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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 26, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

VIA:

ROBERT HARTMANN

FROM:

PAUL THEIS

SUBJECT:

VETERANS DAY SPEECH

MR-7

Attached is the veterans speech for Monday which has been checked and cleared by the following:

1. The Research Office
2. OMB (Paul O'Neill)
3. Domestic Council (James Cavanaugh)
4. NSC (General Scowcroft)
5. Public Liaison Office (Bill Baroody and Ted Mars)
6. Bob Hartmann

At the bottom of page 6, last paragraph, there is an insert statement on the VA report stating "which I have carefully studied." If you haven't had a chance to go over that report, you may want to knock out that phrase.

Attachment

Leave in comment

VETERANS DAY ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT, MONDAY, OCTOBER 28,
1974

Mr. Holt, Mr. Smith, Sergeant Litrell, distinguished representatives of America's veterans organizations and their auxiliaries, my fellow Americans:

Today is a special day for all Americans. But to those of us who are veterans ourselves, it has an added meaning. Memories come back of families and old comrades -- of distant days and places from the past. Some of those friends are still with us, sharing in the challenges of peace, just as they did their duty in wartime. Others we shall never see again. But they, especially, are here with us in spirit, in the shadow of the Tomb of the Unknowns.

We are here today, and we are free today, because for nearly two hundred years, whenever our freedom has been threatened, gallant men and women have answered the call. From all branches of

service, they risked and sometimes gave their lives for this Nation.

We owe more than we can ever repay to the veterans of all wars in which this Nation has been involved. But today I want to emphasize our debt to the Vietnam veterans.

They served in spite of the most difficult psychological pressures. They served at a time when many of their peers and their elders were denouncing service to one's country as immoral. They served while some avoided service.

They served without the full moral support that this Nation has usually given its fighting forces.

Nevertheless, the veterans of the Vietnam generation served with high professional competence, with courage and with honor. America has a deep moral obligation to these fine men and women. As they served us in war, so must we serve them in peace.

As they protected our freedom and prosperity, so must we see to it that they participate fully in the benefits that our system offers.

It has been said that the forgotten men of the Vietnam conflict are those who served. They are the silent heroes of their generation. Too often, those who failed in their duty have ~~hogged~~ ^{monopolized} the headlines and distorted the image of their generation. I intend to see that the silent heroes, the more than six and a half million Americans who served their country in the Vietnam era with quiet courage, are not forgotten. I intend to make certain as well that the men missing in action are not forgotten -- and, to their families and friends I make this pledge: I will do everything possible to resolve the uncertainty of their status.

It should be a source of pride to all of us that this country is now providing higher education and training to one and a quarter million veterans of the Vietnam era. But, like all of us, they are feeling the pinch of inflation and feeling it badly. With this in mind, the Administration has proposed ^{* will range of} that their benefits be increased to keep up with the cost of living.

* address by President on another cy of speech

I am particularly concerned, however, with the plight of the young veteran without a job -- especially if he is disabled or a member of a minority group. For several months now, a special interagency task force has been at work developing a program to meet his needs. My assistants have met with representatives of a number of Vietnam veterans organizations at the White House and elsewhere to get their views and opinions.

This task force has submitted to me a Jobs for Veterans Plan of Action, with the objective of recruiting and hiring into Government at least 70,000 Vietnam era veterans during fiscal year 1975. I am ordering Federal departments and agencies to move, and move now, on this action plan to make sure these veterans are hired as quickly as possible.

I am happy to report that important progress is already being made. Unemployment among veterans had dropped since its peak in 1971.

The National Alliance of Businessmen deserves much of the credit for this. They have mounted an effective private sector job program for veterans. They have set high goals and met them. This coming year they hope to provide 200,000 jobs for veterans, including the placement of 7,500 disabled veterans. They are doing a magnificent job, and they deserve the admiration, respect and cooperation of all Americans.

We have another major moral commitment to the American veteran. It is, as Lincoln put it, "to care for him who shall have borne the battle." To do so, America has created one of the largest, most comprehensive government health systems in the world -- our Veterans Administration hospitals and clinics.

On the whole, the Veterans Administration has done a fine job under very difficult circumstances. Despite repeated and often complicated changes in the laws governing veterans' health benefits, despite the many complex new developments in medicine itself and despite nearly 1.8 million applications for care in fiscal year 1974 alone, the VA is providing the latest and best possible treatment to veterans ranging all the way from major surgery to dental care.

In a special survey completed July 31st, which I have carefully studied, the whole range of VA assets and liabilities was reviewed.

And I am frank to admit that real problems exist. Overcrowding is one problem in some facilities. At some hospitals, patients have to wait longer than they should to receive treatment. Attracting and holding medical professionals and support personnel is another problem.

But the study also discovered through polling that 80 percent of the VA's patients felt that their doctors were giving them the best possible care and that the hospital employees were dedicated people who treated them with respect and understanding. Eighty percent also said that if they needed hospital care again, they would want to come back to the same hospital. That is a pretty impressive vote of confidence from the veterans themselves.

By and large, the report concludes that, in general, VA medicine is first-rate. Where problems still exist, I have asked VA Administrator Dick Roudebush to let me know what is needed to eliminate these problems. I am determined to do everything I can to make

a good system even better -- to make sure the veterans receive the best possible treatment. Dick Roudebush understands veterans' problems and has the legislative experience it will take to work with the Congress as well as ^{with} the Administration and veterans organizations in meeting this challenge.

In difficult times, our veterans of all ages kept the faith with us. They kept America free and enabled us to keep faith with the free world. On this historic day, let us resolve anew to keep the faith with them.

One of the first and greatest men to serve the American flag was George Washington -- and he left behind an eloquent warning. "To be prepared for war," he said, "is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace."

More than once in our history, we have forgotten that warning and, each time, we have paid a heavy toll in human suffering.

As a young man in the 1930's, I remember the isolationism that blinded so many Americans to the menace of Hitler's Germany and its totalitarian allies. Most of us thought that the vast oceans would somehow insulate our country. We thought we could go it alone. But we had a rude awakening on December 7, 1941.

Then a young generation of Americans witnessed firsthand the devastation of World War II and vowed never again to repeat the mistakes of the twenties and thirties.

We vowed to keep America strong. Never again would our weakness invite attack. And we built an international network of mutual security so that the strength and solidarity of the Free World would

deter any adversaries from aggression.

During the past decade, our whole fundamental policy of mutual security and strength has come under sharp attack. I do not intend on this occasion to go into a detailed justification of our entire post World War II national security policy. I do point out, however, that in terms of its original, fundamental objectives, it has been successful.

And we have succeeded in something more. We have managed to build a better world. The economic aid that went into our mutual security program built strong allies and strong, prosperous trading partners.

Encouraging new developments in our relations with both allies and potential adversaries have raised the hope that finally, after so many unwanted wars and so much tragic suffering, mankind may finally be on the path to a lasting peace.

If this is so -- and I believe it is -- no one deserves more credit than our veterans. And nothing will do more to insure peace than a continued policy of national strength.

The markers over the graves of the known and unknown whom we salute here today stand as silent sentinels to nearly 200 years of sacrifice and freedom. The men and women with us here today whom we honor for the uniforms they once wore stand as attentive guardians of this Nation which Lincoln once aptly described as "The last, best hope of earth."

Let us make sure the debt we owe to so many is honored.

Let this Veterans Day strengthen our resolve to always walk the extra mile for peace, but always to walk it strong and unafraid -- for without a mighty America no peace can long survive.

Mr. President: ^{10/27}
a reminder ^{2nd} to PR7
call Paul Millich
tonight. v/a
Steve Todd