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STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

THE UNITED NATIONS, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND VIET NAM

To date, the crisis in the Middle East has provided a vivid demonstration of both the limitations and utility of the United Nations organization. The limitations are underscored by the inability of the U. N. to bring about a durable peace between the Arab states and Israel in the twenty years during which it has been concerned with the problem. In recent months, moreover, the organization has proved to be powerless, if not indifferent, in the face of the mounting tension which culminated in the third Arab-Israeli war. Then, when the war came, as wars usually come, with its swift and sudden violence, it ran a brief searing course while the U. N. stood by in shocked helplessness.

On the other side of the coin, however, it is doubtful that the fighting would have terminated so quickly and so completely had it not been for the United Nations. Bringing the parties together and providing a mechanism for communication among them in the presence of the world, so to speak, was of inestimable value. Without the Security Council's cease-fire, a war of a few days might have stretched into a war of weeks or months or years. Countless lives were undoubtedly spared in consequence of the U.N.'s action. Other and graver catastrophies may well have been forestalled.

On the basis of this experience, it is to be hoped that the U.N. will now turn its attention to the continuing war in Viet Nam. The Security Council might make a significant contribution to peace in this situation.

It would make such a contribution even if it did no more than bring the parties to the conflict together for a face-to-face confrontation on the problems of peace in Viet Nam. The fact that several of the parties to the conflict are not members of the United Nations does not constitute a barrier to a U.N. contribution to peace in Viet Nam. And the urgency of the Middle East crisis ought not to prevent one.

The United Nations was intended to promote peace not solely for member nations but for all nations. The United Nations was intended to act not solely in one conflict at a time but in all conflicts at all times. A clash of arms is no less a tragedy in Viet Nam than in Sinai. A casualty is a casualty in the jungle as well as in the desert. The danger of the expansion of limited violence into worldwide conflict is as great in Southeast Asia as it is in the Middle East.

The Security Council in my judgment, therefore, should turn its attention without delay to the hostilities in Viet Nam. For that matter, there is no reason why the Council cannot act on Viet Nam even as the General Assembly discusses the Arab-Israeli crisis.

It would seem to me that members of the U.N.--and particularly the great powers--must be prepared to come to grips with the question of peace in Viet Nam even as they seem anxious to plunge into the problems of the Middle East. That is the only way in which the organization can meet the responsibilities which are reposed in it by the solemn treaty undertakings of the Charter.