

Vietnam ✓

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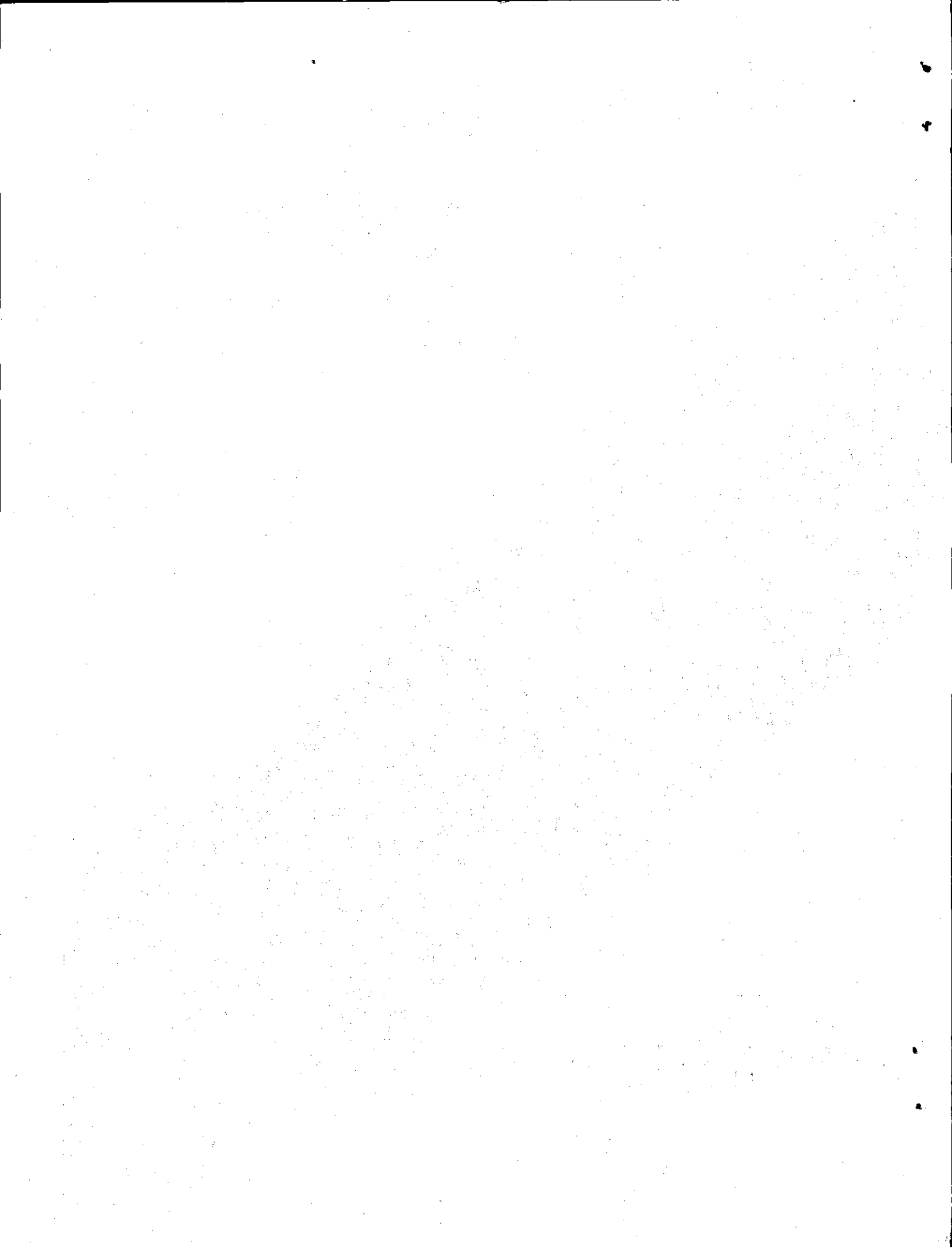
CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENTS RELATING
TO VIETNAM: DECEMBER 1970 . 1971.

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February 1, 1971



CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO VIETNAM

DECEMBER 1970

Summary

The issue of the bombing halt "understanding" was raised in President Nixon's news conference on December 10. President Nixon said that President Johnson, Secretary of Defense Clifford and Ambassador Vance had stated there was an understanding on the flight of reconnaissance planes over North Vietnam. He added that reconnaissance flights would continue and said that he would order the bombing of missile sites in the event that American planes were fired on. He said that there was another understanding relating to Vietnamization, and that if the North Vietnamese threatened American forces or increased the level of fighting in South Vietnam, "then I will order the bombing of military sites in North Vietnam."

The following day, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the "understanding" also included the expectation that the other side would begin serious negotiations. Laird's statement was criticized by Senator J. W. Fulbright as a "reversal of policy." Former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford also said that President Nixon's statement marked a "complete departure from any understanding" that had existed during the previous administration.

On December 15, Secretary of Defense Laird said that there had been "no basic change of policy," and he read a section of an earlier statement by Clifford that if there were not "good faith" negotiations, a decision to resume the bombing "could be made." Secretary of State Rogers on December 23 said that Laird's statements reflected President Nixon's feeling that he was "responsible to protect American lives" and that the United States would "maintain our options" during the Vietnamization process. He said that American intentions to protect Vietnamization had not been part of the original understanding, but that President Nixon had made them clear on many subsequent occasions. Rogers said that in a statement Secretary Laird made regarding "good faith" in the Paris negotiations, he was evoking a "former Defense official" (Clifford). But Secretary Rogers added that "that's not the premise on which we are operating."

Early in the month it was reported that guerrilla expert Sir Robert Thompson had given the President a pessimistic report concerning the situation in Vietnam, but Thompson later denied the report, saying that he was in fact optimistic about the situation. The pacification chief for the Mekong Delta, John Paul Vann, also was optimistic in a mid-month interview, stating that he expected no populated hamlets in the Delta to be under Vietcong control after March 1971.

The picture in Cambodia appeared less optimistic, however, as the enemy appeared to make gains in the ground fighting. Rationing of gasoline began in Phnom Penh, which had earlier been cut off from the oil refinery at Kompong Som. The South Vietnamese army continued to aid the Cambodian forces, however. Senator J. W. Fulbright released a report by two Foreign Relations Committee staffers which concluded that Cambodia would likely have been overrun by Communist forces were it not for U.S. and South Vietnamese assistance, and that continued survival would require a substantial program of U.S. military and economic assistance.

As 1970 ended, both sides agreed that there had been no progress in the Paris peace talks. The original United States-North Vietnam talks had begun in Paris in May 1968; in January 1969 South Vietnam and the NLF began participating in the expanded talks. American delegate David Bruce raised the prisoner of war issue at every meeting during December; on December 1, he held a press conference in which he criticized the other side for its use of the Paris forum for propaganda purposes and for its "inhumane" attitude toward the prisoner of war issue.

The United Nations also expressed its concern for prisoners of war in a resolution passed by the General Assembly on December 9. Various proposals were made during the month for prisoner exchange. On December 22, the North Vietnamese delegation in Paris gave two Senate aides a list of 339 prisoners, which it said was complete, but the move was criticized by both Secretary Rogers and Secretary Laird. On December 25, Michael

Maclear, a Canadian newsman, interviewed two American prisoners who said that they were being well treated and were allowed to receive mail. A Pentagon official said that the interview took place at "a showplace camp." North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong also said in an interview that the prisoners' treatment was "humane," but American officials continued to call for inspection of the POW camps.

At the end of the month, Congress passed five major pieces of legislation dealing with Southeast Asia. The Supplemental Foreign Aid Authorization bill, passed on December 22, contained \$255 million in aid for Cambodia and \$65 million for Vietnam. It also contained language similar to the Cooper-Church Amendment to the military sales act, which prohibited the introduction of U.S. combat troops or advisers into Cambodia. The Supplemental Appropriations bill, passed on December 28, contained the full amounts for military and economic aid for Cambodia (\$155 million), but reduced the allocation for restoration of funds from other accounts from \$100 million to \$75 million. The Appropriations bill also reduced the amount for South Vietnam to \$50 million.

The Defense Appropriation bill passed both Houses on December 29. The bill contained a prohibition against the introduction of American ground troops into Laos or Thailand. It also prohibited the use of American funds for help by other "free world forces" to Cambodia or Laos, except when necessary to insure the safe withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam or to secure the release of American prisoners of war.

On December 31, both the Foreign Military Sales bill and the Foreign Assistance Appropriations bill - which contained the appropriation for the sales bill - were cleared for the White House. The Foreign Military Sales bill contained a measure repealing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution; the Cooper-Church amendment was dropped from the final version of the bill. The Foreign Assistance Appropriations bill contained a provision of \$200 million for foreign military credit sales, along with a provision that the funds could not be spent until formally authorized. Administration officials said they were satisfied with the five bills as passed.

1970

December 1: The Social Committee of the United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution calling for humane treatment of all prisoners of war and inspection of POW camps. The resolution was sponsored by the United States and eleven other countries. The resolution was opposed by the Soviet Union and other Communist nations. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Charles Yost said that the passage of the resolution indicated that "treatment of prisoners weighs on the conscience of the world."

The resolution was passed in the General Assembly on December 9.

December 1: In a news conference at the U.S. Embassy in Paris, David Bruce, the chief American delegate to the Paris peace talks, accused North Vietnam of displaying a "shameful attitude" toward American prisoners of war. He called the Communists' refusal to discuss the prisoner issue prior to American withdrawal "a crude and unacceptable attempt at blackmail," and said, "We intend to get those prisoners out by one means or another."

Ambassador Bruce criticized the other side's refusal to negotiate at the peace table, saying that the talks were "a propaganda field day" for the Communists.

December 1: The American Embassy in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, was hit by a bomb blast, which did severe damage but caused no injuries. It was the first terrorist attack on an official building in Phnom Penh since the war began.

December 1: U.S. intelligence reported the existence of a new Chinese-supplied guerrilla base in eastern Thailand near the Laotian border. Officials believed that the new base indicated that increased insurgency in Thailand was likely.

December 3: The New York Times stated that in a report to President Nixon submitted October 13, Sir Robert Thompson had indicated that United States efforts had failed to destroy the Vietcong infrastructure in South Vietnam. Thompson, the British expert on guerrilla war who has been serving as an adviser to the President, said that despite some success in pacification, there had been in general a failure in intelligence efforts, and that as long as the Vietcong political apparatus remained intact, other aspects of pacification would not solve the basic political problem. (Thompson on December 14 said he had in the October meeting reassured President Nixon on Vietnam.)

- December 3: At the Paris peace talks, Ambassador Bruce proposed that prisoner of war facilities in North and South Vietnam be opened to inspection by an impartial international organization. The North Vietnamese delegate responded that the prisoner issue could only be settled by the United States' agreeing to leave Vietnam by June 30, 1971. The Communists called Ambassador Bruce's proposal "a perfidious maneuver."
- December 5: Twenty-seven Americans were killed in battle action in South Vietnam for the week ending December 5, and 195 were wounded. Three hundred South Vietnamese soldiers were killed and 937 were wounded. Enemy losses were put at 1,425. U.S. troop strength stood at 349,700 as of December 3.
- December 5: An editorial in the North Vietnamese newspaper Quan Doi Nhan Dan said that Secretary Laird's warning against firing on American reconnaissance planes was "a pretext permitting the United States to attack the North at any time." The paper said that North Vietnam was determined to "continue to shoot down American reconnaissance planes, set up anti-aircraft installations anywhere, and mass troops in any sector."
- December 5: Senator Edward M. Kennedy released a General Accounting Office report which was critical of refugee programs in South Vietnam. The report maintained that reports that the number of refugees had declined were "misleading" because of inaccurate reporting and Saigon's "reluctance to report new refugees." It also criticized Saigon's classification of refugees as self-supporting "when many of them still cannot earn a living." The report said that in addition to the 268,000 officially-counted refugees, there were 572,000 widows, orphans, and disabled persons "in need of assistance." The report was critical of relocation programs.
- The report also estimated that there had been more than a million civilian casualties in South Vietnam since 1965, including at least 300,000 dead.
- December 7: Responding to a suggestion by Senator Henry Jackson that the Christmas cease-fire in Vietnam be extended through Tet, a State Department spokesman said, "We are considering extending the Christmas standdown, but for anything like this to have meaning, it would have to be strictly observed by both sides." He observed that there was no reason to believe that the North Vietnamese and Vietcong would accept the proposal. Senator Jackson had suggested that the United States announce that it would not fire unless fired upon, using the six-week period between Christmas and Tet for intensive negotiations.

- December 7: In a phone call to Senator Jackson, Secretary of State William Rogers said that the idea was under consideration. (cont.) A similar proposal was also made by a group known as the National Committee for a Political Settlement, chaired by Clark Kerr.
- December 8: Secretaries Rogers and Laird testified before a subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee in support of the Administration's supplemental foreign aid request. Secretary Rogers said that the aid for Cambodia contained in the bill was the first installment of a continuing military and economic aid program for that country, but he said "the idea that this is a repetition of Vietnam is fallacious." Secretary Laird said that it would be necessary to have a military aid mission in Cambodia "which we hope to hold to a minimum."
- December 8: South Vietnam's Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky arrived in Saigon following a 17-day visit to the United States. He said that President Nixon and Secretary of State Rogers had assured him that the upcoming Vietnamese presidential elections "would be purely a matter for the South Vietnamese people." He said, "I have no political aspirations. I am a soldier."
- December 8: Violent anti-American demonstrations broke out in Quinhon, South Vietnam, in reaction to the accidental shooting of a Vietnamese boy by an American soldier. Some Americans and students were injured in the rioting, and an American jeep was burned. The rioting was described as one of the worst disturbances in Quinhon since 1966.
- United States officials said that the boy was shot accidentally by a warning shot fired as some other youths were attempting to steal goods from an American truck. The Vietnamese crowd demanded that the American soldier who fired the shot be turned over to Vietnamese authorities for trial, but U.S. officials said that he would be held by the United States pending an investigation.
- December 9: Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird presented medals to the 96 members of the commando team who participated in the raid on Son Tay prison in North Vietnam.
- December 10: In a news conference, President Nixon explained the American policy on bombing North Vietnam. He affirmed that there had been an understanding concerning the right of American reconnaissance planes to fly over North Vietnam, saying, "I must insist that there be continued reconnaissance...because, as we are withdrawing our forces...I have to see whether or not there's any chance of a strike against those forces that remain. And we have to watch for the build-up."

December 10: (cont.) "If our planes are fired upon, I will not only order that they return the fire, but I will order that the missile site be destroyed and that the military complex around that site which supports it also be destroyed by bombing. That is my understanding."

He said that there was another understanding, related to the need to protect forces remaining after U.S. withdrawals. He said that if "the North Vietnamese by their infiltration threaten our remaining forces -- if they thereby develop a capacity and proceed possibly to use that capacity to increase the level of fighting in South Vietnam -- then I will order the bombing of military sites in North Vietnam, the passes that lead from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, the military complexes and the military supply lines." The President later said that the United States continued to hope for progress in negotiations, despite the other side's failure to accept any American offers. He said that the United States would not make an extended unilateral cease-fire "because that would be very dangerous for our forces."

Concerning Cambodia, he replied, "None, whatever," when asked if there were any circumstances in which American ground troops would be used in Cambodia. However, he stressed that his proposed aid program for Cambodia would be "probably the best investment in foreign assistance that the United States has made in my political lifetime...the dollars we send to Cambodia save American lives and enable us to bring Americans home..."

December 10: At the Paris peace talks, the United States proposed an immediate exchange of prisoners of war with North Vietnam and the Vietcong. The North Vietnamese said that they would be willing to negotiate a cease-fire in Vietnam "immediately after" a deadline is announced on American withdrawal. In a New Year's message broadcast January 3, the Vietcong said that they would agree to a cease-fire if the United States "declares it will withdraw all its troops and the troops of other foreign countries" from South Vietnam. The United States said that the proposal was simply another way of demanding a unilateral American withdrawal.

December 11: In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird said that the "understanding" concerning the halt in American bombing of North Vietnam included American expectations that the other side would "sit down for serious negotiations in Paris." He said that if North Vietnam insisted that there had been no "understanding," if the understanding was to be "thrown out," then the bombing of the North would eventually follow."

Committee Chairman Fulbright said that through retaliatory bombings, the POW raid and military aid to Cambodia, the Administration had effected "a reversal of policy" and "a resumption of the warfare conducted by the previous Administration."

Secretary Laird said that the understanding called for the other side to respect the Demilitarized Zone and cease shelling population centers of South Vietnam. The Secretary said that the Son Tay mission had a "50-50 chance of returning prisoners of war" and said that "all intelligence agencies" had been consulted before the mission.

December 11: Former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford said in a television interview that President Nixon, in his news conference, "enunciated...a complete departure from any understanding" that had existed between the United States and North Vietnam. Clifford said that the President's statement marked "a distressing change." He said, "If there is any one lesson that I've learned, it is that the application of military force will not bring peace in Vietnam. That's why I think this policy could turn out to have tragic results."

December 11: A State Department spokesman said that North Vietnam had responded to Swedish inquiries concerning 203 American men missing in North Vietnam. Of the 203, 25 were listed as being held prisoner, increasing the total presumed captured to 403. Four of the men were reported to be dead, and the remainder were listed as never having been captured.

December 11: The Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh began the rationing of gas due to enemy occupation of stretches of the road leading to the oil refinery at the port of Kompong Som. The gasoline rationing was said to have marked another success in the presumed Communist intention of isolating the capital.

- December 12: Twenty-nine Americans were killed in battle in Vietnam for the week ending December 12, with 32 dying from non-battle causes. The wounded totalled 377. South Vietnamese forces lost 290 killed and 754 wounded. Communist deaths were estimated at 1,351 for the same period. U.S. troop strength stood at 343,700 as of December 10.
- December 12: President Nixon's press conference warning to Hanoi concerning retaliatory bombing attacks was criticized in the North Vietnamese press as "the height of cynicism and insolence." It was denied that any understanding concerning reconnaissance flights existed, and the President's description of an understanding was said to be "sheer invention."
- December 13: The U.S. Command in Saigon said that a B-57 carrying secret equipment was shot down over the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. No other information was given, except that about 20 B-57's had begun flying combat missions over Laos on October 1. The downed plane was said to have exploded, and the crew was rescued. It was the 75th aircraft downed over Laos since March 10. Fifty-one planes had been lost over Cambodia since April 29.
- December 14: In an interview with the Associated Press, guerrilla war expert Sir Robert Thompson said that he had said that United States Vietnamization and pacification policies were "unassailable by the enemy." He said, "I am optimistic about the future...developments are now taking an encouraging trend." Thompson also said that it should be possible to complete President Nixon's announced troop withdrawals "without any difficulty." His remarks contrasted with a news story of December 2 that he had given President Nixon a pessimistic report in October on the situation in Vietnam.
- December 15: Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird said that he planned to visit South Vietnam in January to confer with American commander General Creighton Abrams on the prospects for further American troop reductions. The Secretary said that "There has been no basic change of policy" regarding the bombing of North Vietnam. Secretary Laird read part of a background statement by former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford on October 31, 1968, concerning the bombing halt. The statement said that if the North Vietnamese "are not proceeding in good faith in their negotiations and...efforts are being made to violate the good faith understandings with movements of one kind or another, then (a decision to resume the bombing) could be made."

- December 15: Laird also voiced strong support for a plan proposed by Senator Robert Griffin to free 1,500 North Vietnamese prisoners as well as any sick and wounded, in the hope of some response by Hanoi.
(cont.)
- December 15: One of the seamen who hijacked the U.S. munitions ship Columbia Eagle in March surrendered to U.S. authorities in Cambodia. The other man involved disappeared in October.
- December 15: South Vietnam reportedly sent a force of 3,000 men deep into Cambodia in response to a request for help from Premier Lon Nol. The force was moved into an area thought to contain about 6,000 North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops.
- December 17: The Washington Post reported that Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and General Creighton Abrams had recommended that the United States cease the use of chemical herbicides in Vietnam, using up the remaining stock only in jungles and uninhabited areas. The remaining supplies of the chemicals "White" and "Blue," if used in such a way, would last until May, the report said.
- December 16: Senator J.W. Fulbright inserted in the Congressional Record a report written by two Foreign Relations Committee staff members, based on a visit to Cambodia and South Vietnam in late November and early December. The report said that the Cambodian forces would probably have been destroyed by Communist troops except for U.S. and South Vietnamese assistance. The report said that it was taken as a foregone conclusion by Cambodian officials and by the U.S. Embassy that American help would continue. The report concluded that in order to survive, Lon Nol's government would require a long-term American aid commitment. Both U.S. and Vietnamese aircraft were providing close air support to Cambodian forces, and South Vietnamese forces were carrying the brunt of the fighting throughout eastern Cambodia. The report noted that the Lon Nol government appeared to have "considerable support" among civil servants, members of the Senate and Assembly, the youth, and intellectuals.
- December 16: John Paul Vann, the head of the pacification program in the Mekong Delta of South Vietnam, said in an interview, "By March 1971, there should be no populated hamlets under Vietcong control in the Delta. There may be five to six percent in a contested status...but by the last half of calendar year 1971, we expect all hamlets to be in the ABC (secure or relatively secure) categories." He said that for thousands of people, "The good life they have been fighting for for decades is available now if they follow the plow instead of the gun...it's not the Vietcong leadership, but

- December 16: (cont.) it's the all-important followers" who have made such decisions. He said that the reason for his optimism was that "The government has become associated with military control and resources. The VC has become associated with hardship and sacrifice."
- December 16: Two separate bombing attacks occurred in Saigon, and two Americans were killed in the attacks. The attacks and one on December 14, were attributed to Vietcong terrorists.
- December 16: The Gallup Poll reported that President Nixon's rating for December was five points lower than in November. In a poll conducted December 5-6, 52 percent of those interviewed said that they approved of the way President Nixon was doing his job. Thirty-four percent disapproved and 14 percent had no opinion.
- December 16: A doctor who went on the POW raid on Son Tay prison told the Army Surgeon's Office that almost all of the American prisoners in North Vietnam are probably "severely malnourished." Lt. Col. J.R. Cataldo said that there is also probably a high proportion of worms, tuberculosis and skin diseases among the prisoners, as well as mental disorientation.
- December 16: In a statement issued by Tass, the Soviet news agency, the Soviet Union accused President Nixon of "a continuation of provocation against" North Vietnam in his statement of American bombing policy. It predicted "even greater complication of the situation in Southeast Asia and the Far East" as a result of the policy. On December 14, Soviet Premier Kosygin gave assurances that the Soviet Union would support North Vietnam in its efforts "to thwart all U.S. aggressive acts."
- On December 17, a State Department spokesman responded that the Soviet statement "was misdirected" and should have urged North Vietnam to "cease attacks on unarmed U.S. aircraft and start negotiating seriously in Paris."
- December 17: At the Paris peace talks the North Vietnamese delegate proposed that the United States propose a deadline for withdrawing its troops from Vietnam. But the American delegate responded that although the United States was ready to negotiate "an agreed timetable" for mutual withdrawal, the U.S. would not accept an "arbitrary deadline." The American spokesman estimated that 175,000 to 200,000 North Vietnamese troops were outside their own territory: 40,000 in Cambodia, 55,000 in Laos and the remainder in South Vietnam.

- December 19: Two rockets struck Saigon, killing six people and wounding eight. The attacks followed a week in which three Americans and four Vietnamese were killed and more than 300 people injured in bombings in Saigon. The bombing was thought to have been committed to coincide with the 24th anniversary of the beginning of the Vietnamese war against the French.
- December 19: South Vietnam announced that it had asked the International Control Commission to seek the release of prisoners of war held by the Communists. In addition, the government offered to exchange all North Vietnamese prisoners for American, South Vietnamese and other prisoners held by North Vietnam and the Vietcong.
- December 19: Twenty-three Americans were killed in battle in Vietnam during the week ending December 19; 160 were wounded. South Vietnamese losses totaled 266 killed and 886 wounded. Enemy deaths were put at 1,404 for the same period. U.S. troop strength stood at 339,200 as of December 17.
- December 20: Speaking on "Issues and Answers," U.S.I.A. Director Frank Shakespeare said that the military incursions into Cambodia in May and June produced "a traumatic reaction in the world at large" and a blow to American prestige abroad. He said that prior to the incursion, American prestige had been high because of President Nixon's foreign policy, and that confidence had begun to build up again since the incursion. His remarks agreed with the conclusions of a poll conducted by the U.S.I.A. in July.
- December 22: Both Houses of Congress passed legislation authorizing \$525 million in supplemental foreign aid, including \$255 million in aid for Cambodia and \$65 million for South Vietnam. The final version of the bill included a Senate-added amendment, similar in language to the Cooper-Church amendment, prohibiting the use of any funds authorized or appropriated under the Foreign Assistance act or any other act to finance the introduction of U.S. ground troops into Cambodia, or to provide military advisers to Cambodia. The bill also stipulated that the military assistance program did not constitute a defense commitment to the Cambodian government. The House agreed to the limitation due to the "immediate requirement for addition funds for military assistance" for Cambodia and the "importance of the authorization to the continued withdrawal of American soldiers from South Vietnam and Korea."

- December 22: A list of 339 prisoners of war held by North Vietnam was delivered to aides of Senators Edward Kennedy and J.W. Fulbright in Paris. The list also contained the names of 20 prisoners who were said to have died in captivity and nine who had been released. North Vietnamese diplomats described the list as final and definitive, but Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird said that "There are no new names on the list." He said, "We will continue our efforts in Paris and elsewhere to gain adherence by the other side to the provisions of the Geneva Convention..." Defense Department officials said that the list did not account for ten men listed as prisoners by the Department of Defense, nor for 412 others listed as missing in North Vietnam.
- December 22: American and South Vietnamese journalists were permitted to visit a prisoner of war camp in South Vietnam in order to observe the distribution of Christmas gifts among the enemy prisoners. The gifts were distributed by the Roman Catholic archbishop to Vietnam, who also toured the camp. The camp held 4,400 prisoners, but only 133 were said to be Roman Catholic.
- The South Vietnamese government announced that it would free at least 30 sick and wounded prisoners for "humanitarian reasons" in honor of Tet, the lunar new year.
- December 22: In a speech broadcast from Hanoi, North Vietnamese Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap warned that American reconnaissance planes flying over North Vietnam would be shot down. He said that the United States had no right to make such flights.
- December 23: In a news conference, Secretary of State William Rogers commented on American bombing policy in Vietnam by reaffirming that the President felt "responsible to protect American lives" and that "if the North Vietnamese take action which he thinks is going to jeopardize those lives and the safety of those men, he will take action that he thinks is appropriate." Asked about Secretary of Defense Laird's apparent indication that progress in the Paris talks was an additional consideration to the continuance of the bombing halt, Rogers said "that's not the premise on which we are operating." He said that there was an "understanding" concerning the reconnaissance flights, although he made the distinction between the words "understanding" and "agreement." He said an understanding "can be a method of operating, and neither side promises anything but it is understood this is how they will conduct themselves."

December 23: Concerning future bombing, he said, "we are going to maintain our options to protect American men" during Vietnamization and that this was "not a new policy." However, Rogers said, the President "didn't say that (the policy) was any part of the understanding. Obviously, it couldn't be part of the understanding. At the time the understanding was reached, there wasn't any Vietnamization program." He said that President Nixon's intention to protect American troops during the Vietnamization process had been repeated "on every occasion in which he addressed the public."

December 23: Secretary Rogers denounced the release by North Vietnam of a list of previously known American prisoners of war as a "contemptible maneuver." He accused North Vietnam of attempting to divert "attention from their barbarism by this method." He said that Communist lack of response to American proposals regarding the prisoners indicated that "they are using the prisoner issue in a very patent and inhuman way to further the cause of their political ambitions."

In a statement, the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry said that Hanoi had "unswervingly pursued a lenient and humane policy toward U.S. pilots. The statement said that North Vietnam had no duty to produce such a list and that the Geneva Convention did not apply to war criminals. It accused United States forces of "barbarous tortures" against Vietnamese "patriotic fighters."

December 24: The three-day Vietcong/North Vietnamese Christmas cease-fire went into effect at 1:00 p.m. The United States and South Vietnam planned to observe 24-hour cease-fires for Christmas and New Year. The Vietcong had also announced three-day cease-fires for New Year and Tet, the lunar new year. The cease-fires of both sides were limited to the territory of South Vietnam.

December 25: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Correspondent Michael Maclear visited a prison camp in North Vietnam, and saw seven American POW's and interviewed two. The men interviewed, Cdr. Robert Schweitzer and Cdr. Walter Wilber, indicated that they had received satisfactory treatment while in prison and that they received mail and were allowed to exercise. Both urged that the Vietnam war be ended. Maclear reported that the men seemed to be in good physical condition. A Pentagon official said that the interview took place at the so-called "Hanoi Hilton" and termed it a "showplace camp."

- December 25: Maclear also had a conversation with North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong, who said that American prisoners "are well-treated." He said that the recently released list of 339 American prisoners was a "full and complete" list of those held.
- December 26: American battle losses for the week ending December 26 reached 41, with 141 wounded. The South Vietnamese lost 301 killed and 899 wounded. Enemy deaths were put at 1,250. U.S. troop strength stood at 337,900 as of December 24.
- December 26: Rep. G.V. Montgomery said that he had met with North Vietnamese officials in Vientiane, Laos, "as a private citizen," and that they had told him that American prisoners had been given special privileges for Christmas including the opportunity to carry on religious services. Hanoi radio later broadcast what it said were excerpts from a carol-singing service by POW's.
- December 26: In an interview, Admiral Thomas Moorer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that if the enemy chose to stage a new offensive, the Ho Chi Minh trail supply lines would be "vulnerable to interdiction" and could be cut in a ground thrust by the South Vietnamese army. He said that it would take the Communists at least a year to replenish the stocks of supplies seized by American and South Vietnamese forces in the sanctuary operations last spring and that he doubted that an attempt to take over Cambodia by force would succeed. He said that he felt that military supplies were the key to North Vietnam's ability to sustain an offensive, and that the enemy was working to rebuild its supply stocks.
- December 26: Four Americans were wounded in Vietnam in the 24-hour Christmas truce. It was charged that the enemy had committed 78 attacks during the truce compared with 116 in 1969.
- December 26: Robert Moot, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) said that the anticipated "peace dividend" from the de-escalation of the war in Vietnam had been eaten up by pay raises and inflation. He said that at its peak in 1968, the war was costing an added \$20 billion a year compared with about \$10 billion at the end of fiscal 1971. In addition, any surplus was expected to be absorbed by additional defense spending on other programs, including military aid to carry out the Nixon Doctrine.

- December 28: The Senate completed action on the 1971 supplemental appropriations bill (H.R. 19923), including \$155 million in military and economic aid for Cambodia. The allocation for restoring funds temporarily "borrowed" from other military and economic aid programs (for example, Taiwan) for use in Cambodia was reduced from \$100 million to \$75 million. The bill also included \$50 million for the commercial import program in South Vietnam, but \$15 million for the land reform program was cut. The House had passed the bill on December 22.
- December 28: Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird said that the Christmas Day interview of two American prisoners of war was "staged and edited" and omitted discussion of medical conditions of the prisoners or information about the other prisoners held.
- President Nixon's news secretary said that the President felt that the filmed interview was in "total disregard of the terms and intentions of the Geneva Convention."
- December 28: A group of 48 American civilians serving with voluntary agencies in Vietnam sent letters to U.N. Secretary General U Thant charging that the United States had violated international treaties of war conduct in Vietnam, including the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War and the Hague Convention prohibiting the use of poisons.
- December 28: The Cambodian government published a decree imposing censorship on newspapers and periodicals in Cambodia. Those publications not complying with the new censorship law would be closed down, the decree said.
- December 29: Both Houses of Congress passed the second conference version of the defense appropriations bill (H.R. 19590), which included an appropriation of \$2.5 billion to support "Vietnamese and other free world forces in support of Vietnamese forces and local forces in Laos and Thailand; and for related costs..." provided that none of the funds were spent for combat allowances higher than those paid to American soldiers, and provided that none of the funds be used to "support Vietnamese or other free world forces in actions designed to provide military support and assistance to the governments of Cambodia or Laos." A proviso specified, however, that "nothing contained in this section shall be construed to prohibit support of

December 29: actions required to insure the safe and orderly withdrawal or disengagement of U.S. forces from Southeast Asia or to aid in the release of Americans held as prisoners of war." The provision was described by Sen. John Sherman Cooper as a "loophole."
(cont.)

A subsequent section of the bill provided that "In line with the expressed intention of the President of the United States, none of the funds appropriated by this act shall be used to finance the introduction of American ground combat troops into Laos or Thailand." Senator Frank Church said in the Senate that the "conference report represents the culmination of an attempt that has gone on now for more than a year to write a statutory limitation on the extension of American military involvement in the Vietnam War... As this conference report now stands, there is no proviso modifying the statutory restriction against the use of American troops or advisors in Cambodia."

December 29: There were reports that Cambodian officials had accused the South Vietnamese of deliberate delays in supplying fuel via the Mekong River to relieve the critical fuel shortage in Phnom Penh. The road to the oil refinery at Kompong Som had been cut off by Communist forces in early December. South Vietnam's Minister of Economics Pham Kim Ngoc said, however, that there had been problems in organizing the convoys and that Saigon recognized that "it is in our interest to help the Cambodians."

December 30: The U.S. Navy turned over 125 river patrol and combat boats to the South Vietnamese in a ceremony marking the withdrawal of the last navy combat forces. About 17,000 navy men were expected to remain in Vietnam as advisers, however. The South Vietnamese navy numbers about 40,000 men.

December 30: The last 1970 session of the Paris peace talks on Vietnam ended with both sides agreeing only that no progress had been made. At the 97th session of the talks, each side blamed the intransigence of the other for the lack of movement. The original talks between the United States and North Vietnam began in May 1968; the expanded talks, including the Republic of Vietnam and the NLF, began in January 1969.

December 31: Both Houses of Congress adopted the final conference report on the Foreign Military Sales Act (H.R. 15628). As passed, the bill contained a provision repealing the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (President Nixon signed the bill on January 12). Senator Robert Dole said that "the President by signing the bill will signal his desire that the Gulf of Tonkin resolution be repealed." In the House, Rep. Thomas E. Morgan said that the House conferees had felt that "changes in U.S. policy and provisions of law recently enacted have made this resolution no longer significant."

The bill also tightened restrictions on the transfer of arms to third countries by recipients of American aid and prohibited American expenditures for foreign aid or military sales which had been appropriated but not authorized.

The conferees had agreed to delete the Cooper-Church amendment from the bill because a similar prohibition against the use of American ground forces in Cambodia was included in the foreign aid authorization bill passed on December 22.

December 31: The House of Representatives cleared the Foreign Aid Appropriations Bill (H.R. 17867) for the President by agreeing to a Senate amendment to the second conference report prohibiting the expenditure of the bill's military sales funds prior to authorization. The Senate had previously agreed to House insistence that \$200 million for foreign military credit sales be appropriated, accepting the second conference report with amendment on December 30. The bill did not contain restrictions which had appeared in 1969 and 1970 appropriations bills on military aid to Communist countries and on aid to countries trading with North Vietnam.

The Senate had objected to the appropriation of military sales funds because the military sales authorization bill had been passed by the Senate on June 30 but had not cleared conference. Senator Fulbright said that the heart of the issue was the attempt of the Appropriation Committees "to usurp the powers of the Senate's authorizing committees."

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January 2: Thirty-three American servicemen were killed in battle action in Vietnam for the week ending January 2, bringing the total since January 1, 1961, to 44,241. Thirty-two men died from non-battle causes, bringing the total of such deaths to 9,064 for the ten-year period. Three hundred nineteen South Vietnamese troops were killed, and enemy deaths were estimated at 1,506 for the week ending January 2. Wounded totals were 305 Americans and 841 South Vietnamese. U.S. troop strength stood at 335,800 as of December 31.

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