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THE DESIRABILITY OF A RESOLUTION OF OUR INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

Mr. PELL. Mr. President, the problem of Vietnam and what we should do in achieving a decent resolution of our involvement in that war torn, unhappy land is a problem that looms over the thinking, the plans, and the aspirations of us all.

There is no Senator amongst us who is more familiar and knowledgeable concerning this problem than is the senior Senator from Montana (Mr. Mansfield), whose knowledge of the area and whose experience with its people is great.

The distinguished Senator from Montana made a singularly perceptive and forthright speech at the convocation of the University of Indiana a week ago today. In the course of that speech, the Senator made the fundamental point that—

There is no obligation to continue to pour out the blood and resources of this Nation until South Vietnam is made safe for one Vietnamese faction or another.

The Senator also cited the sad statistics when he made his speech a week ago that reveal that there were 543 young American men who had been killed in the preceding 7 days. That was the highest weekly total of deaths in the war. Today, only 1 week later, we find that we have reached the second highest total of deaths of the war, 470 deaths have occurred. This brings us to a total of 18,709 young men killed and 115,144 wounded in this unhappy war—a total that is not far from the total young men killed and wounded in the Korean conflict.

These mounting casualty figures of the United States alone—figures that do not include the young Vietnamese men, women, and children that have been and are being killed in North and South Vietnam—I believe show, stress, and underline the importance of the speech of the Senator from Montana and make it singularly significant today.

I call the speech to the attention of my colleagues and ask unanimous consent that it be printed at this point in the Record.

There being no objection, the speech was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

ASSESSMENT IN VIETNAM

(Remarks of Senator MIKE MANSFIELD, of Montana, at the Indiana University Convocation, Bloomington, Ind., February 23, 1968)

The struggle in Vietnam has turned grim, pitiless, and devastating. The casualty figures are staggering. The physical damage is enormous. Men, women, children, soldiers, guerrillas, weapons, machines, cities, towns, and villages—all are thrown together in an inferno of destruction.

It is not surprising that the situation has been interpreted in some quarters as approaching some sort of climax. It may well be, as has been suggested, the beginning of the end. The question is what beginning and what end? Peace by military victory? Peace by negotiations? With whom? For what? There is no certainty at this point as to what will emerge in Vietnam, or for that matter, whether the end of this war is to be found in Vietnam.

I have no desire, therefore, to indulge, today, in what has become a kind of parlor game called “Who’s winning in Vietnam?” It is offensive to me, as I know it must be to you, to hear this deadly conflict treated as some sort of athletic contest. The lives of too many young Americans are on the line in Vietnam. Too many bewildered men and women and children are being burnt, bloodied and broken by this war. Too much is in ruins. Too many lie dead. Vietnam is not a game. There can be no winners; there are only losers and the longer the war persists the greater are the losses for all concerned.

The tragedy of Vietnam constrains us all to great sobriety in discussion. There is little point in speculating on the current crisis—who is winning and who is not or what is being won and what is not. The need is to try to define accurately the character of the present tragedy and, in that way, hopefully, to see more clearly what the interests of this nation will require in the days ahead.

In this respect, seldom has a problem presented greater difficulties than Vietnam and seldom has the need for a solution been
greater. A restoration of peace is imperative for the benefit of the people of Southeast Asia. When they have been fought over for so long that, in the millions, they are torn from their ancestral places seeking refuge where there is no refuge. For us, too, an honorable solution is of the utmost urgency. The war in Vietnam is both divisive and imperils the world. In this connection, we have already suffered a significant degree of inflation. Furthermore, we are confronted with what can only be called the embarrassment of having to discourage the travel of Americans abroad, because of difficulties which the war and other foreign commitments have introduced into the nation's balance of payments.

In our relations with the rest of the world, the war in Vietnam has placed formidable blocks in the way of further progress in international cooperation. It has brought in its wake new threats to the stability of peace, as exemplified by U.S. Fiscal responsibility, by which may be but the precursor of others. In these pinpoints of instability, moreover, there is now a threat to the overall defenses of the world against nuclear catastrophe.

In retrospect it is apparent that at each of these crossroads the American military involvement has deepened. It is also apparent that the successive increases in military commitment are not viewed as peacetime service, but rather to an increase in counter military commitment. At the end of 1965, five Senate reports, under the leadership of Senator Morse, and the Geneva Conference of 1954: the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963 and the replacement of the regime by a sequence of unstable regimes, drawn even more steadily from military sources, ever more dependent on the United States. Finally, there comes to mind the Tonkin Bay incident and the large-scale direct military engagement of the United States thereafter in the war in Vietnam.

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destruction of their land and society even in the name of saving them.

In my judgment, there is now little prospect of meeting these deep obligations to the people of this nation and to the province of which there is no cessation of the bloodletting and the negotiation of an honorable settlement. For that reason, the search for peace must continue to be explored fully and with the utmost urgency.

The Vietnamese have stated that they will open negotiations if the bombing of Hanoi has not yet begun. In connection, it should be noted, first, that the bombing has not achieved the purposes for which it was sanctioned. The bombing has not stopped the movement of men and supplies into the South; on the contrary, the routes of infiltration carry a heavier traffic than ever before and the traffic includes ever more sophisticated weapons. The bombing has done little, if anything, for the morale of the people of South Vietnam and such indications as there are, suggest that it has done a great deal to strengthen the determination of the people of North Vietnam. Further, Hanoi has not yet brought into play the conference table, as a suspension, now, probably will. In short, the bomb is not a success—nor is it close to a failure. In fact, there is every reason to expect an opening of negotiations if the bombing of the North is curbed, it is not at all certain that negotiations, in turn, will bring the conflict to an honorable conclusion. Negotiations may be futile; they may fail.

In the end, they may prove no more effective, than military escalation has proved to be, in bringing this war to an acceptable end.

Indeed, it is not likely that negotiations will be fruitful at this time if the conflict is defined as a simple, clear-cut case of aggression on the part of the North against the South or as some sort of final test which will determine the forces of freedom in Vietnam in a showdown against Communism. The reality in Vietnam is far more complex, both in the actual relationships which exist between North and South Vietnam and among the various political, social, and military forces in Vietnam. How complex, for example, is indicated by the composition of the present government: It is based almost entirely upon a military faction and most of its principals are not Southern Vietnamese but Northern Vietnamese. They are clearly not the whole coin of political leadership in South Vietnam. There are other sources of indigenous leadership, other groups which are without significant voice in the present Southern political structure.

It would be an advance towards peace, in my judgment, if the door to reconciliation could be opened among South Vietnamese of all schools. If that is not to be, however, I cannot see that the diplomacy of this nation must remain bog-tied by the implications. The reasons for it which are owed to the people of this nation and Vietnam urge the seeking of an honorable settlement. The reasons for it which may be found and regardless of who may be willing to join in the search.

Talks at Panmunjom and the search for third party intervention, however, do not begin to exhaust the possibilities of solution. If these efforts do not bear fruit, other options may also be available. The President has already had the matter raised at the U.N. Security Council by Ambassador Goldberg. If necessary, it can and should be pressed anew in that forum. It may be feasible, therefore, to seek an impartial investigation, arbitration or mediation of the dispute or a presentation of the entire matter to the World Court.

Whatever the specific recourse, in my judgment, the efforts to find a peaceful settlement of the Pueblo affair are attuned to this nation's interest. What matters, first, is the safe release of the crewmen. What matters most is the substance not the shadow of this nation's interests.

The flare-up in Korea, coming on top of Vietnam, indicates the hydra-headed potential of war on the Asian continent. The new and dangerous confrontation in the former suggests the urgency of ending the conflict on an honorable basis. In the latter, I do not know what the prospect for peace may be by way of the U.N. approach which has been suggested. Obviously, a U.N. approach cannot be any less effective than the countless other approaches which have already been attempted without success. On the other hand, it may not be any more effective.

In any event, somewhere, somehow, there must be the beginnings of a negotiated settlement. Until it is found, the fires of conflict will blaze ever more fiercely in Vietnam; the arc of war's wreckage will continue to open on the continent of Asia. And if the fires burn out of control to World War III, what nation will then claim the victory? Indeed, what nation will be left to claim it?