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EXCERPTS MADE FROM
THIS TEXT. SEE EXCERPTS
JULY 16, 1971

Good evening. It is a great pleasure for me to be here. It is always good to talk with members of the American Legion. Since I myself am a Legionnaire, I am intimately familiar with the objectives of the Legion and I subscribe wholeheartedly to them. I have always felt that the Legion performs a distinct service not only for its members ~~but~~ but for the Nation, inasmuch as the Legion is dedicated to promoting peace and good will on earth and to the safeguarding ~~of~~ of justice and freedom in our democracy.

The words I have just spoken were, of course, ~~expressed~~ ^{taken} from the Preamble to the American Legion Constitution. And, incidentally, it might interest you to know that the Legion's ~~the~~ Preamble is contained in a recently-published book of patriotic quotations and songs ~~entitled~~ entitled, "I Am An American."

The same volume contains words written by columnist Walter Lippmann, who declared: "Whether we wish it or not we are involved in the world's ~~problems~~ problems, and all the winds of heaven blow through our land."

Those words of Lippmann's were uttered in 1913--but ~~they~~ they are just as true today as they were 58 years ago.

Yes, we ~~are~~ are involved in the world's problems. And recently great light was shed on how we became involved in the most vexing of these problems--~~the~~ a massive land war in Southeast Asia. ~~the~~

We can thank the so-called Pentagon Papers for our enlightenment.

I know the immediate reaction of many was to condemn the newspapers which printed stories based on the ~~the~~ Pentagon Papers. This was the natural reaction of those who felt ~~that~~ there might be some advantage to the enemy from publication of the purloined documents.

I do not see that the Pentagon Papers are of any particular use to the enemy. But I do believe the historical information they contain has illuminated a great lesson for the American people and for all those in positions of authority in the United States Government.

That lesson is that ~~if~~ if the United States is to become involved as a Nation in a ~~grave~~ ^{grave} international ~~matter~~ ^{matter} then the American people must also become involved. The American people must be made knowledgeable ~~before the fact~~ ^{at the time} of involvement--and that involvement must be based on truth.

What have the Pentagon Papers shown us? They have shown ~~us~~ us with shocking ~~clarity~~ ^{clarity} how the ~~Kennedy and Johnson~~ ^{previous} Administrations ~~took~~ ^{secretly} ~~the~~ ^{our} limited-risk commitments of the Eisenhower Administration ~~in~~ in Southeast Asia and made them into a large-scale high-casualty war, which President Nixon is liquidating. ~~And I submit that in liquidating the Vietnam War Mr. Nixon is being~~ ^{open and} ~~truthful~~ with the American people.

President Nixon has turned the course of U.S. participation in the Vietnam War around. He has committed this Nation to ending its participation in that war. And he should be allowed all the options he needs in order to accomplish that withdrawal as safely and with as much lasting benefit as possible.

The President now is making the most crucial decisions of his term in office. He deserves maximum latitude in making those ~~■~~ decisions. I do not urge that Congress be excluded from ~~the~~ the decision-making process. On the contrary. I believe Congress should ~~■~~ be informed to the fullest extent possible, and so should the American people. But the Congress and the people should give the President their utmost support in this most trying of times since the beginning of our involvement in Vietnam. It is only with that kind of support that the President can make ~~decisions~~ decisions which will serve our Nation and posterity well.

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Top
partism



The Vietnam War is a great ~~of~~ tragedy. And the most tragic aspect of it is the failure of the ^{previous} ~~Kennedy and Johnson~~ Administrations to mobilize ~~public~~ American public opinion behind it.

~~The reason public commitment was lacking and is lacking is made abundantly clear by the Pentagon Papers. There was a conscious desire on the part of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations to keep the American people ignorant of our deepening involvement in ~~the~~ Vietnam.~~

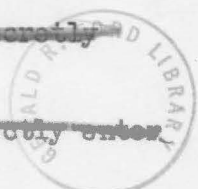
~~There was a conscious decision to keep information from the American people and to mislead the United States Congress. The Pentagon Papers ~~have~~ ~~confirmed this~~ ~~and their publication is therefore~~ ~~enlightening to~~ ~~all~~ ~~except those who took part in this conscious decision to deceive.~~~~

It is the ~~gross~~ grossest of errors to blame the military for what happened during the Sixties. Civilians were ~~responsible for~~ writing the book. Civilians were in charge. ~~It is they who~~ ~~made our~~ ~~top-level~~ foreign policy and ~~military~~ decisions. And they made them without being accountable to the American people, even through their elected representatives. They made those decisions in unhealthy secrecy.

There must never be ~~an~~ another Vietnam. It was George Santayana who said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." I am sure none of us will ever forget Vietnam. We are all determined never to repeat it.

^{avoid another Vietnam}
The best way to ~~do that~~ is to develop mechanisms that will bring the people into Executive ~~Branch~~ Branch decision-making--and the best way to do that ~~is~~ ^{people's} is through their chosen representatives.

~~Part of the reason that ~~the~~ ~~previous~~ ~~Presidents~~ ~~acted~~ ~~so~~ ~~secretly~~ ~~into~~ ~~the~~ ~~Vietnam~~ ~~War~~, ~~step~~ ~~by~~ ~~step~~, is that Congress ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~directly~~ ~~involved~~~~



~~the decisions on when and where to involve our troops~~

There is a power ~~vacuum~~ vacuum in the Congress ~~which~~ which has left almost all the war-making powers to the White House. It is this which makes a tragedy like Vietnam not only possible but likely.

This is a situation which must be corrected at the earliest possible moment.

I therefore urge that Congress approve legislation which would ~~create a~~ ^{create a} ~~check-rein on the President in limited~~ ^{meaningful role for the Congress} ~~or undeclared war situations.~~

Under the terms of this legislation, a ~~single~~ military action by the President would have to be approved within 30 days ^{by the Congress} or ~~the~~ U.S. troops would have to be withdrawn.

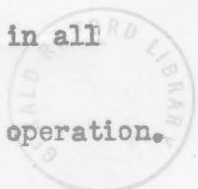
This legislation would ~~create~~ create a new Joint Congressional Committee on National Security to consult with the President and his national ~~security~~ security ~~advisors~~ advisors on military decisions.

This joint committee would ~~include~~ include the majority and minority leaders of both houses of Congress and the chairmen and ranking minority members of all the House and Senate committees directly concerned with foreign and military policy.

Prior to military ~~action~~ action or no later than 24 hours subsequent to it, this Joint Committee on National Security would consult with the ~~President~~ President or his advisors and obtain information on the circumstances surrounding the military action.

The Joint Committee would then transmit reports to the appropriate committees of both Houses of ~~Congress~~ Congress, and these committees would ~~draft~~ draft and send to the House and Senate legislation to ratify or ~~change~~ alter the President's action.

This legislation ~~would~~ would not tie the President's hands, ~~But~~ But it would bring the ~~people's~~ ^{Congress} representatives into the decision-making process in all ^{foreign} military actions involving the dispatch of U.S. troops into ~~any~~ theater of operation.



This would be ~~sure~~ a prompt and responsible way for Congress to exercise its power over the deployment of U.S. troops abroad and could help guarantee that the United States will not again be drawn into an undeclared ~~war~~ war without the support of the American people.

The legislative branch of the Government must play a larger role in decisions of war and peace--the role delegated to the Congress by the Constitution of the United States.

In situations where the Congress in effect endorses a military ~~action~~ action taken by the President, the Congress must ~~set~~ set forth the United States commitment ~~in~~ in precise terms--not hand the Executive a blank check of the Tonkin Gulf variety.

Coincidentally with its action on war powers or separately, I would like to see the Congress adopt a policy resolution on Vietnam supporting President Nixon in his goal of total ~~withdrawal~~ withdrawal within the ~~earliest~~ earliest practicable date. I do not, however, ~~believe~~ believe that any ^{congressional} ~~policy~~ resolution on Vietnam should ~~set~~ ^{set} a date. This would deprive the President of the flexibility he needs to negotiate the best possible agreement with the other side.

Our goal is to get all Americans out of Vietnam by negotiation if possible, and, if not, through our withdrawal ~~programs~~ and Vietnamization programs.

I am heartened by the latest North Vietnamese offer at Paris. I think it provides a basis for negotiation. ~~It~~ It indicates some movement by the other side. However, in my view, some items are non-negotiable ^{at Paris.} I am opposed to simply abandoning South Vietnam to Communist conquest. Even with the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Vietnam, ~~other forms of aid~~ to South Vietnam must continue. We must leave behind a South Vietnam which has a chance to survive as an independent, ~~non~~ non-Communist nation.

This was our original objective in Vietnam. If we cannot guarantee the achievement



~~the~~ of that objective, at ~~least~~ least we should retain some ~~hope~~ hope that our incredibly ~~high~~ costly investment in Vietnam will pay off.

The best we can hope for is to salvage something from our ~~Vietnam~~ Vietnam investment. Victory in the classic military sense is impossible in a limited war of the Vietnam ~~type~~ stripe.

We must adjust ~~to~~ to a world in which military victory is sometimes beyond ~~reach~~ reach. We must adjust to a world in ~~which~~ which American idealism is thwarted.

We went into Vietnam with the noblest of motives, in my view. We are coming out of Vietnam with our ~~heads~~ heads held high. We have nothing to be ashamed of. On the contrary, we can be proud that we ~~tried~~ did the best we could, within reason, to keep a humble peasant people from being ground under the heel of a totalitarian aggressor.

I will never believe that the United States was ~~guilty~~ guilty of ~~any~~ arrogance of power in Vietnam. We acted in the name of justice and freedom. We strove to keep a people free from the iron hand of Communist rule.

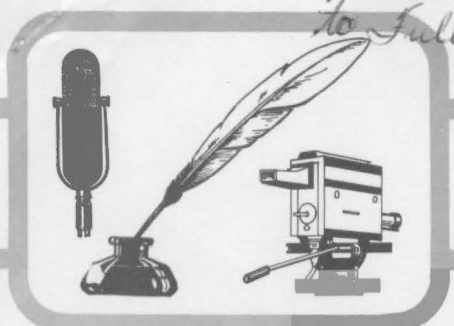
We made mistakes, but no people is perfect. Our nation is still the greatest in the world.

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**CONGRESSMAN
GERALD R. FORD
HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

**NEWS
RELEASE**

--FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY--
7 P.M. FRIDAY

Excerpts from an address by Rep. Gerald R. Ford before the annual convention of the American Legion Department of Pennsylvania, Friday, July 16, 1971, at Pittsburgh, Pa.

There must never be another Vietnam. It was George Santayana who said, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." I am sure none of us will ever forget Vietnam. We are all determined never to repeat it.

The best way to avoid another Vietnam is to develop mechanisms that will bring the people into Executive Branch decision-making--and the best way to do that is through the people's chosen representatives, the Congress of the United States.

The Constitution clearly grants to Congress the power to declare war. But we are now living in a world where wars are fought but not declared. We are living in an age of limited and undeclared wars. This circumstance has stripped Congress of its war-making power and delegated it solely to the Executive. It is this which makes a tragedy like Vietnam not only possible but likely.

This is a situation which should be corrected at the earliest possible moment. I therefore urge that Congress approve legislation which would create a new and meaningful role for Congress in limited war or undeclared war situations.

Under terms of this legislation, a military action by the President would have to be approved by the Congress within 30 days or U.S. troops dispatched to a foreign station would have to be withdrawn.

This legislation also would create a new Joint Congressional Committee on National Security which would consult with the President and his national security advisors on military decisions.

This joint committee would include the majority and minority leaders of both houses of Congress and the chairmen and ranking minority members of the House and Senate committees directly concerned with foreign and military policy.

Prior to military action or no later than 24 hours subsequent to it, this Joint Committee on National Security would consult with the President or his advisors and obtain information on the circumstances surrounding the military action.

The Joint Committee would then transmit reports to the appropriate committees of both houses of Congress, and those committees would draft and send to the House and Senate legislation to ratify or alter the President's action.

(more)



This legislation would not tie the President's hands. He still would have the freedom to act promptly in an emergency situation. But his action would be subject to immediate review by the Congress--and this is as it should be. This would bring the Congress into the decision-making process in all military actions involving the dispatch of U.S. troops into any foreign theater of operations.

This would be a responsible way for Congress to exercise its power over the deployment of U.S. troops abroad and could help guarantee that the United States will not again be drawn into an undeclared war without the support of the American people.

The legislative branch of the Federal Government must play a larger role in decisions of war and peace--the role clearly delegated to the Congress by the Constitution of the United States.

I would also emphasize this. In situations where the Congress endorses a military action taken by the President, the Congress should set forth the United States commitment in precise terms--not hand the Executive a blank check of the Tonkin Gulf variety.

Currently there is another policy resolution pending before the Congress--the so-called Mansfield resolution adopted as an amendment to a draft extension bill in the Senate. This resolution or amendment would declare it the policy of the United States to withdraw all of its troops from Vietnam within nine months, contingent on release of American prisoners of war.

I endorse the goal of total withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. The President has set that goal for the Nation. But I do not think it serves a useful purpose at this time to set a date definite for the withdrawal of all U.S. troops. This is a matter for negotiation, not a matter for Congress unilaterally to make a judgment on.

We want to withdraw all of our troops from Vietnam. And the goal is to withdraw them by the earliest practicable date. We should give the President that kind of flexibility. He needs it to negotiate the best possible agreement with the other side.

I am heartened by the latest North Vietnamese offer at Paris. It provides a basis for negotiation if the other side will follow it up with private talks. It indicates some movement by the other side. However, in my view, some items are non-negotiable at Paris. I am opposed to leaving South Vietnam to shift completely for itself, without arms or logistical aid. This would be to abandon South Vietnam to Communist conquest. Even with the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Vietnam, other forms of aid to South Vietnam must continue. We must leave behind a South Vietnam which has a chance to survive as an independent, non-Communist nation. # # #

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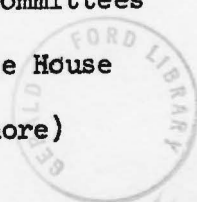
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