

**STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
ROBERT S. McNAMARA**

(Before the Subcommittee on Department of Defense Appropriations of the Senate Committee on Appropriations (amendment to the fiscal year 1966 defense budget), August 4, 1965)

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, last Wednesday President Johnson informed the Nation of the mounting Communist aggression in South Vietnam and the additional measures which we plan to take to assist the people of that country in defending their freedom and independence. We are here today to report on that situation, to review with you the additional military actions involved, and to request the funds required to finance these actions pending the submission of a detailed fiscal year 1966 supplemental request to the Congress when it convenes in January.

Although Vietnam is now the focus of attention, we are not overlooking the possibility that trouble may arise in other areas of the world, perhaps as a reaction to our increased effort in that country or for other reasons. Accordingly, in planning for the increased deployment of U.S. forces to southeast Asia, we have also taken into account the forces which may be needed to meet contingencies elsewhere. Although we have no basis to assume at this time that the Soviet Union or Communist China would deliberately provoke new crises in other areas, prudence dictates that we be prepared for such emergencies.

The issue in Vietnam is essentially the same as it was in 1954 when President Eisenhower said:

I think it is no longer necessary to enter into a long argument or exposition to show the importance to the United States of Indochina and of the struggle going on there. No matter how the struggle may have started, it has long since become one of the testing places between a free form of government and dictatorship. Its outcome is going to have the greatest significance for us, and possibly for a long time into the future.

We have here a sort of cork in the bottle, the bottle being the great area that includes Indonesia, Burma, Thailand, all of the surrounding areas of Asia with its hundreds of millions of people * * *

What is at stake there is the ability of the free world to block Communist armed aggression and prevent the loss of all of southeast Asia, a loss which in its ultimate consequences could drastically alter the strategic situation in Asia and the Pacific to the grave detriment of our own security and that of our Allies. While 15 years ago, in Korea, Communist aggression took the form of an overt armed attack, today in South Vietnam it has taken the form of a large scale intensive guerrilla operation. The covert nature of this aggression, which characterized the earlier years of the struggle in South Vietnam, has now all but been stripped away. The control of the Vietcong effort by the regime in Hanoi, supported and incited by Communist China, has become increasingly apparent.