



NEWS from
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STATEMENT BY SENATOR BOB DOLE

JOINT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE VIETNAM WAR

The American people have endured more than a decade of combat involvement in the Vietnam conflict. Our participation in that war is being ended, but the question still remains, "Why?" How did we become entangled in the first place? What processes, what decisions, what policies lead us into this decade of death, destruction and division?

FULL IMPARTIAL ANSWERS

It is with these thoughts in mind, therefore, that I offer a resolution to create a Joint Committee of the Congress for the purpose of investigating the causes and origins of United States involvement in the Vietnam hostilities.

A Joint Congressional Committee, appointed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate, will, I believe, provide the fairest, most impartial means of providing these answers with all due speed and with the greatest possible concern for serving the public interest.

At hand is a significant opportunity for the Congress to exercise its Constitutional authority and fulfill its responsibility to the American people.

I extend an invitation to my colleagues to join in sponsoring this measure and contribute to furnishing the answers to these questions which are troubling concerned citizens throughout the Nation.

THE FIRST TO DIE

In Saigon, three days before Christmas in 1961, a Specialist 4th Class named James T. Davis left his billet on the street

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called Hai Ba Troung and boarded a truck for a mission into a province bordering on Saigon. Davis was a member of a highly secret intelligence - gathering organization called the 3rd Radio Research Unit. He was called Tom by the men of the unit and he was well-liked. He was 25 years old. He had a wife and a son whom he had never seen back in Tennessee. On December 23, Tom Davis was to be returned to the United States to be discharged.

But on that December 22, he was boarding a truck for one last mission. The unit commander, Colonel William Cochran, passed the truck and told Davis he didn't have to go out -- that it wasn't worth the risk. But Davis didn't like Saigon -- he wanted to take a few more pictures before he went home. And besides, it was his job and if he didn't do it somebody else would have to do it. So he stayed aboard the truck.

On a narrow track in Long An Province, Davis' convoy moved strung out around a curving road, and suddenly Davis' truck was blown off the road. The ARVN guards on the truck were all gunned down from ambush. Davis' body was found with his carbine. The clip was empty, so it was apparent he'd been able to fight back. The stock was broken, which suggested he'd fallen heavily when he was hit. And three days before Christmas they brought his body back to Saigon to send home to Tennessee.

Davis was the first man to die in the Vietnam conflict.

He was number one of a figure which had reached 45,395 as of January 29.

It was said, among his buddies in the 3rd RRU, that Colonel Cochran had put Davis' name in for a Silver Star, and that the Pentagon had replied saying it wasn't authorized because the medal was only given in time of war. No one seemed to know if the story was true, and no one wanted to risk destroying the nice irony of the whole thing by enquiring.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Last December 22, just over a month ago, was the tenth anniversary of that event. Since that event, 56,183 men have died in Southeast Asia. If we had the time, it is probable that each single death could be told as I have told of Tom Davis, and each would show the same elements of chance, of irony, of

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devotion to duty and to America, of loss to loved ones and to this Nation's future.

We cannot know what we have lost in Vietnam, but as President Nixon said a year ago, "There would have been poets among them, and doctors and teachers and farmers. There would have been builders of this Nation."

We cannot know what was lost to America in the last ten years. We cannot recount each single story, and know the pain of what was lost to each of those who paid the supreme sacrifice.

But it seems to me that we can know why.

And it seems to me that we ought to know why.

For despite the motives which led to the loss of those lives, whether those motives be noble or base, despite the judgements which led to such loss, whether those judgements be good or bad, regardless of all this, the loss of these American lives can be redeemed if we learn from these losses lessons that will help bring a lasting peace to this Nation and the world.

WE MUST SEEK LESSONS

We owe it to those who died to seek those lessons. We owe it to their loved ones. We owe it to those who have been crippled and maimed. And most of all we owe it to our children and to their children yet unborn to take from the ashes of death and destruction the flame of understanding which alone can insure that those dead have not died in vain.

World War I began because men refused to recognize the meaning of events, and they were mastered by events. When the war was finished, German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg was asked: "How did it all begin?" And he replied: "Ah, if one only knew."

In the years leading to World War II, America rejected the lessons it might have learned from World War I. From the seeds of ignorance, the world again reaped the whirlwind of war, and a petty tyrant was able to bully his way up to sit forever astride a legacy of horror that staggers the imagination.

In Korea we acted on behalf of freedom to repel aggression, and to leave no doubt of the commitment of the Free World to maintain its freedom. We had learned from World War II not to tempt tyranny with the appearance of weakness. Whether an

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alternative course might have been pursued is academic now. At least we know why we fought; we were not drawn by events and indecision into the war.

Today, we are in Vietnam. Once having been committed, the rightness of our involvement became secondary to the problem of how to get out. Thus, both parties supported the national leadership in its efforts and in its stated goals.

THE LARGER QUESTION

But the larger question today, as the war draws to a close, must go to the beginning of our involvement -- to the days of men like Tom Davis, when our men in Vietnam were called "advisors" and when their number was surreptitiously creeping up and up beyond limits that the American public knew. Our questions must go to such matters as the murders of Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother and how this period set us irrevocably on the road to the tragic loss, diminution, or disruption of so many lives, both American and Vietnamese.

When the battle flags are brought home, and America has recovered her sons, and the question is asked, "How did it all begin," a moral people simply cannot reply with weary indifference, "Ah, if one only knew."

We must know. We have paid bitterly for whatever wisdom there may be in this longest war. And if from that wisdom, we may get peace and reconciliation -- if by that wisdom we may prevent the loss of other, future lives, then should we not seek that wisdom?

I think we must.

Let us act not to condemn nor to condone the actions of the past. Let us rather seek simply to learn from those actions so that the seeds of sacrifice shall not have fallen on barren ground to be blown away in the winds of another war.

JOINT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

JOINT RESOLUTION -- By Senator Bob Dole (R.Kansas)

To establish a joint congressional committee to investigate the causes and origins of United States involvement in the hostilities in Vietnam.

Whereas Congress has in the past undertaken investigations to determine the causes of United States involvement in World War I, World War II, and the Korean Conflict;

Whereas complete and accurate information concerning United States involvement in the hostilities in Vietnam is not available because (A) the series "Foreign Relations of the United States", containing documents concerning the policy of the United States toward Vietnam, has been prepared only through 1946, and (B) the Department of Defense study "United States - Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967", known as the "Pentagon Papers" has not been fully disclosed and does not represent a thorough or independent review of such involvement; and

Whereas the people of the United States have a right to full disclosure of all information concerning the background, origins, and causes of United States involvement in the hostilities in Vietnam: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That (a) there is established a joint congressional committee to be known as the Joint Committee on the Causes and Origins of United States Involvement in the Vietnam Hostilities (hereafter referred to as the "joint committee").

(b) The joint committee shall be composed of the following 14 members:

(1) 7 Members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, 4 of whom shall be members of the majority party and 3 of whom shall be members of the minority party; and

(2) 7 Members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker, 4 of whom shall be members of the majority party and 3 of whom shall be members of the minority party.

(c) The joint committee shall select a Chairman and a Vice Chairman from among its members. Eight members of the joint committee shall constitute a quorum, except that the joint committee may prescribe a lesser number of members to constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting hearings. Any vacancy in the membership of the joint committee shall not affect its authority, and shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

DUTY OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

Sec. 2 (a) It shall be the duty of the joint committee to conduct a thorough study and investigation of--

(1) the actions of each President and administration relating to Vietnam since 1945, and the effects of such actions on the commitment of the United States to the Republic of Vietnam;

(2) the foreign policy assumptions of each such President and administration relating to Vietnam, with special emphasis on the United States view of the objectives of Communist China and the Soviet Union world-wide and in Southeast Asia and how this may have affected United States involvement in Vietnam;

(3) the diplomatic policy of the United States relating to Vietnam since 1945 and the influence of such policy on the United States commitment to the Republic of Vietnam;

(4) changes in United States military and strategic concepts and doctrines, since 1945 and how military concepts and doctrines affected the United States military role in Vietnam; and

(5) Executive-Congressional relations in the context of United States involvement in Vietnam, and the manner in which the overall pattern of the Executive-Congressional relationship on foreign policy matters since 1945 affected Congressional and Executive actions with respect to Vietnam.

(b) Not later than September 6, 1972, the joint committee shall transmit to each House of the Congress a report which shall contain its findings and conclusions. Upon the transmittal of such report, the joint committee shall cease to exist.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

Sec. 3. (a) The joint committee, or any subcommittee thereof, is authorized, in its discretion (1) to make expenditures, (2) to employ personnel, (3) to adopt rules respecting its organization and procedures, (4) to hold hearings, (5) to sit and act at any time or place, (6) to subpoena witnesses and documents, (7) with the prior consent of the agency concerned, to use on a reimbursable basis the services

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of personnel, information, and facilities of any such agency, (8) to procure printing and bindings, (9) to procure the temporary or intermittent services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof, in the same manner and under the same conditions as a standing committee of the Senate may procure such services under subsection (i) of section 202 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, and (10) to take depositions and other testimony.

(b) Subpenas may be issued over the signature of the chairman of the joint committee or by any member designated by him or the joint committee, and may be served by such person as may be designated by such Chairman or member. The Chairman of the joint committee or any member thereof may administer oaths to witnesses.

(c) Upon the request of the joint committee each department, agency, and instrumentality of the executive branch of the Government is authorized and directed to furnish to the joint committee such reports, documents, and information as the joint committee deems necessary to carry out its duty under this joint resolution.

(d) The expenses of the joint committee shall be paid from the contingent fund of the Senate upon vouchers approved by the Chairman of the joint committee or by any member of the joint committee duly authorized by the Chairman.