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Prepared Text of President Johnson's Speech at Omaha

OMAHA, June 30—Following is the prepared text of President Johnson's speech in Omaha today.

Ladies and gentlemen:

I have come to Omaha today because I want to speak to you about the most important business of our time — the business of peace.

Two years ago this week—speaking also in the Midwest—I said that the peace we seek "is a world where no nation fears another, or no nation can force another to follow its command. It is a world where differences are solved without destruction, and common effort is directed at common problems."

This is still true today, and I am convinced that after decades of war and threats of war, peace is more within our reach than at any time in this century.

I believe this because we have made up our mind to deal with the two most common threats to the peace of the world. We are determined to match our resolution with action.

What are these threats?

First is the desire of most people to find a better way of life.

Second is the design of some people to force their way of life on others. We must help to fulfill the one and frustrate the other. For if we ignore these threats—or if we attempt to meet them only by the rhetoric of visionary intentions instead of the good works of determination—I am certain that tyranny, not peace, will be our fate.

I—Food Production

Peace will always be insecure in a world where men do not work together to help others fulfill their fair desires. If the strong and the wealthy turn from the needs of the weak and the poor, frustration will be followed by war. No peace and no power is strong enough to stand for long against the restless discontent of millions who are without hope.

For what is peace if it is only hunger?

We stand today in Omaha, therefore, at the end of a very important lifeline. At the other end, 8000 miles away, is India, a nation of half a billion people.

The wheat here this morning is part of their shield against the catastrophe of drought and famine.

This single load of grain will provide the margin of life for 2500 Indian families through the end of the year. But it is only a tiny fraction of our response to India's need. Since Jan. 1, 5 million tons of American wheat have been shipped to that country—more than 2½ times the annual wheat production of the State of Nebraska.

And this is only about half the grain and other nations are providing India each year to help her overcome her worst drought in her history.

Hopefully, it will be enough. The spring rains in India were normal.

The first days of the summer monsoon are promising. Next year's crop may approach the record levels reached in 1965.

By her own efforts, and with our help and the help of others, India appears to be surviving the drought.

But our job is not over.

Here today, in the center of the greatest food-producing area on the globe, we must face a sobering fact: Just of the world's population is losing the battle to feed itself.

In recent years, in the less developed countries of the world:

• Per capita food production has actually declined.

• Growth in farm production has not kept pace with the rate of population growth.

• Crop yields have lagged far behind those achieved on similar land in more advanced countries.

If present trends continue, we can now see the point at which even our most productive resources—including

the millions of acres in reserve—will not be sufficient to meet the need.

We cannot permit that point to be reached. We must act, and we must act now.

In my Food for Freedom message I asked the Congress for the authority and the funds to help these nations improve and enlarge their own capacity for production.

The farmers of these hungry lands must learn and apply new techniques. They must learn the proper use of fertilizer and water. Their governments must do more to help — by changing policies which retard efficient agriculture.

But we can and will help. We will provide food on special credit terms to those countries willing to increase their own production. We will lend our technical knowledge and our practical experience to those who need it most and who prove they are willing to help themselves. And we will support programs of capital investment in water development, farm machinery, pesticides, seed research and fertilizer.

We have already increased wheat acreage allotments by 15 per cent for 1967 and for many food abroad. And we are ready to go further if necessary.

These are only beginnings. We must work for a global effort. For the food problem is not the special province of any single nation. Hunger knows no ideology, no single race or nationality.

We recognize contributions of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in contributing food to India. We welcome the support of all nations willing and able to help. In this kind of cooperation are the seeds of unity against the common enemies of mankind.

So long for the day when we and others—whatever their political creed—will turn our joint resources to the battle against poverty and ignorance and disease.

Peace lies in that direction.

II—North Vietnamese Threat

That day is not yet here because some men still insist on trying to force their way of life on other people.

That is the reason that peace I want to discuss today.

That is the threat we are meeting in South Vietnam.

The conflict there is important for many reasons. Let me mention three.

First, we believe the rights of other people are just as important as our own and we are obligated to help those whose rights are threatened by others.

Democratic nations can escape a sense of decency and respect for others no more easily than individuals can. If one man in Omaha unlawfully forces another to do what he commands, something in your rebels against the injustice. You know it is wrong. And unless human concern has disappeared from your values, you also know it is necessary to help that man defend himself.

The same principle is true for nations which live by respect for the rights of others. If one government uses force to violate another people's rights, we cannot ignore the injustice, the threat to our own rights, and the danger to world peace.

That is what is happening in Vietnam. The North Vietnamese are trying to deny the people of South Vietnam the right to build their own nation—the right to choose their own system of government—the right to live and work in peace. South Vietnam has asked us for help. Only if we have abandoned our respect for the rights of other people can we turn from their plea.

Second, South Vietnam is important to the security of the rest of Asia.

A few years ago the nations of free Asia lay under the shadow of Communist China. They faced a common threat, but not in unity. They were still caught up in old disputes and dangerous confrontations. And they were thus ripe for aggression.

Now the picture is changing.



Associated Press

"WE SHALL PERSIST"—The President shakes hands with a small boy in a large helmet prior to making a speech in a brief stop at Omaha.

Shielded by the courage of the South Vietnamese, the peoples of free Asia are driving toward economic and social development in a new spirit of regional cooperation. They are convinced that the Vietnamese people and their allies will stand firm against aggression.

As the Prime Minister of Singapore recently stated—our fighting in Vietnam is buying time for a new and vital Asia to emerge and grow stronger. If South Vietnam were to collapse under Communist pressure from the north, progress in the rest of Asia would be greatly damaged.

Third, what happens in South Vietnam will determine whether ambitious and aggressive nations can use guerrilla warfare to take over their weaker neighbors.

I do not know of a single more important reason for our presence in South Vietnam than this. I want to discuss it at some length.

III—Different Kind of War

We are fighting in South Vietnam a different kind of war than we have known in the past.

Sixteen years ago this month, North Korea attacked South Korea. By armed invasion across a national border, a Communist country attempted to overrun its neighbor.

We recognized this kind of aggression immediately. And we acted. North Korean aggression failed because President Truman and the American people—and the forces of the United Nations—had the courage to help South Koreans protect their homes and their country.

Today, South Korea is still free—and thousands of its young men are again fighting side by side with the Americans to defend another small country from being swallowed up by a more powerful Communist neighbor.

Today in South Vietnam we are witness to another kind of armed aggression.

It is a war waged by men who believe that subversion and guerrilla warfare,

transported across international boundaries, can achieve what conventional armies could not.

They believe that a modern scientific and industrial nation such as ours is helpless to defend a smaller and weaker country against "imported terror."

And that is what it is. The Communist guerrillas—the Vietcong—chase their targets carefully. They aim at the heart of a struggling nation by murdering the school teachers, the agricultural extension workers and the health workers.

When the Vietnamese government begins a malaria control program, the Communists set out to kill malaria sprayers.

A new province chief, who is giving leadership to his people, is hunted down and killed. The farmer who hides from the Vietcong is killed. So is the farmer's family. In 1965, the Communists killed or kidnaped 12,000 South Vietnamese civilians—the equivalent of the entire population of Columbus, Nebraska, or Alliance County, or one out of every 25 citizens in Omaha.

If, by such methods, the agents of one nation can seize and hold power where turbulent change is occurring in another nation, our hope for peace and order in the last third of this century will suffer a crushing blow. This is why the problem of guerrilla warfare—the problem of Vietnam—is a critical threat to peace in the world.

Let there be no doubt about it. Those who say this is merely a Vietnamese civil war are wrong. The warfare in South Vietnam was started by the invasion of North Vietnam in 1959.

It is financed and supported by an increasing flow of men and arms from North into the South.

It is directed and led by a skilled, loyal staff in North Vietnam, supported by only a small minority population in the South.

Military tactics are different. The objective is the same as it was in the past—the objective is to conquer a nation by force of arms.

There is nothing we want in Communist China or from Communist China. We have made it clear by every

North Vietnamese decided to step up the conflict in hopes of an early victory.

They recruited and drafted more young men from the Communist-occupied areas in the South.

They slipped across the borders of South Vietnam more than three divisions of the North Vietnamese regular army. Today there are more than three North Vietnamese divisions in South Vietnam.

They built all-weather roads to replace the jungle trails from the North. They began sending in troops by trucks rather than on foot.

They shifted over to heavy weapons, using imported ammunition, much of it coming from Communist China.

What is the sending of men and arms across international boundaries if it is not aggression?

What is the direction of a guerrilla war from outside a sovereign nation if it is not aggression?

So long as that support enables the Communist to prove the subversion and insurgency succeed—and that we have not yet found the ways to help a new nation defend against them—they will go on.

Our purpose is to convince North Vietnam that this kind of aggression is too costly and cannot succeed.

We know from prisoners, defectors and captured documents that the Hanoi government thought conquest was in its grasp.

But free men have rallied to prevent this conquest from succeeding. In the past 15 months, our actions, and those of our fighting allies—Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines—and the determination and courage of the South Vietnamese—have begun to turn the tide.

The casualties of the Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces are three times larger than those of the South Vietnamese and their allies.

Battle after battle is being won by the South Vietnamese and the troops of General Westmoreland.

The attacks on military targets in North Vietnam have imposed—and will continue to impose—a growing burden and a high price on those who wage war against the freedom of others.

In the South, the Vietnamese are determined that their own economic development, social reform and political progress cannot wait until the war ends. They are now preparing to elect a Constitutional Assembly in September as they move toward constitutional government.

For the past two months the political struggles in South Vietnam have been dramatized in our newspapers and on our television screens.

All during this time, Vietnamese citizens representing every important group in the society have been meeting in orderly assembly. They have formulated rules for the election. The rules have been accepted, with only minor modifications, by the government in Saigon.

In the provinces and villages, the Vietnamese have gone on building schools for their children, improving health facilities and agricultural methods, and taking their first steps in land reform.

We can take heart from all of this. We are moving ahead on the military, political and economic fronts. We are backing the Vietnamese not only in their determination to save their country but in their determination to build a modern society in which the government will be of their government, reflecting the will of its citizens.

IV—Objective Is Peace

Our objective in Vietnam is not war. It is peace.

There is nothing we want in North Vietnam or from North Vietnam.

There is nothing we want in Communist China or from Communist China. We have made it clear by every

means at our disposal that we wish the killing to stop.

We have made it clear that we wish negotiations to begin on the basis of international agreements made in 1954 and in 1962.

For 37 days we halted bombing in the North in the hope that the government in Hanoi would signal its willingness to talk instead of wage war. No signal came.

In many more ways than I can now tell you, we have explored and we are exploring avenues to peace with North Vietnam.

No one can tell you how much effort it will take. No one can tell you how much sacrifice it will take. No one can tell you how costly it will be.

But I can and do here and now tell you this: this aggression will not succeed.

The people of South Vietnam will be given the chance to work out their own destiny, in their own way, and not at the point of a bayonet.

All of us can understand fully those who say they are troubled, those who wish the war would end and our troops would come home.

There is no human being in the world who wishes these things more than your President.

But you must have no doubt today about the American soldiers and Marines who are fighting in wet jungles and hot rice paddies, the sailors who are searching the shores and patrolling the seas, and the pilots who are facing the missiles and anti-aircraft guns in carrying out their missions by air.

They will not fail us.

The real question now is: Will we fail them? Our staying power is what counts in the long and dangerous months ahead.

The Communists expect us to lose heart.

They intend to wear us down. They believe a political disagreements in Washington and confusion and doubt in the United States will hand them victory in South Vietnam—and then in Asia.

They are wrong.

We will not let our differences deter us from success. We will not permit the confusing sweep of Vietnamese politics, or the shadowy nature of guerrilla warfare, to paralyze our will to go on.

For there can be only one decision in Vietnam.

We will see this through. We shall persist.

We shall succeed.

We will not permit 14 million innocent men, women and children to fall victims to a savage aggression.

There are many nations, large and small, whose security depends on the reliability of our word and our power.

The word of the United States must remain a trust men can live by and live with and depend upon.

V—Dedication to Commitment

Some day we will all work as friends and brothers—to grow more food, to build more schools, to heal the sick, to care for the old, to encourage the young.

But history is not made by nameless forces. It is made by men and women, by their governments and their nations.

This Nation—working with others—must demonstrate in Vietnam that our commitment to freedom and peace is not a fragile thing. It can—and it will—sustain a major test.

With your support—with your faith—we shall fulfill this Nation's duty.