

## WH6601-11-9535-9536\_scroller

**Date:** 1966-01-26

**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson

**Participant:** Abraham "Abe" Fortas

**Start Time:** 09:54

**Place:** Mansion

SCROLLER TITLE: "Then We're Really in It All"

SCENE SETTER: President Johnson and his adviser Abraham "Abe" Fortas weighed the risk of bombing North Vietnam, which might provoke China to intervene on behalf of its Communist ally and perhaps draw Russia into the war.

**President Johnson:** Got a memo last night saying that when you resume the bombing, it'll bring China right into the war.

**Abraham "Abe" Fortas:** Oh, Lord.

**President Johnson:** I don't know about that, but if you were [Douglas] MacArthur now and he [*unclear*], it might bring them in.

**Fortas:** Yeah.

**President Johnson:** What do you think is the possibility of her getting involved?

**Fortas:** Well, I think it's a risk that's been inherent in this thing right along.

**President Johnson:** It's a risk, but what do you—

**Fortas:** But I wouldn't precipitate it. No, sir.

**President Johnson:** Huh?

**Fortas:** I would not go after China.

**President Johnson:** No, I mean, what do you think the risks are when we resume our bombing program, get north of Hanoi, get in the critical area up there, interrupt the railroad between Hanoi and China, and things of that kind—what do you think the possibility's of her coming across that Yalu [River] like she did in Korea?

**Fortas:** I think they're about 30 percent, maybe more.

**President Johnson:** [*Pause.*] And if she does, then we're really in it all.

**Fortas:** Yes, sir.

**President Johnson:** And then Russia will probably come in, too, won't they?

**Fortas:** Yes, sir.

*End of excerpt.*

CITATION: Conversation WH6601-11-9535-9536, 26 January 1966, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Draft Transcript, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.