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VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS CONVENTION

MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 1974

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

*Mr. Walter, my former colleagues in the Congress.
comrades*

COMMANDER RAY SODEN AND ~~FELLOW MEMBERS~~ OF THE VETERANS OF

^

^

FOREIGN WARS:

I DEEPLY APPRECIATE YOUR MEDAL AND CITATION ON MY FIRST TRIP

OUT OF WASHINGTON AS YOUR PRESIDENT.

I hope what I do will justify this great HONOR.

IT IS GOOD TO BE BACK IN CHICAGO, AMONG PEOPLE FROM ALL PARTS

OF THE NATION, TO TAKE PART IN THIS GREAT 75TH ANNUAL VFW CONVENTION.

proud
AS A MEMBER OF THE OLD KENT VFW POST 830, LET ME TALK

TODAY ABOUT SOME OF THE WORK FACING VETERANS -- AND ALL AMERICANS --

THE ISSUES OF WORLD PEACE AND NATIONAL UNITY.

SPEAKING OF NATIONAL UNITY, LET ME QUICKLY POINT OUT THAT

I ALSO PROUDLY BELONG TO THE AMERICAN LEGION AND THE AMVETS.

AS PRESIDENT AND A VETERAN, I WANT GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL
VETERANS. WE ALL WORE THE SAME NATION'S UNIFORM AND SALUTED THE SAME
proudly *patriotically*
FLAG. DURING MY ADMINISTRATION; THE DOOR OF MY OFFICE WILL BE
OPEN TO VETERANS AS IT WAS IN THE CAPITOL.

TODAY, I AM HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE MY INTENTION TO SEND THE
SENATE THE NOMINATION OF MY PERSONAL FRIEND AND FORMER CONGRESSIONAL
COLLEAGUE, DICK ROUDEBUSH OF INDIANA, TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION. A PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER OF THE VFW,
ROUDY HAS SERVED WELL AS DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR OF THE V. A.
HE IS A MAN WHO GETS THINGS DONE.

THE VETERAN IS A HUMAN BEING AND NOT JUST A "C" NUMBER TO
BE PROCESSED BY A COMPUTER SYSTEM. THE GOVERNMENT KNEW YOUR NAME
WHEN YOU WERE CALLED TO SERVICE. THIS ADMINISTRATION IS GOING TO SEE
TO IT THAT WE STILL KNOW YOUR NAME AND YOUR PROBLEMS. A VETERAN IS
A PERSON, NOT JUST A DIGIT IN A COMPUTER SYSTEM WHICH OFTEN GOOFS.

I PROPOSE THE VA TAKE THE BEST OF OUR TECHNOLOGY AND THE
BEST OF OUR HUMAN CAPABILITIES AND COMBINE THEM. AS PRESIDENT, I
WANT NO ARROGANCE OR INDIFFERENCE TO ANY INDIVIDUAL---VETERAN OR NOT.
THE GOVERNMENT'S MACHINERY EXISTS TO SERVE PEOPLE AND NOT TO FRUSTRATE
OR HUMILIATE THEM.

I DON'T LIKE RED TAPE OR ANY OTHER KIND OF TAPES.

OUR VETERANS HOSPITALS, WHICH WILL NOT LOSE THEIR IDENTITY,
MUST BE THE BEST THAT MEDICAL SKILL AND DEDICATION CAN CREATE.

V.A. HOSPITALS HAVE MADE MANY IMPORTANT ^{medical} BREAKTHROUGHS IN THE PAST.

ONE OF AMERICAS GREAT CHALLENGES IS THE OLDER VETERAN. THE V.A.

MEDICAL AND NURSING CARE SYSTEM FOR OLDER PEOPLE MUST BECOME A

SHOWCASE FOR THE ENTIRE NATION. WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO HUMANIZE

THE V.A.

BUT TO ACHIEVE SUCH PROGRESS, I INTEND TO IMPROVE THE MANAGE-
MENT OF THE V.A. WE MUST GET THE MOST FROM OUR TAX DOLLARS. WHILE
SUPPORTING THE NEW ADMINISTRATOR IN MAXIMUM EFFORTS TO MAKE THE
BEST USE OF FUNDS AVAILABLE, I WANT ROUDY TO TAKE A ^{*constructive*} ~~HARD~~ NEW LOOK
AT THE V.A.'S STRUCTURE. ^{*& services.*}

THE TIME HAS COME TO STOP THINKING OF VETERANS IN TERMS OF
DIFFERENT WARS. SOME MAY MARCH AT A DIFFERENT PACE THAN OTHERS.
BUT WE ALL MARCH TO THE SAME DRUMMER IN SERVICE TO OUR NATION. I
SALUTE THE MEN OF MANY CAMPAIGNS -- OF WORLD WAR ONE...WORLD WAR TWO...
THE KOREAN WAR...VIETNAM.

AS MINORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE AND RECENTLY
AS VICE PRESIDENT, I STATED MY STRONG CONVICTION THAT
UNCONDITIONAL BLANKET AMNESTY FOR ANYONE WHO ILLEGALLY
EVADED OR FLED MILITARY SERVICE IS WRONG. IT IS WRONG.

YET IN MY FIRST WORDS AS PRESIDENT OF ALL THE
PEOPLE, I ACKNOWLEDGED A POWER HIGHER THAN THE PEOPLE, WHO
COMMANDS NOT ONLY RIGHTEOUSNESS BUT LOVE, NOT ONLY JUSTICE
BUT MERCY.

UNLIKE MY LAST TWO PREDECESSORS, I DID NOT ENTER
THIS OFFICE FACING THE TERRIBLE DECISIONS OF A FOREIGN WAR.
BUT, LIKE PRESIDENT TRUMAN AND PRESIDENT LINCOLN BEFORE
HIM, I FOUND ON MY DESK, WHERE THE BUCK STOPS, THE URGENT
PROBLEM OF HOW TO BIND UP THE NATION'S WOUNDS. AND I
AIM TO DO THAT.

AS A LAWYER, I BELIEVE OUR AMERICAN SYSTEM
OF JUSTICE IS FUNDAMENTALLY SOUND. AS PRESIDENT, I WILL
WORK WITHIN IT.

AS A FORMER NAVAL RESERVIST I BELIEVE OUR SYSTEM
OF MILITARY JUSTICE IS FUNDAMENTALLY SOUND. AS COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF, I WILL WORK WITHIN IT.

AS A FORMER CONGRESSMAN WHO CHAMPIONED IT, I
BELIEVE THE CONCEPT OF AN ALL-VOLUNTEER ARMED FORCE IS
FUNDAMENTALLY SOUND AND WILL WORK MUCH BETTER THAN
PEACETIME CONSCRIPTION.

ACCORDINGLY, IN MY FIRST WEEK AT THE WHITE
HOUSE OFFICE, I ~~DIRECTED~~ ^{*requested*} THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE
UNITED STATES AND THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE TO REPORT
PERSONALLY TO ME, BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, ON THE STATUS OF
SOME 50,000 OF OUR COUNTRYMEN CONVICTED, CHARGED, UNDER
INVESTIGATION OR STILL SOUGHT FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE
SELECTIVE SERVICE ACT OR THE UNIFORM CODE OF MILITARY
JUSTICE - OFFENSES LOOSELY DESCRIBED AS DESERTION AND
DRAFT-DODGING.

THESE TWO CABINET MEMBERS ARE TO CONSULT WITH
OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS CONCERNED AND COMMUNICATE TO
ME THEIR UNVARNISHED VIEWS AND THOSE OF THE FULL SPECTRUM
OF AMERICAN OPINION ON THIS CONTROVERSIAL QUESTION,
CONSOLIDATING THE KNOWN FACTS AND LEGAL PRECEDENTS. I WILL
THEN DECIDE HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF
CASES. THERE ARE DIFFERENCES.

DECISIONS OF MY ADMINISTRATION WILL MAKE ANY

FUTURE PENALTIES FIT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S

MISTAKE. ONLY A FRACTION OF SUCH CASES RELATE DIRECTLY

TO VIET-NAM, FROM WHICH THE LAST AMERICAN COMBATANT

WAS WITHDRAWN OVER A YEAR AGO BY PRESIDENT NIXON.

BUT ALL, IN A SENSE, ARE CASUALTIES; ~~STILL~~
ABROAD OR ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE FROM THE REAL AMERICA.

I WANT THEM TO COME HOME, IF THEY WANT TO WORK
THEIR WAY BACK.

ONE OF MY LAST OFFICIAL DUTIES AS VICE PRESIDENT,
PERHAPS THE HARDEST, WAS TO PRESENT POSTHUMOUSLY 14
CONGRESSIONAL MEDALS OF HONOR TO THE PARENTS, WIDOWS
AND CHILDREN OF FALLEN VIETNAM HEROES.

AS I STUDIED THEIR RECORDS OF SUPREME SACRIFICE,
I KEPT THINKING HOW YOUNG, THEY WERE.

THE FEW CITIZENS OF OUR COUNTRY WHO, IN MY
JUDGMENT, COMMITTED THE SUPREME FOLLY OF SHIRKING THEIR
DUTY AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS, WERE ALSO VERY YOUNG.

ALL WARS ARE THE GLORY AND THE AGONY OF THE
YOUNG.

IN MY JUDGMENT, THESE YOUNG AMERICANS SHOULD
HAVE A SECOND CHANCE TO CONTRIBUTE THEIR FAIR SHARE TO
THE REBUILDING OF PEACE AMONG OURSELVES, AND WITH ALL
NATIONS.

SO I AM THROWING THE WEIGHT OF MY PRESIDENCY
INTO THE SCALES OF JUSTICE ON THE SIDE OF LENIENCY. I
FORESEE THEIR EARNED RE-ENTRY INTO A NEW ATMOSPHERE OF
HOPE, HARD WORK, AND MUTUAL TRUST.

I WILL ACT PROMPTLY, FAIRLY AND FIRMLY, IN THE
SAME SPIRIT THAT GUIDED ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND HARRY TRUMAN.

ae I REJECT AMNESTY AND I REJECT REVENGE.
1 *1*

AS MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE PATRIOTISM HAS BEEN
TESTED AND PROVED, I WANT YOUR HELP. I ASK ALL AMERICANS
WHO EVER ASKED FOR GOODNESS AND MERCY IN THEIR LIVES, WHO
— *their* —
EVER SOUGHT FORGIVENESS FOR TRESPASSES, TO JOIN IN
¹
REHABILITATING ALL THE CASUALTIES OF ALL THE TRAGIC
CONFLICTS THAT ARE PAST.

I AM GLAD TO SEE THE VFW AT THIS CONVENTION INSTALL A
VETERAN OF THE KOREAN WAR, JOHN STANG, AS ITS NEW NATIONAL
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. JOHN WAS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WHEN I TOOK
OFF MY UNIFORM AT THE CLOSE OF WORLD WAR TWO.

WE HAVE STRUGGLED FOR YEARS TO OVERCOME DISCRIMINATION AGAINST
YOUNGER AMERICANS, AGAINST OLDER AMERICANS, AGAINST AMERICANS OF
VARIOUS RACES AND RELIGIONS, AND AGAINST WOMEN. I WILL NOT TOLERATE
ANY DISCRIMINATION AGAINST VETERANS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO SERVED
HONORABLY IN VIETNAM.

I AM DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR
VIETNAM-ERA VETERANS. WE HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS IN PLACING VETERANS IN
THE AGE SPAN OF 20 TO 34, BUT TOUGH PROBLEM AREAS REMAIN.

AS OF LAST MONTH THE RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOR VETERANS
BETWEEN 20 AND 24 WAS NEARLY 10 PERCENT. THE RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOR
THESE YOUNG VETERANS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF MINORITY GROUPS WAS 19 PERCENT.
AND FAR TOO MANY DISABLED VETERANS ARE STILL WITHOUT JOBS.

THIS ADMINISTRATION PUTS A HIGH PRIORITY ON AIDING THE MEN
WHO BORE THE BRUNT OF BATTLE. IF WE CAN SEND MEN THOUSANDS OF MILES
FROM HOME TO FIGHT IN RICE PADDIES, CERTAINLY WE CAN SEND THEM
BACK TO SCHOOL AND TO BETTER JOBS AT HOME.

I AM CONSIDERING THE VETERANS EDUCATION BILL IN THIS LIGHT.

BUT YOUR GOVERNMENT IS CONSTRAINED BY ANOTHER CONSIDERATION. WE ARE

ALL SOLDIERS IN A WAR AGAINST BRUTAL INFLATION. THE VETERANS

EDUCATION BILL MAY SOON COME TO ME FOR ACTION. IT COMES WHEN I AM

WORKING HARD, ALONG WITH OTHERS FROM THE CONGRESS, LABOR,

MANAGEMENT AND ELSEWHERE, ON A NONPARTISAN BATTLE PLAN AGAINST

EXCESSIVE GOVERNMENT SPENDING.

*Uncontrolled inflation
could destroy the
fabric &
foundation
of America.*

AMERICA IS FIGHTING FOR ITS ECONOMIC LIFE. I WILL NOT

HESITATE TO USE THE VETO TO CONTROL INFLATIONARY EXCESSES, BUT I

AM OPEN TO CONCILIATION AND COMPROMISE ON THE TOTAL AMOUNT AUTHORIZED

& all other Americans

SO THAT WE CAN PROTECT VETERAN TRAINEES AGAINST THE RISING COST

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OF LIVING.

I COMMEND NOT ONLY THE PAST SERVICES OF VETERANS BUT ALSO
THE CONTINUING INVOLVEMENT OF MANY OF YOU IN THE NATIONAL GUARD AND
RESERVE FORCES. WITH CURRENT MANPOWER REDUCTIONS IN THE ACTIVE
DUTY ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE, AND MARINE CORPS, THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
MUST PLACE CONTINUING RELIANCE ON THE READINESS OF OUR NATIONAL
GUARD AND RESERVES. I INTEND TO PUT MUSCLE BEHIND THIS PROGRAM.

PEACE DEPENDS UPON THE STRENGTH AND READINESS OF OUR
DEFENSES. I WILL SUPPORT EVERY SENSIBLE MEASURE TO ENHANCE THE
MORAL^E AND COMBAT READINESS OF OUR ARMED FORCES.

THE UNITED STATES, OUR ALLIES, AND OUR FRIENDS MUST
MAINTAIN STRENGTH AND RESOLVE. POTENTIAL ADVERSARIES ^{already} WATCH THE
STATE OF OUR READINESS. I WILL OFFER THEM NO TEMPTATIONS.

AMERICA IS NOT THE POLICEMAN OF THE WORLD, BUT WE CONTINUE
TO BE THE BACKBONE OF FREE WORLD COLLECTIVE SECURITY.

JUST AS AMERICA WILL MAINTAIN ITS NUCLEAR DETERRENT STRENGTH,
WE WILL NEVER FALL BEHIND IN NEGOTIATIONS TO CONTROL -- AND HOPEFULLY
REDUCE -- THIS THREAT TO MANKIND. A GREAT NATION IS NOT ONLY STRONG,
BUT WISE; NOT ONLY PRINCIPLED, BUT PURPOSEFUL. A FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSE
OF OUR NATION MUST BE TO ACHIEVE PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH AND MEANINGFUL
NEGOTIATION.

OUR GOODWILL MUST NEVER BE MISCONSTRUED AS A LACK OF WILL.

I KNOW I CAN COUNT ON YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES. PEACE AND SECURITY

REQUIRE PREPAREDNESS AND DEDICATION.

YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED WAR AT FIRST HAND. I WANT TO MAKE

certain + positive

SURE THAT WASHINGTON NEVER SENDS ANOTHER TRAGIC TELEGRAM. THE LIST

OF MOURNERS IS ALREADY ^{*for*} TOO LONG. SO IS THE LIST OF THOSE WHO STILL

WAIT AND WONDER -- THE FAMILIES OF THOSE MISSING IN ACTION.

I WILL NEVER FORGET THEM.

TOGETHER, WE ARE GOING FORWARD TO TACKLE FUTURE PROBLEMS --
INCLUDING THE SCOURGE OF INFLATION WHICH IS TODAY'S DOMESTIC ENEMY
NUMBER ONE.

OUR TASK IS NOT EASY. BUT I HAVE FAITH IN AMERICA. THROUGH
OUR SYSTEM OF DEMOCRACY AND FREE ENTERPRISE, THE UNITED STATES HAS
ACHIEVED REMARKABLE PROGRESS. WE HAVE SHARED OUR PLENTY WITH ALL
MANKIND.

THIS IS THE SAME NATION THAT TRANSCENDED INFLATIONS AND
RECESSIONS | SLUMPS AND BOOMS | TO MOVE FORWARD TO EVER HIGHER LEVELS
OF PROSPERITY AND PRODUCTIVITY. •

THIS IS THE SAME NATION THAT EMERGED FROM THE SMOKE OF
PEARL HARBOR ON DECEMBER 7, 1941, TO CHANGE ITS OWN DESTINY AND THE
HISTORY OF THE WORLD -- AND FOR THE BETTER.

DURING THE FEW MONTHS I WAS VICE PRESIDENT, I TRAVELED SOME
118,000 MILES AND VISITED FORTY STATES. WHAT I SAW AND HEARD GAVE
ME INSPIRATION. IT MADE ME PROUD OF MY COUNTRY. IT SUSTAINS ME NOW.

OUR GREAT REPUBLIC IS NEARLY 200 YEARS OLD, BUT IN MANY
WAYS WE ARE JUST GETTING STARTED. MOST AMERICANS HAVE FAITH IN THE
AMERICAN SYSTEM. LET US NOW WORK FOR AN AMERICA IN WHICH ALL
AMERICANS CAN TAKE EVEN GREATER PRIDE.

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