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MARCH 27, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have signed H.R. 4592 (the Foreign Assistance and Related Programs Appropriation Act of 1975) with considerable misgivings. The considerable reductions in overseas assistance programs -- which the Congress authorized only three months ago -- could prove detrimental to American interests at home and abroad.

The Administration sought appropriations that would reflect the same spirit of constructive compromise that characterized our cooperative efforts in December. I continue to believe that the interests of the United States in an increasingly interdependent community of nations require our purposeful and responsible participation. Such participation is impossible if the Administration's best estimates of a balanced foreign assistance program are subjected to reductions of these drastic dimensions.

I am disappointed that harmful cuts were inflicted in both the development and security assistance sectors. Interdependence applies not only to the present political and economic realities of America's role in the global community, but also to the various modes of foreign assistance which we employ in our foreign policy. Programs of a humanitarian or developmental nature cannot be productive if our friends and allies are unable to defend themselves.

In the areas of humanitarian and development assistance, the \$200 million reduction in food and nutrition funds renders our efforts to alleviate world hunger all the more difficult. The significant reduction in population planning funds will hamper initiatives related to this important factor in the long-term global food and health situation. I deeply regret the action of the Congress in reducing the request for Indochina Postwar Reconstruction funds by over one half -- from \$939 million to \$440 million. At this crucial time, our friends in Vietnam and Cambodia are under heavy attack on the battlefield and must cope with enormous refugee problems.

I am also disappointed that the request for our voluntary contribution to international organizations and programs has been severely reduced. The impact of this reduction will be felt in the lessening of our financial support to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Our deep involvement in the UNDP over the years has been seen by many nations as symbolic of our commitment to work through multilateral as well as bilateral channels to assist the developing world.

In the area of security assistance, I am disappointed in the massive reduction in funding for the Military Assistance Program. The program funds authorized by the Congress would have been barely adequate in terms of

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supplying needed military materiel to a small group of friendly countries unable to assume a greater financial share of their security burden through credit or cash purchases. However, the appropriation of less than half of this sum has jeopardized these critical programs. Simultaneously cutting its appropriations for foreign military sales credits accentuates the difficulties created by the deep cuts in the military assistance program.

Finally, I am troubled because reductions in the overall quantity and quality of our development and security assistance programs will occur at precisely the time when America's assistance is vitally needed. I fervently hope that the Congress will give urgent attention to the interlocking relationship of America's present problems at home and abroad and provide future funding that will be commensurate with our stated principles and national self-interest.

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