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VIETNAMIZATION - Troop Withdrawal Program

NAME: Melvin R. Laird, Secretary of Defense
OCCASION: Meeting with Senate Youth Group
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The inauguration of the Vietnamization program was the first implementation of the Guam Doctrine announced by President Nixon at Guam. We had begun planning for the Vietnamization program early in this Administration and our first reduction of American troops was announced at the Midway Conference in May of 1969.

Since that time, the American ground commitment, the American combat commitment, has been going down, down and down in Vietnam. This Administration will not become bogged down in a land war in Southeast Asia. We have not gone back and wanted to debate the decisions of the past, but we have faced up to where we must go in the future, and we have continued to make reductions in American military forces in Asia. By the end of this fiscal year, we will have reduced American military presence by 320,000 men and women in Asia. We will have had six increments of troop withdrawals announced and met as far as Vietnam is concerned.