

Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973)

The President's News Conference

given on July 13, 1965

THE PRESIDENT. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

VIET-NAM [1.] Secretary McNamara and Ambassador Lodge¹ will be leaving tomorrow evening for Saigon. When they return next week, we will give careful consideration to their recommendations, as well as those of Ambassador Taylor² and General Westmoreland³. And we will do what is necessary.

- 5 The present center of the struggle is in South Viet-Nam, but its root cause is a determined effort of conquest that is directed from Hanoi. Heavy infiltration of North Vietnamese forces has created new dangers and difficulties in South Viet-Nam. Increased aggression from the North may require an increased American response on the ground in South Viet-Nam. Increased aggression from the North continues to require very careful replies against selected military targets in North Viet-Nam.
- 10 Meanwhile, General Westmoreland has the authority to use the American forces that are now in Viet-Nam in the ways which he considers most effective to resist the Communist aggression and the terror that is taking place there. These forces will defend their own bases. They will assist in providing security in neighboring areas, and they will be available for more active combat missions when the Vietnamese Government and General Westmoreland agree that such active missions are needed.
- 15 So it is quite possible that new and serious decisions will be necessary in the near future. Any substantial increase in the present level of our efforts to turn back the aggressors in South Viet-Nam will require steps to insure that our reserves of men and equipment of the United States remain entirely adequate for any and all emergencies.

Secretary McNamara and Ambassador Lodge will concern themselves also with the political and economic situation. We have had Mr. Eugene Black visiting southeast Asia and he has given me an oral report on his encouraging visit to
20 that area⁴. We mean to make it plain that our military effort is only a necessary preliminary to the larger purpose of peace and progress.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC [2.] In the Dominican Republic, Ambassador Bunker⁵ and his colleagues are continuing their skillful and determined effort to find a peaceful solution. We believe, as they do, that it is urgent that a solution be found, and found promptly.

- 25 We are encouraged by indications that leaders on both sides are prepared to stand aside in favor of a new government which will enjoy the confidence of the Dominican people as a whole. Those on both sides who show good will and those who join a new government in the work of restoring peace will deserve the thanks of all of their countrymen. Right now, here, we are both cautious and hopeful.

NOMINATION OF THURGOOD MARSHALL AS SOLICITOR GENERAL [3.] I am very pleased to announce
30 today that I am nominating Judge Thurgood Marshall to be Solicitor General of the United States. He will succeed the Honorable Archibald Cox, who is retiring after more than 4 years of distinguished service to return to Massachusetts.

The Solicitor General directs all Government litigation before the Supreme Court of the United States and the other appellate courts. Judge Marshall brings to that significant job an outstanding record of legal and judicial experience. He has served on the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit since 1962, and at very considerable
35 financial sacrifice is resigning in order to meet the needs of his Government.

For a quarter of a century before his appointment to the bench, Judge Marshall was the leading legal champion of equal rights under the law, appearing before the Supreme Court more than 30 times. His vast experience in the Federal courts, and especially in the Supreme Court, has gained Judge Marshall a reputation as one of the most distinguished advocates in the Nation. I know him to be a lawyer and a judge of very high ability, a patriot of deep convictions, and
40 a gentleman of undisputed integrity.

So it is an honor to appoint him as the 33d Solicitor General of the United States. He is here this afternoon and I would like to ask him to stand.

Judge Marshall.

OTHER NOMINATIONS [4.] I intend to nominate Mr. Leonard Marks of Washington, D.C., to be the Director of the
45 United States Information Service, succeeding the Honorable Carl Rowan.

Mr. Marks has an excellent record as a teacher, as a lawyer, and as a Government servant. President Kennedy appointed him to be an original member of the board of directors of the Communications Satellite Corporation in 1962. Since that time he has been reappointed. Mr. Marks, who has had a long interest in international communications, has represented the United States at broadcasting conferences and activities in Italy, India, Pakistan,
50 Switzerland, Afghanistan, Turkey, and Iran.

Phillips Talbot, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, will be nominated as United States Ambassador to Greece. He will succeed Mr. Henry R. Labouisse, who is Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

A most experienced Foreign Service Officer, the Honorable Raymond A. Hare, who is presently Ambassador to
55 Turkey, will succeed him in his post as Assistant Secretary of State. Ambassador Hare has been in the Foreign Service since 1927. He has served in France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, the United Arab Republic, and Yemen.

I have asked Mrs. Penelope Hartland Thunberg of Maryland to become a member of the United States Tariff Commission. She will serve in the position last held by Commissioner Walter Schreiber for a term expiring June 16, 1970.

60 Mrs. Thunberg is an international economist presently serving as Deputy Chief of the International Division, Economic and Research Area, Central Intelligence Agency. She was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate from Pembroke College and holds the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Radcliffe College. She is here this afternoon and I would like for you to meet her. Please stand up.

RECONVENING OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE [5.] Yesterday the Soviet Government notified the
65 United States Government that it is agreeable to the resumption of negotiations of the 18-nation Disarmament Committee at Geneva. The United States has suggested a date no later than July 27th for this resumption. Mr. William C. Foster now is in the process of inquiring whether this date is agreeable to the other 16 members of the Disarmament Committee.

At the conclusion of the Geneva conference last September, it was agreed that the two cochairmen, the Soviet Union
70 and the United States, would consult and would agree on a date for resumption, after which the other members of the Committee would be consulted in order to obtain their agreement as well.

Mr. Foster met with the Soviet spokesman in New York on June 15th on instructions to urge reconvening of the Disarmament Committee as soon as possible. Yesterday's Soviet response is an encouraging development. As we have stated before, peace is the leading item on the agenda of mankind, and every effort should be made to lead us toward
75 that goal. As I stated in San Francisco, we will come to these next negotiations with proposals for effective attack on these deadly dangers to mankind, and we hope that others will do the same.

Now I am prepared to take your questions.

QUESTIONS

MANPOWER NEEDS FOR VIET-NA VIET-NAM [6.] Q. Mr. President, in your statement about the situation in
80 Viet-Nam, sir, you referred to the necessity for maintaining adequate reserves and adequate equipment. I wonder, sir, in view of the increased fighting and the increasing manpower commitment, are you giving any thought, is the Government giving any thought, first, to calling up additional Reserves, or second, to increasing draft calls?

THE PRESIDENT. The Government is always considering every possibility and every eventuality. No decisions have been made in connection with the Reserve or increasing draft calls. We will be in a better position to act upon matters
85 of that kind after the Secretary returns from his trip.

AMBASSADOR HARRIMAN'S TRIP TO MOSCOW [7.] Q. Mr. President, could you tell us whether Governor Harriman's⁶ trip to Moscow has any connection with the Soviet position in Viet-Nam?

THE PRESIDENT. I think that the Governor has best explained that trip himself by saying it is a vacation. That is on the wires today. It is not an official Government trip. He was not sent there by the President, although the Governor is

90 a man of a wide range of interests and experience. I approved heartily of his statement that he would be glad to visit with any people that cared to visit with him. It is a personal trip, and a vacation trip in nature.

POSSIBILITY OF AVOIDING MAJOR WAR IN ASIA [8.] Q. Mr. President, what do you think, in your judgment, are the chances at this time of avoiding a major land war in Asia?

THE PRESIDENT. I don't think that anyone can prophesy what will happen from day to day, or week to week, or
95 month to month. I think it is well for us to remember that three Presidents have made the pledge for this Nation, that the Senate has ratified the SEATO treaty by a vote of 82 to 1, pledging the United States to come to the aid of any nation, upon their request, who are parties to that treaty or protocol.

President Eisenhower made our first commitment there in 1954. That was reaffirmed by President Kennedy many times in different ways. The present President has reiterated the stand of the United States that we expect to keep that
100 commitment.

Our national honor is at stake. Our word is at stake. And it must be obvious to all Americans that they would not want the President of their country to follow any course that was inconsistent with our commitments or with our national honor.

MERGER OF RESERVES AND NATIONAL GUARD [9.] Q. Mr. President, sir, in view of the situation in North
105 Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam, are you thinking of continuing the plans for a merger of Reserves and the National Guard?

THE PRESIDENT. So far as I am aware, the situation there has no effect on the merger one way or the other.

Q. Would it not affect the efficiency of our forces?

THE PRESIDENT. It is contended that the merger would improve the efficiency, but I do not think that it is a matter
110 that would be considered in connection with what happens out there, one way or the other.

MANNED ORBITING LABORATORY [10.] Q. Mr. President, could you give us a status report on the Air Force's manned orbiting laboratory, and specifically whether you intend to give it a "go-ahead," and if so, when?

THE PRESIDENT. No, I am not in a position to make a statement on that at this time. The Space Council has had some briefings in connection with the matter. There is a study going on every day in that connection, but I would not
115 want to go further than that now.

RELATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION [11.] Q. Mr. President, in view of the Disarmament Conference and the Soviet response, and Ambassador Harriman's conversations with the Soviet Union, could you give us your assessment of the Soviet-American relations as they stand now? Could you give us a temperature reading?

THE PRESIDENT. We are very anxious to maintain close relations with the Soviet Union, and we had felt that
120 considerable progress had been made in the last several years. Unfortunately, the situation that developed in North Viet-Nam has placed a strain on those relations. We regret it very deeply, but we have felt that, as I said earlier, our national honor required us to pursue the course of conduct that we have followed.

We will be looking for every opportunity that we can to work with the Soviet Union in the interest of peace. We think that the resumption of the Disarmament Conference is one step in that direction. We would like to improve the
125 relations any way we can.

MANPOWER NEEDS FOR VIET-NAM [12.] Q. Mr. President, you told us last week, sir, that things in Viet-Nam will probably get worse before they can get better. And today you indicate that we will probably send a lot more forces there than we have now. Can you give us any appraisal as to how many, or are we going to change our fighting, or is a new concept going to be introduced? Can you give us any indication of that?

130 THE PRESIDENT. As I said in my opening statement, the aggression has increased. The forces that are pursuing that aggression have greatly increased in number. It will be necessary to resist that aggression and, therefore, to have substantially larger increments of troops which we have been supplying from time to time.

I do not think that anyone can tell at this date any special figure that will be required, but I think that following

Ambassador Lodge and Secretary McNamara's trip we will have a better estimate of what the rest of the year will hold
135 for us.

GOVERNMENT IN SAIGON [13.] Q. Mr. President, some people have questioned the ability of the South Vietnamese to govern themselves at this point--most recently, Senator Stennis of Mississippi. Can you give us some indication of what you see in the future for the reestablishment of democratic civilian rule in Saigon?

THE PRESIDENT. We would hope that if the North Vietnamese would cease their aggression we could immediately
140 take steps to have the people of South Viet-Nam exercise their choice and establish a government of their choosing. We, of course, would hope that that would be a very efficient and effective and democratic system.

SEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT [14.] Q. Mr. President, with the increasing number of American troops going to Viet-Nam, would you say if there will be a continuing or any increasing diplomatic probing for a peaceful settlement?

145 THE PRESIDENT. Yes, we will constantly be on the alert to probe, and to be ready and willing to negotiate with the appropriate people. I must say that candor compels me to tell you that there has not been the slightest indication that the other side is interested in negotiation or in unconditional discussions, although the United States has made some dozen separate attempts to bring that about.

RELATIONS WITH THE PRESS [15.] Q. Mr. President, quite a bit has been written recently about your relations
150 with the press. Some of these stories have been openly critical, to say the least, sir. We seem to have heard from everybody but you. I wonder if you could give us your views on the subject?

THE PRESIDENT. I think that the press and the Congress and the people of the United States have, generally speaking, with very minor exceptions, given me during the time I have been President very strong support and very excellent cooperation. I know that there are some in each segment that have been disappointed in some of my
155 decisions and some of my actions. I like to think that those who talk about them the most see us the least, and so far as I am concerned, I have no criticism to make of any other people in helping me do my job.

We have a very fine Cabinet. Nearly every person I have asked to come and help the Government has done so. I think that there are very few Presidents in the history of this country that have had more support of more publishers and more magazines than the present President. I am grateful for that, although I recognize it is an essential part of their
160 duty to point up weaknesses that they think exist.

I have seen that take place for some 35 years, and as long as they point them out, in the manner in which they are pointing them out, and the people continue to support us, and the Congress continues to support us, I am not going to find any fault with them. During the period that we have had the most hectic, distressing moments here in Washington, the poll has gone up 6 percent out in the country, so I sometimes think maybe it just may be July in the
165 Nation's Capital.

REPEAL OF THE POLL TAX [16.] Q. Mr. President, are you taking any position at this point on the poll tax repealer in the House version of the voting rights bill?

THE PRESIDENT. Yes, I have taken a position since making my recommendations to the Congress early in the year, that I would like to see the poll tax repealed. I am against the poll tax. I have tried to get it repealed every time that I
170 have had a chance, when I thought we could do it legally.

I have asked the Attorney General to attempt to work with the conferees of both House and Senate to see if they cannot agree on satisfactory language that will give us the most effective repeal provision that is obtainable and that we think can be supported in the courts. I have no doubt but what a very satisfactory solution will be found. And I think that would be quite desirable⁷.

175 VACANCIES IN USIA [17.] Q. Mr. President, have you discussed with Leonard Marks as yet the particular man or the type of men that you and he might like to fill the other two key vacancies in the USIA--the Deputy Director and the head of the Voice of America?

THE PRESIDENT. No. The Deputy Director is now being handled by a very able man with experience who will be there for a while yet. I am sure that after Mr. Marks reviews the organizations and talks to the present Deputy Director
180 and the present Director, Mr. Rowan, he will come up with some suggestions and recommendations. I believe that

they will be acceptable.

HOUSE ACTION ON VOTING RIGHTS [18.] Q. Mr. President, in view of your long history of seeking to keep civil rights a bipartisan matter, why did you single out the House Republican leadership for criticism in your statement on voting rights last week⁸?

185 THE PRESIDENT. I didn't single out anyone. We had had several days' debate about the relative merits of two proposals. It had been observed that the administration proposal was dripping in venom and was inadequate and went too far, and a good many things had been said about it. Finally, when it was put as a test to the judgment of the House and they made their decision, I commended that decision and said that I believed that they were wise in acting as they had. Because had they adopted the so-called Ford or McCulloch substitute for the committee bill, as advocated by
190 Judge Howard Smith and Governor Tuck and others, I was of the opinion it would have diluted and taken strength from the bill that they had passed⁹.

I am very proud of the action of the House. I am very proud of the judgment they exercised in that connection. But people are allowed to comment on the relative merits of legislation either before or after a vote, and I found there have been a good many comments on my proposals. I thought it would be appropriate if I carefully limited myself to an
195 observation that the substitute would have diluted the right of every American to vote.

I think all of us are aware of the fact that in years gone by we could have done much more than we have in that field. I have become very conscious of that as I have traveled over this Nation and talked to our people. I think the House acted wisely, and I have every confidence in the action that will follow the conference report. I ask the cooperation of members of both parties. I do not think the substitute was as effective as the bill that was adopted. And I would not
200 like to see us return to it.

THE PRESIDENT'S VIEWS ON CIVIL RIGHTS

GENERALLY [19.] Q. Mr. President, in connection with civil rights and the colloquy between you and the Republican leaders, they have suggested that over the years you have changed your position on civil rights. I wondered if you could give us your concept of your developing philosophy on civil rights legislation?

205 THE PRESIDENT. Yes, I think that all of us realize at this stage of the 20th century there is much that should have been done that has not been done. This bill is not going to solve the problem completely itself. There will be much to be done in the years ahead. I think the problem of the American Negro is one of the two or three most important problems that we must face up to with our legislation again next year.

I am particularly sensitive to the problems of the Negro and the problems of the city and the problems which the shift
210 in population has caused, the problems of education. I have task forces working on those things. And perhaps it is because I realize, after traveling through 44 States and after reading some 20,000 or 30,000 letters a week, digests from them, that it is a very acute problem and one that I want to do my best to solve in the limited time that I am allowed.

I did not have that responsibility in the years past, and I did not feel it to the extent that I do today. I hope that you
215 may understand that I think it is an acute one and a dangerous one, and one that occupies high priority and one that should challenge every American of whatever party, whatever religion. I am going to try to provide all the leadership that I can, notwithstanding the fact that someone may point to a mistake or 100 mistakes that I made in my past.

THE SOVIET UNION'S AID TO HANOI [20.] Q. Mr. President, the Soviet Union announced yesterday a new aid agreement to North Viet-Nam. I think they said it was over and beyond what they are now supplying. Do you see this
220 as a serious, perhaps dangerous contribution to the increased aggression you spoke of earlier that is being directed from the North?

THE PRESIDENT. Peter¹⁰, I don't think that we can tell the extent of that agreement and how far it will reach. They gave no figures. They did not explain what materials they were going to supply. We have known for some time now that they are furnishing equipment and they are furnishing supplies and they are making contributions of aid in one
225 form or the other to North Viet-Nam; this is no surprise to us at all.

I read the very general announcement that they had made. There is nothing that I could detect from it, or that our experts could detect, that would give me any more information than contained in the announcement.

EFFECT OF TEACH-INS ON VIET-NAM [21.] Q. Mr. President, do you think it possible that increased aggression

and infiltration by North Viet-Nam springs from a misreading on the other side, a perhaps mistaken belief that the
230 teach-ins and whatever criticism there has been here in the United States of your policy, that this represents the voice
of the American people?

THE PRESIDENT. No, I don't think that the teach-ins and the differences of opinion have increased the strength of
the North Vietnamese or the aggression that has taken place. I do think that at times our allies, particularly the South
Vietnamese people, and particularly our own soldiers, do get concerned about how strong we are behind them and
235 how united we are in this very serious undertaking.

But I am glad to say that I don't think it has had any serious or damaging effect there. I get several letters a day from
soldiers in Viet-Nam, service people, the Navy, Marines, Army, and Air. I hear from their parents. And I have yet to
receive a single complaining letter.

On occasions they wish that the folks back home, who are following this with such dedicated interest, understood the
240 position as they feel they understand it. But I don't think it has damaged our effort out there and I don't think it will. I
think we will be united in this effort.

There will be some differences of opinion about the wisdom of some courses that the President takes, the Executive
takes, but whenever and wherever we can, we will try to explain those to the people involved and at least try to get
their understanding.

245 THE SECRETARY OF STATE [22.] Q. Mr. President, there have been reports published from time to time that you
might contemplate a change in the office of the Secretary of State. In the months to come, do you foresee such a
change ?

THE PRESIDENT. None whatever. And I think you do a great damage and a great disservice to one of the most able
and most competent and most dedicated men that I have ever known, Secretary Rusk. He sits to my right in the
250 Cabinet room. He ranks first in the Cabinet and he ranks first with me.

SELECTION AS VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

IN 1960 [23.] Q. Mr. President, there are two recently published versions as to how President Kennedy selected you as
his vice presidential running mate in 1960, Mr. Graham's¹¹ and Mr. Schlesinger's¹². Which of these, in your judgment,
is closest to the truth, or do you have your own version?

255 THE PRESIDENT. I would not want to get into a dispute with my friends who have written these memorandums. I
don't see anything to be gained by that.

The President asked me, on his own motion, to go on the ticket with him, and I gave him my reasons for hesitating. He
told me he would speak to Speaker Rayburn and others, and he did. Subsequently, he called me and said, "Here's a
statement I am going to read on television, unless you have an objection." I listened to it. After I heard it, I felt that I
260 should do what I did. I don't know just how much these men may know about what actually happened, but they are
entitled to their opinions. Of course, I know why I did what I did.

Merriman Smith, United Press International: Thank you, Mr. President.
(4387 words)

Quelle: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=27078&st=&st1=>

¹¹Henry Cabot Lodge, U.S. Ambassador to South Viet-Nam. – ²Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, former U.S. Ambassador to South Viet-Nam, who resigned on July 7, 1965. – ³Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Commander of United States Forces in South Viet-Nam. – ⁴On July 10, 1965, the White House announced that Eugene R. Black, adviser to the President on southeast Asian social and economic development, had telephoned the President and given him an encouraging report on his visit to the Far East. During his trip Mr. Black had participated in meetings of the Consultative Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East on the establishment of an Asian Development Bank. He reported to the President that all had gone well, and the Bank would begin operating early in 1966. – ⁵Ellsworth Bunker, U.S. Representative to the Organization of American States. – ⁶W. Averell Harriman, Ambassador at Large and former Governor of New York. – ⁷The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was approved by the President on August 6, 1965 (see Item 409). The act did not abolish the poll tax as a precondition for voting in State elections, but it authorized the Attorney General to test the constitutionality of the poll tax in the courts. – ⁸See Statement by the President Following Passage of the Voting Rights Bill by the House of Representatives, July 10, 1965. – ⁹Representative Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, minority leader of the House of Representatives, and Representative William M. McCulloch of Ohio, ranking Republican member of the House Judiciary Committee, sponsored a substitute for the administration's voting rights bill. The substitute bill was

supported by Representatives Howard W. Smith and William M. Tuck, both of Virginia. – ¹⁰Peter Lisagor of the Chicago Daily News.
– ¹¹The late Philip L. Graham, former President of the Washington Post. His account of the 1960 nomination for Vice President is in the form of a memorandum to himself. It is published in – ¹²Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.,