

367

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Floor Statement by
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President Nixon's Address to
The National League of Families

One of the most difficult and frustrating aspects of the war in Indochina is the plight of the nearly 1,500 Americans who are being held as prisoners of war or who are listed as missing in action in North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Countless efforts by this nation and other governments and by many public and private figures throughout the world have met with virtual futility in seeking to assure release, or at the bare minimum, humanitarian treatment, for these brave men. The Nixon Administration has, from the very beginning, devoted every possible resource to achieving these goals --- in Paris at the formal negotiations, through intermediaries and through private channels. The response from the enemy, however, has been duplicitous, contradictory, misleading --- and singularly devoid of any indication that they are willing to discuss prisoners and missing men in good faith.

In and of itself this intransigence and insensitivity on the enemy's part would be disheartening enough to the families of these men and to those who bear the responsibility for leading this nation and attempting to terminate the war in an honorable way which offers hope of rescuing the captives. However, there have been some who have preyed on the anxieties and frustrations of the parents, wives, brothers, sisters and children of the prisoners and missing and upon a war-wearing people's desire for peace. They have said that the President has abandoned the prisoners and that he has rejected possible avenues for their release. They have raised false hopes and made irresponsible charges for the shallow benefits of personal publicity and momentary notoriety.

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DOLE -2-

These charges are false. They are malicious. And they do no service to the 1,476 missing and captive American fighting men, to their families and the leaders in this country, who --- unlike their opportunistic critics --- are charged with the heavy responsibility of providing for the safety and security of this nation and the men who defend it.

Last evening at the annual meeting of the National League of Families of Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, President Nixon clearly and forthrightly stated his commitment to these family members and to their men. So there may be no mistake over that commitment, nor the intensity of the President's devotion to it, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the President's remarks be printed in the record at this point.

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