

FOR THE SENATE

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William E. Miller

THE JOINT SENATE-HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP

Press Release

Issued following a
Leadership Meeting

June 11, 1964

FOR THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

Charles A. Halleck,
Leader
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Chr of the Conference
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Congressional Committee

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATEMENT BY REP. HALLECK:

We are seriously disturbed by repeated reports in responsible newspapers that the Johnson Administration is postponing a decision on the war in Viet Nam until after election day next November.

This has twice been reported by the New York Times whose highly-respected columnist Arthur Krock wrote in the May 24th issue that President Johnson fears the election campaign could "require him to make the fateful decision he hopes to postpone until after election day." In the same issue a Washington story on Viet Nam described the Administration as "moving with the usual caution of an election year though many here doubt that the critical choices in Southeast Asia can be put off until November."

The Washington Post on June 1 reported from Saigon that the Viet Nameese think there will be increased action this year "but say it will stop short of a direct challenge that might force the United States to take some face-saving action it would prefer to avoid during an election year." The story also reported that a Viet Nameese paper, the Saigon Post, in a front page editorial had "noted that the Communist Viet Cong rebels are not hampered by any election campaign and concluded that 'what is worse, they damned well know we have our hands tied until November.'"

The Washington Star has reported (May 15) that no decision will be made until "December or later," while the New York Times (June 2) covering the Honolulu conference on Viet Nam said "officials hope now to stretch over a longer period of time a program of less dramatic political and military moves" in South Viet Nam.

Two weeks ago the Joint Senate-House Republican Leadership declared "indecision in Washington is dribbling away both American lives and American prestige in Southeast Asia." If this indecision is based on the politics of an election year, as the press is indicating, the Johnson Administration must be prepared to answer for it. We think all Americans will support a firm policy in Viet Nam, but they will never tolerate an election year gamble that could endanger the American position in the entire Far East.

(Dirksen statement, pg. 2)

June 11, 1964

On June 1, the United States and the Soviet Union signed a consular convention, the first bilateral treaty ever negotiated between the two nations. Subject to ratification by the United States Senate, the convention would authorize negotiations for the Soviet Union to open consular offices in such cities as New York, Chicago and San Francisco in exchange for similar American offices in the Soviet Union.

The agreement contains an unprecedented concession to the Soviet Union. Although a consular office is concerned principally with trade and its officials and employees do not enjoy diplomatic immunity, the Soviet Union demanded that a provision be included for immunity from prosecution for crimes, including espionage.

Only four months earlier, J. Edgar Hoover, chief of the FBI, testified before the House Appropriations Committee (January 29) as follows:

"It is well established that a top-heavy percentage of Soviet bloc official personnel assigned to this country actually have intelligence assignments....The number of these representatives has steadily increased over the years and the Soviet bloc works diligently to send more and more such representatives to this country."

Attorney-General Robert Kennedy has stated that "Communist espionage in this country is much more active than it has ever been" (Parade magazine, January 7, 1962), yet the Senate is now going to be asked to ratify an agreement that will increase Soviet espionage and cloak it with immunity from prosecution to boot.

The State Department tells us the unprecedented immunity concession was necessary to obtain a Soviet agreement to notify our authorities of the apprehension of American nationals within three days and to accord access to them within four. We think the Senate should take an exhaustive look at this strange deal before any vote on ratification.

If the Russians are "mellowing" as the State Department contends, then the United States has paid an exorbitant price simply to get the Soviet Union to accord American citizens the same treatment that other civilized societies do.