



U.S. Halts Bombing Of North Viet-Nam

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On October 31, 1968, President Johnson addressed the Nation from the White House to announce the cessation of all air, naval, and artillery bombardment of North Viet-Nam as of 8 a.m., November 1, Washington time. This pamphlet is the text of his address on that occasion.

Good evening, my fellow Americans: I speak to you this evening about very important developments in our search for peace in Viet-Nam.

We have been engaged in discussions with the North Vietnamese in Paris since last May. The discussions began after I announced on the evening of March 31st in a television speech to the Nation that the United States, in an effort to get talks started on a settlement of the Viet-Nam war, had stopped the bombing of North Viet-Nam in the area where 90 percent of the people live.

When our representatives, Ambassador Harriman and Ambassador Vance, were sent to Paris, they were instructed to insist throughout the discussions that the legitimate elected government of South Viet-Nam must take its place in any serious negotiations affecting the future of South Viet-Nam.

Therefore, our Ambassadors Harriman and Vance made it abundantly clear to the representatives of North Viet-Nam in the beginning that, as I had indicated on the evening of March 31st, we would stop the bombing of North Vietnamese territory entirely when

that would lead to prompt and productive talks, meaning by that, talks in which the Government of Viet-Nam was free to participate.

Our Ambassadors also stressed that we could not stop the bombing so long as by doing so we would endanger the lives and the safety of our troops.

For a good many weeks, there was no movement in the talks at all. The talks appeared to really be deadlocked. Then, a few weeks ago, they entered a new and a very much more hopeful phase.

As we moved ahead, I conducted a series of very intensive discussions with our allies and with the senior military and diplomatic officers of the United States Government on the prospects for peace. The President also briefed our congressional leaders and all of the presidential candidates.

Last Sunday evening, and throughout Monday, we began to get confirmation of the essential understanding that we had been seeking with the North Vietnamese on the critical issues between us for some time. I spent most of all day Tuesday reviewing every single detail of this matter with our field commander, General Abrams, whom I had ordered home and who arrived here at the White House at 2:30 in the morning and went into immediate conference with the President and the appropriate members of his Cabinet. We received General Abrams' judgment and we heard his recommendations at some length.

CESSATION OF BOMBARDMENT

Now, as a result of all of these developments, I have now ordered that all air, naval, and artillery bombardment of North Viet-Nam cease as of 8 a.m., Washington time, Friday morning [November 1].

I have reached this decision on the basis of the developments in the Paris talks, and I have reached it in the belief that this action can lead to progress toward a peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese war.

I have already informed the three presidential candidates, as well as the congressional leaders of both the Republican and the Democratic Parties of the reasons that the Government has made this decision.

This decision very closely conforms to the statements that I have made in the past concerning a bombing cessation.

It was on August 19th that the President said: "This administration does not intend to move further until it has good reason to believe that the other side intends seriously"—seriously—"to join us in deescalating the war and moving seriously toward peace."

Then again on September 10th, I said: "... the bombing will not stop until we are confident that it will not lead to an increase in American casualties."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, all military men, have assured me—and General Abrams very firmly asserted to me on Tuesday in that early 2:30 a.m. meeting—

that in their military judgment this action should be taken now and this action would not result in any increase in American casualties.

A regular session of the Paris talks is going to take place next Wednesday, November 6th, at which the representatives of the Government of South Viet-Nam are free to participate. We are informed by the representatives of the Hanoi Government that the representatives of the National Liberation Front will also be present. I emphasize that their attendance in no way involves recognition of the National Liberation Front in any form. Yet it conforms to the statements that we have made many times over the years that the NLF would have no difficulty making its views known.

PRODUCTIVE TALKS CAN BEGIN

What we now expect—what we have a right to expect—are prompt, productive, serious, and intensive negotiations in an atmosphere that is conducive to progress.

We have reached the stage where productive talks can begin. We have made clear to the other side that such talks cannot continue if they take military advantage of them. We cannot have productive talks in an atmosphere where the cities are being shelled and where the demilitarized zone is being abused.

I think I should caution you, my fellow Americans, that arrangements of this kind are never foolproof. For that matter, even formal treaties are never foolproof, as we have learned from our experience.

But in the light of the progress that has been made in recent weeks, and after carefully considering and weighing the unanimous military and diplomatic advice and judgment rendered to the Commander in Chief, I have finally decided to take this step now and to really determine the good faith of those who have assured us that progress will result when bombing ceases and to try to ascertain if an early peace is possible. The overriding consideration that governs us at this hour is the chance and the opportunity that we might have to save human lives, save human lives on both sides of the conflict. Therefore, I have concluded that we should see if they are acting in good faith.

We could be misled—and we are prepared for such a contingency. We pray God it does not occur.

But it should be clear to all of us that the new phase of negotiations which opens on November 6th does not—repeat, does not—mean that a stable peace has yet come to Southeast Asia. There may well be very hard fighting ahead. Certainly, there is going to be some very hard negotiating, because many difficult and critically important issues are still facing these negotiators. But I hope and I believe that with good