

ROBERT KENNEDY ASSURES VIETNAM

Says U.S. Troops Will Stay
Until Reds Are Defeated
—Calls Diem Brave

Special to The New York Times.

SAIGON, Vietnam, Feb. 18—Robert F. Kennedy said tonight that United States troops would stay in South Vietnam until Communist aggression was defeated.

The Attorney General of the United States said at a hurriedly summoned news conference at Saigon airport: "We are going to win in Vietnam. We will remain here until we do win."

Mr. Kennedy did not leave the heavily guarded field during a two-hour stop on his flight from Jakarta to Bangkok. He said he wished he could have stayed longer.

Asked whether the United States was involved in a "war" here, Mr. Kennedy asserted: "We are involved in a struggle."

Questioned on 'Semantics'

"What is the semantics of war and struggle?" he was asked.

"It is a legal difference," explained the Attorney General. "Perhaps it adds up to the same thing. It is a struggle short of war."

"American boys are dying out here," a British correspondent said. "Do the American people understand and approve of what is going on?"

"I think the American people understand and fully support this struggle," Mr. Kennedy replied. "Americans have great affection for the people of Vietnam. I think the United States will do what is necessary to help a country that is trying to repel aggression with its own blood, tears and sweat."

Calls Diem Brave

Mr. Kennedy's formal remarks were cleared with the State Department in urgent exchanges during the day. In an approved statement he lauded President Ngo Dinh Diem as "brave and patriotic."

When he was asked about the economic and social reforms the United States has been pressing upon President Diem, Mr. Kennedy smiled and replied:

"You heard my statement. We have full confidence in the President."

Ngo Dinh Nhu, who is President Diem's brother and a powerful adviser, heard this tribute. No questions were asked by the South Vietnamese press, which is controlled by the regime.

In his formal statement, Mr.

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Kennedy said he and Mrs. Kennedy regretted that their visit was "so brief."

"We particularly regret it," he said, "because Vietnam's struggle to preserve its independence against Communist aggression is a grave one which affects free countries everywhere."

"This is a new kind of war, but war it is in a very real sense of the word. It is war fought not by massive divisions but secretly by terror, assassination, ambush and infiltration."

"Hanoi [North Vietnam's capital] may deny its responsibility, but the guilt is clear. In a flagrant violation of its signed pledge at Geneva in 1954, the North Vietnamese regime has launched on a course to destroy the Republic of Vietnam."

Mr. Kennedy said the South Vietnamese people had proved "their courage and tenacity against adversity and their inflexible attachment to their independence from foreign domination."

"The American people," he said, "will see Vietnam through these times of trouble to a period when the Vietnamese people will find a long-sought opportunity to develop their country in peace, dignity and freedom."

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