12-20-1972

Statement on Renewed Bombing in Vietnam

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I am personally depressed by the speech of Dr. Kissinger on last Saturday which indicated there was very little light, if any, at the end of the so-called tunnel. I am disturbed at the resumption of bombing north of the 20th parallel because, to me, it is an accentuation of the war and a re-broadening of the area of conflict. This is not the road to peace, but rather the road to a continuing impasse with both sides, if not all sides, being stubborn and unwilling for purposes of prestige or power to give the necessary inch.

It is long past the time when we should consider people, not power or prestige, and go back to the October 26 agreement which held out the prospect of a peace this year. The blood bath, which is Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, must be ended and the sooner the better for all concerned.

Anger, stubbornness, prestige will not bring this war to a close; the only possible answer I can see is through negotiations. We have gone too far out on a limb based on Dr. Kissinger's report to the press and the nation on October 26, a report which, I believe, was made in good faith. If "peace is at hand", the sooner we achieve that most necessary objective, the better it will be for us and for all concerned. Would not the signing of the October 26th agreement, tentatively agreed to earlier in October, suffice?
The hopes of the American people have been raised and now they have been shattered. How long will this war last? The bombing and mining will not, in my opinion, bring the war to a close. They will only prolong it. The bombing tactic is eight years old. It has not produced results in the past. It will not lead to a rational peaceful settlement now. It is the "stone-age" strategy being used in a war almost unanimously recognized in this nation as a "mistaken" one. It is a raw-power play with human lives, American and others, and, as such, it is abhorrent.

Furthermore, in this longest war in the history of the United States there is the question of the POWs and the Recoverable Missing in Action. What is happening now will lead to new increases in both categories and a lengthening of the delay before they will be returned to the United States. The date of their return will be determined only by a peace settlement and that is not in sight at the present time.

Dr. Kissinger, on October 26th, indicated, in effect, and quoting from Hanoi's broadcast of that date, that the reunification of Vietnam was acceptable to the United States. He evidently agreed that the United States respects the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Vietnam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva agreements," and that "the reunification of Vietnam shall be carried out step by step through peaceful means." The Geneva Accords called for all-Vietnamese elections—north and south—two years after the Accords went into effect.
Dr. Kissinger further stated in his October 26th press briefing quoting from a paragraph of a draft of a tentative agreement that "the DRV proposed the cessation of the war throughout Vietnam, a cease-fire in South Vietnam and a total withdrawal of U.S. forces," and then it said - still quoting Kissinger - "The two South Vietnamese parties shall settle together the internal matters of South Vietnam within three months after the cease-fire comes into effect." Dr. Kissinger then said "This has been our position since the beginning of these negotiations. It was never accepted four years ago, three years ago, or two months ago. The first time it was accepted was on October 8. As soon as it was accepted we completed within four days a rough draft of an agreement from which we have since been operating..."

One of the reasons advanced for the stepped-up bombing was a supposed North Vietnamese concentration of men and material to enlarge their operations in the south. Perhaps this is true but it goes contrary to press reports in the preceding time period.

These press reports raise serious questions as to the purpose of the renewed bombing. Is it for some urgent interim military purpose until negotiations are resumed? Or is it an attempt— one more of many attempts—to put the pressure on the North Vietnamese, so we can get out of a tragic and mistaken war without the appearance of a mistake? Is it for that, that we are expending additional planes and, far more serious, additional lives, American and Asian? It is long since past time to stop worrying about saving face and concentrate on saving lives and our own sense of decency and humanity.
The Senate I am sure would be more than willing to give of its advice, counsel, and its full support to the President, to achieve, not through attrition but through negotiation, an end to this tragic war. It is the President's for the asking.