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STATEMENT BY SEN. EDMUND S. MUSKIE (D-ME.)
ON HALTING THE BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM
DECEMBER 28, 1971

Over three years ago, President Johnson ended the bombing of North Vietnam. He did so in recognition that this tragic conflict could only be settled through negotiation and political compromise.

Almost four years ago, in his campaign for the Republican nomination, President Nixon announced that he had "a plan to end the war and win the peace." Yet today we find that any real effort at serious negotiation has been abandoned, and that his plan for peace contemplates a residual American military presence for the indefinite future. And now, as part of a program which perpetuates the war through "Vietnamization", American planes are engaged in new massive bombing attacks in North Vietnam, while continuing the aerial devastation of Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam.

This is wrong. It is wrong for us and for our national interest. It is wrong for the long-suffering people of Indochina. It exposes the bankruptcy of President Nixon's "Vietnamization" policy.

We should now set three goals:

To end all American military involvement in Indochina;

To bring home all our military personnel, including those now held captive;

To do everything within our power to encourage and expedite a political settlement that will put an end to the fighting and the dying.

The resumption and intensification of our air war against North Vietnam serves none of these objectives. It increases our military involvement in the air even as ground forces are being reduced. It brings our prisoners of war no closer to freedom but only adds to the list of those held captive in North Vietnam. It makes impossible any meaningful

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negotiations in Paris or elsewhere to secure the release of American prisoners and to seek the means for political accommodation.

Efforts are made to justify this escalation by charging North Vietnamese violations of the 1968 understandings which led to the bombing halt. But military actions on both sides during the past year, including over 100 strikes by U.S. bombers against the North, make this a hollow excuse.

Our present policy in Vietnam is a dangerous one and a futile one. The way to peace in Vietnam is not through increased bombing of North Vietnam to maintain and protect a residual military force indefinitely in South Vietnam. The way to peace is through negotiations in Paris. I am convinced that an agreement can be made with the North Vietnamese and the NLF that would end our involvement in this war completely and permanently by our setting a date for our withdrawal and a date for the return of our prisoners. I believe that this action would create the climate in which a negotiated end to all the fighting could be achieved.

At this time, I call upon President Nixon to change our country's policy.

I call upon him to stop the bombing of North Vietnam.

I call upon him to resume genuine negotiations and to set a date for our complete withdrawal so that our tragic involvement in this war, and the war itself, can be brought to an end.

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