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SPECIAL REPORT

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TEXT OF AN ADDRESS BY SECRETARY OF STATE WILLIAM P. ROGERS BEFORE THE CORNELL UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEW YORK CITY, SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 1970

No two foreign policy matters are of greater importance today than the search for peace in Southeast Asia and the search for an agreement with the Soviet Union to limit strategic armaments.

In one case the objective is to seek an end to a conventional war and thus provide peace and stability to the Pacific area.

In the other it is to seek an end to an unparalleled, and certainly unconventional, arms contest in which man already has developed the capability to destroy mankind.

In both we hope to achieve the objective by negotiation. However, in neither case can we rely on an assumption that the negotiations will succeed.

Two days ago we began substantive discussions with the Soviet Union in Vienna on the control of strategic nuclear weapons -- commonly referred to as SALT. These could be among the most important international discussions in history. Our security is directly involved. So are the hopes of all peoples for peace and well being. As President Nixon stated on April 16, "The effort to limit strategic armaments remains an integral part of our work for a lasting peace, a peace from which all peoples will benefit."

Security does not necessarily improve through the building of more complex and more destructive weapons. Competition between the United States and the Soviet Union in this field would not add to the basic security of either nation. It would divert resources we both need to use in other fields. It would increase world tensions and fears.

In the last 20 years the United States and the Soviet Union have spent some $600 billion on their strategic forces. If the arms race proceeds unchecked, that amount or more, is likely to be spent in the next 20 years in order to stay even. The United States and the Soviet Union must find a better and more sensible way of staying where we are.

We believe that there is. We believe the way to achieve a stable balance of forces is through a strategic arms limitation agreement.

At the very least, we believe that the risks inherent in continuing the strategic arms race make it mandatory that we negotiate thoughtfully and painstakingly -- with serious purpose.

We hope that such a purpose exists in the Soviet Union. The Helsinki talks encouraged us to believe that the Soviet leaders approach these talks seriously. So far, at Vienna, we have reason to change that assessment.

Last Tuesday in the Soviet Union -- before the talks got started -- Communist Party General Secretary Brezhnev referred to them in a major speech. It is interesting to note his comments and his conclusions.

He referred to the present world situation as one of "better political and ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism." He stated that Communists never approach disarmament from a position of "toothless pacifism." And he averred that the Soviet Union would respond to attempts "by any party whatsoever" to achieve military "superiority" over the Soviet Union by making the required increase in its own military might.

This statement should remind us that discussion plus serious purpose does not equal agreement and that the Soviet Union does not intend to curb its strategic weapons program on the assumption that there will be early agreement.

However, Mr. Brezhnev went on to say other things that were more encouraging. He said: "The Soviet Union would welcome a sensible agreement," that if the United States really wanted a strategic arms limitation treaty, "prospects for the negotiations may be viewed positively." And he concluded: "The Soviet Union, in any case, will do all within its power to see that these talks prove useful."

Let me reply by saying:

First, the United States does not believe the world should be condemned to continuing conflict. We want to end the era of confrontation and enter an era of negotiations with the Soviet Union and other countries, hopefully, to end the bitter political and ideological struggle of which Mr. Brezhnev spoke.

Second, we know, of course, that the Soviet Union has legitimate security interests to protect in these negotiations. President Nixon, repeatedly, has made it clear that we seek an agreement that respects the security interests of both the United States and the USSR. We seek no unilateral advantage.

Third, as in the case of the Soviet Union, the United States has no intention of weakening our relative strategic capabilities while the discussions are taking place, on the assumption that there will be an early success at Vienna. In that spirit we are continuing the construction of our Safeguard Program, and the President has asked for a modest addition this year.

Fourth, this should give rise to no doubt about our intentions. The United States enters the SALT talks seriously, hopefully and with every intention of seeking a reasonable, equitable and verifiable agreement.

Finally, the President has given our delegation a clear statement for purpose and authority to move to a discussion of specific proposals designed to achieve limitation -- and eventual reduction -- of strategic arms. Consequently, the United States stands ready to negotiate, in the most comprehensive manner, looking toward an agreement on all offensive and defensive weapons.

If an agreement could be reached it might hasten the time when the Soviet Union would be able to abandom its present view of the world as a place of "bitter political and ideological struggle" in favor of the appeal in the United Nations Charter which calls for states "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors."

Negotiation is the means through which we seek an arms limitation agreement with the Soviet Union. Negotiation also characterizes the approach of the United States to the problems of Southeast Asia.

President Nixon last year said we were prepared to work for a negotiated solution to end the war in Vietnam. That remains our position. But, because North Vietnam has not been prepared to negotiate, the meetings in Paris have produced no results.

In the last few weeks, tensions have increased as a result of significant developments in Cambodia and Laos threatening their neutrality. The neutrality of each country has been recognized and supported by international agreements, previously negotiated at Geneva in 1954 and 1962. The neutrality of each is being threatened by North Vietnam, in direct violation of its solemn pledge as a signatory. On February 14, North Vietnamese Communist Party Chief Le Duan said that it was the policy of his government to "strengthen lasting friendship between our country and the Kingdom of Cambodia, and build good neighborly relations with the Kingdom of Laos on the basis of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity."

With that statement as a backdrop, what are the facts?

In Laos over 65,000 regular North Vietnamese troops have invaded and now occupy large portions of Laotian territory. About 40,000 are in the southern part of the country, along the Ho Chi Minh trail. More than 25,000 North Vietnamese troops are in northern Laos. On February 12, this force launched the current offensive which has led to the increased anxieties. Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma has strongly objected and condemned this invasion of his country by the North Vietnamese -- to no avail.

It should be noted that the United States has no ground combat forces in Laos, and we have no plans to introduce any. But we have extended -- and will continue to extend -- military assistance to the Laotian Government in order to help it maintain its neutrality.

The termination of the war against Laos should be by a political decision. Fourteen nations have treaty responsibilities, as signatories to the 1962 Geneva Accords, to help maintain Laotian neutrality. We believe all should fulfill their obligations to help end the aggression in Laos by North Vietnam in clear violation of the accords.

The United States has consistently supported the Laotian Government in its efforts to bring about consultations under the 1962 Geneva Accords. On February 28, Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma of Laos wrote to the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, the foreign ministers of the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, urging them to call upon all the signatories to join in consultations as required by the accords to find means to secure their observance. He has also appealed to Laotian Communists -- an appeal we support -- to negotiate with him to find a solution for their internal problems.

On March 6, President Nixon wrote the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom urging consultations among the signatories. Prime Minister Wilson concurred. But Premier Kosygin's reply was negative. On March 21, the President again wrote, asking the Soviet Government to exercise its responsibility. To date there has been no reply.

On April 7, the President took a very unusual initiative by writing separate letters to all other signatories to the accords, urging their cooperation in consultations with the Laotian Government and with each other to ensure observance of the accords. We are now awaiting the results of that appeal.

As anxiety mounted following North Vietnam's February offensive in Laos, public interest shifted to Cambodia, when Prince Sihanouk was displaced. This event served to focus world attention on the illegal North Vietnamese occupation of parts of Cambodia and a growing Cambodian resentment of that occupation.

In Cambodia, as in Laos, North Vietnam has long been occupying territory in direct violation of its repeated promises to respect the country's neutrality. There are today some tens of thousands of North Vietnamese troops in Cambodia. In Cambodia, as in Laos, Hanoi is using armed forces against a state where it has no legitimate rights and against a people with whom it has no ethnic affinity.

The cumulative effect of years of these violations has, for some time, caused the Cambodian Government to express increasing concern. Since 1968 Sihanouk had been protesting the violations. In April 1969 he revealed publicly that he had been unable to visit an area in northeastern Cambodia because of the presence of North Vietnamese troops. Sihanouk sought international support for efforts to get the North Vietnamese armed forces to withdraw. At the time of his downfall, he was on a trip to Moscow and Peking for this purpose.

The rise of Cambodian hostility over the North Vietnamese presence came rapidly and dramatically. Most governments, including ours, were surprised at the ouster of Prince Sihanouk by the Cambodian Parliament. This was an internal Cambodian development, motivated partially by resentment to the presence of North Vietnamese troops in Cambodia.

The new Prime Minister -- Lon Nol -- promptly called for North Vietnamese military withdrawal and instituted measures to strengthen the Cambodian armed forces. At the same time he emphasized that the new Cambodian Government remained committed to a policy of neutrality, and did not seek alliance with the West.

A year ago, before we reestablished diplomatic relations with Cambodia with a small mission of Americans, we affirmed publicly our recognition and respect for the "sovereignty, independence, neutrality, and territorial integrity" of Cambodia within its present frontiers. The policy we expressed toward Cambodia then remains our policy toward Cambodia now.

Cambodia has wisely sought to negotiate a solution directly with the invaders. We hope that North Vietnam and the Viet Cong will respond, so that further resort to force in Cambodia can be averted in favor of a peaceful settlement acceptable to all sides. We respect recent Cambodian proposals to seek diplomatic measures of protection through United Nations action and through a return of the International Control Commission established by the 1954 Geneva Accords.

Having said these things I should point out that we recognize that the problems of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam are interrelated. We welcome initiatives by countries in or outside the area which might lead to progress toward restoration of peace in Southeast Asia. France, Indonesia, and New Zealand have all made suggestions which we are discussing with them and which may be helpful.

Some proposals suggest that possibly the Geneva Conference machinery should be reconvened to consider all of Indochina. In fact, Ambassador Malik of the Soviet Union to the United Nations made a specific reference to this possibility on Thursday. President Nixon has made it clear that he was interested in exploring any suggestion that holds out any reasonable prospect for peace. We would, of course, like to know more about what motivated his remarks and how deliberate they were. Consequently, I have instructed Ambassador Yost to seek whatever clarification and explanation the Soviet Union is prepared to offer.

But wholly apart from consideration of a new Geneva Conference, the nations which signed the Geneva Accords assumed responsibilities. The violations of those accords by North Vietnam in Laos and Cambodia are explicit, uncontested, open, and without any shred of international sanction. Is it not time for nations which are signatories to international agreements actively to support them? Should not the international community itself more actively look for ways to shoulder its responsibilities?

The sharply increased fighting in Laos and the possibility of overt warfare in Cambodia have understandably caused concern among Americans. They ask if the war in Southeast Asia is widening rather than diminishing. They wonder if this means that the period of American involvement will be lengthened, rather than reduced.

The objective of the Nixon Administration is to avoid both these results.

It is true, of course, that we cannot be indifferent to the military pressures by North Vietnam on the independence and neutrality of Laos and Cambodia. They affect the safety of our own forces in South Vietnam and the prospects for peace there. They also affect the future stability of Southeast Asia. We continue to believe that an ultimate settlement to the Vietnam war must take Laos and Cambodia into account.

However, we are determined not to reverse the long-term direction of our policy toward fostering more self-reliance among Asian states.

In time this troubled region may cease to be the tinder box of the Far East Political settlements at some point in time may replace military pressures. We may see in Southeast Asia, as we may now be seeing in Vienna, the beginnings of an era of negotiation. That is our hope and that is what the Nixon Doctrine seeks to accomplish.

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