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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 13, 1984

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT DEDICATION OF VIETNAM MEMORIAL STATUE

November 11, 1984

Vietnam Memorial
Washington, D.C.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Warner, thank you very much. And may I thank you also for the crucial personal support that you gave to the building of this Memorial.

I extend the thanks of the nation also to all who have contributed so much to this fine cause.

Ladies and gentlemen, honored guests, my remarks today will be brief because so much has been said over the years and said so well about the loyalty and the valor of those who served us in Vietnam. It's occurred to me that only one very important thing has been left unsaid, and I will try to speak of it today.

It's almost ten years now since U.S. military involvement in Vietnam came to a close. Two years ago, our government dedicated the Memorial bearing the names of those who died or are still missing. Every day, the families and friends of those brave men and women come to the wall and search out a name and touch it.

The Memorial reflects as a mirror reflects, so that when you find the name you're searching for, you find it in your own reflection. And as you touch it, from certain angles, you're touching, too, the reflection of the Washington Monument or the chair in which great Abe Lincoln sits.

Those who fought in Vietnam are part of us, part of our history. They reflected the best in us. No number of wreaths, no amount of music and memorializing will ever do them justice. But it is good for us that we honor them and their sacrifice. And it's good that we do it in the reflected glow of the enduring symbols of our Republic.

The fighting men depicted in the statue we dedicate today, the three young American servicemen, are individual only in times, of -- or in terms of their battle dress. All are as one, with eyes fixed upon the Memorial bearing the names of their brothers in arms. On their youthful faces, faces too young to have experienced war, we see expressions of loneliness and profound love and a fierce determination never to forget.

The men of Vietnam answered the call of their country. Some of them died in the arms of many of you here today, asking you to look after a newly born child or care for a loved one. They died uncomplaining. The tears staining their mud-caked faces were not for self-pity, but for the sorrow they knew the news of their death would cause their families and friends.

As you knelt alongside his litter and held him one last time, you heard his silent message -- he asked you not to forget.

Today, we pay homage not only to those who gave their lives, but to their comrades present today and all across the country. You didn't forget. You kept the faith. You walked from the litter, wiped away your tears, and returned to the battle. You fought on, sustained by one another and deaf to the voices of those

MORE

who didn't comprehend. You performed with a steadfastness and valor that veterans of other wars salute, and you are forever in the ranks of that special number of Americans in every generation that the nation records as true patriots.

Also among the servicemen and women honored here today is a unique group of Americans whose fate is still unknown to our nation and to their families. Nearly 2500 of the names on this Memorial are still missing in Southeast Asia, and some may still be serving.

Q They are.

THE PRESIDENT: Their names are distinguished by a cross rather than the diamond. Thus, this Memorial is a symbol of both past and current sacrifice.

The war in Vietnam threatened to tear our society apart. And the political and philosophical disagreements that animated each side continue to some extent.

It's been said that these memorials reflect a hunger for healing. Well, I do not know if perfect healing ever occurs. But I know that sometimes when a bone is broken, if it's knit together well, it will in the end be stronger than if it had not been broken.

I believe that in the decade since Vietnam the healing has begun. And I hope that before my days as Commander in Chief are over the process will be completed.

There were great moral and philosophical disagreements about the rightness of the war. And we cannot forget them because there is no wisdom to be gained in forgetting. But we can forgive each other and ourselves for those things that we now recognize may have been wrong. And I think it's time we did.

There's been much rethinking by those who did not serve and those who did. There's been much rethinking by those who held strong views on the war and by those who did not know which view was right. There's been rethinking on all sides, and this is good. And it's time we moved on in unity and with resolve -- with the resolve to always stand for freedom as those who fought did, and to always try to protect and preserve the peace.

And we must in unity work to account for those still missing and aid those returned who still suffer from the pain and memory of Vietnam. (Applause.) We must as a society take guidance from the fighting men memorialized by this statue. The three servicemen are watchful, ready and challenged, but they are also standing forever together.

And let me say to the Vietnam veterans gathered here today: When you returned home, you brought solace to the loved ones of those who fell, but little solace was given to you. Some of your countrymen were unable to distinguish between our native distaste for war and the stainless patriotism of those who suffered its scars.

But there's been a rethinking there, too. And now we can say to you and say as a nation, thank you for your courage. Thank you for being patient with your countrymen. (Applause.) Thank you.

Thank you for continuing to stand with us together. The men and women of Vietnam fought for freedom in a place where liberty was in danger. They put their lives in danger to help a people in a land far away from their own. Many sacrificed their lives in the name of duty, honor and country. All were patriots who lit the world with their fidelity and courage.

They were both our children and our heroes. We will never ever forget them. We will never forget their devotion and their sacrifice. They stand before us, marching into time and into shared memory forever. May God bless their souls.

Now, I shall sign the document by which this memorial has been gratefully received by our government. (Applause.)

(The document is signed.) (Applause.)

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you very, very much.

THE PRESIDENT -- and now it belongs to all of us, just as those men who have come back belong to all of us. Thank you. (Applause.)

END

R/K 6/6

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 9, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR BEN ELLIOTT
DEPUTY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
AND DIRECTOR OF SPEECHWRITING

FROM: PETER J. RUSTHOVEN *PJR*
ASSOCIATE COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Draft Presidential Remarks for the
Ceremony at Vietnam Veterans Memorial

This will confirm, as I discussed with Peggy Noonan this afternoon, that our office has reviewed the above-referenced draft remarks and, aside from the point noted below, has no legal or other substantive objection to them.

The President will not be signing "on behalf of the people of the United States" the agreement conveying the Memorial. Instead, he will be signing simply as a witness to the signature of Secretary of the Interior Clark, who will be the official actually signing the agreement for the Government. Accordingly, the last sentence of the remarks should be revised so that it does not indicate that the President is officially signing on behalf of the United States.

cc: Richard G. Darman

WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING WORKSHEET

☐ O - OUTGOING☐ H - INTERNAL☐ I - INCOMINGDate Correspondence
Received (YY/MM/DD) _____Name of Correspondent: Richard Darman☐ MI Mail Report

User Codes: (A) _____ (B) _____ (C) _____

Subject: Remarks: Ceremony at Vietnam
Veterans Memorial

ROUTE TO:

ACTION

DISPOSITION

Office/Agency (Staff Name)	Action Code	Tracking Date YY/MM/DD	Type of Response	Code	Completion Date YY/MM/DD
<u>CHH</u>	ORIGINATOR	<u>84.11.09</u>			<u>1 1</u>
<u>CHH 09</u>	Referral Note: <u>B</u>	<u>84.11.09</u>		<u>SP4.11.109</u>	<u>2:30</u>
<u>CHH 17</u>	Referral Note: <u>I</u>	<u>84.11.09</u>			<u>1 1</u>
	Referral Note:	<u>1 1</u>			<u>1 1</u>
	Referral Note:	<u>1 1</u>			<u>1 1</u>

ACTION CODES:

A - Appropriate Action
C - Comment/Recommendation
D - Draft Response
F - Furnish Fact Sheet
to be used as Enclosure

I - Info Copy Only/No Action Necessary
R - Direct Reply w/Copy
S - For Signature
X - Interim Reply

DISPOSITION CODES:

A - Answered
B - Non-Special Referral
C - Completed
S - Suspended

FOR OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE:

Type of Response = Initials of Signer
Code = "A"
Completion Date = Date of Outgoing

Comments: _____

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WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 11/9/84 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: 2:30 P.M. TODAY

SUBJECT: REMARKS: CEREMONY AT VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL
(11/9 - 12:30 draft)

	ACTION	FYI		ACTION	FYI
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MURPHY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEESE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	OGLESBY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BAKER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ROGERS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEAVER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SPEAKES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
STOCKMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SVAHN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DARMAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	VERSTANDIG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FIELDING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHITTLESEY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FULLER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	HENKEL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HERRINGTON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ELLIOTT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HICKEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
McFARLANE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
McMANUS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REMARKS:

Please provide any edits directly to Ben Elliott by 2:30 p.m. today, with an information copy to my office.

Thank you.

RESPONSE:

Richard G. Darman
 Assistant to the President
 Ext. 2702

(Noonan)
November 9, 1984
12:30 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: CEREMONY AT VIETNAM VETERANS WAR MEMORIAL
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1984

Senator Warner, thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, honored guests, my remarks today will be brief, because so much has been said over the years, and said so well, about the loyalty and valor of those who served us in Vietnam. It has occurred to me that only one very important thing has been left unsaid, and I will try to speak of it today.

It is almost 10 years now since U.S. military involvement in Vietnam came to a close. Two years ago our Government dedicated the memorial wall bearing the names of those who died or are still missing. Every day the families and friends of those brave men come to the wall, and search out a name, and touch it. The memorial reflects as a mirror reflects, so that when you find the name you are searching for, you find it in your own reflection. And as you touch it, from certain angles, you are touching too the reflection of the Washington Monument, or of the chair in which great Lincoln sits.

Those who fought in Vietnam are part of us, part of our history; they reflected the best in us. No number of wreaths, no amount of music and memorializing will ever do them justice, but it is good for us that we honor them, and their sacrifice. And it is good that we do it in the reflected glow of the enduring symbols of our republic.

Included in the thousands of servicemen and women honored here today is a unique group of Americans whose fate is still unknown to our Nation and their families. Nearly 2,500 of the

names on this memorial are still missing in Southeast Asia and some may still be serving. Their names are distinguished by a cross, rather than the diamond. Thus, this memorial is a symbol of both past and current sacrifice.

The war in Vietnam threatened to tear our society apart; and the political and philosophical disagreements that animated each side continue, to some extent. It has been said that these memorials reflect a hunger for healing. I do not know if perfect healing ever occurs, but I know that sometimes, when a bone is broken, if it is knit together well it will in the end be stronger than if it had not been broken. I believe that in the decade since Vietnam the healing has begun, and I hope that before my days as Commander in Chief are over, the process will be completed.

There were mistakes and missteps in the manner in which we carried out and ended the Vietnam War. There were great moral and philosophical disagreements about the rightness of the war. And we cannot forget them because there is no wisdom to be gained in forgetting. But we can forgive each other, and ourselves, for those things that we now recognize may have been wrong. And I think it's time we did. There has been much rethinking by those who did not serve, and those who did; there has been much rethinking by those who held strong views on the war, and by those who did not know which view was right. There has been rethinking on all sides, and this is good. And it is time we moved on, in unity and with resolve -- with the resolve to always stand for freedom, as those who fought did, and to always try to protect and preserve the peace. And we must in unity work to

account for those still missing, and aid those returned who still suffer from the pain and memory of Vietnam.

We must, as a society, take guidance from the fighting men memorialized by this statue. The three servicemen are watchful, ready and challenged -- but they are also standing, forever, together.

And let me say to the Vietnam veterans gathered here today: When you returned home you brought solace to the loved ones of those who fell. But little solace was given you. Some of your countrymen were unable to distinguish between our native distaste for war and the stainless patriotism of those who suffered its scars. But there has been a rethinking there, too, and now we can say to you, as a Nation: Thank you for your courage, and thank you for being patient with your countrymen. Thank you for continuing to stand with us, together.

The men and women of Vietnam fought for freedom in a place where liberty was endangered. They put their lives in danger to help a people in a land far away from their own. Many sacrificed their lives in the name of duty, and honor, and country. All were patriots who lit the world with their fidelity and courage. They were both our children and our heroes.

We will never, ever, forget them; we will never forget their devotion and their sacrifice. They stand before us marching into time, and into shared memory, forever. May God bless their souls.

I will now sign, on behalf of the people of the United States, the document by which this memorial is received by our Government.