Background For Commanders

Secretary of State Reaffirms Basic U.S. Policy on Vietnam

Appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Feb. 18, Secretary of State Dean Rusk reaffirmed the following 14-point statement of U.S. policy on Vietnam:

1. The Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 are an adequate basis for peace in Southeast Asia;
2. We would welcome a conference in Southeast Asia or on any part thereof;
3. We would welcome "negotiations without preconditions" as the 17 nations put it;
4. We would welcome unconditional discussions as President Johnson put it;
5. A cessation of hostilities could be the first order of business at a conference or could be the subject of preliminary discussions;
6. Hanoi's four points could be discussed along with other points which others might wish to propose;
7. We want no U.S. bases in Southeast Asia;
8. We do not desire to retain U.S. troops in South Vietnam after peace is assured;
9. We support free elections in South Vietnam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice;
10. The question of reunification of Vietnam should be determined by the Vietnamese through their own free decision;
11. The countries of Southeast Asia can be non-aligned or neutral if that be their option;
12. We would much prefer to use our resources for the economic reconstruction of Southeast Asia than in war. If there is peace, North Vietnam could participate in a regional effort to which we would be prepared to contribute at least $1 billion;
13. The President has said, "The Viet Cong would not have difficulty being represented and having their views represented if for a moment Hanoi decided she wanted to cease aggression. I don't think that would be an insurmountable problem."
14. We have said publicly and privately that we could stop the bombing of North Vietnam as a step toward peace although there has not been the slightest hint or suggestion from the other side as to what they would do if the bombing stopped.

Secretary Rusk concluded with the following:...

...the Hanoi regime is demanding the following preconditions to which the United States must agree before the Communists will even condescend to negotiate:

First, that the South Vietnamese government be overthrown;
Second, that the Liberation Front, the creature and agent of Hanoi, be accepted as the sole bargaining representative for the South Vietnamese people;
Third, that South Vietnam be put under the control of a coalition government formed by the Communists and from which the South Vietnamese government would be excluded.

May I conclude, therefore, Mr. Chairman, with certain simple points which are at the heart of the problem and at the heart of United States policy in South Vietnam.

• The elementary fact is that there is an aggression in the form of an armed attack by North Vietnam against South Vietnam.
• The United States has commitments to assist South Vietnam to repel this aggression.
• Our commitments to South Vietnam were not taken in isolation but are a part of a systematic effort in the postwar period to assure a stable peace.
• The issue in Southeast Asia becomes worldwide because we must make clear that the United States keeps its word wherever it is pledged.
• No nation is more interested in peace in Southeast Asia or elsewhere than is the United States. If the armed attack against South Vietnam is brought to an end, peace can come very quickly. Every channel or forum for contact, discussion or negotiation will remain active in order that no possibility for peace will be overlooked.