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REMARKS BY SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON

to the American Society of Newspaper Editors

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Thursday Morning, April 17, 1975
Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.

Twenty-five years ago, in a period marked by cooperation between Congress and the Executive, Senator Arthur Vandenberg described American foreign policy as "a meeting of minds." "Thus," he said, "we achieved substantial unity. Our government did not splinter. It did not default. It was strong in the presence of its adversaries."

At a time when the foreign policy of the United States has suffered major reverses, cooperation between the Executive and Legislative Branches is once again critically important. I am ready to join in an effort to rebuild this historic partnership. But we in the Congress cannot play our constitutional role in developing a coherent foreign policy so long as information to which we are entitled is kept from us and prior consultation is denied us.

In recent years, a pattern of secretive personal diplomacy has come to characterize our relations with other nations. Secret "understandings" -- withheld not only from the Congress but from the then Secretaries of State and Defense -- marked the SALT I negotiations. When Congress was considering the Trade Act of 1974, crucial Soviet-American communications bearing directly on that legislation were withheld -- and to this day those communications on trade have not been disclosed to Congress. And now we have the refusal of the Administration to make known the precise nature and texts of secret understandings reached with South Vietnam in connection with the ill-fated Paris accords.

These events raise profound questions. The Congress must be informed of the details of significant promises made by any President to foreign governments, especially when those promises can involve substantial U.S. military assistance or even the use of American power. Any commitment which relies for its implementation on subsequent Congressional action can hardly reassure an ally when the ally knows that the Congress is unaware of its existence. For any Administration to give a commitment in secret -- because it doubts that the

commitment can gain the consent of the Congress -- is to court a foreign policy disaster. And disaster will come when the secret promise others had counted on cannot be carried through.

Obsessive secrecy has come to surround American diplomacy. And it not only undercuts our foreign policy objectives, it also confuses and distorts our public debate.

The President calls for renewed cooperation with Congress in foreign policy; yet his Administration implies that Congress is to blame for the collapse of the Paris peace accords.

The President addresses the Congress in the language of bipartisanship; the Vice President tells the press that "the rapid advance of Communist takeover... has the makings" of a political issue in 1976.

I say the American people have a right to an Administration that says what it means and means what it says. The American people do not want an Administration which says one thing in public but another in private, one thing "on the record" but another for "deep background," one thing by the Secretary of State but another by the ubiquitous "senior official" who always seems to turn up on the Secretary's airplane.

I believe that the American people want their foreign policy to remain grounded in a confident and hopeful view of the future. Since the end of World War II, we have promoted collective security, we have contributed substantially to the regeneration of democracy and prosperity in Europe, we have helped solidify free institutions in Japan, and we have invested significantly in the social and economic progress of the less-developed world.

The United States is determined to build on these past achievements. Our friends overseas know that America is not about to withdraw from the world. We have always been strongest in times of adversity; our conviction remains undiminished that America must remain strong and steady.

We recognize, first of all, that credible and convincing military strength is fundamental to our freedom and security and to that of our friends. In these times of upheaval and uncertainty around the world, we must maintain a strong and efficient defense capability -- both as a deterrent to aggression and as a basis for a firm and consistent American foreign policy.

I believe we also recognize that the peace of the world will in large measure depend upon a stable Soviet-American strategic balance. Sensible arms limitations can play an important role in achieving this essential stability. But let us be honest with ourselves in evaluating the progress we have thus far made at the SALT talks. If SALT is to be remembered as a major contribution to world peace, it must produce agreements which reduce the strategic forces on both sides.

The November 1974 Vladivostok arms agreement has been surrounded by exaggerated Administration rhetoric that masks a quite limited step. For that agreement does not place a "cap" on the arms race; instead, it lays the basis for a sustained ten-year arms build-up which will cost both sides billions of dollars.

We need a SALT II agreement which builds a foundation for mutual strategic force reductions. I believe this objective is attainable even within the framework of the astonishingly high ceilings agreed to by President Ford at Vladivostok.

Specifically, I have proposed that the Administration seek a supplement to a SALT II treaty which would designate a portion of the forces permitted each side as forces which would remain unmodernized during the life of the agreement. Each side would designate some 700 of the 2,400 strategic delivery vehicles allowed under the Vladivostok accord and agree not to upgrade them in any way.

This simple addition to a Vladivostok treaty would have several immediate benefits: it would save both sides billions of dollars that would otherwise have to be spent on the modernization of obsolete weapons; each side would have a far sounder perspective on what the strategic forces of the other would look like, thereby reducing dangerous uncertainties; and, perhaps most significantly, the 700 weapons which remained unmodernized would become increasingly obsolete and would therefore become the natural candidates for elimination in subsequent negotiations. In short, a provision of the sort I am suggesting would build into SALT a trend toward arms reduction, rather than arms expansion.

I will continue to press this proposal because I believe that we can get it if we try hard enough, and because I believe that it is a reasonable standard against which the Congress can measure the results of the current SALT negotiations.

Now, before responding to your questions, let me just add this:

In his last public speech, Senator Vandenberg underlined the basis of our foreign policy. After expressing pride in the record that the United States "had written in the annals of human history," Senator Vandenberg said:

"We are joined together in a crusade for enduring peace. We grip friendly hands across the sea. We have no enemies unless aggressors nominate themselves as such. Our common cause is human rights, fundamental liberties and a free world of free men."