

3-26-1968

## The Situation in Vietnam

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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### Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "The Situation in Vietnam" (1968). *Mike Mansfield Speeches*. 704.  
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## THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, the question of Vietnam continues to occupy the minds and sear the hearts of all our people inside and outside the Government and in every segment of our Nation. That this is the case only emphasizes the fact that it is the shadow hovering over us and affecting, directly and indirectly, our domestic policies, our financial position, and our relations with the other nations of the world.

My feelings on our involvement in Vietnam are, I believe, fairly well known. Of chief concern at the moment is the question of increments to our forces in that country above the 525,000 ceiling which has previously been announced and established for mid-1968. Speculative stories continue to appear in the public press about increases ranging anywhere from 30,000 to 206,000 above this 525,000 limitation.

I know that the question of additional troops has been and still is being given the most serious consideration by the White House and the Defense Department, and I can imagine the agonies which are involved in the making of the decision. I would hope, and I am sure that those who are facing up to the responsibilities entailed in this matter recognize the fact, that every Senator likewise has a responsibility to the people, not only as a Senator from a particular State but as a Senator of the United States, as well. It could be no other way, nor should it, if we are to represent the people as they have every right to expect us to represent them. I would like, therefore, to make my position and my feelings known before rather than after a decision will be reached. As a Senator from Montana, it is my firm belief that any increase above the announced and assigned level should not be put into effect.

My stand on this question does not mean it is necessary to surrender or to get out of Vietnam. It does mean we have to concentrate and consolidate the already great commitment which we have there. It means the adoption of a patient strategy—less destructive of the country and of our forces and less voracious in the consumption of our resources. It means a strategy designed not to conquer what was never Saigon's, even in its best days—that is, absolute control over South Vietnam—but rather to hold a strong and tenable position at no more than the present level of American involvement, for purposes of negotiating a decent and honorable settlement of the conflict. Our position for a negotiated settlement, it seems to me, will be no worse, and it may well be better, if we consolidate and concentrate rather than deepen and spread our involvement in South Vietnam with another great increment in men on the ground.