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WICHITA.....Congressman Bob Dole (R-Ks), speaking to the Cosmopolitan Club in Wichita today at noon, stated that, in his opinion, the overpowering issue of the day continues to be the war in Vietnam. Dole stated, "The vast majority of Americans are confused and frustrated, but prayerfully hoping for a negotiated settlement leading to an early and honorable end of the war. I doubt," Dole said, "the North Vietnamese nor their supporters, the Russians and the Chinese Communists, will make any real effort to settle the war prior to the November elections."

Congressman Dole stated that he felt there were two things that could be accomplished soon:

(1) "Training of the South Vietnamese soldier should be accelerated and then they should be used as replacements for American troops. This war has become an American war and, in my opinion, the time is long past due for the South Vietnamese to bear a greater share of the burden. Young Americans are being drafted to fight in Vietnam while South Vietnamese of the same age, by and large, escape military service entirely. For example, as soon as 50,000 South Vietnamese troops are trained and combat ready, they should replace 50,000 Americans and the 50,000 Americans should be returned home.

(2) "There is some little evidence, such as the release of American prisoners and the reduced shelling of Saigon, that the enemy in South Vietnam may eventually be willing to negotiate a settlement. Perhaps in the near future bombing could be further reduced if this can be done without endangering the lives of Americans in Vietnam. If there is one scintilla of evidence of good faith on the part of the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, then a further response on our part could bring about meaningful negotiations."

Dole concluded that "the war in Vietnam has become the greatest American tragedy of the century. It seems senseless," he said, "to continue the slaughter and the sooner a cease fire begins, the better."