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Congressional Record S. 13332 - The War in Southeast Asia

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
Mr. STENNIS. Mr. President, the committee having considered and disposed of this conference report, I ask unanimous consent that the time for debate be limited to 3 hours to the side, under the proper procedures as to the control of time, and that at the conclusion of that time or when the time might be yielded back, we proceed to a vote on the adoption of the conference report.

Mr. GRAVEL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we have 3 hours of debate on this? Mr. MANSFIELD. Not at all.

Mr. STENNIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we have 3 hours of debate on this?

Mr. STENNIS. Mr. President, in lieu of the original proposal that if anyone has any suggestion as to what time they think would be more proper, I would be glad to consider it and perhaps agree to it. I ask unanimous consent that we have 3 hours of debate on each side.

The PRESIDENT. Mr. President, is there objection?

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I think it is rather late in the day and late in the first phase of this session to bring a conference report of this magnitude before the Senate.

I would point out that my figures are not up to date. Unfortunately, the Defense Department has not for some time published to me the weekly casualty list for the past several weeks. I am sure that it was an oversight. However, as of July 10, less than a month ago, 390,871 Americans were wounded; 45,373 Americans died in combat; 9,653 Americans died in non-combat capacities—55,026 Americans died in Vietnam, in Southeast Asia; 355,897 American casualties as of July 10, 1971.

Just lately I received some information relative to the number of amputee casualties because of the war in Southeast Asia.

In 1966, there were 88.
In 1967, there were 203.
In 1968, there were 459.
In 1969, there were 609.
In 1970, there were 312.
From January to April 1971, there were 72.
There have been a total of 1,723 amputees.

In regard to the number of servicemen in Southeast Asia who are addicted to drugs, I am informed by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health and Environment:

We are now engaged in an enlarging testing program to determine the extent of drug addiction there. Based on available data, the number of addicted servicemen appears to be considerably fewer than 40,000. We anticipate more accurate estimates as the detection program proceeds. The highest priority attention is being given to control of drug traffic, detection, treatment and rehabilitation of servicemen who become victims of drug addiction.

It is high time. It is long past time. This is the longest war, I believe, in the history of this Republic. It is the second most costly war in the history of this Republic. This war has cost us around $120 to $130 billion conservatively speaking. Not only do the cities of Southeast Asia burn, but the cities at home also burn because of riots and poverty and ghettos.

So, we have the casualties, 355,000 Americans or more, a number which will be doubled and redoubled into the next century. And we have the growing drug problem. Yet a Senate amendment, an amendment in reference to Senator Boro, the chief North Vietnamese negotiator, Xuan Thuy, the chief North Vietnamese negotiator, and the No. 5 man in the North Vietnamese Politburo, Le Doc Tho, have made a proposition that they will consider a withdrawal in line with the prisoner release on a phased basis and apart and separate from the other five points in the seven-point proposal advanced in Paris a little over a month ago.

Mr. President, some people may denigrate the war in Vietnam and Southeast Asia because we have not succeeded in showing these 350,000 American casualties. Some people may think little of the cost in an area which is not, has not, and never will be vital to the security of this country.

Oh, yes, I have read speeches prepared—not given, but prepared—about how we should bring our forces home. And I have had my name mentioned in reference to that fact because when I was Secretary of State I worked with Secretary Dulles and along with my late colleague, former Senator Alexander Smith of New Jersey; I was one of the three U.S. signatories to that treaty. But that treaty applied to nations primarily outside of Indochina—the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, France, Indochina was brought in as a corollary under the umbrella of SEATO because at that time the Indochinese states of Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam were outside the perimeter of the treaty.

But the one thing which this statement, which was inserted in the Record but which was not read, left out was that before this country would go to war for that part of the world under the terms of that agreement would be due to constitutional processes. The Senator from Montana was the one who insisted that that treaty and not any constitutional processes did not mean signing a Southeast Asia Treaty; nor does it mean approving a Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

This conference report is an important matter. For the first time, by an overwhelming vote, the Senate expressed its strong desire that this war be brought to a conclusion within 9 months,
with the proviso that within that time there would have to be a phased release of U.S. prisoners of war to match our phased withdrawal.

What have we got to lose? President Nixon has had in effect for two and a half years a policy of phased withdrawal of American armed forces. He is not alone in this. He is already, and I give him full credit for what he has done but it is not fast enough.

Do we draw back as slowly because we want to give the Government of South Vietnam "a reasonable chance to survive"? Well, to my personal knowledge, since 1964, for 17 years we have been equipping, advising, supplying, and aiding during most of that time, paying for the cost of equipment which the South Vietnamese Army used. We have had our generals there since 1954.

What do we mean when we say "a reasonable chance?" Is 17 years not long enough? Is an army of 1.1 million men, equipped, trained, supplied, and advised by us, not enough? Are not 355,000 American casualties enough? Is $130 billion nothing but trouble, and we in Congress not enough? Are not 355,000 American casualties enough? Is an army of 1.1 million men, equipped, trained, supplied, and advised by us, not enough?

I think the first point of variance here might be the assumption of our much beloved friend, the distinguished majority leader, that because the enemy have indicated they will sever some of these points from the standpoint of withdrawing and the return of the POW’s, there is at the same time no evidence that the enemy actually will do what he says. There is vast difference, as we have found out in 17 years between what the enemy will do and what the enemy says he will do.

The President was asked about this point at the press conference and his reply was that he understands—

There has been some criticism in the Senate and the House that the administration is not interested in negotiating a settlement that we are not considering the various proposals that have been made by the VC and North Vietnam.

He goes on to say, on the contrary, in denying that—

We are very actively pursuing negotiations on Vietnam in established channels. The Record, when it finally comes out, will answer this criticism of the President of this government in pursuing negotiations in established channels. It would not be useful to negotiate in a different way, burning just as fiercely.

We have paid far too much and gotten nothing but trouble, and difficulty and danger to ourselves.

Yes, we can burn cities in South Vietnam, and in the delta, cities like Ben Tre. We can "destroy" those cities to "save" them. Our own cities are burning in a different way, but burning just as fiercely. Our own people are divided, not because of race primarily, but because of Vietnam and all it entails. Many of our own people are going hungry and our prestige has fallen in every continent of the globe.

I am not interested in face, personally, although I have my share of pride. I am not interested in prestige. I am interested in people, and the people I am with are the people I am most interested in are my own people in the United States of America. The country I am most interested in is my own country, the United States of America.

We have a lot to talk about and every Senator has a tremendous responsibility in this situation, just as the President has, but this is not a case of adversary proceedings with the President responsible for the mistakes which we have made for far more than a decade. It is time for us in this body, in this Congress, and in this body, in this body, in this body, in this body, in this body, in this body, in this body, in this body.

I think it would be better, therefore, instead of trying to get a time limitation for tonight or tomorrow, which is in my opinion, a means of paying lip service for the mistakes which we have made for far more than a decade. It is time for us in this body, in this Congress, and in this body, in this body, in this body.

I think it is unfortunate that we have to go into a recess period. Of course, if we do, I would hope that we could come to a time agreement when we come back and take it up again on the 13th of August.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I believe the Senator from Alaska reserved the right to object.

If I may yield 5 minutes on this side, I may say it would not be difficult to find facts which will not be very sorry record which has been going on entirely too long with its many tragic consequences. I think perhaps the point of variance here might be the assumption of our much beloved friend, the distinguished majority leader, that because the enemy have indicated they will sever some of these points from the standpoint of withdrawing and the return of the POW’s, there is at the same time no evidence that the enemy actually will do what he says. There is vast difference, as we have found out in 17 years between what the enemy will do and what the enemy says he will do.

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members of one party or the other are elected or defeated. For a little while we think it is important, but the thing that counts is the welfare of the Nation as a whole. This Republic is facing the most dangerous period in its history, and the times do not call for adversary proceedings. The times call for cooperation and accommodation, as we have in this body between the two leaders and between the two parties, and as we would like to do in relation to the administration downtown. We want to work together because, while it may be hard to believe because a politician says it, we all are agreed, in my opinion, that the welfare of the Nation comes ahead of the success of either party or any individual member.