

ON THE SENATE FLOOR

JUNE 22, 1970

Mr. President:

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As debate on the Foreign Military Sales Act has progressed over the past weeks one point has emerged upon which there has been nearly universal agreement. That point is the superfluous nature and irrelevancy of the so-called Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

The Tonkin Gulf Resolution is inappropriate to today's realities in Southeast Asia. It is a vehicle of escalation and widening involvement, whereas U.S. operations in Southeast Asia are today directed toward de-escalation and reduced involvement in combat. It is the policy device of a previous Administration which sought to expand the American presence in Vietnam; whereas the Nixon Administration has never relied upon nor invoked the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in the formulation and execution of its policy.

The Tonkin Gulf was variously and inconsistently interpreted after its adoption. Some saw it as a purely defensive and narrow-ranged response to a specific incident. Others saw it as a carte blanche mandate with which to enmesh the United States in a full-scale commitment to the South Vietnamese government. Some considered it a virtual declaration of war.

In the wake of these differing interpretations, the Tonkin Gulf resolution now stands as an obsolete and unused vestige of our foreign policy. It has been rejected by the Nixon Administration, and it serves no useful purpose other than as a reminder of its past abuses and their consequences.

Since the resolution was subjected to such abusive interpretation, its presence on the statute books presents a clear and not altogether fanciful danger that some other and equally vexatious reading might be given it in the future.

Recent Senate debate has repeatedly emphasized the responsibility of Congress to assume its obligations in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy. While care should be taken to avoid actions which would appear to limit or transgress upon the President's prerogatives in this field, Congress, the Senate in particular, has a significant role to play in establishing policy objectives and guidelines. By repealing the Tonkin Gulf Resolution we can exercise our powers and fulfill our responsibilities in a positive and meaningful way. Having provided the peg upon which the Vietnam escalation was

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hung, we can make a start at exerting Congressional influence and wisdom by removing that peg and clearing the way for other worthwhile achievements in defining foreign policy and national priorities.

AMENDMENT

Intended to be proposed by Mr. Dole to H.R. 15623, an Act to amend the Foreign Military Sales Act,

viz: At the end of the bill, add the following new section:

Sec. 14. The joint resolution entitled "Joint resolution to promote the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia," approved August 10, 1964 (78 Stat. 384; Public Law 33-403), is terminated effective upon the day that the second session of the Ninety-first Congress is adjourned.