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VETERANS DAY ADDRESS

ARLINGTON CEMETARY

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1974

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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 UNKNOWNNS.

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
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 THAT THEIR WIDE-RANGE OF BENEFITS BE INCREASED TO KEEP UP WITH THE COST OF LIVING.

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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 HAS
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 V.A. 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 V.A. 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 TOP QUALITY MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL IS ANOTHER PROBLEM.

BUT THE STUDY ALSO DISCOVERED THROUGH POLLING THAT
80 PERCENT OF THE V.A.'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,
V.A. MEDICINE IS FIRST-RATE. WHERE PROBLEMS STILL EXIST,
I HAVE ASKED V.A. 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.

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