

JAMES ABOUREZK
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United States Senate
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

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April 13, 1975

Dear Friends:

Events in Indochina are occurring at a breathtaking pace, adding urgency to Congressional efforts to call for a complete termination of military and economic aid.

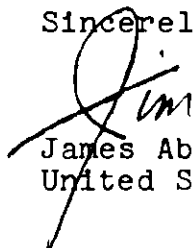
As you know, President Ford has expanded his request for military and economic aid to South Vietnam to nearly one billion dollars. Thus, I feel compelled to reintroduce immediately two amendments which would deny all aid, except humanitarian aid, to the government of South Vietnam. In effect, they would deny the Administration's supplemental request and any future requests for military or economic aid for fiscal year 1976.

We still have \$175 million in unexpended funds already approved by the Congress for South Vietnam during this fiscal year. Furthermore, the GAO has indicated that the South Vietnamese government has not used much of the equipment which this country has already provided. In addition, no one has to be reminded of the vast inventories now in the hands of the North Vietnamese because of the hasty retreat by the South Vietnamese army.

Many organizations including the Coalition to Stop Funding the War are supporting zero-aid amendments such as the ones which I introduced earlier. I would deeply appreciate your support of my amendments to President Ford's request as a vote on this extremely important issue in the Senate draws near.

With best regards, I am

Sincerely,


James Abourezk
United States Senate



United States
of America

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SENATOR ABOUREZK ON AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. President, there has already been a great deal of discussion on the issue of providing additional arms to Cambodia and South Vietnam through the President's supplemental request. A great deal has been said about

the amount of aid requested and its impact on the present regimes in power, but we simply cannot underscore enough the necessity of keeping sight of the two most important elements of this issue—recognition of our own national interest and adherence to the Paris peace accords.

My colleague from South Dakota (Mr. ABOUREZK) has addressed these questions in an excellent article in the Washington Post. I would encourage each of my colleagues in the Senate to carefully consider the points raised by Senator ABOUREZK as we near a final decision on the supplemental request.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

AID TO VIETNAM: PROLONGING OUR SHAME (By James G. Abourezk)

Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger agreed to the 1973 Vietnam peace accords for one basic reason—an overwhelming majority of people in the United States wanted out of the Vietnamese conflict, believing it was time for the Vietnamese to settle their own controversy. In recognition of the fact that conformity to the peace agreement means an end to his personal political power, President Thieu has acted to defy the agreement. He has done so by crushing democratic freedoms, by keeping political prisoners detained, and by preventing formation of the National Reconciliation Council. The combination of his political obstruction and military initiative has resulted in Provisional Revolutionary Government and North Vietnamese abandonment of their political strategy in favor of military counterforce. President Ford and his spokesmen are now, with great hypocrisy, denouncing the use of force by "the other side" in an effort to maintain Thieu in power.

Because the 1973 Paris accords were in the form of an executive agreement, rather than a treaty subject to ratification by the Senate, the administration can easily undo them. Instead of more money for armaments, the Congress can perform a far better function by adopting a resolution affirming its belief both in the letter and in the spirit of the peace agreements.

We are being asked again this time to vote more military aid to the Saigon government for a variety of reasons—to keep our word, to retain our ability to be a stabilizing influence in world affairs, to maintain the principle of Vietnamese self-determination, and finally, to prevent a blood bath of innocent people.

More military aid will accomplish none of these objectives. A return to the Paris agreements will accomplish all of them.

Another of the administration's stated reasons for intervention in Vietnam has been defined in terms of a vague national interest, without explanation of what that interest really is. It is useful to explore here what is not in our national interest.

It is against our national interest to continue to pour taxpayers' money into a bottomless pit.

It is against our national interest to deprive our suffering economy and our people of that badly needed money.

It is against our national interest to promise the public a nonexistent light at the end of the tunnel.

It is against our national interest to be identified as a world power consistently opposed to internal political changes in third-world countries.

It is against our national interest to fund a long-term blood bath under the pretense that we are preventing one.

If a decision on continued funding is too difficult in terms of "national interest," then we should consider our moral interests.

I have difficulty discussing American intervention in Vietnam without seeing in my mind the burning flesh of Vietnamese children. If napalm is an instrument of high level U.S. foreign policy, then the Vietnamese have become, to me, both its symbol and its object. The most persuasive argument in favor of further American intervention in Vietnam pales alongside the outrage perpetrated against the people of that country, both North and South. This cost in money terms can be measured with some degree of accuracy. But how do we compute the value of human bodies that have been maimed and destroyed to protect personal and bureaucratic investments both in Washington and Saigon?

Those who favor more aid to South Vietnam assign to our collective conscience what they say will be bloody results of our failure to provide that aid. Where is their conscience in respect to what our policy has done there? I can conceive of no future action that can cause me more shame than the slaughter and destruction for which we have been, and are still, responsible. Rarely has truth been an option to be considered by our Vietnam policymakers. I am now unable, on their word, to erase from my mind the images of Vietnamese peasants suffering and dying by our firepower and by our defoliating toxins.

And again, we are being asked to keep our word. To whom did we give our word? Who gave it, and on whose authority was it given? Our initial large scale entry into Vietnam was based on a mysterious attack in the Gulf of Tonkin, which either never occurred or, if it did, was provoked by our own forces. Whatever promises were made were grounded on the boldest lies ever told by any government.

Finally we are urged to continue the slaughter to save our credibility in a world built on alliances and their fulfillment. But what credibility attaches to the world's greatest power acting through a surrogate to systematically destroy a small nation only a fraction of our size? Once the French departed, our allies in Western Europe, including the French, refused to take part in what was clearly a civil war. Our adversaries have happily watched our economy and our social fabric disintegrate because of our intervention in Vietnam.

As our Vietnam policy has made us into the "bully of the world," our credibility in military, moral and economic terms has become more and more obscure. Our only chance to restore it is to admit officially our tragic error before it goes farther.

Clearly the American public long ago stopped buying the various justifications for prolonging Vietnam's agony. What counts now is whether or not the Congress can be sold once more on an unreal argument of national interest to continue military aid. I hope not.

ABOUREZK AMENDMENTS TO PRESIDENT FORD'S SVN AID REQUEST

Military Assistance to South Vietnam

SEC. ____ Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no funds appropriated after the date of enactment of this Act may be used for the purpose of furnishing, directly, or indirectly, any kind of military assistance (whether by cash, credit, guaranty, lease, loan, gift, or otherwise) to the Government of South Vietnam unless after the date of enactment of this Act the Congress enacts legislation which is in express limitation of the applicability of the prohibition contained in this section and which specifically authorizes additional military assistance to be made available to such Government and specifies the type of military assistance to be furnished.

Economic Assistance to South Vietnam

SEC. ____ Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no funds appropriated after the date of enactment of this Act may be used for the purpose of furnishing, directly or indirectly, any kind of economic assistance, except humanitarian assistance as provided in section 38, Public Law 93-559 (whether by cash, credit, guaranty, lease, loan, gifts, or otherwise) to the Government of South Vietnam unless after the date of enactment of this Act the Congress enacts legislation which is in express limitation of the applicability of the prohibition contained in this section and which specifically authorizes additional economic assistance to be made available to such Government and specifies the type of economic assistance to be furnished.

United States Senate

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