

## **Remarks on Vietnam at Syracuse University (August 5, 1964)**

**Lyndon B. Johnson**

*President Lyndon Johnson speaks at Syracuse University about his Administration's goals in Southeast Asia. He sees the primary goal of military action in the region as enabling "the will of the world for peace" and publicly affirming that America will not abandon its allies in the Cold War.*

*This transcript contains the published text of the speech, not the actual words spoken. There may be some differences between the transcript and the audio/video content.*

Dr. Newhouse, Chancellor Tolley, Governor and Mrs. Rockefeller, Members of the Congress, distinguished guests, members of the faculty, ladies and gentlemen:

I know that you share with me the great admiration and pride that the generosity of Dr. Newhouse has made possible for this area of our Nation and for this great institution. We all are in his debt, and in the years and generations and centuries to come, we will see the products of this great adventure.

On this occasion, it is fitting, I think, that we are meeting here to dedicate this new center to better understanding among all men. For that is my purpose in speaking to you.

Last night I spoke to the people of the Nation.

This morning, I speak to the people of all nations--so that they may understand without mistake our purpose in the action that we have been required to take.

On August 2 the United States destroyer Maddox was attacked on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin by hostile vessels of the Government of North Viet-Nam.

On August 4 that attack was repeated in those same waters against two United States destroyers.

The attacks were deliberate.

The attacks were unprovoked.

The attacks have been answered.

Throughout last night and within the last 12 hours, air units of the United States Seventh Fleet have sought out the hostile vessels and certain of their supporting facilities.. Appropriate armed action has been taken against them. The United States is now asking that this be brought immediately and urgently before the Security Council of the United Nations.

We welcome--and we invite--the scrutiny of all men who seek peace, for peace is the only purpose of the course that America pursues.

The Gulf of Tonkin may be distant, but none can be detached about what has happened there.

Aggression--deliberate, willful, and systematic aggression--has unmasked its face to the entire world. The world remembers--the world must never forget--that aggression unchallenged is aggression unleashed.

We of the United States have not forgotten.

That is why we have answered this aggression with action.

America's course is not precipitate. America's course is not without long provocation.

For 10 years three American Presidents-President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present President--and the American people have been actively concerned with threats to the peace and security of the peoples of southeast Asia from the Communist government of North Viet-Nam.

President Eisenhower sought--and President Kennedy sought--the same objectives that I still seek:

That the governments of southeast Asia honor the international agreements which apply in the area;

That those governments leave each other alone;

That they resolve their differences peacefully;

That they devote their talents to bettering the lives of their peoples by working against poverty and disease and ignorance.

In 1954 we made our position clear toward Viet-Nam.

In June of that year we stated we "would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the 1954 agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."

In September of that year the United States signed the Manila pact on which our participation in SEATO is based. That pact recognized that aggression by means of armed attack on South Viet-Nam would endanger the peace and the safety of the nations signing that solemn agreement.

In 1962 we made our position clear toward Laos. We signed the Declaration of Neutrality of Laos. That accord provided for the withdrawal of all foreign forces and respect for the neutrality and independence of that little country.

The agreements of 1954 and 1962 were also signed by the government of North Viet-Nam.

In 1954 that government pledged that it would respect the territory under the military control of the other party and engage in no hostile act against the other party.

In 1962 that government pledged that it would "not introduce into the Kingdom of Laos foreign troops or military personnel."

That government also pledged that it would "not use the territory of the Kingdom of Laos for interference in the internal affairs of other countries."

That government of North Viet-Nam is now willfully and systematically violating those agreements of both 1954 and 1962.

To the south it is engaged in aggression against the Republic of Viet-Nam.

To the west it is engaged in aggression against the Kingdom of Laos.

To the east it has now struck out on the high seas in an act of aggression against the United States of America.

There can be, there must be no doubt about the policy and no doubt about the purpose.

So there can be no doubt about the responsibilities of men and the responsibilities of nations that are devoted to peace.

Peace cannot be assured merely by assuring the safety of the United States destroyer Maddox or the safety of other vessels of other flags.

Peace requires that the existing agreements in the area be honored.

Peace requires that we and all our friends stand firm against the present aggressions of the government of North Viet-Nam.

The government of North Viet-Nam is today flouting the will of the world for peace. The world is challenged to make its will against war known and to make it known clearly and to make it felt and to make it felt decisively.

So, to our friends of the Atlantic Alliance, let me say this, this morning: the challenge that we face in southeast Asia today is the same challenge that we have faced with courage and that we have met with strength in Greece and Turkey, in Berlin and Korea, in Lebanon and in Cuba. And to any who may be tempted to support or to widen the present aggression I say this: there is no threat to any peaceful power from the United States of America. But there can be no peace by aggression and no immunity from reply. That is what is meant by the actions that we took yesterday.

Finally, my fellow Americans, I would like to say to ally and adversary alike: let no friend needlessly fear--and no foe vainly hope--that this is a nation divided in this election year. Our free elections--our full and free debate--are America's strength, not America's weakness.

There are no parties and there is no partisanship when our peace or the peace of the world is imperiled by aggressors in any part of the world.

We are one nation united and indivisible.

And united and indivisible we shall remain.