

My Fellow Citizens:

I have asked to speak to you this evening to inform you of important developments in the search for peace in Vietnam.

As you know, we have been engaged in discussions with North Vietnamese representatives in Paris since last April. The discussions began shortly after I announced that the United States -- in an effort to get talks started on a settlement of the war -- had stopped the bombing of North Vietnam in the area where 90% of its people live.

Our representatives in Paris -- Ambassador Harriman and Ambassador Vance -- have insisted throughout these discussions that the legitimate Government of South Vietnam must take its place in any serious negotiations affecting the future of their country.

They made it clear to the representatives of North Vietnam that we would stop the bombing of North Vietnamese territory entirely, when that would lead to prompt and productive talks

-- talks in which the Government of South Vietnam participated.

They also stressed that we could not stop the bombing so long as doing so would jeopardize the safety of our troops, and those of our allies. This required that the de-militarized zone between North and South Vietnam be respected.

For months, there was no movement in the talks. They were deadlocked.

Then, about six weeks ago, they entered a new and critical phase.

As an agreement began to take shape, I conducted a series of intensive discussions with our allies, and with the senior military and diplomatic officers of our own government, on the prospects for peace.

Last weekend the essential understanding we had been seeking with the North Vietnamese on the critical issues between us was reached.

And today -- jointly with President Thieu of the Republic of Vietnam -- I have ordered that all air, naval, and artillery bombardment of North Vietnam cease as of \_\_\_\_\_, Washington time.

President Thieu and I have reached this decision on the basis of developments in the Paris talks,

-- and in the belief that this action can lead to progress toward a peaceful settlement of the war.

I have already informed the three Presidential candidates, and the Congressional leaders of both Parties, of these developments.

The decision I am announcing today is entirely consistent with statements I have made in the past on a bombing cessation.

On August 19th I said:

"This Administration does not intend to move further until it has good reason to believe that the other side intends seriously to join us in de-escalating the war and moving seriously toward peace."

On September 10th I said that

"the bombing will not stop until we are confident that it will not lead to an increase in American casualties."

The decision is also fully and unanimously supported by the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and our senior officials in South Vietnam, Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams.

President Thieu, who has been thoroughly and consistently informed of all developments at the conference table, joins in the decision. The governments of other nations fighting with us in Vietnam -- the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Thailand -- also concur.

A session of the Paris talks will be convened this \_\_\_\_\_, November \_\_\_\_, at which representatives of the Government of South Vietnam will be present. We are informed by the representatives of the Hanoi government that representatives of the National Liberation Front will also be present. Their participation in no way involves recognition. Yet it conforms to our consistent position that their views could be heard in the course of making peace in Vietnam.

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

We have reached the stage where productive talks may begin. We have made clear to the other side that such talks cannot continue if they take advantage of them to violate the de-militarized zone, -- or to launch new attacks against the urban centers of South Vietnam.

I must caution you, my fellow citizens, that understandings of this kind are never fool-proof. Even formal treaties are not fool-proof.

But in the light of the progress made in recent weeks, and considering the unanimous military and diplomatic advice rendered me, I have decided that we should take this step now -- to see if an early peace is possible. The over-riding consideration that governs us at this hour is the chance to save human lives -- the lives of men on both sides of the conflict. That chance -- that hope -- we cannot forego.

We could be misled -- and we are prepared for that contingency. We pray God it does not occur.

It should be clear to all of us that the new phase of negotiations which will open on November 2 does not mean that a stable peace has come to Southeast Asia. There may well be hard fighting ahead. Certainly there will be hard negotiating. Many difficult and critically important issues face the negotiators:

-- There must be a speedy withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam -- and our implementation, under verified conditions, of the commitment we made at Manila in 1966.

-- A way must be found to bring those who are now fighting with the Viet Cong into the peaceful life of South Vietnam -- on the principles of national reconciliation, and participation in political activities by all who agree to renounce force and abide by the Constitution of South Vietnam.

-- Peace must come to Laos as well as to Vietnam. The foreign forces now in Laos must be withdrawn.

-- There must be -- in short -- a settlement that is compatible with the principles of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962, under conditions which -- this time -- guarantee that those agreements will be effectively monitored.

As you can see, hard problems lie ahead. With good will, they can be solved. We know that negotiations can move swiftly when the common intent of the negotiators is peace.

The world should know that the American people still remember the protracted Korean negotiations of 1951 to 1953 -- and that they do not intend to accept deliberate delay and procrastination.

How has it come about that now -- on October 29th -- we have stopped the bombardment of North Vietnam?

I can tell you that I would have given all I possess if conditions had permitted me to stop it many months ago; -- if there had been sufficient movement in the Paris talks to enable me to say, "Now it can be stopped. "

But I did not control the timing of events during the past few months. The decisions of men in Hanoi -- which very likely reflected conditions in South Vietnam and throughout the world -- determined when and whether it would be possible for us to stop the bombing altogether.

We could not retract our insistence on the participation of the Government of South Vietnam in the substantive talks. For though we have been allied with South Vietnam in this struggle for many years, we have never assumed or demanded the role of determining the future of their country. The very principle for which we are engaged there -- the principle of self-determination -- requires that the South Vietnamese speak for themselves at the Paris talks.

It was made just as clear to North Vietnam that a total bombing halt must not risk the lives of our men and those of our allies.

Until now, there was no understanding on these points. The events of which I spoke last March, when I said

"Whether a complete bombing halt becomes possible in the future will be determined by events . . . "

-- had not occurred.

Now they have. And though I cannot tell you precisely why, I do know that a series of other hopeful events has occurred this year in South Vietnam and elsewhere:

-- the steady strengthening of the constitutional government in South Vietnam;

-- the expansion of South Vietnam's armed forces, to the point where a million men are now under arms;

-- the superb performance of our own men, under the great leadership of General Westmoreland and General Abrams;

-- and the influence of some of North Vietnam's allies and ours.

Perhaps some, or all of these factors played a part in bringing about progress in the talks. And when at last progress came, I believe that my responsibilities to the brave men who bear the burden of battle there -- and my duty to seek an honorable settlement of the war -- required me to recognize it and act upon it at once.

So have I done.

There have been many long days of waiting for this agreement -- days that began in hope, only to end in frustration.

Constancy to our national purpose -- which is to seek the basis for a durable peace in Southeast Asia -- sustained me in those hours when it seemed there would be no progress in the talks.

Now that progress has come, I know that your prayers are joined with mine -- and with those of all humanity -- that the action I announce tonight will be a major step toward a firm and honorable peace in Southeast Asia.

What is required of us in these new circumstances is exactly that steady perseverance that has brought us to this hopeful prospect:

-- a perseverance here at home to match that of our men in Vietnam.

So in the days ahead, I ask you not only for your prayers -- but for your persevering support of those who search for peace.

Thank you, and good evening.