

The attention of the House has been drawn to the publication this week by the New York Times of a series of documents describing the involvement of the United States in Indochina up to 1968. In these documents are several references dealing with the activities of an officer in the Department of External Affairs serving on the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam in 1964-65. I should like to give the House the facts about his activities, which he carried out on instructions from the Canadian Government.

On June 10, 1965, my predecessor, the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, in a statement before the Standing Committee on External Affairs said:

"I informed the House on Monday that our role in Vietnam has not been supine and that we have attempted to use the channels available to us by virtue of our Commission membership to establish contact with North Vietnam. Our commissioner in Saigon, over the past eight months, prior to May 31 made several trips to the capital of North Vietnam, Hanoi.

During these visits he has had discussion with the local leaders and officials in an attempt to assess the North Vietnam government's position. I asked him to go to Hanoi on May 31 and to see someone senior in the government of Vietnam, the Prime Minister or the Foreign Minister, and this he did.

This is the most recent contact that he has made, and although his report is not an encouraging one, I want to say that we have not abandoned the probing process. Mr. Seaborn, who is our Commissioner, is an officer of considerable experience and ability. He is well qualified for an important assignment of this delicate nature. He had an interview with the Foreign Minister on May 31 in which he expressed Canada's concern, and our willingness to play a helpful role if possible.

He sought clarification of the North Vietnam government's position including its reaction to the recent pause in the bombings. Naturally I cannot go into any greater detail about it at this time; but I would like to say that the Foreign Minister stated repeatedly that the four conditions which had previously been outlined by the Prime Minister of North Vietnam on April 8, taken as a whole, represented the Hanoi government's approach to a settlement."