

JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE

by

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY AND PRIME MINISTER

HAROLD HOLT

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AMBASSADOR CLARK: Gentlemen it is indeed an honour and pleasure for me to introduce the Vice President of the United States of America, the Honourable Hubert H. Humphrey who has come to Australia on a special mission for President Lyndon Johnson following the historic Honolulu Conference. Prime Minister Holt, of course, needs no introduction.

Gentlemen, the Vice President of the United States.

MR. ROBERT ABERNATHY - N. B. C. -- What is the attitude of Australians towards the war in Vietnam, the conduct of that war and Australian involvement there? Then what are your comments on the demonstrators we have seen today?

MR. HOLT: - Gentlemen, you heard me say at the luncheon that the Australian people and I speak as the Head of this democracy, fully conscious that in a democracy you speak for a majority and I believe in this case an overwhelming majority. The Australian people are firmly behind the administration of the United States in the stand that it has taken in Vietnam. We understand fully the reasons for your presence in Vietnam. And because those reasons were so magnificently stated for us today by the Vice President, because of those reasons we are there with you as we have been over the years in other causes where Australians and Americans have been together in the cause of freedom.

You mentioned the demonstrators here today. Well, they're entitled to demonstrate in the kind of democracy we have. But I think a truer indication of the state of opinion is that in the government parties, and these are men and women responsible to Australian electors and having to carry the responsibility of their judgments and their decisions into their electorates. But there is not one member of the two government parties in both Houses of the Parliament who has not been fully in support of our intervention with you in Vietnam and in support of the American policy there. I believe and subscribe wholeheartedly to the statement that the Vice President has made. I only wish that what he has put so compellingly and movingly and clearly to us today could have reached out to every household in every free country of the world. And I hope that the message that he has given us today will spread throughout not merely the free world but even reach into the darker recesses of the Communist world because there was a great statement coming from a free people directed to freedom-loving people throughout the world. And we are greatly indebted to him for this heartening statement of the American attitude.

ALAN REID - Sydney Sunday Telegraph -- A defence question: Release yesterday in Washington of an Armed Services hearing of January 20 reveals that Secretary McNamara has asked for more troops from Australia. I ask you, Sir, have you discussed this with the Prime Minister? And I ask the Prime Minister what is his reaction to this request.

MR. HUMPHREY: - In response to your question, Sir, I have not made any request to the Government of Australia for additional forces in Vietnam. I read on the press wires the matter from Washington, the release of certain testimony from the Armed Services Committee in Washington. The Government of Australia will do what it feels it can do and we Americans have faith and

confidence in their judgement. I said today in my remarks in the other room that Australia today is a participant in a host of activities in many countries including her commitments to the defence of Malaysia, her foreign aid activities in the Colombo plan countries, her emergency assistance to India, her help in Pakistan, her great contribution - a very generous contribution - to the Asian Development Bank, and her forces now in Vietnam. You would expect, I am sure, that the Government of the United States would encourage every country that it can to make some contribution, and greater contributions in Vietnam. This would be a very natural thing for our government to do. But may I say we are very grateful to have as our partner in Vietnam, amongst other partners, Australia and the New Zealanders and the Koreans and ourselves and other countries that are indeed some 30 of them in activities of a non-combatant nature. We're hopeful that there will be more, particularly in that other sector of the non-combatant services.

MR. HOLT: - Could I supplement that, Mr. Vice President?

You know we are in almost daily, certainly close and continuous discussion and consultations at some level or other with the United States of America. What the Vice President has said about our talks today I confirm completely of course. He has raised no question with us which implies or presents any pressure of any kind to this country. But we are engaged together in Vietnam. We are engaged together in some of these other activities of an economic and social kind to which the Vice President has referred. There need be no mystery about the fact that at a time when American forces have been increased very substantially in a conflict in which we are both involved but along the line in service discussions and in various other ways we've talked together about what one country can do and what another can do, - and what we can do ourselves. It's well known, as the Vice President has just put it to you, that Australia has obligations in a number of directions. We are trying to help against Malaysian confrontation. We are helping to a degree in Vietnam. We are helping in the aid field. We are trying to secure the situation of New Guinea for which we have accepted great responsibilities. And we have here a continent, as I said earlier, the size of the United States. In two states of this continent of ours Mr. Vice President, you could contain the whole of France, Germany, Italy and the British Isles and in one of those States there is less than a million people and in one of the others there is less than 2 million people. And so we have in Australia a great variety of responsibilities to discharge. We are capable of coming to our own judgement. As to what contributions Australia should make, whether it is of a military kind, an economic or social kind, in any particular area or issue and in any part of the world. And I can say with entire sincerity and frankness that at no time has any pressure been put upon this country of an improper or irregular character by the Government of the United States or any representative of it. But we are grown people, we can think and speak in realistic terms about these things. And what a remarkable world it would be if at no point in discussions in either service quarters or administrative or government quarters that the question hadn't been raised as to whether Australia could do a little more here or a little more there. Sir, you have stated the position quite accurately from our point of view and I'm glad to be able to confirm it.

HERSCHEL HURST - Melbourne Sun: -- I'd like to submit a question - a supplementary question to the one asked by Mr. Reid. And that is; what answer, if any, has our government given, or you yourself given to Mr. McNamara's stated request for an increase in troops?

MR. HOLT: - We have been considering for some time now what more could usefully be done in Vietnam. We have had discussions as you know with the Defence Minister of the United Kingdom quite recently, and it was important for us to be clearly aware of British intentions and of forming

some judgement ourselves of the future picture in that particular area of the world and, indeed, of the British contribution in this area of the world, because quite clearly that had a bearing of what Australia can do in one part of South East Asia or another. We've since had the advantage of the talks with the Vice President and our discussions at various levels in the administration and at the service levels. We have come to no conclusion as yet but this matter is actively under consideration. I hope we shall soon be in a position to what extent Australia feels able at this point of time, having regard to our commitments in all these other directions I mentioned, to supplement our present scale of forces in Vietnam.

TOM WICKER - New York Times: -- Mr. Prime Minister, is it possible that some time in the near future you may be able to augment activity in Vietnam on the civilian side? For instance, those similar to the medical teams you have there now, as well as perhaps things like military.

MR. HOLT: - Well, I shall certainly hope that we will be able to play an increasing role in these and other directions. As the Vice President has pointed out to you, Australia has recently made a contribution to the Asian Development Bank quite disproportionate to the size of our population or our resources. There is to be a United States contribution of \$U. S. 200, 000, 000. There is a Japanese contribution of \$U. S. 200, 000, 000 and an Australian commitment of \$A85, 000, 000. There are a variety of directions in which economic and technical assistance is being given by Australia. Not merely in South Vietnam but throughout this whole area. You may have read that only in the last week, or was it earlier this week, we have announced an Australian grant of wheat to a value of \$U. S. 9, 000, 000 to India in order to assist that country. In a variety of ways, we are trying to give effect to the sort of spirit which resulted in Australia pioneering international aid activities in this part of the world through the Colombo Plan. And we have welcomed the imaginative approach, the constructive approach of the President. And we have watched with appreciation the drive being given to this effort by the Vice President. This approach which sees a military victory as being only a part of the purpose which lies ahead for us; and before the military victory has been achieved we would hope to be well on our way with work that can be done in this constructive economic and social improvement through South East Asia. But don't overlook the fact that we are still only a country of something under 12, 000, 000 people inhabiting a vast continent with all the problems that distance and scarcity of population make for us. But you will find us not an unwilling ally - a country which has contributed something under just under half a million casualties in two World Wars when we had less than eight million people in Australia is not a country that is laggardly in its recognition of international responsibility.

MR. HUMPHREY: - I might add to what the Prime Minister said, that in every country that we have visited we have found the heads of government to be enthusiastic and in full support of the Asian Development Bank. I believe with the exception of one country where the resources were entirely too limited - I believe it was Laos. There has been a generous contribution on the part of those countries to the Asian Development Bank which offers, I think, a great hope for economic and social development in the Asian areas.

SAM LIPSKI - The Bulletin: -- Mr. Vice President what are the needs of Vietnam? Would you care to give us your assessment of the kind of time scale that's involved in military activities? By this I mean, how long do you think the present phase of military activities is likely to go on? And are you able to say whether in one year or in two years there is likely to be some major change in the present strategy of the United States - purely in the military field - disregarding for a moment whatever other social or economic activities the United States might undertake.

MR. HUMPHREY: -- Sir, I don't think it is possible, nor would it be even reasonable to try to project what the time scale will be on military activities. I can only say this: that whatever is required and that whatever amount of time is needed that the people and the government of the United States are prepared for that. We realise that this is a difficult assignment but we do see encouraging developments. The forces of the allies, the government of Vietnam, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Korea, those forces are on the offensive. They are winning every engagement in which they are coming in contact with the enemy. The forces of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese are suffering defeats and heavy casualties. I believe that this spells for us the hope of a military success. But I want to make it quite clear that military success alone does not mean the accomplishment of our objectives, because the objectives must be a stable government and a viable economy for Vietnam and that, Sir, to me is the most difficult assignment. Actually I really believe that the military capability for what people call military victory is there, and it can be assured. But the economic and social progress that is required will test us very severely and will take considerable time, energy and resources, but to this we are willing to give ourselves and we find others willing to do the same.

LEN BICKEL - A. B. C. (Australia): -- Following the general tenor of your statement, can you give us any idea of the shape or the pattern or the type of form of government that you would find acceptable both in the United States and to South Vietnam that might ensue following a settlement with the communists? And secondly, what would be the role of the Viet Cong in the long term administration of that government?

MR. HUMPHREY: - Well, Sir, our purpose in Vietnam is to thwart the aggression, to stop the aggression, so that the people of Vietnam can make their own choice as to what kind of a government they want and what their future will mean. I do not think it would be proper for a free nation such as the United States, and I am sure my Australian friends agree, for us to outline the character of government that the people of Vietnam should have. What we are trying to demonstrate by our efforts in Vietnam is the right of free choice and that includes the freedom to establish a government of their own choosing, - the freedom if they wish, to have a united Vietnam - whatever they wish to do. But we are not going to tolerate conditions, if we can prevent it, of having force and aggression design the future of a people or a nation. And your second question, Sir, I forgot, Sir.

MR. BICKLE: -- What would be the role of the Viet Cong in a settlement?

MR. HUMPHREY: - Well, the Viet Cong is not a government and I want to make it quite clear and that in any negotiations that may take place our Government's position has been that North Vietnam, which does mastermind the military operations of the Viet Cong, is the sovereign, - is the regime that is recognised for purposes of negotiations. And whomever they wish to bring with them as friends and associates to the conference table is their business. But the Viet Cong is not a government institution; it is not recognised as a government entity, and it will not be recognised as a government entity.

STUART HARRIS - London Times: -- I am not quite clear who I ought to address the question to, if you forgive me, because I really want to get an answer. The question I would like to ask either of you is this; is whether the American Government has taken the Australian Government fully into its confidence on the contingency planning in Vietnam both of a political and a military character on the basis of the Australian government was not represented in Honolulu, and I would like to feel that from the American point of view that the American has taken the Australian government fully into its confidence on the possibilities and the possible responses by America to those contingencies, and I'd like to feel that the Australian government from

its point of view feels completely happy with the American government, and be quite sure that its commital is certain, provided the contingencies have been foreseen.

MR. HOLT: - Mr. Harris, I don't know that I follow the latter part of the question entirely but I can say this: - that the Australian government believes that the co-operation, the supply of the information and discussion from the United States Government to the Australian Government could not be closer. I don't know of any direction in which we could have closer consultation or discussion than we received at all levels from the United States and those who serve it.

MR. HUMPHREY: - And may I add that the prime purpose of my visit with the Prime Minister and the Ministers of this government is to answer any questions that the Ministers may have and to fill in any or all details relating to the Honolulu conference, and to advise and consult with the members of this government relating to plans and programmes that our government has in mind. We do feel that the continuing consultation is essential and in fact we have discussed today even the improvements and methods of such consultations and discussion.

MAXAMILLIAN WALSH - Australian Financial Review: -- You're a friend of India Sir, and I know Indians enjoy a greater measure of diplomatic contact with Hanoi than does the United States. I was wondering, Sir, whether the Indians were able to indicate to you whether Hanoi's attitude to negotiations is any less intransigent than it has been in the past? Or the other way?

MR. HUMPHREY: - The Indian Government has been very helpful in this matter. The President of India, who is a highly respected statesman, as you know, offered his good offices and the good offices of his government to bring about negotiations and discussions leading towards peace. I'd been assured by representatives of the Indian Government that they would intensify these efforts. I have spoken to the representatives of the Indian Government about the desirability of having the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference reconvene a Geneva Conference. Regrettably the information from Hanoi is not at all encouraging and I think it should be clearly understood that the Indian Government, because of the aggression of China upon its frontiers and borders, is not, does not, have the kind of contacts that it would like to have in Hanoi, and surely not in China; but the Indian Government is being helpful - we are in close contact and consultation with the Indian Government. President Johnson has been in personal consultation by letter and communicating with the Indian Prime Minister. On two occasions I have spent a considerable period of time with the President of India and we have nothing but feeling of gratitude towards that government for what it is attempting to do.

STAN STEPHENS - Adelaide Advertiser: -- Mr. Vice President, is it the intention of President Johnson despite the more than somewhat discouraging signs emerging from Hanoi today to continue his peace efforts?

MR. HUMPHREY: - Yes, Sir. Bi-laterally, through normal diplomatic channels through the United Nations, through the extension of good offices on the part of friendly nations and non-aligned nations, and any at all. And we have been getting, we have had efforts, from sources that are as varied as the Commonwealth Nations, Nasser, the President of the United Arab Republic, the President of India, the 17 non-aligned countries. We will pursue any avenue, any honourable avenue, towards a conference table discussion lending itself towards negotiations and we will continue to do so.

RICHARD CROLL - Channel 7, Sydney: -- Since you have been here to answer questions of the Australian Government on the subject of the Honolulu Conference and since Australia is fighting in Vietnam: -

a two-part question. No. 1 - Do you think in any future conferences Australia should take part? And, do you think that it would be fair to say to make a gesture of increasing its troops in Vietnam that the Americans would welcome it?

MR. HUMPHREY: - I am sure of that, Sir. Let me just say a word to you about the Honolulu Conference to put it in proper perspective. President Johnson had intended to go to Honolulu in October to meet there with our representative General Westmoreland and the head of CINCPAC, Admiral Sharp and other officers of our government, including our Ambassador, Ambassador Lodge. Because of his operation surgery, he could not go. He spoke to me about it then. A little later on in the month of January, I don't think this has been spread on the record particularly; he spoke to me about my possibility of going, and then when it was discovered that Secretary McNamara was meeting with General Westmoreland and since President Johnson had not as yet had a chance to meet with General Westmoreland since he had been assigned in Vietnam, and Ambassador Lodge had not returned to Washington since he had been assigned to Saigon, the President felt this gave him an opportunity on a weekend to go within the jurisdictional limits of the United States, Hawaii being the 50th State, to meet with our officials and at the same time to meet with the government leaders of Vietnam whom he had not met. Our President believes a great deal in personal diplomacy. He likes to know the men that he talks to. As he has indicated in the past, you can get the measure of the man when you have a chance to be with him and talk with him. This was a meeting that had as its purpose the co-ordination of activities between the government of Vietnam and the United States. Every government that's friendly to the United States that is involved in this matter was notified and was informed by letters from the President. I am sure that without indulging - without violating any rule of secrecy - that the Prime Minister the former Prime Minister of Australia, and the present Prime Minister of Australia had been in personal communication with the President of the United States.

RICHARD CROLL: - - That would be an internal matter in the United States.

MR. HUMPHREY: - Yes. I do think, Sir, that the suggestion that you have made, which is one, by the way, which has been discussed by some of us on this journey, is very meritorious. Mainly, that in due time the allies involved in the struggle in Vietnam will want to consult in a much broader framework than the Honolulu Conference.

ALLAN REID - Sydney Sunday Telegraph: - - Have you had any concrete assurance in detail from the present South Vietnamese Government they will produce the social reform that is so obviously necessary for the success for the outcome, of your military effort.

MR. HUMPHREY: - Yes, Sir, indeed we have. Now the assurances have been given by the Chairmen of the Government, the Council of Ken, that is known as National Unity Council - General Chu, and by the Prime Minister - Prime Minister Ky, and his Ministers. Frankly we have been impressed, favourably impressed, by these gentlemen. This is a relatively new government but it has been empowered for better than seven months and has exhibited considerable stability. The Prime Minister, Prime Minister Ky, made a very favourable impression upon the President and indeed upon myself with the sincerity of his purpose in advocating and instituting the necessary economic, political and social reforms. The question of the ability to carry out is one that only time can tell. We are working with them. It is our view that our Australian friends, our New Zealand friends, and the Koreans and others that will be working with us will have to be of help to the Vietnamese government in terms of technicians and specialists to help carry out these reforms. But we have already seen the reforms in action. I have visited, Sir, on the spot, at least two areas in the Saigon district where I witnessed some

of the reforms underway. I believe candour and frankness is the only way to deal with these men. It is an uphill fight. It will be difficult. But these men seem determined to make the effort and Prime Minister Ky told me, he said that had we been at this 12 years ago much of the trouble we have today would not be here and he said, "I am determined to have honesty in my government; I am determined to have a social revolution. I do not intend to let the Viet Cong say that they are the revolutionaries. I am the revolutionary," said Prime Minister Ky to me. He said, "I will carry out these reforms." And I've noticed since we've left that he has acted, and, for example, on the black market a new code new law and an Inspector General to pursue the black market violators, the violators and the black marketeers. The appointment of a new Director of Docks and Harbours - things that were needed - manpower that was needed. The establishment of a training school for the training of cadres - the training of cadre personnel to go into these villages and hamlets. We believe that there is a sincerity of purpose. We also know that there is a limitation of trained manpower, and that's why I said to you earlier that the struggle for the reconstruction of the country which has been literally decimated by the Viet Cong, that that's the long-term battle. Actually I am much more optimistic on the military front. I find that the real challenge ahead is going to be in what we call the programmes of pacification and world construction.

ALAN REID: -- Thank you, Mr. Vice President.
