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THE VICE PRESIDENT, RICHARD NIXON, GEORGE WALLACE and P  
October 31, 1968 -- 6:05 p. m.

JONES: Mr. Vice President?

HUMPHREY: Yes?

JONES: If you'll talk up -- Can you hear me all right?

HUMPHREY: I hear you well.

JONES: Mr. Nixon?

NIXON: Yup.

JONES: And Governor Wallace?

WALLACE: Yes, sir. I'm here.

JONES: All right. Hold one for the President.

P: Hello?

HUMPHREY: Mr. President?

NIXON: Yes. Hello?

P: Hubert? Are you and Dick and George on?

HUMPHREY: Yes, Mr. President.

NIXON: Yes.

WALLACE: Yes.

HUMPHREY: We're all on.

P: Do you hear me all right?

H+N+W: Yes, Sir.

P: I have with me Secretary Rusk and Clifford and General  
Wheeler and Mr. Helms of the CIA, and Mr. Rostow. I'm

reading from -- I want to read a brief background to you from my conference call to you of October 16, so you can get a predicate to what I'm about to say.

I said then, this is in absolute confidence, because any statement or any speeches or any comment at this time referring to substance of this conversation will be injurious. I don't think there's any question about that and I know you would not want that to happen.

First: Our position -- the Government's position today -- is exactly what it was the last time all three of you were briefed. That position mainly is this: We're anxious to stop the bombing and would be willing to stop the bombing IF they -- Hanoi -- would sit down with us, with the Government of South Vietnam present and have productive discussions. We have told them that we did not think that we could have productive discussion if, while we were talking, they were shelling the cities, or if they were abusing the DMZ. That was on October 16th, when I talked to you.

The next sentence said, "From time to time they

have nibbled back and forth at these various items. Each time they do, there is a flurry of excitement and so on, and so forth.

Since that time, they have sent their man back to Hanoi; we have continued to have our regular weekly meetings and other meetings; we have been in touch with a good many Governments in the world -- from Eastern Europe to India to the Soviet Union -- all these people working every hour to try to (a) get them to accept the Government of South Vietnam that they're all puppets and that they'd never sit down in a room with, and (b) trying to inform them that we would be glad to stop the bombing, but that the bombing could not continue stopped it they (a) shelled the cities; or (b) if they abused the DMZ.

On Sunday night, I was informed by Paris that there were very good indications that they would let the Government of Vietnam come and be present at the Conferences, and that they fully understood what would happen if we stop the bombing and they shell the cities, or abuse the DMZ.

When I got back to Washington from New York, I went back to the Soviet Union and pointed out that I did not want to deceive anybody and didn't want them to be deceived, didn't want to stop the bombing and have to start it again; but I wanted to make it abundantly clear that if they would let the Government of Vietnam come to the meetings and if they thoroughly understood what would happen, then I wanted to seriously consider this matter. But I had doubts -- repeat "doubts" -- that the North Vietnamese would stop shelling the cities or would stop abusing the DMZ. The Soviet Union came back to me on Tuesday or Wednesday, and said that my doubts were not justified.

Ambassador Harriman came back to me and said, "We have repeated to you at least 12 times -- we've repeated to North Vietnam at least 12 times -- in 12 meetings, and some meetings we repeated it several times -- that we could not have a productive discussion in an atmosphere of shelling the cities or abusing the DMZ; therefore, you may be sure we understand it.

While this was going on, we'd gone out and talked to all of our allied countries, and at that time they all tentatively agreed that this was a wise move.

Now, since that time with our campaign on, we have had some minor problems develop. First, there have been some speeches that we ought to withdraw troops, or that we'd stop the bombing without any -- obtaining anything in return, or some of our folks are -- even including some of the old China lobbyists, they are going around and implying to some of the Embassies and some of the others that they might get a better deal out of somebody that was not involved in this.

Now that's made it difficult and it's held up things a little bit and I know that none of you candidates are aware of it or responsible for it, because I'm looking in my transcript here, when we talked before, and I asked for your comments. The Vice President said he had no comment, but thanks very much; Vice President Nixon said, "Well, as you know, this is consistent with what my position has been all along and I made it very

clear: I'll make no statements that will undercut the negotiations so we'll just stay right on that, and hope that this thing works out", and then Mr. Wallace said, "Yes, sir. Mr. President, that's been my position all along, too, the position you stated, and I agree with you that we shouldn't play any politics in this matter, so it might foul up the negotiations."

Now, I concluded last March that I couldn't as a candidate stop this war. And I concluded that I ought to stop it the first day I can. I'm going to try to stop it as soon as I can. Therefore, I am planning to issue an order -- I'm meeting with the Security Council tonight --- I'm planning to issue an order that will stop the bombing; that will set a date for a meeting where the Government of Vietnam will appear; and I'm making it very clear to the intermediaries -- I can't do it in public because they'll say it's a condition and reciprocal and we'll never get an agreement -- and you must not make that statement either, but I think you ought to know it. And we're going to have to wait for 24-48-72 hours to

see what happens at the DMZ and see what happens at the cities, and we may have to start the bombing just as fast as we stopped it. But I have considered this matter day and night since March 31st, at least, and last week I decided before I make this decision I wanted to get every member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff over here and I did. And I went over this matter with them and General McConnell, the Air Force Chief, said, "Mr. President, I recommend that you go ahead and do this." General Chapman of the Marines said, "I think, Mr. President, that you should go ahead with this."

General Palmer, who is acting for General Westmoreland that day, but who has been his deputy in Vietnam and just returned, and who handled the Dominican Republic for us, said, "Considering everything that has been brought up, I would go along with making this proposition."

Senator Russell said, "It's worth a try."

General Abrams then was called in -- he rode all night and he got here at 2:30 and he stayed with us til -- he left about 4:00<sup>the day before</sup> yesterday -- he said he couldn't do much



bombing in North Vietnam anyway, in the next few days; that he could take that power and use it to good advantage in both Laos and South Vietnam; that he thought if we could get the Government of Vietnam at the table that it was advisable; and he thought in the light of what had happened in the last two-three months in the troops that they had moved, that such action would not in any way increase the casualties of the American or allied troops, and therefore, he would strongly recommend this move.

Ambassador Bunker took the same position.

Secretary Rusk, Secretary Clifford, General Wheeler, all the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Ambassador, the Commanding General, General Andy Goodpasture his deputy, took the same position.

Now, I'm meeting with the Security Council and am going to review it with them. We've gone out to our allies -- I don't know just -- they approved it several days ago. But in the light of these overtures that have been surreptitiously made -- the gossip that's gone on by some of the lobbys, and the campaigners -- I don't know just what will come out of that situation. We're in touch with it.

We're on top of it. We're watching it. But we think that this is what we ought to do. Now, I would hope, and I'm going to say so in my statement tonight -- that this would not be to anyone's advantage, except to the countries, to peace and to the men in Vietnam.

First of all, the conference won't be held until after the Election. Probably, we would hope, the sixth or seventh of November, or sometime in that period. We would hope that the Government of Vietnam would have time to get their men there and of course, the other governments have got to get the NLF there. I would hope that all of you could say -- like you said here the other day -- that you felt that you didn't want to do anything to undercut the negotiations; that you recommended peace at the earliest possible date; this is not peace, this is not a settlement; this is just one step that indicates that if they do not shell the cities, and if they do not abuse the DMZ -- both of those would be great military advantages for us at a time when we're giving up bombing that we can't do for the next 90 days anyway, on account of the weather. In North Vietnam. We can use that very

effectively in other places. I told General Abrams to return; to give them all he's got in South Vietnam and Laos; but be prepared for this order. The order will not go into effect for several hours after it's issued. It's got to go all over the Pacific, put out some 12 hours. I would think that when I get through with the Security Council sometime this evening from 8:00 on, I'll make a statement to the public. I have confidence enough in y'all that I've called you even before I've called my own legislative leaders. I've told you every bit of the information I have. Every diplomatic and military adviser I have recommends this course.

I would not want it on my conscience that I had left the Presidential arena and refused to run to try to get peace -- and then when they agreed, that I -- the thing that I insisted on most, bringing the GVN into the table, that I said, "No, I've got to put it off because I'm concerned with an Election." I'm not concerned with an election. Y'all are concerned with an election. I don't think this concerns an election. I think all of you want the same thing. So I thought if

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I laid it on the line that way, and presented it to you, you would at least have a complete, full understanding of all the facts. I'll be glad to give you any of the written recommendations; all the files are open to you; be glad to show you what happened; nobody will know whether it'll be a success or not until we really get into these discussions and these talks with the GVN present. If they shell the cities or if they abuse the DMZ, General Abrams already has his orders, and he is directed to respond immediately without even coming to Washington.

So it could be on-again, off-again planning. But all of my people from General Abrams to Goodpasture to all the Joint Chiefs of Staff -- I even went down and got General Monmyer who had been in charge of all our Air Force there for several years and who had just been brought in from Thailand to Langley Field, and had him in alone, and I didn't tell him what anybody else recommended. And he not only recommended, but he urged it.

I hope that y'all can give us the support because I think there's nothing more important to your Country than to have an undivided group here at this time, and let

one man speak with a single voice to the communist world and to the rest of the world.

Over and out. And I'd be glad to have your comments.

NIXON: Could I ask one question, Mr. President? This is Dick Nixon. The -- With regard to the talks, if --

P: A little louder, Dick.

NIXON: With regard to the talks, if they begin, and as I know, you've made it clear that they may not -- but you think they may: Does that mean at that point we will not be stopping activities in the South, except for -- What you're stopping is simply the bombing?

P: Dick, the talks will be held. We have a firm agreement that the North Vietnamese will bring the NLF in and the South Vietnamese will be permitted to attend. We will stop the bombing only in the North where -- in the confidence of the family, the American family -- we practically have stopped it already, anyway. We will take that same bombing that's taking place in the North today and apply it in Laos and in South Vietnam, where we need it much more than we do in the North. In other words,

I'm running a transportation company and I run between Atlanta and New York, but the bridge is out between now and Spring between here and New York, so I'm going to put all my trucks going to Atlanta.

NIXON: Right. In other words, you will continue after the talks begin, you will -- that doesn't mean that we will discontinue our activities and let them have the advantage that they had in Korea; for example, anything like that.

P: Not at all. We will discontinue our activities of bombing the North ...

NIXON: That's all ---

P: --Unless they shell our cities or unless they abuse the DMZ. Both of those are valuable to us.

NIXON: Right.

P: But we will take the same airplanes that are bombing the North when they can get through with that weather, and apply all of that military activity to South Vietnam in the hope that we can wind things up there.

NIXON: I've got it.

P: We don't want to brag about that publicly --

NIXON: No-no-no. I understand that. Just want to--

P: You see; when we stopped bombing Hanoi and Haiphong, we took in every plane that was going up there and we started putting it in the Central Panhandle. Now the weather is bad in the Panhandle. So we are pulling them out of there, but we are getting -- we hope -- three concessions for it: One they agreed to -- that the Government can come to the conference table-- these puppets that they said they would never sit down with.

Second, we told them that if they shelled the cities or abused the DMZ, we would be back bombing tomorrow morning.

NIXON: But you are not going to state that publicly?

P: No. We can't state that publicly because they will consider it "ultimatum" or "threat" or "reciprocity" or "condition".

NIXON: The only thing you are going to state publicly is that the other people will be allowed to come to the conference.

P: You are right. And after November Fifth, I will sit down and I will do it before that, if you have time -- with any of the three of you and go into this thing in

detail. Now, my position is this: I can't wait. I have got every adviser, military-civilian-CIA-Ambassadors Bunker, Goodpaster, Abrams, -- everyone of them recommend this course. So, I am going to recommend it to the Nation. I am going to issue the order. I would just hope you all would do likewise.

NIXON: Okay. Thank you.

HUMPHREY: Thank you.

WALLACE: Mr. President, I just pray that everything you do works out fine and I am praying for you.

P: Well, I need it. Any other comments.

NIXON: We'll back you up. Thank you, Mr. President.

HUMPHYRE: We'll back you up, Mr. President.

WALLACE: We'll back you Mr. President.

P: Thank you very much.

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