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Kennedy's Stronger Line

By Roscoe Drummond

WASHINGTON—When you look at the pattern of the President's recent actions, it is clear that Mr. Kennedy is now taking a tougher cold-war line than at any time since he entered the White House. They are all of one piece. They all point in the same direction:

1.—Gen. Paul D. Harkins is in Saigon to take over the Military Assistance Command and give it new drive.

2.—American military assistance to South Vietnam is being greatly expanded. Some 4,000

Americans are now engaged in training, advising and supporting stepped-up South Vietnamese efforts to drive out the North Vietnamese Communist invaders.

3.—The Army is centralizing the command for all its "special warfare" services in the hands of its youngest general, Brig. Gen. William Rosson. He is directing a wide expansion in the field of guerrilla training and techniques.

4.—The United States is coolly resisting all harassment by Soviet fighter planes trying to drive Allied aircraft from some of the air lanes to West Berlin.

5.—In a major statement of policy, cleared by President Kennedy and Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara serves notice on Premier Khrushchev that the United States will vigorously challenge "Communist subversion and covert aggression" on its own terms.

'Design for Conquest'

There was no censor's watering down of this speech. Secretary McNamara mentioned Mr. Khrushchev by name and cited the Soviet Premier's famous speech of Jan. 6, 1961, in which Mr. K. proclaimed Russia's support for "wars of liberation" against non-Communist nations. He described it as "the Communist design for world conquest."

Mr. McNamara's is the first official public speech spelling out the directives which Mr. Kennedy gave to a special meeting of 52 top policy-making and advisory officials of the Administration at the White House on Jan. 18. At that time the President set forth the conclusions of his own "new look" at our total defense posture and how he believes the United States can prevail in the cold war.

The substance of what the President had to say at this meeting was reported in this column a few days later. Two of the most significant points were these:

Fighting to Win

It is evident that after months of trying to find ways to reduce East-West tensions, Mr. Kennedy has concluded that, far from joining with him to resolve any tensions, the Soviet Union is acting to exploit them—in South Vietnam, in Laos, in Berlin, in breaking the test moratorium, and in two aggressive aide-memoires Mr. Khrushchev thrust at the President in Vienna.

The United States, Mr. Kennedy said, will maintain its powerful nuclear deterrent and is strengthening its capability to wage conventional war. What he found missing was an effective capability for unconventional warfare of the kind the Communists mount against the weaker nations.

At this point the President gave

the American military leaders his own personal conviction that, if we keep the first two conditions—strong nuclear and conventional capacity—the odds are that during the next ten years the only wars with which the Communists will likely challenge the free world will be unconventional; that is, attacks by subversion, terror, and guerrilla operation.

It is this guerrilla-warfare capability which Mr. Kennedy is pressing with vigor. The United States is appreciably stepping up this type of highly specialized aid and training in South Vietnam.

The Khrushchev speech which Mr. McNamara cited has recently had intense re-study by the White House. The President asked every high official of the government to re-read it and keep it before them as an authoritative blueprint of Soviet purposes.

All of these developments reveal a much tougher Administration course in fighting the cold war—and in fighting it to win. It is my conviction that the nation will welcome these developments with relief.



Mr. Drummond

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