

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 7, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Two years have passed since the last American troops left Vietnam. Shortly after our withdrawal, draft inductions were terminated. We established an All-Volunteer Armed Force with the highest pay in history. For the first time, the Nation's youth could look to the military for jobs fully competitive with civilian job alternatives.

America is no longer at war. But peacetime military volunteers have remained fully eligible for all the wartime veteran benefits designed to reward those who entered service during the period of actual hostilities in Vietnam.

The time has now come to terminate wartime benefits which apply to the new peacetime volunteers. This is consistent with action taken by earlier Presidents in ending wartime veterans benefits after World War II and the Korean Conflict.

Today, therefore, I have issued a Proclamation terminating on May 7, 1975, the eligibility period for those Vietnam war benefits that the President is empowered by law to end. At the same time, I am submitting appropriate legislation to the Congress requesting the termination of the eligibility period for G.I. Bill education and training benefits -- an action that is solely the prerogative of the Congress.

These actions primarily concern future peacetime volunteers who are neither disabled nor die in service. I want to emphasize that the termination actions will in no manner impair the eligibility for full wartime benefits of the more than 7 million Vietnam-era veterans already discharged, or those presently serving in our Armed Forces.

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Future veterans disabled in service will continue to receive Veterans Administration compensation and other service-connected benefits on an absolute par with present wartime benefits. Families of those who die in service will receive the same service-connected benefits available to families of veterans of wartime service.

The period between the cessation of hostilities and the termination of eligibility for wartime veterans' benefits has already extended longer in the case of Vietnam than for any prior war. For virtually all of our World War I military personnel, the benefit eligibility period ended with the November 11, 1918, Armistice. For World War II veterans, eligibility was terminated on most benefits December 31, 1946, some 16 months after the surrender of Japan. A Proclamation by President Eisenhower established a January 31, 1955, termination date for most of the Korean Conflict benefits. The Proclamation followed the signing of the Korean Armistice by 18 months.

I believe the actions I have taken today make an equitable distinction between those who serve in time of war and those who serve in time of peace. These actions also guard the Nation against unwarranted future expenditures and will result in cumulative savings of \$1.5 billion over the next five years after termination.

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