

My fellow Americans.

(nothing on tape)

A

This was the situation when I was inaugurated on January 20.

1. The war had been going on for five years.
2. Thirty-eight thousand Americans had been killed in action.
3. Five-hundred-fifty thousand Americans were in Vietnam with no plans to reduce ~~them~~ *the number*.

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4. No progress had been made at the negotiations in Paris and the United States had not put forth a comprehensive peace proposal.
5. The war was unpopular causing deep division at home as well as criticism from many of our friends as well as our enemies abroad.

In view of these circumstances

There were some who urged I end the war at once by ordering the immediate withdrawal of all American forces.

- (1) From a political standpoint this would have been a popular and easy course to follow.
- (2) After all, the war had been begun by my predecessor.
 - a. I could blame the defeat for America, which would be the result of such action, on him and come out as the peacemaker.
 - b. Some put it quite bluntly: This was the only way to avoid allowing Johnson's War to become Nixon's war.

RESERVATION COPY

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(3) But I had a greater obligation than to think only of the years of my Administration and the next election.

1. I had to think of the effect of my decision on the next generation and the future of peace and freedom in America and the world.
2. The great question at issue is not whether Johnson's war becomes Nixon's war but how we can win America's peace.

B

(Tape rolling with no voice)

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new
② The United States first sent economic and military aid and five years ago American combat forces to help prevent the Communist takeover.

1 3. We did not then or now seek bases in South Vietnam or the conquest of North Vietnam.

2 4. Our limited aim then and now was to provide for the people of South Vietnam the right to choose their own government without any outside interference.

Many believe that President Johnson's decision five years ago to send American combat forces to South Vietnam was wrong. Many others - I among them - have been strongly critical of the way the war has been conducted.

But the question is -- now that we are in the war what is the best way to end it?

1. In January I could only conclude that the immediate withdrawal of all American forces from Vietnam and the acceptance of American defeat implicit in that decision would be a disaster not only for South Vietnam but for the United States and for the cause of peace such a withdrawal was supposed to serve.

- (1) For the South Vietnamese, our withdrawal before they are prepared to take over their own defense would inevitably allow the Communists to repeat the massacres which followed their takeover of the North fifteen years ago.
 1. They then murdered more than fifty thousand people and hundreds of thousands more died in slave labor camps.
 2. Who can believe they would kill less in the South where millions have once before fled from their terror and the majority of the people have opposed them?
 3. We saw a prelude of what would happen when the Communists entered the city of Hue last year. During their brief rule there - there was a bloody reign of terror in which some 3000 civilians were clubbed and shot to death.

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- (1) With the sudden collapse of our support, these atrocities of Hue would become the nightmare of the entire nation.
2. For the United States, this first defeat in our nation's history would result in a collapse of confidence in American leadership, not only in Asia but throughout the world.
 - (1) In 1959 President Eisenhower said "Strategically South Vietnam's capture by the Communists would bring their power several hundred miles into a hitherto free region. The remaining countries of Southeast Asia would be menaced by a great flanking movement. The loss of South Vietnam would set in motion a crumbling process that could as it progressed have grave consequences for us and for freedom."
 - (2) President Kennedy repeated our pledge of help in 1963 when he said of South Vietnam, "We want to see a stable government there carrying on a struggle to maintain its national independence. In my opinion for us to withdraw from that effort would be to collapse not only South Vietnam but Southeast Asia so we are going to stay there."

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- (3) President Johnson said in 1965, "Let no one think for a moment that retreat from Vietnam would bring an end to conflict. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another. The central lesson of our time is that the appetite of aggression is never satisfied."
- (4) Three American Presidents have faced the challenge of aggression in South Vietnam. ¹ All three saw the stakes and understood what had to be done. ² What we do now must reflect not only the wisdom of their commitment but also must protect the credit of the American Presidency and the American word.
3. For the future of peace, the humiliation and defeat of the United States would be a disaster of immense magnitude.
- (1) Those in the developing world who see terror and armed force as the means to impose on the many the arbitrary will of a few would find enormous encouragement in our abandonment of South Vietnam.

4. What choices do we have if we are to end the war?

5. What are the prospects for peace?

One year ago, the United States halted its bombing ^{of} ~~in~~ North Vietnam with the hope that this action might lead to negotiations which would end the war.

1. I believe the American people are entitled to an accounting as to what has happened during that year at the peace table in Paris, on the battle field in Vietnam and on the ~~fx~~ effect of the new policies adopted by this Administration when it came into office.

→ A

(Pick up part this was the situation when I was inaugurated, etc.)

Then page 3 of the draft where it says tape rolling with no voice --

Insert ~~xxx~~

ⓑ

3. Let us all understand that ~~there is no~~ the question before is not whether some Americans are for peace and some against it.

(1) We all want peace.

_____ 4.

Let us turn now to the fundamental issue. Why and how did the United States become involved in Vietnam in the first place?

Fifteen years ago North Vietnam, with the logistical support of Communist China and the Soviet Union launched a campaign to impose a Communist government on South Vietnam by instigating and supporting revolution. In response to the request of the government of South Vietnam, ~~then pick up on page 4~~ The United States ~~and economic and military aid~~ under President Eisenhower and President Kennedy sent economic and military aid to South Vietnam to aid the people of South Vietnam in their efforts to prevent a Communist takeover.

2. Five years ago, President Johnson sent American combat forces to South Vietnam. ~~for~~

then pick up on page 4 ---- We did not then or now etc.

then continue the balance of pages 4, 5, 6, and 7

(2) Still more ominous our defeat in South Vietnam would without question promote recklessness in the councils of those great powers who have not yet abandoned their goals ~~for~~ of world conquest.

I chose instead to change our policy in Vietnam from a war policy to a peace policy.

In order to end a war fought

1. / ~~On a war fought~~ on many fronts, I initiated a pursuit

for a peace on many fronts.

(1) In a television speech on May 14, ~~before the -~~
~~Ex~~ in a speech before the United Nations, ~~on~~
and ~~xx~~ on a number of occasions I set forth
our peace proposals in great detail.'

1. We have offered mutual withdrawal of all
outside forces from South Vietnam within
one year under international supervisory.
2. We have proposed a cease-fire under inter-
national supervision.

(1) President Thieu of South Vietnam
also proposed a cease-fire on November
7, 4 and repeated his proposal in a speech
on November 1st.

3. We have offered free elections under international
supervision with the Communists participating in
the election supervisory bodies as well as participating
in the elections as an organized political force.

(1) The Saigon Government has pledged to accept
any result of the elections.

(2) It is significant to note that of the two voices
claiming to speak for the people of South Vietnam,

only the Saigon Government and not the Viet Cong has been willing to put the issue to the people in a free and democratic test and to accept the result of that test.

We have not put forth our proposals on a take-it-or-leave-it-basis.

1. We have indicated that we are willing to discuss the proposals that have been put forth by the other side and that anything is negotiable except the right of the people of South Vietnam to determine their own future without having a government imposed upon them against their will.

- (1) At the Paris peace conference, Ambassador Lodge has demonstrated our ~~flex~~ flexibility and good faith in 38 (check now more) open meetings as well as in eleven private sessions.

~~Ex~~

As you know, there has been no response from Hanoi to these public proposals.

1. They have refused even to discuss our proposals.
2. They demand our unconditional surrender to their proposals that the war end on their terms; that we withdraw all American

forces immediately and that we overthrow the government of South Vietnam as we leave.

3. They have responded to our public words of moderation with insult.

We have not limited our peace initiatives to public forums and public statements. I recognized that a long and bitter war like this one usually cannot be settled in a public forum.

2. That is why in addition to the public statements and negotiations I have explored every possible private avenue that might lead to a settlement.

~~xxx~~

The American people are entitled to know how ~~xxx~~ diligent our search for peace has been.'

1. Therefore tonight I am taking the unprecedented ~~xxx~~ step of disclosing some of the initiatives for peace which we have undertaken privately and secretly because we thought that we thereby might open a door which publicly would be closed.

I did not wait for my inauguration to begin my quest for peace.

1. Soon after my election through an individual who was directly in contact ~~with~~ on a personal basis with the leaders of North Vietnam I made ~~to~~ two private offers

for a ~~xxxx~~ rapid, comprehensive settlement.

(1) Hanoi's replies called in effect for our surrender before negotiations.

2. Since the Soviet Union furnishes most of the military equipment for North Vietnam there were many who felt that the Soviet Government might be able to influence the North Vietnamese Government to negotiate an end to the war.

(1) To explore this possibility, Secretary of State Rogers, my ~~advisor~~ Assistant for National Security Affairs Dr. Kissinger, and ~~Impersonally~~ Ambassador Lodge and I, personally, have met on a number of ~~of~~ occasions with representatives of the Soviet Government to enlist their assistance in getting meaningful negotiations started.

1. In addition we have had extended discussions with representatives of other governments which have ~~desire~~ diplomatic relations with North Vietnam directed toward that same end.

2. These initiatives have to date produced no results.

TOP SECRET/EYES ONLY/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority WH Pres Release of 11/3/69
BY RJP NARS, Date 7/15/81

Dear Mr. President:

I realize that it is difficult to communicate meaningfully across the gulf of four years of war. But precisely because of this gulf, I wanted to take this opportunity to reaffirm in all solemnity my desire to work for a just peace. I deeply believe that the war in Vietnam has gone on too long and delay in bringing it to an end can benefit no one -- least of all the people of Vietnam. My speech on May 14 laid out a proposal which I believe is fair to all parties. Other proposals have been made which attempt to give the people of South Vietnam an opportunity to choose their own future. These proposals take into account the reasonable conditions of all sides. But we stand ready to discuss other programs as well, specifically the 10-point program of the NLF.

As I have said repeatedly, there is nothing to be gained by waiting. Delay can only increase the dangers and multiply the suffering.

The time has come to move forward at the conference table toward an early resolution of this tragic war. You will find us forthcoming and open-minded in a common effort to bring the blessings of peace to the brave people of Vietnam. Let history record that at this critical juncture, both sides turned their face toward peace rather than toward conflict and war.

Sincerely,

His Excellency
Ho Chi Minh
President
Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Hanoi

TOP SECRET/EYES ONLY/NODIS

3. In mid-July I became convinced that it was necessary to make a major move to break the deadlock in the Paris talks.

(1) I spoke directly with an individual who had known Ho Chi Minh on a personal basis for thirty years.

(2) Through him I sent a letter to Ho Chi Minh.

(3) I did this secretly outside of the usual diplomatic channels with the hope that ~~that~~ with the necessity of making statements for propaganda removed there might be constructive progress toward bringing the war to an end.

(4) I think it is now appropriate that I share with you the text of the letter I sent to him:

(Put the letter in at this point)

(5) I received Ho Chi Minh's reply on August 30, three days ~~before him~~ before his death. It simply reiterated the public position North Vietnam had flatly taken in the Paris talks and rejected my initiative.

The sum total of all the public, private and secret ~~xxx~~ negotiations which have been undertaken since the bombing halt a year ago and since this Administration came into office ~~xxxx~~ on January 20, is --- no progress whatever except agreement on the shape of the bargaining table.

1. It has become clear that progress ⁱⁿ and negotiation does not depend on our making new offers.
 - (1) It depends on the other side's ~~desire~~ deciding to negotiate seriously.
 - (2) And they will not do so while they are convinced that all they have to do is to wait for our next concession, and the next until they get everything they want.
 - (3) The obstacle in negotiating an end to the war is not the President of the United States.
 1. And it is not the South Vietnamese Government.
 - (4) The obstacle is the other side's absolute refusal to have any kind of serious talk with the South Vietnamese or to show the least willingness to join us in seeking peace.

~~This, I realize, is a discouraging report but the American -~~

I realize that this report on our efforts on the diplomatic front is discouraging but the American people are entitled to know the truth -- the bad news as well as the good news where the lives of our young men are involved.

Let me now turn, however, to a more encouraging report on ~~and~~ another front.

1. At the time we launched our search for peace ~~through-~~
~~-----negotiation,~~ I recognized that we might not succeed in bringing an end to the war through negotiation.

(1) I, therefore, put into effect another plan to bring peace -- a plan which could bring the war to an end regardless of what happens on the negotiating front. It is in line with a major shift in U. S. foreign policy which I described in my press conference at Guam on July 30.

1. Let me briefly explain what has been described as the Nixon Doctrine. A policy which ~~would~~ not only would help bring the war in Vietnam to an end but which is an essential element of our program to prevent future Vietnams.

(1) We Americans are a do-it-yourself-people --
an impatient people.

1. Instead of teaching someone else to do a
job, we like to do it ourselves.

2. This trait has been carried over into our
foreign policy.

(1) In Korea and again in Vietnam, the
United States furnished most of the
money, most of the arms, and most of ~~them~~
the men to help the people of those countries
freedom
~~to~~ defend their ~~countries~~ against
Communist aggression.

~~(2) Before any American troops were committed~~

~~Before any American troops were~~

(2) Before any American troops were committed to
Vietnam, a leader of another Asian country told-
~~me--gave this advice when I was--~~ expressed this
opinion when I was traveling abroad as a private
citizen.

1. "When you are trying to assist another
nation defend its freedom, U. S. policy
should be to help them fight the war but
not to ~~go~~ fight the war for them."

In Guam, I laid down these three principles as guidelines for American policy not only in Asia -- in the future -- in the future not only in Asia but in other parts of the world.

1. The United States would keep all of our treaty commitments.
2. We would provide a shield if a major nuclear power threatened the freedom of a nation allied with us
3. In cases involving other types of aggression, internal or external, we would furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But that we would look to the nation involved to assume the responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.'

(1) After I announced this policy I found that the leaders of the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea and other nations which might be threatened by Communist aggression welcomed this new direction in American foreign policy.

1. The defense of freedom is everybody's business -- not just America's business.
2. And it is particularly the responsibility of the people whose freedom is threatened.

In the previous Administration we Americanized the war in Vietnam.

1. In this Administration we are Vietnamizing the war.

The policy of the previous Administration not only resulted in our assuming the primary responsibility for fighting the war but even more significant did not adequately stress the goal of ~~strengthening~~ strengthening the South Vietnamese so that they could defend themselves when we ~~xxxxxx~~ left.

The Vietnamization Plan was launched following Secretary Laird's visit to Vietnam in March.

1. Under the plan I ordered a substantial increase in the training and equipment of South Vietnamese forces.
2. ~~As our training~~ - In July, ~~xxx~~ on my visit to Vietnam, I changed General Abram's orders so that they were consistent with the objectives of our new policy.
 - (1) Under the new orders (and here get the one sentence from Kissinger that he will have) (summary of what the change in orders is)
 - (2) Air operations have been reduced by 20%.

We have now begun to see the results of this long overdue change in American policy in Vietnam.

1. After five years of Americans going into Vietnam, we are finally bringing American men home.
 - (1) By December 15, over 60,000 men will have been withdrawn from South Vietnam -- including twenty percent of all of our combat troops.
2. The South Vietnamese have continued to gain in strength.
 - (1) As a result they have been able to take over combat responsibilities from our American forces.
3. In this connection, it is particularly significant to note that for most of last year United States' casualties exceeded those of Saigon forces.
 - (1) This pattern has been reversed so that during the past two months our losses have been cut to less than one-half of those of the South Vietnamese.

Two other significant developments have occurred since this Administration took office in January.

(1) As I have indicated on several occasions, the rate of withdrawal will depend on developments on three fronts:

1. One is the progress which may be made at the Paris talks.

(1) An announcement of a fixed timetable would completely remove any incentive for the enemy to negotiate an agreement.

1. They would simply wait until our forces had withdrawn and then move in.

2. The other two factors on which we will base our withdrawal decisions are the level of enemy activity and the progress of the training program of the South Vietnamese forces.

(1) Progress on both these fronts has been greater than we anticipated when we started the withdrawal program in June.

(2) As a result, our timetable for withdrawal is more optimistic now than when we made our first estimates in June.

(3) This clearly demonstrates why it is not wise to be frozen in on a fixed timetable.

1. We must retain the flexibility to base each withdrawal decision on the situation as it is at that time rather than on estimates that are no longer valid.

Along with this optimistic estimate, I must - in all candor - leave one note of caution.

1. If the level of enemy activity significantly increases we might have to adjust our timetable accordingly. However, I want the record to be completely clear on this one point.

- (1) If United States casualties rise again while we are attempting to scale down the fighting, those casualties will be the result of a conscious decision by the enemy.

1. Hanoi could make no greater mistake than to assume that an increase in violence would be to its own advantage.

We have now begun to see the results of ~~this~~ this long overdue change in American policy in Vietnam.

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Two other significant developments have occurred since this Administration took office in January.

1. Enemy infiltration over the first ten months of this year is two-thirds ~~xx~~ of what it was over the similar period last year.
2. Most significant, and most important United States casualties have declined during the last two months to the lowest point in three years.

Let me turn now to ~~xxx~~ our program for the future.

1. We have a plan which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete withdrawal of U. S. ground combat forces and their replacement by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled time table.

(1) This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness.

1. As South Vietnamese forces become stronger the rate of American withdrawal can become greater.

I have not and do not intend to announce the time table we have agreed upon.

1. There are two obvious reasons for this decision.

As I have ~~said~~ indicated on several occasions,
(1) / The rate of withdrawal will depend on the progress
of the training program of the South Vietnamese
forces, the level of enemy activity, and ~~the~~ progress,
if any, at the negotiating table in Paris.

(2) ~~1~~ An announcement of our ~~time~~ time table would
completely remove any incentive for the enemy
to negotiate an agreement. They would simply
wait until our forces had been withdrawn.

developments
3 v's:
2

There is a slight change on developments on three fronts:

1. One is the progress which may be made at the Paris talks.
 - a. An announcement of a fixed time-table would completely remove any incentive for the enemy to negotiate an agreement.
 - (1) They would simply wait until our forces had withdrawn and then move in.
2. The other two factors on which we will base our withdrawal decisions are the level of enemy activity and the progress of the training program of the South Vietnamese forces.
 - a. Progress on both these fronts has been greater than we anticipated when we started the withdrawal program in June.
 - b. As a result, our time-table for withdrawal is more optimistic now than when we made our first estimates in June.
 - c. This clearly demonstrates why it is not wise to be frozen in on a fixed time-table.
 1. We must ~~xxx~~ retain the flexibility to base each withdrawal decision on the situation as it is at that time rather than

on estimates that are no longer valid.

~~In all candor I must leave one note of caution:-~~

- ~~1. If the level of en-~~

Along with this optimistic estimate I must in all candor leave one note of caution.

1. If the level of enemy activity significantly increases we might have to adjust our time-table accordingly. However, I want the record to be completely clear on this one point.

- (1) If United States casualties rise again while we are attempting to scale down the fighting those casualties will be the result of a conscious decision by the enemy.

- a. Hanoi could make no greater mistake than to assume that an increase in violence would be to its own advantage.

At the time of the bombing halt last November there was some confusion as to whether there was an understanding on the part of the enemy that if we stopped the bombing they would ~~stop~~ stop shelling cities of South Vietnam.

1. I want to be sure there is no misunderstanding on the part of the enemy with regard to our withdrawal program.

- a. ~~We have taken note of the f~~ We have noted the reduced level of infiltration and the reduction of our casualties and are basing our withdrawal decisions partially on those factors. ~~If the~~
-----enemy sh-

If the enemy should take advantage of our withdrawal program and should increase infiltration or escalate attacks to a point that I conclude that our remaining forces are in jeopardy I shall not hesitate to use the means at my disposal more effectively than we have used them in the past to protect the lives of ~~Amerieans~~- the Americans remaining in Vietnam.

1. This is not a threat.
2. This is a statement of policy which as commander in chief of our armed forces I am making in meeting my responsibility for the ~~safety of American fighting~~- protection of American fighting men wherever they may be.

- (1) Hanoi could make no greater mistake than to assume that an increase in ~~xxx~~ violence would be to its own advantage.

I am sure that you can recognize from what I have said that we have only two choices open to us if we want to end the war.

1. I can order an immediate ~~withdrawal~~- or precipitate withdrawal of all Americans from Vietnam without

regard to the effect of that action on South Vietnam and accept defeat for the United States.

2. Wek Or we can persist in our search for a just peace through a negotiated settlement if possible -- or through continued implementation of our plan for Vietnamization if necessary, a plan in which we will withdraw all of our forces from Vietnam as the South Vietnamese become strong enough to defend their own freedom.

I have chosen the second course.

1. It is not the easy way.
2. It is the right way.
3. It is a plan which will end the war and serve the cause of peace, not just in Vietnam but in the Pacific and in the world.

In speaking of the consequences of defeat or humiliation to the United States I mentioned that our allies in the world would lose confidence in America.

1. Far more dangerous, we would lose confidence i in ourselves.
 - (1) The immediate reaction would be a sense of relief as our men came home.

1. But inevitable remorse and divisive
recrimination over ~~xx~~ having suffered
the first defeat in America's history
would scar our spirit as people.

We have faced our crises in our history and have become
stronger by rejecting the easy way out and taking the hard
but right way in meeting our challenges.

1. Our greatness as a nation ~~have~~ has been our
~~capacit~~ capacity to do what had to be done when
we knew our course was right.

The hopes of the world for peace and freedom in the last
third of this century will be determined by what happens
in A^{me}rica and by the decisions that are made by whoever
occupies the office I now hold.

1. As President I hold the responsibility for choosing
the best path to this goal at this time and then
for leading our nation along it.
 - (1) I cannot and shall not abdicate this responsibility.
 - (2) I will lead us toward our common goal for peace
with all the strength and wisdom I can command
in accordance with yours hopes, mindful of
your interests and aided by your prayers.

In asking for your support I do not challenge the right of many of my fellow citizens to disagree with my decision.

1. I realize that this war is the most difficult and controversial in our history and that honest and patriotic men have reached different conclusions as to how the war should be conducted and as to how peace can be achieved.

- (1) In San Francisco a few weeks ago several demonstrators carried placards which read, "Lose in Vietnam, bring the boys home."

1. One of the great strengths of our free society is that any American has the right to reach that conclusion and to advocate that point of view.

- (1) I, however, would be untrue to my oath of office ~~xx~~ if I allowed the policy of this nation to be affected by those who hold that point of view and who to resort to demonstrations in the streets to impose it on the nation.

- (2) As long as I hold this office the policy of this nation will not be made in the streets.

1. It will be made by ~~the elected-~~
~~representatives of the people-~~
~~in the Con -~~
through the orderly process of
democratic decision by your
elected representatives in the
Congress and by the President
in the White House.

- (1) If a vocal minority, however
fervent in its cause prevails
over both reason and the will
of the majority this nation has
no future as a free society.

It is my belief that the great majority of Americans do not
want the United States to lose in Vietnam.

1. They do want to end the war.
2. But they want to end it with a just peace -- just to
us, just to South Vietnam and just to North Vietnam.

I have outlined to you tonight a plan which will bring that kind
of peace.

1. The more support we can have throughout the nation
for that plan and for that kind of peace the sooner the
war will end.

- (1) Because let us understand -- North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States.

Only Americans can do that.

And so tonight to that great silent majority of (my fellow citizens,) my fellow Americans I ask your support.

1. I pledged in my campaign for the presidency to end the war in a way that we could win the peace.
2. I have initiated a plan of action ^{which} ~~that~~ will enable me to keep that pledge.
3. The more support I can have from the American people the sooner that pledge can be redeemed.

d. → Let us be united for peace but let us also be united against defeat.

5. I am confident that we shall meet the challenge which confronts us.

- (1) And those ~~wh~~ who live in peace and freedom in this nation and throughout the world will forever be thankful to us for having had the courage to do so.