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Hanoi on their Proposal for Cease Fires Christmas and Easter

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~~WEDNESDAY A.M., DECEMBER 14, 1966~~

December 13, 1966

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MARKFIELD (D., MONTANA)

PRESS RELEASE

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Since the N.L.F.-Hanoi proposal of two 48-hour cease-fires, at Christmas and at New Year's have been accepted by us, there has been increasing advocacy of a cease-bombing of North Viet Nam to extend at least until Tet, the Vietnamese New Year. Some have even urged that the bombing of the North be discontinued indefinitely.

There is much to be said for these proposals. They express a widespread desire to see an end to this brutal conflict at the earliest possible moment. A more useful approach, however, might be a proposal for a cease-fire and stand-fast throughout Viet Nam, north and south.

The N.L.F. made the initial proposal for the two 48-hour cease-fires. It is perfectly proper for us, now, in counter-proposal, to offer to extend the cease-fire, together with a stand-fast until Tet, which occurs early in February in 1967. The reaction to such a proposal would be most helpful to our understanding of the intentions of Hanoi and the N.L.F. Hopefully, the President's long-standing proposal for unconditional discussion or negotiation, in public or private, might be acted upon during this cessation in the fighting.

Each side has set forth, unilaterally, its own objectives. Not much more can be offered, unilaterally, in the way of preliminaries to negotiations. The need now is for a period of pause in the conflict in order to see if there can be some reconciliation of general positions. The Pope, U Thant, and others have tried to be helpful, as individuals, but without success. The United Nations seems either unable or unwilling to act. It appears to me, therefore, that the initiative has been thrown back to those directly involved. The offer for a Christmas-New Year pause on the part of the N.L.F. is a specific, if fragmentary, initiative. A proposal on our part for a cease-fire and stand-fast, now, is not only proper, it may also be timely. We have nothing to lose. All, hopefully, may have something to gain.

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