's words, "the moral commitment." Does that -- did that commitment include a promise to intervene with force in the event of a major violation by North Vietnam of the Accords?

A: I do not know the answer to that question. What I indicated earlier was that the United States indicated its determination at that time that the Accords not be grossly violated and although the Accords started to be violated by Hanoi from the very time the agreements were signed, the violations tended to be low-level, relatively discreet, rather than gross and blatant as they have become more recently.

Q: Mr. Secretary, are there any plans to reintroduce the one-for-one exchange? Are we going to try to get the number of aircraft to Vietnam -- let's say, they've lost or abandoned?

A: Any question of the putting in of additional equipment into Vietnam would be based upon what we perceive to be the present needs of the situation, reflecting the possibility of a stabilizing of a defense perimeter north of Saigon and that any details of that sort will have to be worked out with the President subsequent to the return of General Weyand when he provides his report.

Q: Mr. Secretary, do you have a worst-case/best-case forecast for what is liable in the future? In the worst case, how long do you think Saigon could hold; in the best case, how long?

A: I would care to avoid speculation on that subject. As you know, the testing period should come in the next 30 days, and I would hope -- we would all hope -- that under the circumstances that Saigon will be able to stand up to that test. The best case I think is just what has been indicated, that there will be the possibility of a defensive area in the South -- Saigon and the Delta -- that can be held with the forces available to the government.

Q: What are the ingredients going into making up this estimate period? Why do you put that kind of time limit on it?

A: What is Hanoi's strategy, whether Hanoi plans to bring its forces indeed down into the area around Saigon; whether it would plan on an assault against Saigon; whether they would consolidate their gains in the northern part of the country -- in the Highlands and MR I or would seek to disrupt by moving into the Delta areas, I think that those are the major considerations regarding the capability of the forces opposed to the government forces in that period of time. There is also the question of how successfully the government will be in pulling together the forces that are available; the troops that have been evacuated from the North making them reasonably combat effective and stemming and reversing the decline in morale of those forces.

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Q: Mr. Secretary, based on what you know now, do you see any evidence that Hanoi is tilting toward any one of those options? For example, do you see any evidence that they are moving down divisions from MR I and II, for example, closer to Saigon?

A: There has been relatively little movement of that sort. There has been the further movement, however, of some of their divisions from the strategic reserve toward the South.

Q: Mr. Secretary, two more questions on the Phnom Penh airlift: are you saying that if Saigon becomes unavailable, we'll shift all of our operations to Thailand?

A: That would have to be worked out but I think that the question is a moot one unless we get additional funding from the Congress because our funding limitations are quite severe at the present time.

Q: What is our recourse if Thailand denies us permission?

A: Well, I think that we will have to deal with all of those aspects as the problem arises; I do not think the problem will arise.

Q: In the past the Administration has always said the South Vietnamese have shown the will to fight and therefore -- (inaudible) -- Now the Administration is saying -- both Mr. Habib and you are saying -- that the test is about to come. Are you in any way telling the South Vietnamese that it's time that they make a stand and fight; it's time that they stop this strategic withdrawal; if they do not they will have no chance of getting it when it comes.

A: That was not my intention to tell them that; but I think that the circumstances convey that message in themselves.

Q: Can I get back to your earlier point; you referred back to the President's remarks of March 6, I don't recall exactly, you said military power, but the thrust of it was no GIs would be going in. Are you ruling out the possibility that the President will make a request to the Congress to use American airpower?

A: I cannot rule that out at this time but that is a subject that would have to be reviewed very carefully with the President and I think that the likelihood even of that form of reintroduction of power is quite low.

Q: Do you anticipate a massive airlift during the next 30 days in the manner of the 1973 airlift to Israel?

A: No, sir, at this time we have the \$175 million worth of funding which is the fourth quarter's portion of the \$700 million worth of funding that was allowed to use in FY 75. We will continue to draw on that funding but the kind of operations that you describe would depend upon the availability of far greater funding than is presently available to us. At any point that we receive additional funding we would have to consider that possibility.

Q: Mr. Secretary, I've been intrigued by your comments over the last two weeks. First an attack on Saigon was expected in 1976; as recently as Monday it was expected within 30 to 60 days and now it's expected in thirty days. Are you troubled by the intelligence

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D. R. FORD

you've been receiving from your best experts? That's one question and the second one is what's changed your mind so rapidly?

A: I think that what I've just said is essentially what I've said before that we could have a test in the next 30 days or so. The other day, I think I was talking about an assault on Saigon. What we're saying here is that there is that possibility in the near time frame. More generally with regard to the intelligence matter, the prevailing intelligence until March 17 was that Hanoi intended to chip away in an attempt to eliminate pacification, eliminate government strong points but the main assault, the allout offensive so frequently described would come in 1976. That could change if there were opportunities presented to Hanoi. I think that the estimate of Hanoi's intentions in retrospect probably stands up quite well. The problem with intelligence was not the estimate of the intentions but the estimate of the capabilities of South Vietnam. It is obvious in retrospect that the strength, resiliency and steadfastness of those forces were more highly valued than they should have been, so that the misestimates, I think, apply largely to Saigon's capabilities rather than to Hanoi's intention. Now, since March 17, the intelligence community generally has stated that because of the new opportunities that have been presented to Hanoi as a result of the partial collapse of the forces of Saigon in the North, that they have been altering their calculations and as a consequence an allout offensive against Saigon may well come this year. I would point out, however, that to this point the word offensive probably should be kept in quotation marks. There has been relatively little combat activity. The major combat activity occurred at Ban Me Thout which fell on the 12th of March. In addition to that relatively small scale engagement, there was a general withdrawal ordered by the government that has created the opportunity that I have spoken of. I think that in several ways that our intelligence was deficient. The ways that come to mind -- this is in retrospect -- are that we had spoken for the past two years of the major logistical effort on the part of Hanoi developing a road network and a base structure in the western part of South Vietnam. That the impact of that very substantial expansion of Hanoi's capabilities was not fully taken into account in striking the balance. Secondly, that we have been engaged since we were faced with the reduced funding of this year with the necessity of shrinking the logistical base and the force structure of the forces available to South Vietnam and that this shrinkage of the force structure has had effects that go beyond the physical and have affected morale and organizational cohesion and resiliency. That also was not taken into account sufficiently in striking the balance. And finally, I think that we must recognize that while we have talked continuously amongst ourselves of the morale effects of the sharp reduction in ammunition consumption and the ammunition allowed the South Vietnamese forces that that impact on morale has not been taken sufficiently into account as well as the fact that the economic conditions in Vietnam have deteriorated in a manner so that the real pay of civil servants and soldiers has deteriorated -- that also has affected the underlying

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cóhesion of the forces of the government. Now, this is all very well to speak of in retrospect. I think that these are major problems that are easier to see in hindsight than they were in prospect.

Q: This does not add up to placing the blame on the legislature or any one place in Washington.

A: That is correct. I have steadfastly attempted to avoid placing the blame. If there is blame to be distributed, I think that the blame can be distributed in a number of places. What I have repeatedly said, and I have said this steadily during the course of last year, that with regard to the drastic reduction of assistance for Vietnam in which the President's budget request was reduced by better than 60%, before one takes into account price increases, the very substantial increase in fuel costs as well as munitions, that first it was unworthy of the United States to fail to provide material and moral support to the South Vietnamese after the Paris Agreements that permitted the reduction of our own forces. I've emphasized that. I have emphasized secondly, that as a result of the reduction in funding available, that the force structure and logistical base of the South Vietnamese forces has been shrunken. We did not think shrunken unacceptably. Thirdly, we have been aware of the impact on morale of the declining availability of ammunition and those are considerations that must be kept fully in mind.

Q: In discussions on morale, do we have any feeling yet for the state of morale which has set in the South Vietnamese divisions in the III and IV Regions, those which have not been involved in this retreat?

A: We do not know the answer to that. We know that the effects of the collapse in the North cannot but have some effect on the morale of the remaining forces. As I indicated earlier, any decline in morale must be stemmed and reversed if there is to be a substantial chance of establishment of a stabilized perimeter.

Q: For example, in the 1972 offensive in hindsight it was viewed that the North made some mistakes in not fully exploiting some of their opportunities and that they didn't have the wherewithal to respond quickly to a changing situation. You said now that they obviously have a very good logistics system. Is there any doubt in your mind that they have the capability, if they choose, to bring down a large number of divisions quickly and to launch the kind of attack that would be a very serious test for the defenders?

A: They have the capability to move those divisions forward into MR III and MR IV.

Q: If you were going to choose the word to describe the way you feel about the South Vietnamese actions, or lack of actions, how would you describe it?

A: I think that my reaction is one of sympathy. We are all distressed, I think, at the partial collapse of the forces available to the government in the North. It is plain that the strategic decision to withdraw, however wise in terms of the forces available

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to the government under those circumstances with the decline in the mobility assets available to the government, that this was executed in a way and without sufficient preparation that it has led to at least a partial debacle. That, I think, elicits sympathy on the part of myself and on the part of most Americans.

Q: Would you say that the South Vietnamese divisions and forces are sufficient to withstand a North Vietnamese attack -- it's a question of morale and ability of the government to organize these forces?

A: As I've indicated before, that will be a severe test.

Q: Are the physical forces available to the government sufficient, in your estimation, to withstand an attack?

A: As I suggested, I think the question there is the morale of those forces and how they will perform when and if the test comes. I would prefer not to speculate further on that at this time.

Q: Did President Thieu ask the United States for either troops or air cover?

A: I do not know whether there has been any formal request. I would have to check on that and we'll get back to you.

Q: Does the Defense Department have any general plans for the evacuation of Saigon, and also, any plans to save equipment the United States has supplied?

A: The United States Government has an emergency evacuation plan for all capitals around the world, so that I would suspect that we have one that is in good shape with regard to Saigon, but that is not unique to the circumstances of Saigon. With regard to the equipment, there are no such plans. That first of all presupposes that circumstances would arise in which it would be appropriate to withdraw equipment, and I do not think that there is much capability to do so.

Q: To follow up on that point, will those four U.S. ships and will those 700 Marines be available for this emergency evacuation plan if it becomes necessary to protect American citizens, not only from the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong but from South Vietnamese soldiers?

A: In the event of an emergency evacuation plan, the forces of the United States are available at the request of the Ambassador through the Department of State.

Voice: We're run over about 12 minutes. Let's take about three more questions.

Q: Mr. Secretary, is it known how many aircraft were lost in the rout and is it known why they didn't fly them out?

A: Many of the aircraft were non-flyable; some of them were in storage. As you know, once again as a result of the decline in funding, there have been insufficient parts to maintain some of the aircraft. Contract maintenance funds were shrunken under the reduced budget and as a result the decision was made to put some of the aircraft aside and to concentrate on the maintenance of others. To what extent other

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aircraft that were flyable were not flown out and why, I do not know the answer.

Q: Do we know the total number left behind?

A: It certainly would be in excess of several hundred.

Q: Barring further aid to South Vietnam this fiscal year, is the \$175 million enough to cover the losses, and the defense of Saigon into the rainy season?

A: The question of enough is dependent upon the ability of the government effectively to organize the forces available to them. We have a request to the Congress for \$300 million in addition. The overall strategy with regard to aid will be reviewed by the Administration when General Weyand returns. The amount of aid that we can move in at the present time is quite limited.

Q: Do you plan to go out to the western White House this weekend?

A: I'm not planning on that at this time; I'm in touch with the President by phone on a daily basis.

Q: The other part of the question is, is the rainy season going to hinder the North Vietnamese -- the rains are about due to start in another month or so in MR III?

A: The restrictions on the North Vietnamese would be far less than they have been historically because of the improvement of the road net.

Q: Mr. Secretary, there always is great sensitivity when we move in Marines and our ships and we all remember the Tonkin Gulf; what exactly are the orders for the four Navy ships with the four Marine rifle companies aboard?

A: The position of the Department of Defense in its issuance of orders is to adhere strictly to the law specified in the cutoff of all combat activities in the summer of 1973. I believe August 15; at that time it was indicated to all forces that they should avoid situations that would require participation in combat. Those orders continue to apply throughout the four successive states of Indochina. In any circumstances in which it appears that American forces would be drawn into combat situations that would be circumstances that we become involved in such matters voluntarily, we would be in violation of the law.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you said earlier that the United States was determined to uphold the principles of the Paris Accords and see that they were enforced and so forth; what recourse does the United States have other than to send in troops?

A: That is the problem. I think you put it very well. The ultimate sanction after 1973 was the sanction of re-employment of U.S. military power to enforce the Accords. With the legislation that was passed August 15, 1973, the ultimate sanction disappeared for the enforcement of those Accords.

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Q: Can I switch you to something else that you commented on this week in regard to an oil embargo. You said intervention is a remote possibility; you also said on the other hand we would have to react. You spoke of the reaction being severe; do you want to elaborate on that?

A: No.

Q: Will you? Or didn't you get enough questions to clarify your thinking on the matter?

A: I think that there is inherently in such a situation a considerable degree of ambiguity as I indicated. The prospect of military intervention on which I was directly asked, continues to be a remote possibility. What I further stated was that the United States might react less tolerantly towards the reintroduction of a boycott depending on the circumstances than it did in 1973. Now, just how we might react under such hypothetical conditions has not been defined; I do not believe it can be defined until such conditions arise and decisions are made.

E N D



Informal Briefing
ASD/PA Joseph Laitin
Wednesday, April 2, 1975

Mr. Laitin: My name is Joe Laitin for those of you who don't know me. I see a lot of familiar faces here.

The Secretary has been out of the building for a couple of hours and I've deferred the start of this briefing to await his return. Although he has some urgent business coming up he is deferring some of his own appointments so that he can come down here and address you himself. I anticipate that we'll have about 20 minutes, so keep your questions short.

Q: Will he have an opening statement?

A: I anticipate that he might make an opening statement, but we want to reserve most of the time for questions, which I assume is what you would want. I remind you, he only has about 20 minutes, so let's try to make the most of it. He'll be down here within a minute or two. Meantime, is there anything you want to ask me?

Q: What's the present location of those four ships and what are their orders?

A: They're off Nha Trang and Cam Ranh Bay. Before the end of the day we can give you more details. They're moving in that offshore area. We'll give you their precise location later, John.

Q: How far off Nha Trang are they?

A: I can fine that out for you. I read in the New York Times this morning that they're a mile off shore. You may be right, but I'm trying to check.

Q: The story didn't say they were one mile off. It said they had permission to go in one mile.

A: I believe that is an accurate statement on your part.

Q: Nha Trang is now under North Vietnamese control, isn't it?

A: I can't add to that right now, but we certainly can get the answer for you before long. I think it is, but I have not read all the cables. I've read a lot of the traffic this morning but I was not concentrating on that aspect at the time.

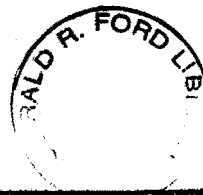
Q: On the other part of John's question about the orders these ships will be under, what these ships will be doing --

A: Fred, you'll get all the information that we have available as the day goes on just as we've been doing the last couple of days.

Q: My memory is that the provisional revolutionary government of North Vietnam claims a 12-mile territorial limit.

A: You're getting into a legal question there that I don't feel qualified to address myself to, although your question is certainly a good one.

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Q: That was a legal question you got into on August of 1964.

A: I went into that with some of our people and it's a long, complicated legal thing, and if you talk to one of our general counsels, I'll be glad to arrange that later in the day, John. As I understand it, beyond three miles is generally considered as being in international waters.

Q: Does the Secretary have a specific announcement is it just going to be mainly Q&A?

A: I told you that he's been out of the building for a couple of hours and I felt that because of the recent developments you would much prefer to hear from him than from me, or any of the people in my office.

Q: What's the destination of those four ships?

A: They are in a general area off the coast of Nha Trang.

Q: What's their destination? At one time it had been Cam Ranh Bay.

A: They're in that area between Cam Ranh Bay and Nha Trang.

Q: Where are they going to go now from there is what I'm trying to find out?

A: That's one of these I'm trying to find out, too. I'm trying to be as candid as I know how to be with you.

Q: All four ships have arrived?

A: Yes.

Q: And the Marine rifle companies have been dispersed among the four ships?

A: I have not had word that the Marine rifle companies have been dispersed -- I think the term is transdecked -- because they are on the two ships that came from the Okinawa. Before the end of the day I think we should have more information on that. I'm trying to expedite some of this information. Some of it I understand won't be available until late tonight, but we'll get it to you as soon as we can. If it's important enough, I won't hesitate to wake you at 3:00 a.m.

Q: Has any thought been given to using the space on some of these cargo planes that have come in, the C-5s, to bring some of these babies out?

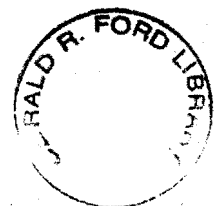
A: As far as I know, there are only one or two C-5s that have gone to Saigon. As for whether any thought has been given to this problem, I can only answer that by saying I've discovered that thought is being given to everything around here.

Q: I'm sure you can't answer right now, but is there any possibility whether it will be considered?

Q: Could we just ask what, if anything, the C-5s or the other airlift planes are taking out of South Vietnam?

A: I have absolutely no information on that now, but when I know, you'll know, as the day goes on.

MORE



Q: Will you take it as a query then?

A: Of course, Mike.

Q: In the event of a general evacuation, are there any plans for preventing the loss of more U.S.-furnished military equipment? In other words, if there is a takeover by North Vietnam, the whole country, they would be turned into --

A: I think that that is one of the questions that you might address to the Secretary when he arrives here momentarily.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Secretary of Defense.



4/3/75

This was transmitted to the President
this morning and the content was
coordinated with State and NSC.

Dr. Marrs



We are seeing a great human tragedy as untold numbers of Vietnamese flee the North Vietnamese onslaught. The United States has been doing and will continue to do its utmost to assist these people.

I have, for example, directed all available naval ships to stand off Indochina to do whatever is necessary to assist. We have appealed to the United Nations to use its moral influence to permit these innocent people to leave, and we call on North Vietnam to permit the movement of refugees to areas of their choice.

The requirements for the care and ultimate disposition of all those who are fleeing from the war will be heavy. Because of the large numbers involved and the overwhelming need for assistance, I will soon be asking the Congress for additional funds to meet this humanitarian requirement. We will as well be working with the humanitarian agencies to do everything humanly possible to relieve the tragic plight of these refugees.

A.I.D. is working with the Republic of Vietnam to expedite transportation to the United States for about 2,000 Vietnamese orphans now in Saigon. I have directed that funds from a \$2 million children's assistance allocation be used to airlift them in suitable and safe aircraft as soon as possible, and that the USAID Mission in Saigon move immediately to cut through any red tape or bureaucratic obstacles.

These orphans are now in the custody of licensed adoption agencies operating in Vietnam. They were already in the process of adoption by American families living in various parts of the United States. Those few who do not have families arranged will be placed with families now on waiting lists of the agencies.

We do not now need foster care homes or additional sponsoring families. Adoption agencies involved which have U.S. offices will be contacting the prospective parents.

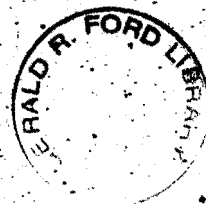
Inquiries from families in the U.S. who are in the process of adopting Vietnamese children should be made to the appropriate adoption agencies. (A list is attached).



A.I.D. has been working with the Government of Vietnam and U.S. voluntary agencies in Vietnam for two weeks to expedite the transportation and placement of these orphans in U.S. homes, because of the overloading of voluntary agency facilities in Saigon caused by the refugee situation.

We presently are lining up one or two C-5A planes and equipping them to ensure safe transportation and care en route. We are also lining up alternative available planes. The flights will begin within the next 36 to 48 hours and possibly sooner. We are arranging to have the children met at Travis Air Force Base and/or other locations on the west coast and to be cared for upon arrival.

World Airways brought 57 orphans into Oakland last night at 11:30 p.m. This was an unauthorized flight because the South Vietnam Government, the FAA, and the U.S. Mission in Saigon considered the rice cargo plane to be unsafe and unsuitable for a long flight of infants across the Pacific. We would welcome World Airways participation as long as its flights are safe and appropriate arrangements for medical care made.



The following agencies with branches ~~in~~ in Vietnam are active in intercountry adoption work. All are either licensed or in the process of being licensed by the Ministry of Social Welfare of the Republic of Vietnam to handle such adoptions.

Prospective adoptive parents should contact one of the following agencies:

Holt Children's Service
P.O. Box 2420
1195 City View Street
Eugene, Oregon 97402
Telephone: (503) 687-2202

TAISSA (Traveler's Aid--International
Social Services of America)
345 East 46th Street, Room 715
New York, New York 10017
Telephone: (212) 687-2747

Friends For All Children
445 South 68th Street
Boulder, Colorado 80303
Telephone: (303) 494-7305

United States Catholic Conference
201 Park Avenue, South
New York, New York 10003
Telephone: (212) 475-5400

Friends of Children of Vietnam
600 Gilpin
Denver, Colorado 80211
Telephone: (303) 321-8251 or 8262

Pearl S. Buck Foundation
2019 DeLancey Place
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103
Telephone: (215) 732-1030

World Vision Relief Organization
919 West Huntington Drive
Monrovia, California 91016
Telephone: (213) 357-1111



12:35 p.m.

Thursday, April 3

Mr. Marsh says the memo sent up by General Scowcroft on the Refugees is about to be released unless you have strong reservations.

Mr. Marsh is presently in General Scowcroft's office.



To: Phil Buchen

From: Brent Scowcroft



We are seeing a great human tragedy as untold numbers of Vietnamese flee the North Vietnamese onslaught. The United States has been doing and will continue to do its utmost to assist these people.

I have, for example, directed all available naval ships to stand off Indochina to do whatever is necessary to assist. We have appealed to the United Nations to use its moral influence to permit these innocent people to leave, and we ^{are calling} call on North Vietnam to permit the movement of refugees to areas of their choice.

The requirements for the care and ultimate disposition of all those who are fleeing from the war will be heavy. Because of the large numbers involved and the overwhelming need for assistance, I will soon be asking the Congress for additional funds to meet this humanitarian requirement. We will as well be working with the humanitarian agencies to do everything humanly possible to relieve the tragic plight of these refugees.



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 3, 1975

MEMO FOR: SITUATION ROOM

FROM: JACK MARSH

Please transmit, via classified channels, the attached
CHENEY ~~Don Rumsfeld~~ for the President's consideration.

Thank you.



~~CLASSIFIED~~

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 3, 1975



MEMORANDUM FOR:

~~CHENEY~~
~~DON RUMSFELD~~

FROM:

JACK MARSH *JM*

Attached is a question and a proposed response which I have prepared on the Vietnam matter which I would appreciate your bringing to the President's attention for his consideration.

By way of background, you should be aware that I have run this by Buchen, Rourke, Wolthius and Cannon who concur in the response.

I have also showed it to Henry who goes with the first paragraph of the response but takes strong exception to the second paragraph which he feels should be modified to be less conciliatory. He makes several points which I feel I should pass on.

1. Henry feels that a statement of not trying to assess blame as to what went wrong is appropriate.
2. He feels a firm response is necessary by the President that does not permit the Congress to escape responsibility. He feels that it is necessary to recount a number of legislative actions in recent years that lead to the straw that broke the camel's back. For example, the bombing halt, the steady cuts in aid, other Congressional limitations.

In summary, his view is that the Congress failed to make the hard choices and accept the responsibilities required of the situation.

Brent's view would be to take the first paragraph of the response on North Vietnamese aggression and use the responses to similar questions already forwarded by NSC for the second portion. I feel you should have the benefit of these views recognizing that the question he receives is not likely to be in the form any of us have propounded and the response he gives might reflect a number of inputs.

Determined to be Administrative Marking

Date 1/28/98 By KBL

~~CLASSIFIED~~

QUESTION:

Mr. President, there has been much discussion as to who is to blame for the disastrous turn of events in Vietnam. There has been some reference to your view that the Congress is ² fault for failing to provide the recent request for \$300 Million in aid. Who do you feel is to blame?

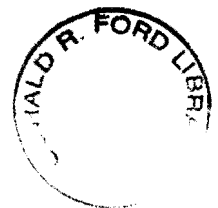
ANSWER:

Let's remember the real source of the problem in Vietnam is the flagrant aggression and violation of the Paris Peace Accords by the North Vietnamese. They have invaded South Vietnam. They are the aggressors. They are causing the refugee problem. If they would withdraw and stop their aggression and their atrocities, the situation in that country would stabilize. North Vietnam is where the blame lies by ignoring the Peace Agreement they signed.

Now as to what's happened because of the aggression ^{that} is more complex involving many factors here and in Vietnam. As you know, I have had a long record of supporting our effort there. Naturally, I am sorry that I did not receive the response that I had hoped for in my request for additional aid and assistance. Like many others, I am disappointed that over a period of years there has been both a diminution and limitation on our assistance to South Vietnam but it is not up to me to become involved in a national debate as to who in America is at fault. My hope is that the Congress will join with me in doing whatever we might to be of help and assistance to this besieged country and its people.

It is a tragic situation. I am deeply troubled by what has happened but my support for them has not changed and I am glad that I did what I did to try to obtain for them the help I felt they needed.

Detained to be Administrative Marking
Date 1/28/98 By 1/BA



~~CLASSIFIED~~

-2-

I concur with the argument that Henry is making on Presidential leadership and calling on the Nation to pull together to make tough choices and accept responsibilities as a world leader. I think this should be the thrust of next week's Congressional Message and ensuing speeches in the days and weeks ahead. In this the Congress will have to be challenged, and in a Churchillian sense.

Where I think we differ is how we point out these Congressional inactions in Vietnam that contributed to developments there. I think the press conference forum is not the best place to make the points that need to be made.



4/3/75
for Thursday

2

- A giant storm dumped snow on five midwestern states, causing 29 deaths and closing down Chicago's O'Hare Airport for only its third time. Michigan used its National Guardsmen to rescue motorists.

- More favorable economic news was reported by the networks. The President expressed confidence at his news conference that recovery will start by summer.

FROM THE WIRES

O'Neill and Delegation To See Rabin

Tel Aviv (AP) -- A 25-man U.S. Congressional delegation arrived in Israel today for talks with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and a tour of Israel's front line with Syria. The delegation, led by Rep. Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., (D., Mass.), flew aboard a U.S. Air Force jet from Cairo, where they met high-ranking Egyptian officials. O'Neill said he expected the Geneva Middle East peace conference to be reconvened, but he did not rule out further Israeli-Egyptian negotiations through the United States despite the collapse of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's mediation mission. "The final step should be settled directly between Israel and Egypt," he said. The delegation leaves for home Sunday.

Kissinger - Dobrynin Meet

Washington (UPI) -- Secretary of State Henry Kissinger today conferred with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin on Middle East issues and the talks on strategic arms limitation agreements. Dobrynin said he and Kissinger also discussed Indochina "but only on minor issues." The hour-long meeting started at 3:30 p.m.

FROM THE NETWORKS

Ford Says He Has Authority to Use Military to Protect Americans in South Vietnam

President Ford said today at a San Diego news conference he believes he has the authority to use the military to protect any evacuation of Americans from South Vietnam, CBS reported.



Walter Cronkite challenged this on the CBS Evening News. Cronkite said:

"The question about the President's authority to use troops for an evacuation involves the War Powers Act passed by Congress in 1973 over the veto of then President Nixon. That law says the President may use troops if it becomes necessary because of an attack on the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces. But the law says nothing about the protection of Americans overseas, neither authorizing the use of troops nor expressly forbidding it, for that matter. Spokesmen in the offices of some Senators who backed the law concede that this is a murky area."

ABC/NBC reported that the President's news conference was his first detailed assessment of what he termed the "sad and tragic events in South Vietnam," but said he retains basic optimism about the future. The President announced (shown on CBS film) an American airlift of some 2,000 already-adopted orphans.

John Chancellor (NBC) said the President indicated it would be up to the American people to judge who is at fault for the events in South Vietnam. Howard K. Smith (ABC) said Ford's mood was somber and his personal frustration was clear. Tom Brokaw (NBC) said the President blamed the chaos on President Thieu's unilateral decision to withdraw his troops from the Central Highlands. Thieu also was frustrated by Congress, which had refused to vote additional aid to South Vietnam, the President said.

Bob Schieffer (CBS) said the President defended the history of the American involvement in Vietnam. Tom Jarriel (ABC) said Ford protested that the restrictions of the War Powers Act stripped him of even the psychological threat of U.S. intervention in Indochina.

On ABC/CBS film, the President said he is frustrated but he is convinced "this country is going to continue its leadership." The President said (on NBC/CBS film) that the United States will not abandon its allies. He warned any adversaries that they should not feel that the tragedy of Vietnam is an indication that Americans have lost their will or desire to stand up for freedom anywhere in the world.



APRIL 3, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary
(San Diego, California)

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

I am delighted to be here today on the beautiful shores of San Diego bay -- America's cleanest bay in terms of size and traffic. I am especially pleased because this is a showcase of what Americans can do on a local level to solve problems and respond to the future with creativity and confidence.

San Diego has demonstrated that environmental quality is good business. Even the animals in your famous zoo are thriving because of your achievements in preserving our natural heritage as you develop the most modern recreational and industrial facilities. I commend your carefully managed residential growth. San Diego is truly a city on which others could be modeled.

I am especially proud of the role of the United States Navy as a good citizen in San Diego, among our greatest Naval bases. And I pledge to you today, as one who sailed from here during World War Two, that I remain committed to a Navy second to none in readiness, capability and dedication to our nation's highest ideals.

I know that the concerns of this area go beyond your vital Navy installations and the wonders of the San Diego zoo. Too many in this region are without employment. Prices and taxes are too high. New sources of energy are essential.

I also know that local problems are best solved by local people. This administration responded to your pioneering of growth management strategy to preserve the residential environment. The Department of Housing and Urban Development has just approved San Diego's application for \$9.1 million under the historic new community development block grant legislation. This confers upon San Diego the distinction of being one of the very first major cities to receive such assistance.

Your able mayor, Pete Wilson, tells me that one of the ways this grant will be used is to speed economic development by attracting new business and industries to San Diego. Funds from this new block grant approach are available for the first time to prepare sites and, together with the on-the-job training programs of the Department of Labor, offer an extra inducement for new enterprises to locate in your already world-renowned climate.

This kind of local initiative and planning proves we are on the right track with block grants instead of trying to run everything from Washington, and demonstrates my firm conviction that the best features of community development should neither be sacrificed in the current economic climate nor stifled by Federal red tape.

San Diego is a showcase of the good neighbor policy. The nearby Mexican border is the busiest international crossing in the world, making this a gateway city with a unique challenge. San Diego and Tijuana share the same air and water and seek joint solutions to problems that cross national boundaries.



I commend Fronteras 1976, the San Diego community's bicentennial project, jointly sponsored by the city and the University of California at San Diego. This project will advance regional and international understanding -- demonstrating to the world the potential of creative cooperation and interdependence among sovereign nations.

Serious problems confront the American people at home. Yet unemployment and the growth of our economy, as well as our national security, are directly related to relations with the rest of the world.

In recent weeks we witnessed discouraging and tragic events in the Middle East on which we depend for far too much of our energy needs. These developments dramatized the urgency of moving ahead in San Diego and throughout America with constructive action to make this nation independent of foreign sources of energy.

Today I renew my challenge to the Congress to act before the end of this month on the urgently-needed energy program I requested last January. We can afford no more delays.

I would not be frank and honest with you if I were to ignore the serious setbacks we have suffered in recent weeks in our quest for peace in the Middle East and, more recently and more dramatically, in Southeast Asia.

Even as I speak, the dimensions of the human catastrophe in Southeast Asia increase. Whether from your evening news shows or morning headlines or from my top secret reports, it is impossible not to be moved and shaken by the sudden and tragic developments in South Vietnam. All Americans are shocked and saddened and wondering what we can do.

First, we are taking all the humanitarian measures we can to relieve the innocent civilian refugees in South Vietnam whose plight touches the heart of America. At the same time, we are providing for the safety of all the Americans who from a deep sense of duty might be endangered by swift changes in the battle zone.

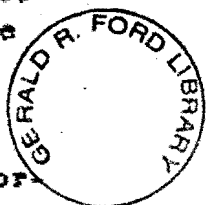
Second, as soon as they return from their Easter recess and I have opportunity to address them, I will ask the members of the Congress for a firm American commitment to humanitarian assistance for the helpless victims of North Vietnamese aggression in flagrant violation of the Paris accords, which sought to end the suffering and bloodshed on a civilized basis.

Finally, I must say with all the certainty of which I am capable: no adversaries or potential enemies of the United States should imagine that America can be safely challenged; and no allies or time-tested friends of the United States should worry or fear that our commitments to them will not be honored, because of the current confusion and changing situation in Southeast Asia. We stand ready to defend ourselves and support our allies as surely as we always have.

As it always has, adversity is creating a new sense of national unity among Americans in these sad and troubled times. I will not engage in recriminations or attempts to assess blame, nor should any of us. Not all the facts are known. What is essential now is that we keep our nerve and our essential unity as a powerful but peace-loving nation.

As President and Commander-in-Chief, it is my sworn duty to maintain and strengthen the power for peace which the United States possesses both at home and abroad.

(MORE)



A handwritten mark or signature, possibly a stylized "L" or "J", located at the bottom right of the page.

The military strength of this Nation depends, as it always has, on its economic strength and the will power and self-discipline of its people.

The credibility of the United States in the world, both among our allies and our adversaries, depends upon their assessment of our moral, economic and military strength and staying power. All three of these elements are essential.

Let me consider briefly the problem of ensuring and increasing our economic strength. In this, the obvious priority is to get out of the recession we have been experiencing, and particularly to increase employment and get the jobless back into productive jobs.

But along with that urgent goal goes another priority, less obvious to some, which is to end the recession without adding unnecessarily to the inflationary pressures which have plagued us for many years prior to the recession and which helped to bring it on. We must make more jobs and reverse the recession without recklessly inviting a new round of double-digit inflation, rising interest rates and higher prices which in the long run would cancel out whatever stimulus and expansionary incentive we can apply to the economy in the short run.

That is why I am determined to hold the line on all the massive Federal spending programs which are moving through the Congress. That is why I have drawn the line at a maximum budget deficit of \$60 billion, which is where we stand now and is as far as we dare to go without endangering economic recovery.

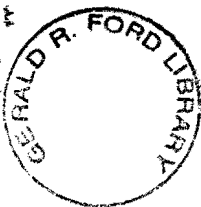
I am gratified that some of the responsible members of the Senate and the House, on both sides of the political aisle, have spoken publicly of the danger of more massive deficits. Not merely the Administration, but the country needs their help and will need their votes when the showdowns come. But I have no wish to wage a veto war with Congress. We have enough real wars and rumors of war. What I would prefer is for the Congress to exercise its constitutional power of the purse with the responsibility and prudence that the people expect of it. Congress must cut rather than spend; it must reduce existing programs instead of creating new ones. It cannot go on giving away more and more government benefits without considering how to pay for them, and the damage that will be done by borrowing to pay for them.

When the American people are tightening their belts to get through the worst recession of recent times -- caused in large part by decades of deficits and ever-growing government programs -- the Congress should not ask them to suffer the consequences of more of the same fiscal folly.

I would like the Congress to fix an absolute ceiling on Federal spending for the coming year. The ceiling where I drew the line. To do this effectively, the Congress must go one step further -- put the already enacted procedures of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 into effect a whole year ahead of schedule, starting this July 1.

In the face of a huge deficit that could reach \$100 billion if my budget is overridden, it is hard to see how Congress can refuse to do this and retain any fiscal credibility.

Excessive Federal spending for years has fueled the fires of inflation and imposed the unfair tax of all on the American people -- robbing the retired of their pensions, the elderly of their Social Security, the hard-working majority of their paychecks' full value in the supermarket. Runaway inflation can ruin the productive growth and essential strength of the free enterprise system and cripple our entire American economy.



That is why my economic recovery program contains two elements, each essential to its success. One, a quick one-time tax cut to stimulate buying power and new investment in job-producing expansion. The other, spending cuts and a one-year moratorium on new spending by the government -- except for emergency and energy needs. Federal tax cuts alone will not work without simultaneous Federal spending restraints.

I am deeply concerned, however, that some elements in Congress will try to pay for additional spending programs by dangerously stripping billions from the defense budget. At a time like this, nothing could be more shortsighted or devastating to our safety.

Individually, many of the domestic spending programs proposed in the Congress may have attractive aspects. They provide help to some worthy group.

It is hard for Members of Congress to oppose them -- it will be hard for me to veto them if Congress enacts them. But it is not the individual programs that are unacceptable but the sum total of them -- adding up easily to \$30 billion or more to bring the deficit into the \$100 billion range.

Defense spending, on the other hand, provides no benefits except the most precious benefit of all -- the freedom of our country and the last hope for peace in the world. As President Eisenhower so wisely observed, only the strong are free. Certainly we have ample reason to believe this truth today.

My budget recommendations for national defense are the minimum I believe to be essential for our safety.

It is now a popular idea that because Americans are not fighting anywhere, because we are seeking to broaden every avenue of peace, that we can expand social benefit programs and pay for them out of defense cutbacks. Simple arithmetic disproves this. I have seen careful mathematical projections that show, if welfare and other transfer payments continue merely at their present rate of growth -- about 9% annually for the past 20 years -- half of the American people will be living off the other half by the year 2000.

Except for vastly increasing taxes on those who work, the only way such payments can be continued indefinitely is to take them away from our national defense. Other superpowers are doing nothing of the kind. I pledge to you today that I will resist stripping America's defense capability in every legal way available to me.

But if the men and women you send to the Congress fail to face up to these inescapable realities, refuse to exercise the balanced judgment their own new budget committee has been set up to enforce, then by simple arithmetic it will only be a few short decades before our defenses will be down to a single soldier with a single rifle with a single round of ammunition.

I have more faith in America than that. I have always been an optimist. And wherever I can get away from Washington and see Americans as they really live and work and play and plan for their children, my sense of what's right with our country is recharged and reinforced.

I am very pleased to be here today in the optimistic atmosphere and problem-solving climate of Southern California. I am among people with great experience and great courage. Many of the heroic POW's, who were liberated from North Vietnam are here in San Diego. They know the need for an orderly and peaceful world. They also know -- as men who live on the brink of doom, the danger of pessimism. They know that the objective facts are not as bad as a mood of frustration and futility to which some of our countrymen are tempted to succumb.



Today I want to appeal to the common sense and courage of the American people. This is not a moment for despair or fatalism. Obviously it is not the time to dismantle our defense capabilities -- including our intelligence capacities.

We will go on helping people to help themselves. It is in keeping with our religious heritage, our decency and our own self-interest. We will preserve partnerships with people striving for freedom.

I reject the prophets of doom who see nothing but depression at home and despair abroad. I will reject any advice to pull down the stars and stripes and sail home from the seas of the world to the safe anchorage of San Diego Bay. If we do so, this anchorage will no longer be safe. You know it. And I know it.

Under my Presidency, we will neither furl the flag nor abandon hope. We will maintain constancy and credibility in American policy, at home and abroad. We are living in a complicated and troubled time. Events are moving very rapidly. But we will not withdraw inward nor surrender to a state of shock.

America is being put to the test. It is not just a test of our moral authority in the world. It is a test of our will to develop our own energy resources, to reduce bureaucratic waste, and to preserve our dollar by guarding against non-essential spending with the same vigilance that we continue the watchfulness and strength of our armed forces.

It is a test of our will to provide for the economic security of our families while assuring the military security of our nation. We can meet this test only by reducing vulnerability to weaknesses in our economy and energy capacities. That is why an adequate security program goes hand-in-hand with sound economic policies and prompt, effective energy legislation.

America has the will. America has the resources. America has the know-how. And Americans has the faith.

I share your belief in America. If you despaired of this nation and its future, you would not be here today. Together, we will build a new and better tomorrow.

#



PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 12

of the

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

12:01 P.M. PDT
April 3, 1975
Thursday

In the Silver Room
At the San Diego Convention
and Performing Arts Center
San Diego, California

THE PRESIDENT: Will you please sit down.

At the outset, let me express my appreciation to Mayor Pete Wilson and the fine people of San Diego for the very warm welcome.

I also am delighted to see one or more of my former colleagues in the Congress here. It is always nice to see them and all others who may be here. Good morning.

I have a short opening statement.

We are seeing a great human tragedy as untold numbers of Vietnamese flee the North Vietnamese onslaught. The United States has been doing -- and will continue to do -- its utmost to assist these people.

I have directed that all available Naval ships to stand off Indochina, to do whatever is necessary to assist. We have appealed to the United Nations to use its moral influence to permit these innocent people to leave, and we call on North Vietnam to permit the movement of refugees to the area of their choice.

While I have been in California, I have been spending many hours on the refugee problem and our humanitarian efforts. I have directed that money from a \$2 million special foreign aid children's fund be made available to fly 2000 South Vietnamese orphans to the United States as soon as possible.

I have also directed American officials in Saigon to act immediately to cut red tape and other bureaucratic obstacles preventing these children from coming to the United States.

MORE



I have directed that C-5A aircraft and other aircraft especially equipped to care for these orphans during the flight be sent to Saigon. I expect these flights to begin within the next 36 to 48 hours. These orphans will be flown to Travis Air Force Base in California, and other bases on the West Coast, and cared for in those locations.

These 2000 Vietnamese orphans are all in the process of being adopted by American families. This is the least we can do, and we will do much, much more.

The first question is from Mr. George Dissinger of the San Diego Tribune.

QUESTION: Mr. President, are you ready to accept Communist takeover of South Vietnam and Cambodia?

THE PRESIDENT: I would hope that that would not take place in either case. My whole Congressional life in recent years was aimed at avoiding it. My complete efforts as President of the United States were aimed at avoiding that.

I am an optimist, despite the sad and tragic events that we see unfolding. I will do my utmost in the future -- as I have in the past -- to avoid that result.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I understand you are soon going to ask Congress for new authority to extend humanitarian aid in Southeast Asia. I wondered if you stand by your request, though, for more military aid for South Vietnam.

THE PRESIDENT: We do intend to ask for more humanitarian aid. I should point out that the Administration's request for \$135 million for humanitarian aid in South Vietnam was unfortunately reduced to \$55 million by Congressional action. Obviously, we will ask for more; the precise amount we have not yet determined.

We will continue to push for the \$300 million that we have asked for and Congress had authorized for military assistance to South Vietnam, and the possibility exists that we may ask for more.

MORE



QUESTION: Mr. President, how and why did the U.S. miscalculate the intentions of the will of the South Vietnamese to resist?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe that we miscalculated the will of the South Vietnamese to carry on their fight for their own freedom.

There were several situations that developed that I think got beyond the control of the Vietnamese people. The unilateral military decision to withdraw created a chaotic situation in Vietnam that appears to have brought about tremendous disorganization.

I believe that the will of the South Vietnamese people to fight for their freedom is best evidenced by the fact that they are fleeing from the North Vietnamese and that clearly is an indication they don't want to live under the kind of government that exists in North Vietnam.

The will of the South Vietnamese people, I think, still exists. They want freedom under a different kind of government than has existed in North Vietnam. The problem is how to organize that will under the traumatic experiences of the present.

QUESTION: Unilateral decision by whom?

THE PRESIDENT: It was a unilateral decision by President Thieu to order a withdrawal from the broad, exposed areas that were under the control of the South Vietnamese military.

QUESTION: Mr. President, what is your response to the South Vietnamese Ambassador to Washington's statement that we had not lived up to the Paris peace accords and that the Communists are safer allies?

THE PRESIDENT: I won't comment on his statement. I will say this: That the North Vietnamese repeatedly and in massive efforts violated the Paris peace accords. They sent North Vietnamese regular forces into South Vietnam in massive numbers -- I think around 150,000 to 175,000 -- well-trained North Vietnamese regular forces, in violation of the Paris peace accords, moved into South Vietnam.

We have objected to that violation. I still believe that the United States, in this case and in other cases, is a reliable ally and although I am saddened by the events that we have read about and seen, it is a tragedy unbelievable in its ramifications.

MORE

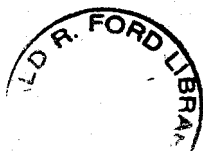


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I must say that I am frustrated by the action of the Congress in not responding to some of the requests for both economic, humanitarian and military assistance in South Vietnam. And I am frustrated by the limitations that were placed on the Chief Executive over the last two years.

But let me add very strongly, I am convinced that this country is going to continue its leadership. We will stand by our allies and I specifically warn any adversaries they should not, under any circumstances, feel that the tragedy of Vietnam is an indication that the American people have lost their will or their desire to stand up for freedom any place in the world.

MORE



QUESTION: Mr. President, can you explain why President Thieu, with our close military ties as allies, did not tell you what he was going to do in terms of the retreat?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the only answer to that can come from President Thieu.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford, recently you said the fall of Cambodia could threaten the national security of this country. Considering the probable fall of South Vietnam to Communist forces, do you feel that will threaten our national security, and if so, how?

THE PRESIDENT: At the moment, I do not anticipate the fall of South Vietnam, and I greatly respect and admire the tremendous fight that the government and the people of Cambodia are putting up against the insurgents who are trying to take over Cambodia.

I believe that in any case where the United States does not live up to its moral or treaty obligations, it can't help but have an adverse impact on other allies we have around the world. We read in European papers to the effect that Western Europe ought to have some questions.

Let me say to our Western European allies, we are going to stand behind our commitments to NATO, and we are going to stand behind our commitments to other allies around the world.

But, there has to be in the minds of some people, a feeling that maybe the tragedy of Indochina might affect our relations with their country. I repeat, the United States is going to continue its leadership and stand by its allies.

QUESTION: Are you, in fact, a believer of the domino theory of, if Southeast Asia falls, then perhaps some of the other countries in the Pacific are next?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe there is a great deal of credibility to the domino theory. I hope it does not happen. I hope that other countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand, the Philippines, don't misread the will of the American people and the leadership of this country to believing that we are going to abandon our position in Southeast Asia.

We are not, but I do know from the things I read and the messages that I hear, that some of them do get uneasy. I hope and trust they believe me when I say we are going to stand by our allies.

MORE



QUESTION: Mr. President, as you are well aware, there are about 7000 Americans still in Saigon. They are in danger not only from Communist attack, but from South Vietnamese reprisals. There are reports that the South Vietnamese are in a bad temper toward Americans.

Do you feel that under the War Powers Act and also under the limitations voted by Congress in 1973 on combat by Americans in Indochina, that you could send troops in to protect those Americans, and would you, if it came to that?

THE PRESIDENT: I can assure you that I will abide totally with the War Powers Act that was enacted by the Congress several years ago. At the same time, I likewise assure you that we have contingency plans to meet all problems involving evacuation, if that should become necessary. At this point, I do not believe that I should answer specifically how those contingency plans might be carried out.

QUESTION: Sir, you don't want to talk specifically. Can you tell us, however, if you do believe that you do have the authority to send in troops? You are not saying, I understand, whether you would, but do you have the authority?

THE PRESIDENT: It is my interpretation of that legislation that a President has certain limited authority to protect American lives. And to that extent, I will use that law.

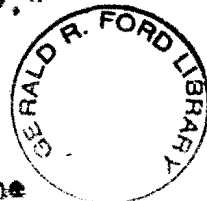
QUESTION: Mr. President, despite your statement here this morning about war orphans, there apparently is a lot of red tape in Washington. A San Diego man who is trying to get four Vietnamese children out of that country has received hundreds of calls from people all over the Western United States wanting to help, even adopt children, but despite this outpouring of compassion by the American people, all he gets in Washington is, "No way."

There is nothing that can be done. Why is he running into this problem, if we are trying to help?

THE PRESIDENT: Having had some experience in the past with the Federal bureaucracy, when we had a similar problem involving Korean orphans, I understand the frustration and the problem.

But, I am assured that all bureaucratic red tape is being eliminated to the maximum degree and that we will make a total effort, as I indicated in my opening statement, to see to it that South Vietnamese war orphans are brought to the United States.

MORE



QUESTION: Do you think something can be done before it is too late for many of them?

THE PRESIDENT: I can only say we will do what has to be done, what can be done, as a practical matter. I cannot guarantee that every single South Vietnamese war orphan will get here, but I can assure you that we intend to do everything possible in that humanitarian effort.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the Gallup Poll shows a very healthy majority of the American people, 60 percent of the American people, are more concerned about the high cost of living than they are about any other issue including the recession and international developments.

I would like to ask you, in view of that, if Congress does not respond to your repeated appeals to hold down spending and not exceed a level that would produce a deficit of \$60 billion. If they don't do that, and government borrowing increases to cover the deficit, do you have any plans, is there anything you plan to do beyond just these appeals to Congress to prevent a resurgence of inflation?

THE PRESIDENT: As I clearly indicated last Saturday night when I approved the Tax Reduction Act, I have drawn the line on additional Federal spending. That is as far as we dare go.

If we go beyond that, we amplify the potentialities for a resurgence of double-digit inflation. I intend to appeal to the Congress to hold the lid and I intend to appeal to the American people to get their Members of Congress -- Senators and Congressmen -- to stop coming to the White House with one spending bill after another.

In addition, I am asking the Congress to enact a provision that would make applicable for fiscal year 1976 the Budget Control Act that was enacted last year by the Congress.

Under the present law, the Budget Control Act, which forces the Congress to set a ceiling, does not actually come into effect until fiscal year 1977. It seems to me in the crisis that we face today, that the Congress ought to amend the Budget Control Act and make it applicable to fiscal year 1976 so they will impose on themselves, individual Members of Congress -- House and Senate -- a spending limitation.

Now, they are going through sort of a practice session on it. I wish they would abandon the practice session and get down to the ball game, and they, themselves, set a spending limit at the level that I indicated.

MORE



QUESTION: What I am asking you, Mr. President, is if you have any strings to your bow other than these Congressional strings? In other words, what I am asking you is, do you plan any executive action to try to curb a resurgence or prevent a resurgence of inflation?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the executive actions will be directives to the various departments of the government to limit their spending even within the appropriated amounts that Congress has made available.

We are expecting every department to spend as little as possible to carry out their programs or their mandates, and this includes holding the line on Federal personnel; it includes the limitations on spending for anything that cannot be justified. Under the law, that is the maximum that I can do in an executive capacity.

QUESTION: Mr. President, if it would alleviate the refugee problem in South Vietnam and bring about something of a temporary ceasefire, would you urge President Thieu to resign?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe that it is my prerogative to tell the head of state elected by the people to leave office. I don't believe whether it is one head of state or another makes any difference in our efforts to help in the humanitarian program.

We are going to carry it on, I hope, with a full cooperation of the South Vietnamese government, and I don't think it is appropriate for me to ask him, under these circumstances, to resign. I don't think his resignation would have any significance on our humanitarian efforts.

QUESTION: In that regard, are there any plans underway by the U.S. government to accept large numbers of Vietnamese refugees in this country other than the 2,000 orphans that you have talked about?

THE PRESIDENT: Under existing law, action by the Attorney General can permit refugees who are fleeing problems in their own country to come to the United States. This authority was used after World War II. This authority was used after the Hungarian invasion by the Soviet Union.

This authority has been used on a number of other occasions. I can assure you that that authority is being examined and if it will be helpful, I certainly will approve it.

MORE



QUESTION: Mr. President, what is your judgment now on when you expect the recession to end and recovery to begin? Is it the third quarter of this year, or will it be later?

THE PRESIDENT: Our best judgment is that the recession will turn around during the third quarter of this calendar year. We are already seeing some significant changes in the statistics that give us more certainty that the recession will end and that economic recovery will begin in the third quarter of this calendar year.

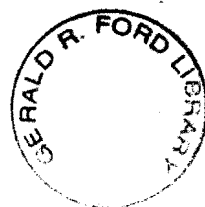
QUESTION: Could you tell us what those signs are, please, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. The latest report shows that there has been an increase in the ordering of manufactured goods. The first time I think in six months that there has been an increase rather than a decrease.

Interest rates are dropping. More money for borrowers is being made available. The inflation is receding, or at least the rate of inflation is receding. As of the last report, it would annualize at about 7.2 percent, contrasted with a 12 or 13 percent rate of inflation in 1974.

When you add up all these various economic indicators, it does show that the recession is receding and that economic conditions will get better in the third quarter of 1975.

MORE



QUESTION: Mr. President, in line with the spending question last year when you campaigned in California, you asked voters to help defeat the big spenders in Congress and, if they happened to be Republicans, well, so be it.

Do you plan to use the same philosophy in campaigning next year, and to the extent you will openly campaign against Republicans whose philosophies or policies may contradict yours? If so, how does this sit with your statement that the Republican Party is broad enough for all views?

THE PRESIDENT: I expect to be campaigning very hard for my own re-election in 1976. I will, of course, urge that voters in every state support those candidates who believe as I do, that we have got to hold a line on and restrain excessive Federal spending.

My enthusiasm for an individual candidate will, of course, depend upon his strong support for my policy of fiscal restraint, but I am not going to pass judgment today on individuals, whether in one party or another.

QUESTION: Does this mean then that there is a possibility that during that campaign you could come out openly in support of a Democrat as opposed to a Republican?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe in the need for the country to have individual Members of the House and Senate who believe that these massive Federal spending programs are bad for America.

I certainly will look with favor on anyone who believes as I do, that we cannot spend ourself into prosperity. A tax cut approach is a far better way, and that massive spending programs are not good for America.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you now head an Administration which came to power on a strong law and order platform, but the crime rate since 1969 has done nothing but go up and the statistics include crimes at the highest levels of government.

My question is, whether you think it would be fair for the Democrats to charge that this Administration is soft on crime, or at least is incapable of dealing with the problem?

THE PRESIDENT: Unfortunately, for the country the crime rate has been increasing for the last ten or 15 years, whether it was under a Democratic administration, under President Kennedy or President Johnson, or, except for, I think, one year under the former President, the crime rate has been going up. I don't think it is a partisan issue.



~~It is my judgment that we have to maximize~~
our efforts--the Federal Government, state government
and local units of government--to try and have
proper enforcement of the law, which includes the
prosscution of people who violate the law.

I can only assure you that to the extent that
the Federal Government can do something about it, we --
this Administration -- will do it. The facts of life
are that most law enforcement is the local responsibility.

Through the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, the
Federal Government has been spending for the last several
years around \$800 million to help local units of government,
state units of government in the upgrading of their law
enforcement capability, helping police departments,
helping sheriff's departments, helping the courts, and
will continue to do it.

But, the principal responsibility rests at the
local level.

QUESTION: Will you be able to spend any more
money under your proposition that the line has to be
drawn somewhere on fighting the crime problem?

THE PRESIDENT: I think in the budget I submitted,
there is ample money for a Federal effort to carry out
the Federal role in the area of law enforcement.

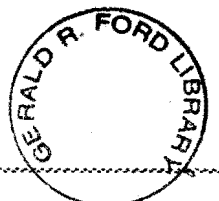
QUESTION: Mr. President, you spoke a few
minutes ago about being frustrated by the limitation of
the War Powers Act. If it were not forbidden now, would
you like to send American planes and Naval forces and
possibly ground forces into Vietnam to try to turn the
situation around?

THE PRESIDENT: I have said that there are no
plans whatsoever for U.S. military involvement in
Vietnam. On the other hand, I think history does prove
that if a Chief Executive has a potential to, it, to
some extent, is a deterrent against aggressors.

QUESTION: So, that is your frustration, because
you do not have that power to at least threaten the
possibility?

THE PRESIDENT: I did not use the word "threat."
I said the potential for power, I think, over the years
has indicated that that potential is a deterrent
against aggression by one country against another.

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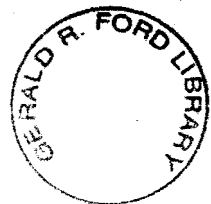


QUESTION: Mr. President, in view of the possible primary entries by Governor Reagan and perhaps Governor Thompson of New Hampshire, would you be good enough to discuss your own timetable?

When will you set up your committee, specifically, and can you also tell us, do you plan to enter any primaries yourself, or through a stand-in candidate?

THE PRESIDENT: We have not defined our precise timetable, nor our precise plans for the pre-convention campaign. We are in the process of putting together our timetable and our plans. I have said repeatedly that I intend to be a candidate; but I have made no categorical announcement to that effect. But, the matter is not being neglected.

MORE



QUESTION: Mr. President, in light of current concerns regarding the assassination of President Kennedy and the recent showings of the Zapruder films, do you still have the same confidence in the finding of the Warren Commission that you had as a Member of that Commission?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have to read very carefully what the Warren Commission said. And I, as a member of the Warren Commission, helped to participate in the drafting of the language. We said that Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin. We said that the Commission had found no evidence of a conspiracy, foreign or domestic.

Those words were very carefully drafted. And so far, I have seen no evidence that would dispute the conclusions to which we came.

We were most careful because in 1963 and 1964, when we most carefully analyzed all the evidence available, there was none of the involvement of anybody or anybody as a group, in the assassination.

It is my understanding that the Rockefeller Commission may, if the facts seem to justify it, take a look at it, at the problem, and I suspect that the House and Senate committees that are currently investigating CIA history may do the same.

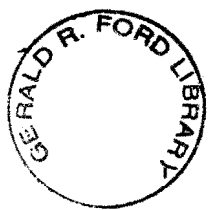
But the Commission was right when it made its determination and it was accurate, at least to this point -- I want to re-emphasize that -- as to the evidence that we saw.

QUESTION: Mr. President, some people are saying this week that despite all our massive aid in Vietnam and all the lives that were lost there, that the whole thing has come to nothing.

Now, how do you feel about this, and do you think there is any lesson to be learned in what has been happening over there?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that the program of the previous four or five Presidents -- President Kennedy, President Johnson, President Nixon, and myself -- were aimed at the -- in the right direction, that we should help those people who are willing to fight for freedom for themselves.

That was a sound policy. Unfortunately, events that were beyond our control as a country have made it appear that that policy was wrong. I still believe that policy was right if the United States had carried it out as we promised to do at the time of the Paris peace accords where we promised, with the signing of the Paris peace accords, that we would make military hardware available to the South Vietnamese government on a replacement, one-for-one basis. Unfortunately, we did not carry out that promise.



QUESTION: Are you blaming Congress for this, then?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not assessing blame on anyone. The facts are that in fiscal year 1974, there was a substantial reduction made by the Congress in the amount of military equipment requested for South Vietnam.

In fiscal year 1975, the current fiscal year, the Administration asked for \$1 billion 400 million in military assistance for South Vietnam. Congress put a ceiling of \$1 billion on it and actually appropriated only \$700 million.

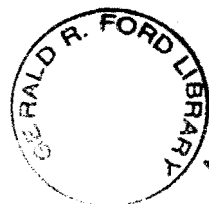
Those are the facts. I think it is up to the American people to pass judgment on who was at fault or where the blame may rest. That is a current judgment.

I think historians, in the future, will write who was to blame in this tragic situation. But the American people ought to know the facts and the facts are as I have indicated.

I think it is a great tragedy, what we are seeing in Vietnam today. I think it could have been avoided. But I am not going to point a finger. The American people will make that judgment. I think it is more important for me and the American people and the Congress, in the weeks and months ahead, to do what we can to work together to meet the problems of the future.

That is what I intend to do, and I will go more than half way with the Congress in seeking to achieve that result. I think we have the capability in America. I think we have the will to overcome what appears to be a disaster in Southeast Asia. To the extent that I can, I hope to give that leadership.

MORE



QUESTION: Mr. President, regardless of what caused it, it seems apparent that for the first time in our Nation's history, the enemy is about to win a war where Americans fought and died. Do you think those 55,000 lives were wasted?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think they were wasted, providing the United States had carried out the solemn commitments that were made in Paris. At the time American fighting was stopped in South Vietnam, at a time when the agreement provided that all of our troops should be withdrawn, that all of our POW's should be returned, if we had carried out the commitments that were made at that time, the tragic sacrifices that were made by many -- those who were killed, those who were wounded -- would not have been in vain.

When I see us not carrying through, then it raises a quite different question.

QUESTION: Is that a yes, then, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I still think there is an opportunity to salvage the situation in Vietnam, and if we salvage it, giving the South Vietnamese an opportunity to fight for their freedom, which I think they are anxious to do, if given an honest opportunity, then there was not a sacrifice that was inappropriate or unwise.

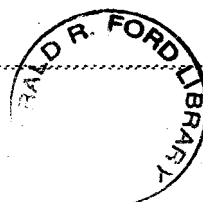
QUESTION: Good afternoon, Mr. President.

In a speech you are going to deliver here in San Diego this afternoon, you warn against the fatalism, despair and the prophets of doom. Yet, as I look back over the past eight months or a year -- and I don't mean to suggest that these are in any way your responsibility or fault -- I have a laundry list which cites Portugal as having a leftist government raising serious questions about its future in NATO.

Greece and Turkey are at each other's throats, threatening the Southern flanks of that alliance. We are familiar that Secretary Kissinger's mission failed in his peace talks with Egypt, and Israel, and we don't need to rehash the situation in Cambodia and South Vietnam.

That being the case, sir, how can you say that the world outlook -- and particularly as you address it in your speech next week on the state of the world -- is anything but bleak for the United States when many of the minuses which I cited are actually plusses for the Soviets?

MORE



THE PRESIDENT: The speech that I am giving to Congress and to the American people next week will deal with many of the problems that you have raised. I think we do face a crisis, but I am optimistic that if the Congress joins with me, and the American people support the Congress and me, as President, we can overcome those difficulties.

We can play a constructive role in Portugal; not interfering with their internal decisions, but Portugal is an important ally in Western Europe. We can find ways to solve the problem in Cyprus and hopefully keep both Greece and Turkey strong and viable members of NATO.

We can, despite the difficulties that transpired in the Middle East in the last several weeks, find a way to keep a peace movement moving in that very volatile area.

It may mean -- and probably does -- that we will have to take the problem to Geneva. I would have preferred it otherwise, but the facts are that if Congress and the American people and the President work together -- as I expect they will -- then in my judgment, those disappointments can become plusses.

QUESTION: But, sir, can you cite any specific reasons for the optimism you express?

THE PRESIDENT: The historical character of the American people, that is the main ingredient that in my judgment, will take America from the disappointments of the present to the optimism of the future.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, very much.

END (AT 12:45 P.M. PDT)

