

Paraphrased by AP

Viet-Nam Summary
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There is an impression very generally held about the country that the situation in South Viet-Nam is so confused that the average citizen can hardly be expected to understand the rights and wrongs of it. This short article undertakes to demonstrate the contrary in minimum words--that in spite of their seeming complexity, the issues in the United States involvement in South Viet-Nam are simple, clear and readily explained.

We are involved in South Viet-Nam today because the independence of that country is being threatened by the subversive aggression conducted by the Communist leadership in North Viet-Nam. Since 1954, that leadership has had the purpose of imposing Communist domination upon the South Vietnamese people against the will of the vast majority.

Our purpose, as expressed by President Johnson, is simple and direct: "Our objective is the independence of South Viet-Nam and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves--only that the people of South Viet-Nam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way."

In danger of being overwhelmed, the South Vietnamese people through their government have repeatedly requested the aid of the United States and we have repeatedly responded affirmatively to these requests. We have done so for three valid reasons. The first is our traditional attitude in opposition to aggression and colonization, whether imperialist or communist, and our historic support of the right of self-determination for all nations. Beyond this motivation, we have a second reason in the fact that the United States is formally committed to assisting South Viet-Nam under the terms of the SEATO Treaty passed by the Senate in February 1955 by a vote of 82-1. Finally, we have felt ourselves obliged to assist South Viet-Nam out of

consideration of the worldwide consequences to ourselves and to the Free World of a Communist success in South Viet-Nam. Thus, our principles, our pledged word and our self-interest all have impelled us to take the course of action which we are following.

Actuated by these motives, we have undertaken to cause Hanoi to cease the aggression which it is conducting against South Viet-Nam and thus to allow a restoration of peace and stability in South Viet-Nam and Southeast Asia. To bring the Communist leaders to this change of behavior, it has been essential to increase our combat effectiveness in the ground fighting in South Viet-Nam against the Viet Cong guerrillas and the infiltrated units of the North Vietnamese Army. We are achieving this increase by developing to a maximum the strength of the Armed Forces and police of South Viet-Nam and by adding thereto progressive increments of United States ground troops. To reduce the flow of reinforcements and men and equipment coming from North Viet-Nam to support the guerrilla war, we are using our air power and that of the South Vietnamese against military targets north of the 17th parallel. While these military actions have been taking place, we have been doing everything possible to improve the stability and effectiveness of the government in Saigon and in the provinces and to defend the economy of the country against the growing threat of inflation. Finally, while all these activities go on, we are continuously engaged in a search for a peaceful solution through honorable negotiation. In combination, these activities--military, political, economic and diplomatic--are designed to convince the leaders in Hanoi that their aggression can not succeed and that it is in their own interest to change their ways.

Our success in pursuing these lines of action has been uneven. On the military front, thanks to the growing effectiveness of our United States ground and air forces, we have seized the initiative and are imposing very heavy casualties on the Viet Cong guerrillas and on the infiltrated regular army units of North Viet-Nam. The general military situation is quite favorable although the enemy continues to bring in reinforcements.

In March and April, we passed through a period of renewed political turbulence marked by the anti-government activities of an opposition group in the Hue-Danang area, composed of the Tri Quang clique of the Buddhists, the supporters of General Thi (whose relief from command of the I Corps triggered the demonstrations) and the traditional dissidents in Hue-Danang who regularly oppose any government in Saigon. These anti-government activities have ended in an apparent compromise, based on the holding of general elections for a constitutional convention in the next few months. The forecast is for continuing political activity and unrest during the summer and fall as South Viet-Nam in the midst of war strives to lay the foundations of constitutional government.

On the economic front, the evidence of inflation is increasing but the situation is receiving intensive treatment from the responsible Vietnamese and United States economists, recently assisted by representatives of the International Monetary Fund.

On the diplomatic front, there is still no indication from the Communist side of a serious desire to open peace negotiations. Actually, it is premature to expect negotiations until the Communist leaders have a compelling incentive to seek a prompt, peaceful settlement. Until they are convinced of the necessity for peace, there is the risk of a repetition

of the prolonged, fruitless wrangling at Panmunjom, which lasted two years before we got a Korean armistice. That experience reminds us that the initiation of negotiations with the Communists does not necessarily mean that peace is just around the corner.

In the meantime, no one has suggested a better strategy than the one described above if we are to retain our basic objective of an independent South Viet-Nam, free from attack. All other alternatives which have been suggested have serious objections. A deliberate pull-out on the part of the United States is unthinkable and fortunately receives little support even from the sharpest critics of our present policy. A holding strategy has been proposed, under the terms of which our forces would give up the offensive and pass to the static defense of certain fortified bases or enclaves. Such deliberate passivity on our part would surrender large blocs of the civilian population to Viet Cong domination, would destroy the morale of the government and people of South Viet-Nam and would forego any hope of final success. It would take the pressure off the Hanoi leaders and would remove any incentive for them to come to a conference table in a mood to negotiate a just settlement. The American troops themselves would not accept for long such an inglorious posture; neither would our people who sooner or later would say as some voices sometimes do even now: "Let's end it or get out." In the inability to end it, a sit-out would soon result in a pull-out.

The third alternative which has been suggested is the all-out use of our military strength--perhaps giving Hanoi and Peking an ultimatum to lay off South Viet-Nam, followed by unlimited air attacks if they do not comply. This course runs a maximum risk of major war with Red China and furthermore destroys prematurely the government in Hanoi whose collaboration may be useful in the ultimate restoration of peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

The fourth alternative is to try to turn over the Viet-Nam problem to the United Nations. Unfortunately, the United Nations does not want this problem, and could not cope with it if it were accepted. Finally, Hanoi and Peking will have absolutely nothing to do with the United Nations and will accept no participation by that body in any settlement.

We know of no other alternatives than those discussed above. Hence, we are left with the present course of action. In continuing to pursue it, we can and must do better on all fronts, military, political, economic and diplomatic--persevering with patience and determination. We are engaged in a test of our national character. If we fail this test, we will soon face harder ones with greatly diminished chances of success and at greatly increased costs. Thus, we need to unite in President Johnson's pledge: "We will not grow tired. We will not be defeated. We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement."