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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

I am returning, without my approval, H.R. 12, a bill to provide for the protection of foreign diplomatic missions and to increase the size of the Executive Protective Service.

I am in agreement with the primary objective of H.R. 12 -- to increase the size of the Executive Protective Service to enable it to more effectively fulfill its responsibility under current law. I am also mindful of the need to assure adequate protection of foreign diplomats and missions. However, I am unable to sign this bill because it would unwisely extend the purpose and functions of the Executive Protective Service and would create a precedent that could erode current and proper distinctions between Federal and local law enforcement responsibilities.

Protection of foreign diplomatic officials and missions is an established part of the overall responsibility of local law enforcement agencies to protect individuals and property within their respective jurisdictions. The conditions under which EPS personnel could be assigned outside the Washington, D.C., area under the enrolled bill are unwarranted and unwise. Although I realize that the Congress has limited these circumstances to only seven metropolitan areas and to situations of extraordinary protective need, I am concerned that this bill would be but a first step toward a permanent and wider expansion of the role of EPS nationally.

When the Congress enacted Public Law 91-217, which established the EPS in 1970 and authorized the President to assign officers of the Service to areas outside Washington, D.C., on a case-by-case basis to safeguard foreign missions, it made its intention clear concerning the wise exercise of that authority. The House Committee on Public Works in its report on that legislation emphasized that:

> "This authority extends only to situations of extraordinary gravity, where the local police force is totally incapable of providing a level of protection deemed essential to the international integrity of the U.S., or where the protection of the President himself, for example, would be involved. This additional authority is not, and may not be construed to be, a substitute for the responsibility of local police forces to provide protection for consulates, the United Nations, and similar foreign delegations within the U.S." (House Committee on Public Works report on H.R. 14944, December 8, 1969).

I agree fully with that statement.

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H.R. 12 would also authorize the Secretary of the Treasury to reimburse State and local governments for provision of protective and other services to foreign missions and visiting officials, in lieu of providing those services directly by the Executive Protective Service. A maximum of $3.5 million annually would be authorized to be appropriated for that purpose. This authority, too, would set an unwise and potentially very expensive precedent. It would inevitably lead to pressures to reimburse State and local governments for other local services provided to foreign missions and perhaps even for protection of the President and Presidential candidates. Moreover, reimbursements to State and local governments for protective assistance, which is a historic part of their duty under our Federal system of government, are contrary to the cooperative nature of law enforcement in the United States.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,
November 29, 1975

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