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Friday, March 8, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Arguments Used Against Administration in Senate Debate,  
Thursday, March 7

Senator Fulbright

(1) Constitutional issue -- Executive has no right to extend the war without debate or consideration by Congress.

(2) Tonkin Gulf Resolution -- Like any contract based on misrepresentation, in my opinion, is null and void.

(a) The Maddox and Turner Joy were engaged in intelligence activities.

(b) Lack of adequate proof that the alleged attack (August 4) in fact took place.

(3) Questions quoted from Washington Post Editorial:

(a) What will we do with the initiative <sup>if</sup> we gain it?

(b) What is to stop the enemy from trying to gain it back?

(c) Isn't there a limit to additional forces where the risk of wider war outweighs any conceivable gain in security or stability in South Viet-Nam?

(4) The Senate should insist on being informed about any widening commitment and have a chance to debate any such commitments.

(5) The circumstances of the presentation of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution prevented any meaningful debate.

(6) The Tonkin Gulf Resolution was obtained under "false pretenses on mistaken facts."

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)

White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983

By 129, NARA, Date 3-31-92

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Senator Case

(1) Unexplained differences in reports on Viet-Nam by "disinterested observers" and media reporters on the one hand and the "official optimism reports" from the Administration.

(2) Is the war winnable without the destruction of South Viet-Nam and of much of America's might?

(3) The Administration must justify any conclusion that additional commitments will not be self-defeating and cause greater disaster.

Senator Miller

(1) In 1966, "of the thousands of sorties flown over North Viet-Nam, less than 1% were directed at key Chief of Staff targets."

(2) The Administration must tell the Senate and the people why "we must be enduring a prolonged war policy."

Senator Hatfield

(1) Need for clarification of war declaration and war making powers under the Constitution.

(2) Congress must be a partner in war making.

The Senator referred to his resolution (Senate Concurrent Resolution 63) which he introduced several days ago. Text of the resolution is attached.

Senator Church

(1) Asia is "an endless morass" and the day of Western control of Asian affairs has passed.

(2) We stand ready to "plunge still deeper in Asia" where huge populations wait to engulf us, and legions of young Americans are being beckoned to their graves."

(3) We shall soon run out of men and money.

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Senator Robert Kennedy

- (1) No light at the end of the tunnel.
- (2) Sending more troops or increasing the bombing is not the answer in Viet-Nam.
- (3) "Are we like the God of the Old Testament, that we can decide in Washington, D. C, what cities, what towns, what hamlets in Viet-Nam are going to be destroyed? "
- (4) Do we have the authority to kill tens and tens of thousands of people because we say we have a commitment to the South Vietnamese people?
- (5) Have the Vietnamese people been consulted on the future?
- (6) Couldn't the Germans or Russians justified their aggression with the same argument -- that they needed territory for their own protection?
- (7) What can more troops accomplish that isn't being accomplished by those that are already there?
- (8) What are the people of Viet-Nam willing to do for themselves?
- (9) Are we going to say -- as we are now saying -- that South Viet-Nam doesn't have to draft its own 18-and 19-year-olds?
- (10) Should we just stand by and watch when the Vietnamese Army loses?
- (11) South Vietnamese youth are buying deferments from draft boards.
- (12) Stealing in Beaumont, Texas, isn't causing the death of American boys.
- (13) Corruption -- do we have to accept it?
- (14) Is our commitment to Thieu or Ky or to whom?
- (15) "What we have been doing is not the answer -- it is immoral and intolerable to continue it."

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Senator Fulbright

- (1) Viet-Nam doesn't threaten the security of the United States.

Senator Harke

- (1) War is causing stock prices to fall and hurting business.
- (2) The economic system of the United States is in danger of collapsing because of the Viet-Nam war.
- (3) Are we fighting communism in Viet-Nam? If so, why don't we fight it in Cuba? Why not liberate "the people of Communist China?"

Senator Fulbright

- (1) Additional troops will mean supplemental requests of 10-15 billion dollars -- all added upon a deficit.

Senator Mansfield

- (1) We are not in the wrong place, fighting the wrong kind of war.
- (2) The domino theory is a cliché.
- (3) We should try harder for peace on the Diplomatic front.
- (4) The Tet offensive was a confirmation of stalemate.

W. W. Rostow

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