Chronological: Sales and Marketing Executives of Honolulu Annual Meeting

SPEECH BY SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUYE
at Sales and Marketing Executives of Honolulu
Annual Meeting, Waialae Room - Kahala Hilton
Hotel; Honolulu, Hawaii; April 22, 1975; 7:45 PM

In recent days Washington has been the center of an anquished assessment of the impact of what is happening in Southeast Asia. In speeches, articles and editorials we have been reading the prophesies of the demise of American prestige as a world power. The ever present question seems to be, after the loss of Cambodia and quite likely of South Vietnam, what will the Russians, the Chinese, our allies in Europe or in Asia think of us? What does President Marcos of the Philippines or Chiang Ching-kuo of the Republic of China think of the value of America's commitment? From the dark prognostications one could almost conclude that the world is coming to an end. To listen to some prophets of doom it is almost as if our fate was inextricably linked to the fate of South Vietnam and Cambodia and we are about to go under as a world power.

I think that view totally ignores reality. The domino theory is as valid as we make it. To announce to the world that we believe the loss of Vietnam or the loss of Cambodia automatically means the loss of other areas in Asia may become a self-fulfilling prophecy, but it is neither inevitable or likely. It is distressing that President Ford and Secretary Kissinger fail to grasp that elementary fact.

America is still the most powerful nation in the world. We are still the strongest nation both militarily and economically. The fall of Cambodia and the tragedy of South Vietnam does not change that basic fact. By bringing an end to this drain on our resources and an end to the disunity within our nation over our Vietnam policy, our nation will be strengthened, not weakened. Our dominance of the oceans with our Polaris and our Poseidon missiles remains undiminished. Our F-14's and 15's will continue to dominate the air and are superior to the craft of any other power.

I believe the other nations of the world, friendly and unfriendly, are well aware of our power.

In this world of economic turmoil the United States is still in relatively good shape--even in the midst of our biggest recession since the great depression of the 1930's. The dollar is still strong in the world's markets. Our people are still the best fed, the best clothed and the best housed in the world.

And we are still the most generous with our international assistance. Since the first days of foreign assistance under the Marshall Plan the United States has shared with other nations of the world--particularly the less developed nations--more than $194 billion in foreign assistance. This is the mark of a strong and generous people. We have not only carried our share,--we have carried more than our share of the cost of feeding a hungry world. We continue

an unequalled record of living up to our treaty commitments. In Southeast Asia, we have done so to the extent of the expenditure of over $150 billion and the loss of over 55,000 lives of our Nation's finest young men in support of the Governments of South Vietnam for over ten years.

An additional 300,000 have been wounded, many of them scarred for life in our effort to help the Governments of South Vietnam and Cambodia. In the final analysis it was their war to win or lose and they are the ones who lost it.

Yes, we are a great nation and a generous people. And at this time in our history, it is my conviction that if we are to retain our greatness it is time for us to stop the killing and to do everything in our power to get both sides to stop the continued violence and to seek a resolution of outstanding differences within the realities of the current dismal situation.

Greatness requires candor and in the case of our Vietnam policy it requires the candid admission that our policy has been in error.

Vietnam will haunt America for many years. We will long hear the cries of the wounded and of the widows and orphans of the Vietnam conflict. We will for many decades be paying the cost of our Vietnam involvement.

There is no question that the Government of North Vietnam has violated the terms of the Paris Accord. And certainly there can be no question that South Vietnam has also violated the terms of that Accord. Both parties lack "clean hands." If the Paris Accords were to be followed in good faith even at this late date it is within the realm of reason that peace would once again arrive in Southeast Asia.

For the past two and a half years, I have chaired the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations of the Senate Appropriations Committee. In that capacity, I have applied two tests in judging the merits of the foreign assistance requests which have come before my committee: first, will the extension of the requested aid serve America's national interests? and secondly, is the recipient country doing its utmost to help itself both financially and militarily and using our assistance in a prudent manner?

In recent days, some have equated our commitment to Cambodia and South Vietnam with our commitment to the State of Israel. These commentators have suggested that the recent events in Indochina should be a warning to Israel--that America was once again retreating behind a wall of isolationism.

To equate Israel with South Vietnam and Cambodia is not only

ridiculous--it is grossly unfair to Israel.

Two years ago, I visited South Viet Nam as chairman of the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations to determine if the funds, which were appropriated by Congress, were being effectively applied. I also wanted to determine for myself how much of the financial burden of defense the South Vietnamese themselves were shouldering.

One measure of self-help is the level of domestic taxation. I had heard reports that the Vietnamese were doing little to finance their own war effort. The South Vietnamese had had income tax laws on the books for more than two years. So I inquired as to how actively these taxes were being collected and how many tax evaders had been convicted for non-payment. To my shock and dismay, I found that no one had been convicted of non-payment. The rich military and business elite paid little or no tax. An aggresive tax collection program was virtually non-existent. The U.S. taxpayers were paying their taxes and everything else for them--almost 80% of their total economic and military needs, while many Vietnamese studiously avoided any economic sacrifice, as well as military service. The American people assisted in this way for more than a decade. It could not go on forever.

Their record of non-effective utilization of material is just as strong. Until recently South Vietnam had the world's fourth largest and strongest air force. Unfortunately, they had several air forces, with each area commander in control of his own air force! Coordination was and is almost non-existent. One area would have adequate spare parts, while in other areas planes would be grounded for lack of the same spare parts. U.S. advice on how to more effectively coordinate and utilize these supplies fell on deaf ears.

As you know, many of these terribly expensive aircraft were simply abandoned and left for the North during the recent evacuation of the Northern provinces. Many of the planes were fully fueled and armed. The pilots were ready to fly. But leadership and coordination at the top simply was not there. So, the soldiers and pilots of South Viet Nam abandoned their equipment and turned over to the North an incredibly deadly arsenal. This same arsenal will surely be used on the South Vietnamese as the fighting continues.

The Pentagon places a one billion dollar price tag on the abandoned military equipment and ammunition. The replacement value exceeds $2 1/2 billion.

Brand new tanks, rifles still packed in crates, entire warehouses of parts and ammunication were left behind. This sorrowful occurrence is unique in the annals of modern warfare. When the Central government issued the withdrawal orders to the northern provinces, most if not all of the senior South Vietnamese military officers found themselves in Saigon for medical "checkups" or other bogus reasons. The foreign television crews who showed the looting and massive flight of the South Vietnamese army were filming leaderless men. Vietnamization proved to be a total failure when it was needed most.

Cambodia also squandered the military and economic assistance provided in good faith by the U.S. taxpayer. Cambodian officers and civilian leaders skimmed millions upon millions of dollars off the top for their so-called "phantom" troops. These troops existed only on paper; yet their pay, rations and family allowances went directly into the pockets of the commanders. As the war worsened, the leaders began to also bilk their own real troops. It was no surprise when the men in one company killed their paymaster and held a ritual dinner during which the paymaster's heart and liver were consumed.

Two years ago, Cambodia was supposedly in a life or death battle for its own existence. Yet assistance requests contained orders for pink bidets, air conditioners and Mercedes Benz spare parts for private cars used by the top officers and civilian leaders.

The list of graft, black market profiteering and corruption is almost endless in Cambodia. The case in South Viet Nam is not much better. It seems to me that America in many ways had a greater sense of urgency in the defense of Cambodia, than the Cambodian leaders themselves did. Now, Cambodia has fallen.

The full record of U.S. assistance to South Viet Nam, based on facts compiled by the CIA, the State Department and the Pentagon clearly shows that the U.S. "gave its all" in its attempt to help.

Over the past nine years the U.S. spent around 15 times as much to help Saigon than Russia and China together did to help Hanoi. In military support alone America outspent the communists 34 times.

Not a single Soviet or Chinese, as far as I can tell, died in combat in Viet Nam. Yet, 56,226 Americans died and another 153,654 were seriously injured aiding the South Vietnamese.

Since 1966, total communist aid to Hanoi, as best as can be estimated, amounted to $9.3 billion. President Ford recently set the total figure for U.S. assistance at $150 billion.

But most telling is the fact that of all outside money pumped into both sides of the Viet Nam War by all communist and non-communist sources combined, 93.8% of the total came out of the American taxpayers' pocket.

The facts concerning U.S. support for South Viet Nam speak clearly for themselves.

America can provide assistance to nations in need. Our record on this is solid, generous and open for all to see. Americans, however, cannot become Cambodians. We cannot for long replace South Vietnamese. Either these people are able to do the job themselves, or they fall. If, in the end, despite our best efforts, they cannot win, America does not carry the blame.

Now, let's consider Israel. Although easily out-numbered and threatened on several fronts simultaneously, Israel's strong national leadership and her unified, determined citizenry has so far prevailed. The cost of survival, however, is very high.

In a country of just over 3 million men, women and children, a full 10% of the population is in some form of military service. Para-military training can begin as early as 14. Upon reaching the age of 18, all men and women enter the active military service. Only those with physical or mental disabilities and those involved in an important government assignment are exempt. After completion of active service, all enter the active reserve until the age of 55--the longest period of military service in the world.

Even with a disastrous 50% inflation rate, Israel spends a full 40% of its total GNP on defense. The U.S. in comparison spends only 6% of its GNP on defense. To finance this full time, war effort, Israelis pay the highest taxes in the world. All Israelis pay income taxes, and the penalties for non-payment are harsh. For example, the average Israeli will earn $2,100 in 1975. Of that amount he will pay $1,300 in taxes, taking home only $800. Israeli citizens, in order to finance their own defense efforts, bear the highest foreign debt burden per capita in the world.

Yet, not until 1973 did Israel receive any military credits from the U.S. All previous assistance had been in the form of interest bearing loans. Israel has never missed a payment on these loans.

U.S. military equipment sold or credited to Israel is carefully accounted for, and effectively used when needed. Israel is continually holding herself up by sheer determination and very hard work. The terms of American commitment are well understood by the Israeli.

Recently, the President of the United States on several occasions charged or intimated that the members of Congress have failed to cooperate with the Administration in the conduct of American foreign policy.

A close study of our foreign policy shows, however, that the President's real complaint is that Congress will not simply give him blanket approval and a free hand to do whatever he wishes. Yet, both the President and the Secretary of State have repeatedly announced that they desire a bipartisan foreign policy with Congress. While both the President and the Secretary of State have been strong in rhetoric on a bipartisan foreign policy, there have been more complaints than efforts at cooperation with the Congress. President Ford should recall that the brilliant Republican, the late Senator Vandenburg, in describing bipartisan foreign policy, had said, "We wish to be with the President on the take-off, and not just the crash landing."

In earlier Congresses and Administrations, Congress delegated or lost many of its inherent foreign policy making powers to the Presidents.There were many reasons for this--good and bad. But now in the 94th Congress, the situation has drastically changed. The Executive Branch has over the last decade abused its foreign policy powers and misled the American people too often. Members of Congress will no longer simply rubber stamp decisions by the President or Secretary of State, or close their eyes and ears to "secret" agreements or initiatives. Secretary Kissinger, a few days ago, stated that the Cambodian situation might be different today, if we had appropriated more money for bombing in Cambodia back in 1973. Congress can respond that American policy--especially in Indochina--might well have been different if Congress had been told the truth and had a say in what was done in the name of the American people there.

The U. S. invasion of Cambodia which was ordered by the President

is a good example of the kind of abuse we can no longer tolerate.

I and the other members of Congress were informed an hour before President Nixon's nationwide TV appearance that we should watch it. We were not advised of the nature of his speech. Ten minutes prior to the news conference, I received a phone call, along with other Senators and Representatives, concerning what the President was going to say. Ten minutes prior to the announcement and after troops were already across the border!

What is important is not pride, but responsibility. The members of Congress are elected to represent the views of their constituents. Together we are the voice of the American people in the daily conduct of the government.

If key Executive decisions or information are withheld from us, or the Congress and the American people are intentionally misled, the process of representative government becomes a farce. I, for one, have insisted and will continue to insist on full and timely knowledge of all events and decisions in areas which fall under my jurisdiction in the Senate. I am not predisposed to blindly follow the wishes or dictates of a President or Secretary of State. If it should happen that actions I do not condone are taken, I shall not be obediently cooperative or share responsibility for the outcome.

Congress has much expertise, wisdom and experience to offer in foreign policy formation and execution. If the President is sincerely concerned with our nation's image and credibility abroad, he must recognize that continued attempts at token bipartisanship with the Congress and the people of this nation will only produce more domestic strife and external confusion.

I am tired of receiving word through the newspapers or over television that our Administration has committed our country to a certain financial handout or policy shift. I am fed up with having Executive Branch bureaucrats coming before my committees and subcommittees and telling me after the fact that in order to uphold the good name of the U.S. I must go along with a certain new change. In many cases, I am asked to approve funds for programs and policies about which I had absolutely no say. This procedure must and will stop.

In this vein, a clear majority of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress do not wish to send any more U.S. military

assistance to South Viet Nam. For more military assistance will not improve or save the situation there. It will just continue the killing. The President, however, still insists that this be done.

Congress will, however, vote funds for humanitarian assistance for refugees, orphans and other relief purposes.

The military situation may well deteriorate too rapidly for the safe evacuation of all Americans and their dependents, let alone other categories of refugees in large numbers.

I urge that the U. S. and Saigon negotiate with Hanoi immediately to bring an end to the fighting, to stop putting additional arms into South Viet Nam and to permit the safe exodus of Americans and their dependents. The killing has gone on much too long.

It is time to put aside political maneuvering and to learn from our past mistakes and successes. The present insolvency of American foreign policy need not continue. The growing suggestion that the U. S. is militarily weakened is simply not true. The President must adjust to the new political reality in the decision making process. By working closely with Congress in the formation of future foreign policy decisions, such tragedies as South Viet Nam and Cambodia may well be avoided in the future. The President, Congress and the people together will determine the extent of our future commitments to our allies. The time for true bipartisanship is now.