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Congressional Record - Vietnam re: Supporting the President

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. SAXBE. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I think the record should be made straight on the question of the President and his attempts to achieve a responsible solution to the tragedy which is Vietnam. I think we ought to also keep in mind that if any decision is going to be made, it is going to be made by the President of the United States.

What the President has done has been to bring about a deescalation of the conflict. What we have seen is 7 months of very reduced infiltration and 7 weeks of a decided lull in the fighting, up to this time. What we have seen is a reduction in personnel of 60,000 men, and it is

hoped that more will be coming home before the end of this year. What we have seen is the inauguration of a new policy instead of the old "search and destroy" strategy sometimes referred to as a policy of "maximum pressure."

What we have now is a military policy known as protective reaction, which, in effect, means that if we are going to be attacked we will act accordingly, and if fired upon we will fire back. It approaches, in essence, a sort of cease-fire and standfast policy.

I would like to see the country get behind President Nixon, not for the purpose of prolonging the war but for the purpose of bringing about a responsible settlement and a responsible peace at the earliest possible opportunity.

I would like to see us encourage President Nixon in the efforts he has made in that direction.

I would like to see him pull out our troops faster.

I would like to see the war brought to an end sooner.

I have made my position known on Vietnam for the past 6 years. But the President is the one at whose desk, in the words of Harry S. Truman, "The buck stops." President Nixon is the one who will have to make the final decision.

It is my hope that we will encourage him to keep going along the road he has followed and is following, and that he will do all that he can to speed up the resolution of the conflict in which we are involved.

President Nixon is aware, as all of us are—perhaps he more so—that the deaths of Americans in Vietnam, up to this time, are about 45,000 from all causes; that the wounded are pretty close to 250,000; and that the cost is well in excess of \$100 billion.

He is aware of the fact that we have problems at home which must be faced up to but which cannot be faced up to, as they should be, unless and until the tragedy in which we are involved in Vietnam is brought to a responsible conclusion.

I want to say, as a Democrat, that it would be my intention to support the President in every effort he would make toward a responsible and a peaceful departure from the quagmire in which we are caught, and I assure him that, so far as we are concerned, there will be no politics involved, because this is not a Republican responsibility, except that the President happens to be a Republican. It is a responsibility which can be placed, if we go back far enough—and not too far—on the shoulders of Democrats and Republicans alike.

What I am trying to say in brief is that this is something in which we are all involved and in which all of us must bear a certain share of the blame.

I think that the most important question now is to get out of this war responsibly and as quickly as possible; and, when we do, not to maintain a residual number of troops in Vietnam or in any other part of the Southeast Asian mainland but that, once a settlement is achieved there, to pull out, lock, stock, and barrel. Vietnam is not and has not been vital to the security of this Nation.

I would hope that when that day comes—and it will be a day not for rejoicing for those who pay with their lives and their bodies, but a cause for relief—when that day comes, I would like to see us enter into an agreement with other powers to insure the neutrality of all Southeast Asia, including Thailand, to the end that that region can achieve some stability and can look forward with some hope, because they have been immersed in war too long—and so have we.

I thank the Senator from Ohio. /