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SENATE STATEMENT BY SENATOR BOB DOLE

VIETNAM IN THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President, Yesterday the Communist government of Vietnam scored a major symbolic victory in gaining the U.N. Security Council's approval for membership in the United Nations. The active participation by our own U.N. Delegation in the approval is the latest step in the Carter Administration's efforts to normalize relations with Vietnam. The significance of that move lies in its departure from previous U.S. policy opposing United Nations membership for Vietnam until it cooperated in accounting for missing American servicemen.

I have no objection to "putting the past behind us," as President Carter so often phrases it. But when it comes to cooperation in accounting for American MIA's, the Vietnamese seem intent upon perpetuating the past. I have seen no efforts on their part to put the past behind them. Instead, they continue to hammer upon a U.S. aid "obligation" stemming from our involvement in the recent war.

In an appearance Tuesday before the House International Relations Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific affairs, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger referred to Vietnamese claims as "an absurdity" and "an insult." I fully agree with his assessment that Vietnamese Communist officials forfeited whatever hope they might have had for reconstruction aid when they violated the 1973 Peace Agreement and launched the invasion of the Republic of Vietnam. Secretary Kissinger maintained that he "would not even consider reconstruction aid until we have a full accounting" for missing Americans in Southeast Asia, and I believe the majority of our citizens feel the same way.

LITTLE PROGRESS IN ACCOUNTING

In the last two years, the Vietnamese have accounted for 35 missing Americans within their territory, of the several hundred still listed by the Defense Department as Missing in Action there. The House Select Committee on MIA's reported late last year that it is reasonable to believe the Vietnamese could account for more than 150 of the missing. Yet we seem to be proceeding "full speed ahead" in our normalization efforts, without due regard to the progress on the accounting issue.

Secretary Kissinger, who had numerous contacts with the Vietnamese during his tenure with the Department, advised that Hanoi's leaders "could not believe that the Congress was not a docile instrument of the Administration." Their understanding of American government was naive and simplistic. Yet, it is sometimes easy to see where they get that impression. It is frustrating to me to see Congressional efforts blunted which seek to hold Vietnam responsible for an accounting of our servicemen.

Recently, an amendment I offered to discourage aid to Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia by international monetary organizations passed the Senate on a strong vote of 58 to 32. It would have required U.S. delegates to those organizations to vote "no" on loan applications by these countries, and would have authorized a reduction in U.S. contributions to a monetary organization which granted such aid over our objections. The intent was to keep some pressure on the Vietnamese, the Laotians, and the Cambodians to cooperate in further accounting efforts. A similar amendment had passed the House of Representatives, attached to a different measure.

The amendment was reported from Conference Committee on Tuesday of this week in a substantially modified form that does not really reflect the will of either the Senate or House. It directs the monetary institutions to "consider" the responsiveness of the Asian governments on the accounting issue when loan requests are reviewed. This modification, of course, deletes any real force from the measure.

Mr. President, I am convinced that the Vietnamese can do better in their accounting efforts. I am convinced the United States government can do better in persuading the Vietnamese to cooperate. With each additional provision of aid or recognition, the Vietnamese have less incentive to cooperate. For this reason, I regret American participation in approving Vietnam's U.N. membership at this time, and I will continue to oppose formal recognition or aid of any kind until we see much better success in accounting for our MIA's.