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## **Press Release - Era of Negotiation: Part One**

Edmund S. Muskie

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FROM THE OFFICE OF  
SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE  
221 Senate Office Building  
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V. nam  
FOR RELEASE  
10:00 a.m., Thursday  
March 26, 1970

ERA OF NEGOTIATION? (PART I)

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) today asked the Nixon Administration to answer some "hard questions" about its failure to make a "semblance of an effort to negotiate a peace settlement" in the Vietnam war. In the first of a planned series of speeches on the Floor of the Senate, Muskie noted that "the most the Administration is planning, and the best it can achieve under 'Vietnamization' is to have 225,000 troops left in Vietnam at the end of 1971—21 months from now."

Muskie pointed out that it has been 126 days since Henry Cabot Lodge resigned as United States Ambassador to the Paris Vietnam peace talks, and no replacement has been named. "While the charade of talks goes on, the war continues in Vietnam and threatens to spread to other parts of Southeast Asia. Laos is a battle-ground and Cambodia is in turmoil."

Muskie said he intends "to raise the question about a negotiated end to the war in Vietnam each week in the Senate, until a successor to Mr. Lodge has been named and until some meaningful steps have been taken toward a settlement in Paris."

In his remarks, Muskie posed the following questions to the Nixon Administration:

"Mr President, what is the Administration trying to convey by this unfortunate diplomatic-protocol gap in Paris?

"Is it so pleased with the progress and future of Vietnamization that it feels that the whole conflict can be settled to our satisfaction by force? Or does it feel that the reduced but still enormous U. S. troop presence in the South is inadequate to let us speak effectively to Hanoi or Saigon, to get them to resolve their differences by negotiation?

"What has the Administration done to get Saigon to send to Paris a representative both able and willing to negotiate?

"How does the Administration propose to deal with the related instability and conflict in Laos and Cambodia?

"Is the Administration so certain, in the face of some contrary evidence, that Hanoi's position in Paris is one of total intransigence? Even if the Administration is so convinced, does this mean it has no obligation to probe and to try? Does it believe the tough bargaining necessary to achieve a negotiated end to the war isn't worth the time of a top-level appointment as our chief negotiator in Paris?

"Has the Administration written off negotiations? If not, what are its preconditions for resuming meaningful negotiations? Is it, in effect, asking North Vietnam to surrender?

"Is the Administration playing a game where the next move can be made only by the other side?

"Have we given up the initiative toward peace to the other side?

"I raise these questions, Mr. President, because they must be answered if we are to know what the Administration's real intentions are with respect to Vietnam and the rest of South east Asia. We have been told that the Administration has a plan for peace in Vietnam, but the hard questions remain.

"I believe the American people have a right to get answers to those questions, and I intend to raise them each week until they are answered."

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