

of Canada that every care has been taken to spare civilian life in those operations. Nevertheless, I should be less than frank if I did not say there is a risk inherent in these operations in terms of giving this conflict a character, a complexion, which I am sure all of us would be concerned to avoid....

There is a further aspect to these latest operations which is bound to cause concern. That is the possibility... of a greater engagement in this conflict by those who have supported and actively encouraged the policies and the efforts of the Government of North Vietnam. It is not possible, I think, beyond a certain point, to estimate what the threshold of that greater engagement may be, but it must be clear that everyone in every country, in all of the continents, is concerned about the dangers flowing from any change in the pattern of the present conflict.

It seems to me exceedingly difficult to guarantee against a miscalculation on the part of one or other of the powers concerned who may consider the course of developments in Vietnam as carrying a direct risk to their national security. All I can say at the moment is that, from all the information that has been made available to us, there appears to be a continuing recognition of the need for restraint on the part of all the governments directly concerned in the conflict.

I wish to deal with a matter which seems to me to be crucial from the point of view of the Canadian Government and of other governments which believe that a negotiated solution is the right way of resolving the Vietnam conflict. The question we must ask ourselves is whether these latest developments, or any future developments tending in the same direction, are likely to help or hinder the prospect of such a solution. This has been the cornerstone of Canada's policy and the guiding consideration in the efforts which we have been making in recent months.

I am bound to say, on balance, that, whatever the rights or wrongs of the situation may be, it is the judgment of the Canadian Government that there is a relation between this whole matter of bombing and the prospects of arriving at even a beginning of a process which might in due course yield an honourable accommodation of the interests of the major parties in the conflict in Vietnam.

I should like to take this point a little further by explaining to the House the positions of the Government of North Vietnam and the Government of the United States, as I understand them, on the basis of what has been said publicly and in private discussions. The Government of North Vietnam has called for a permanent and unconditional cessation of all bombing and other acts of war against their territory. This is one of the elements in a letter which President Ho Chi Minh addressed to the Prime Minister on January 24, and in the absence of which the Government of North Vietnam does not appear prepared to envisage a political solution. The argument behind the formulation is that, by bombing targets in North Vietnam, the United States is encroaching on the sovereignty of that country, and that this is a violation of accepted standards of international law and international relations. The Government of North Vietnam, accordingly, does not think that a willingness to cease this bombing should be qualified by any conditions whatsoever, or that it warrants any countervailing undertakings by the North Vietnamese Government in respect of its own policies.