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Press Conference - Wilmington, Delaware - Statement on Calley Case

Edmund S. Muskie

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To: Andrea
From: Pam

Log in.

Statement on Calley

as dictated by Andrea at L. Street

(so this is a rough draft)

Wilmington
March 31
news conf.

Q: What are your views on the Calley case...
Muskie: Yes, everybody is. I was not aware of it. Of course the Calley case itself, his guilt or innocence, is still in the judicial process and I wouldn't want to comment on those aspects of it. He still has ~~several~~ several avenues of appeal open to him and I would assume that he would take one or more of them, as is his right, and that's where the question of his guilt or innocence ought to be resolved.

I think, however, that out of the Calley case come broader questions that are more visible as a result of that verdict than before, and that's the question of the morality of our involvement in South Vietnam. I suppose the Calley case arises out of the fact that this is a guerilla war, a character of a guerilla war, the pressures that it imposes upon soldiers who are beset by enemies difficult to identify, who come from directions that are unpredictable; and it's understandable that soldiers reacting to the threat of the enemy under these kind of circumstances under a different situation than they were in the European part of the ~~world~~ in World War II and World War I.

This kind of Guerilla war ~~also involves~~ has also prompted us to use other tactics in conducting the war which raise moral questions. Saturated bombing to get at guerillas difficult to get ~~x~~ on the ground inevitably involves civilian deaths on a wide scale. ~~There~~ They're not visible to those who snuff out their lives but they're just as dead. And it's ~~inevitable~~ inevitable part of this kind of guerilla warfare. I hope out of this that we at least reach the conclusion that we ought never to get involved in this kind of ~~warfare~~ warfare in a country outside of our own borders, which involves this kind of question, and I find it difficult to conceive of our ~~vital~~ real interests being involved in such a war to the extent that we ought to get involved.

So if there is a moral questions involved in the Calley case, then certainly a similar question exists with respect to our conduct of the war generally, especially to the use of air power and a similar question exists with respect to our involvement in the first instance.