

Document D (Modified)

Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) Washington, May 27, 1964, 11:24 a.m.

Johnson: I will tell you the more, I just stayed awake last night thinking of this thing, and the more that I think of it I don't know what in the hell, it looks like to me that we're getting into another Korea. It just worries the hell out of me. I don't see what we can ever hope to get out of there with once we're committed. . . . I don't think it's worth fighting for and I don't think we can get out. And it's just the biggest damn mess that I ever saw.

Bundy: It is an awful mess.

Johnson: And we just got to think about it. . . I just thought about ordering all those kids in there. And what in the hell am I ordering them out there for? What in the hell is Vietnam worth to me? . . .

Bundy: Yeah, yeah.

Johnson: Of course, if you start running from the Communists, they may just chase you right into your own kitchen.

Bundy: Yeah, that's the trouble. And that is what the rest of that half of the world is going to think if this thing comes apart on us. That's the dilemma, that's exactly the dilemma.

. . .

Johnson: But this is a terrible thing that we're getting ready to do.

Bundy: . . . I think, also, Mr. President, you can do, what I think Kennedy did at least once which is to make the threat without having made your own internal decision that you would actually carry it through.

Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of a telephone conversation between the President and McGeorge Bundy, Tape 64.28 PNO 111. U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68, Volume XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia: Regional Affairs, Washington, DC, Document Number 53.