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WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Ronald Reagan Library

Collection: SPEECHWRITING, WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF:
Speech Drafts

Archivist: kdb

File Folder: Vietnam Unknown Soldier Entombment
(Dolan)(Cave) May 28, 1984 [1] Box 157

Date: 1/21/97

DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
1. memo	from Robert M. Kimmitt to Ben Elliott, re Presidential Remarks - Vietnam Unknown Soldier Entombment [copy]	5/24/84	P5
2. memo	original of item number 1	5/24/84	P5 ((7) 12/22/00

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P-1 National security classified information [(a)(1) of the PRA].
- P-2 Relating to appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA].
- P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA].
- P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA].
- P-5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA].
- P-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA].

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- F-1 National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA].
- F-2 Release could disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA].
- F-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA].
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- F-7 Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA].
- F-8 Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA].
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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 28, 1984

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY
HONORING VIETNAM UNKNOWN SOLDIER

Arlington National Cemetery

2:15 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: My fellow Americans, Memorial Day is a day of ceremonies and speeches. Throughout America today, we honor the dead of our wars. We recall their valor and their sacrifices. We remember they gave their lives so that others might live.

We're also gathered here for a special event; the national funeral for an unknown soldier who will today join the heroes of three other wars.

When he spoke at a ceremony at Gettysburg in 1863, President Lincoln reminded us that through their deeds, the dead had spoken more eloquently for themselves than any of the living ever could, and that we living could only honor them by re-dedicating ourselves to the cause for which they so willingly gave a last full measure of devotion.

Well, this is especially so today, for in our minds and hearts is the memory of Vietnam and all that that conflict meant for those who sacrificed on the field of battle and for their loved ones who suffered here at home.

Not long ago when a memorial was dedicated here in Washington to our Vietnam veterans, the events surrounding that dedication were a stirring reminder of America's resilience, of how our nation could learn and grow and transcend the tragedies of the past.

During the dedication ceremonies, the rolls of those who died and are still missing were read for three days in a candle-light ceremony at the National Cathedral. And the veterans of Vietnam who were never welcomed home with speeches and bands, but who were never defeated in battle and were heroes as surely as any who have ever fought in a noble cause, staged their own parade on Constitution Avenue. As America watched them, some in wheelchairs, all of them proud, there was a feeling that this nation, as a nation, we were coming together again and that we had, at long last, welcomed the boys home.

"A lot of healing went on", said one combat veteran who helped organize support for the memorial.

MORE

And, then, there was this newspaper account that appeared after the ceremonies. I'd like to read it to you. "Yesterday, crowds returned to the Memorial. Among them was Herbie Petit a machinist and former Marine from New Orleans. 'Last night,' he said, standing near the wall, 'I went out to dinner with some other ex-Marines. There was also a group of college students in the restaurant. We started talking to each other. And before we left, they stood up and cheered us. The whole week,' Petit said, his eyes red, 'it was worth it just for that.'"

It has been worth it. We Americans have learned to listen to each other and to trust each other again. We've learned that government owes the people an explanation and needs their support for its actions at home and abroad. And we have learned, and I pray this time for good, the most valuable lesson of all -- the preciousness of human freedom.

It has been a lesson relearned not just by Americans but by all the people of the world. Yet, while the experience of Vietnam has given us a stark lesson that ultimately must move the conscience of the world, we must remember that we cannot today, as much as some might want to, close this chapter in our history, for the war in Southeast Asia still haunts a small but brave group of Americans -- the families of those still missing in the Vietnam conflict.

They live day and night with uncertainty, with an emptiness, with a void that we cannot fathom. Today, some sit among you. Their feelings are a mixture of pride and fear. They're proud of their sons or husbands, fathers or brothers who bravely and nobly answered the call of their country. But some of them fear that this ceremony writes a final chapter, leaving those they love forgotten.

Well, today, then, one way to honor those who served or may still be serving in Vietnam is to gather here and rededicate ourselves to securing the answers for the families of those missing in action. I ask the members of Congress, the leaders of veterans' groups and the citizens of an entire nation present or listening to give these families your help and your support, for they still sacrifice and suffer.

Vietnam is not over for them. They cannot rest until they know the fate of those they loved and watched march off to serve their country. Our dedication to their cause must be strengthened with these events today. We write no last chapters. We close no books. We put away no final memories. An end to America's involvement in Vietnam cannot come before we've achieved the fullest possible accounting of those missing in action. (Applause.)

This can only happen when their families know with certainty that this nation discharged her duty to those who served nobly and well. Today, a united people call upon Hanoi with one voice: Heal the sorest wound of this conflict, return our sons to America, end the grief of those who are innocent and undeserving of any retribution. The Unknown Soldier who is returned to us today and whom we lay to rest is symbolic of all our missing sons.

MORE

and we will present him with the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration that we can bestow.

About him we may well wonder, as others have. As a child, did he play on some street in a great American city? Or did he work beside his father on a farm out in America's heartland? Did he marry? Did he have children? Did he look expectantly to return to a bride?

We'll never know the answer to these questions about his life. We do know, though, why he died. He saw the horrors of war, but bravely faced them -- certain his cause, and his country's cause was a noble one. That he was fighting for human dignity, for free men everywhere. Today we pause to embrace him and all who served us so well in a war whose end offered no parades, no flags, and so little thanks.

We can be worthy of the values and ideals for which our sons sacrificed -- worthy of their courage in the face of a fear that few of us will ever experience -- by honoring their commitment and devotion to duty and country. Many veterans of Vietnam still serve in the armed forces, work in our offices, on our farms, and in our factories. Most have kept their experiences private. But most have been strengthened by their call to duty.

A grateful nation opens her heart today in gratitude for their sacrifice, for their courage, and for their noble service. Let us, if we must, debate the lessons learned at some other time. Today, we simply say with pride, thank you dear son. May God cradle you in His loving arms.

We present to you our nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor, for service above and beyond the call of duty -- in action with the enemy during the Vietnam era.

Thank you.

END

2:25 P.M. EDT

VIETNAM UNKNOWN SOLDIER ENTOMBMENT

MEMORIAL DAY IS A DAY OF CEREMONIES AND SPEECHES. THROUGHOUT AMERICA TODAY, WE HONOR THE DEAD OF OUR WARS. WE RECALL THEIR VALOR AND THEIR SACRIFICES -- WE REMEMBER THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES SO THAT OTHERS MIGHT LIVE. WE ARE ALSO GATHERED HERE FOR A SPECIAL EVENT, THE NATIONAL FUNERAL FOR AN UNKNOWN SOLDIER WHO WILL TODAY JOIN THE HEROES OF THREE OTHER WARS.

WHEN HE SPOKE AT A CEREMONY AT GETTYSBURG IN 1863, PRESIDENT LINCOLN REMINDED US THAT -- THROUGH THEIR DEEDS -- THE DEAD HAD SPOKEN MORE ELOQUENTLY FOR THEMSELVES THAN ANY OF THE LIVING EVER COULD, AND THAT WE THE LIVING COULD ONLY HONOR THEM BY REDEDICATING OURSELVES TO THE CAUSE FOR WHICH THEY SO WILLINGLY GAVE A LAST FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION.

THIS IS ESPECIALLY SO TODAY; FOR IN OUR MINDS AND HEARTS IS THE MEMORY OF VIETNAM AND ALL THAT CONFLICT MEANT FOR THOSE WHO SACRIFICED ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE AND FOR THEIR LOVED ONES WHO SUFFERED HERE AT HOME.

NOT LONG AGO, WHEN A MEMORIAL WAS DEDICATED HERE IN WASHINGTON TO OUR VIETNAM VETERANS, THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THAT DEDICATION WERE A STIRRING REMINDER OF AMERICA'S RESILIENCE, OF HOW OUR NATION COULD LEARN AND GROW AND TRANSCEND THE TRAGEDIES OF THE PAST.

DURING THE DEDICATION CEREMONIES, THE ROLLS OF THOSE WHO DIED AND ARE STILL MISSING WERE READ FOR 3 DAYS IN A CANDLELIGHT CEREMONY AT THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL.

AND THE VETERANS OF VIETNAM WHO WERE NEVER WELCOMED HOME WITH SPEECHES AND BANDS -- BUT WHO WERE NEVER DEFEATED IN BATTLE AND WERE HEROES AS SURELY AS ANY WHO HAVE EVER FOUGHT IN A NOBLE CAUSE -- STAGED THEIR OWN PARADE ON CONSTITUTION AVENUE.

AS AMERICA WATCHED THEM, SOME IN WHEELCHAIRS, ALL OF THEM PROUD, THERE WAS A FEELING THAT AS A NATION WE WERE COMING TOGETHER AGAIN AND THAT WE HAD -- AT LONG LAST -- WELCOMED THE BOYS HOME.

"A LOT OF HEALING . . . WENT ON," SAID ONE COMBAT VETERAN WHO HELPED ORGANIZE SUPPORT FOR THE MEMORIAL. AND THEN THERE WAS THIS NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT THAT APPEARED AFTER THE CEREMONIES. I WOULD LIKE TO READ IT TO YOU:

"YESTERDAY, CROWDS RETURNED TO THE MEMORIAL. AMONG THEM WAS HERBIE PETIT, A MACHINIST AND FORMER MARINE FROM NEW ORLEANS. 'LAST NIGHT,' HE SAID, STANDING NEAR THE WALL, 'I WENT OUT TO DINNER WITH SOME OTHER EX-MARINES. THERE WAS ALSO A GROUP OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE RESTAURANT. WE STARTED TALKING TO EACH OTHER AND BEFORE WE LEFT THEY STOOD UP AND CHEERED US.'

'THE WHOLE WEEK,' PETIT SAID, HIS EYES RED, 'IT WAS WORTH IT JUST FOR THAT.'"

IT HAS BEEN WORTH IT. WE AMERICANS HAVE LEARNED TO LISTEN TO EACH OTHER AND TO TRUST EACH OTHER AGAIN. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT GOVERNMENT OWES THE PEOPLE AN EXPLANATION AND NEEDS THEIR SUPPORT FOR ITS ACTIONS AT HOME AND ABROAD. AND WE HAVE LEARNED -- AND I PRAY THIS TIME FOR GOOD -- THE MOST VALUABLE LESSON OF ALL: THE PRECIOUSNESS OF HUMAN FREEDOM.

IT HAS BEEN A LESSON RELEARNED NOT JUST BY AMERICANS BUT BY ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

YET WHILE THE EXPERIENCE OF VIETNAM HAS GIVEN US A STARK LESSON THAT ULTIMATELY MUST MOVE THE CONSCIENCE OF THE WORLD, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT WE CANNOT TODAY -- AS MUCH AS SOME MIGHT WANT TO -- CLOSE THIS CHAPTER IN OUR HISTORY.

FOR THE WAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA STILL HAUNTS A SMALL BUT BRAVE GROUP OF AMERICANS, THE FAMILIES OF THOSE STILL MISSING IN THE VIETNAM CONFLICT. THEY LIVE DAY AND NIGHT WITH UNCERTAINTY, WITH AN EMPTINESS, WITH A VOID WE CANNOT FATHOM. TODAY, SOME SIT AMONG YOU; THEIR FEELINGS ARE A MIXTURE OF PRIDE AND FEAR.

THEY ARE PROUD OF THEIR SONS OR HUSBANDS, FATHERS OR BROTHERS, WHO BRAVELY AND NOBLY ANSWERED THE CALL OF THEIR COUNTRY, BUT SOME OF THEM FEAR THAT THIS CEREMONY WRITES A FINAL CHAPTER, LEAVING THOSE THEY LOVE FORGOTTEN.

TODAY, THEN, ONE WAY TO HONOR THOSE WHO SERVED OR MAY STILL BE SERVING IN VIETNAM IS TO GATHER HERE AND REDEDICATE OURSELVES TO SECURING THE ANSWERS FOR THE FAMILIES OF THOSE MISSING IN ACTION. I ASK THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, THE LEADERS OF VETERANS GROUPS, AND THE CITIZENS OF AN ENTIRE NATION -- PRESENT OR LISTENING -- TO GIVE THESE FAMILIES YOUR HELP AND YOUR SUPPORT, FOR THEY STILL SACRIFICE AND SUFFER; VIETNAM IS NOT OVER FOR THEM; THEY CANNOT REST UNTIL THEY KNOW THE FATE OF THOSE THEY LOVED AND WATCHED MARCH OFF TO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY.

OUR DEDICATION TO THEIR CAUSE MUST BE STRENGTHENED WITH THESE EVENTS TODAY; WE WRITE NO LAST CHAPTERS, WE CLOSE NO BOOKS, WE PUT AWAY NO FINAL MEMORIES. AN END TO AMERICA'S INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM CANNOT COME BEFORE WE HAVE ACHIEVED THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING OF THOSE MISSING IN ACTION. THIS CAN ONLY HAPPEN WHEN THEIR FAMILIES KNOW WITH CERTAINTY THAT THIS NATION DISCHARGED HER DUTY TO THOSE WHO SERVED NOBLY AND WELL. TODAY, A UNITED PEOPLE CALL UPON HANOI WITH ONE VOICE -- HEAL THE SOREST WOUND OF THIS CONFLICT; RETURN OUR SONS TO AMERICA; END THE GRIEF OF THOSE WHO ARE INNOCENT AND UNDESERVING OF ANY RETRIBUTION.

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER WHO HAS RETURNED TO US TODAY AND WHOM WE LAY TO REST IS SYMBOLIC OF ALL OUR MISSING SONS. AND WE WILL PRESENT HIM THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR, THE HIGHEST MILITARY DECORATION WE CAN BESTOW.

ABOUT HIM, WE MAY WELL WONDER AS OTHERS HAVE: AS A CHILD, DID HE PLAY ON SOME STREET IN A GREAT AMERICAN CITY, DID HE WORK BESIDE HIS FATHER ON A FARM IN AMERICA'S HEARTLAND? DID HE MARRY? DID HE HAVE CHILDREN, DID HE LOOK EXPECTANTLY TO RETURN TO A BRIDE? WE WILL NEVER KNOW THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS LIFE. WE DO KNOW, THOUGH, WHY HE DIED. HE SAW THE HORRORS OF WAR BUT BRAVELY FACED THEM, CERTAIN HIS OWN CAUSE AND HIS COUNTRY'S CAUSE WAS A NOBLE ONE; THAT HE WAS FIGHTING FOR HUMAN DIGNITY, FOR FREE MEN EVERYWHERE. TODAY, WE PAUSE, TO EMBRACE HIM AND ALL WHO SERVED US SO WELL IN A WAR WHOSE END OFFERED NO PARADES, NO FLAGS, AND SO LITTLE THANKS. WE CAN BE WORTHY OF THE VALUES AND IDEALS FOR WHICH OUR SONS SACRIFICED, WORTHY OF THEIR COURAGE IN THE FACE OF A FEAR THAT FEW OF US WILL EVER EXPERIENCE BY HONORING THEIR COMMITMENT AND DEVOTION TO DUTY AND COUNTRY.

MANY VETERANS OF VIETNAM STILL SERVE IN THE ARMED FORCES, WORK IN OUR OFFICES, ON OUR FARMS, IN OUR FACTORIES. MOST HAVE KEPT THEIR EXPERIENCES PRIVATE, BUT MOST HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED BY THEIR CALL TO DUTY. A GRATEFUL NATION OPENS HER HEART TODAY IN GRATITUDE FOR THEIR SACRIFICE, FOR THEIR COURAGE AND THEIR NOBLE SERVICE. LET US, IF WE MUST, DEBATE THE LESSONS LEARNED AT SOME OTHER TIME; TODAY WE SIMPLY SAY WITH PRIDE: THANK YOU, DEAR SON; AND MAY GOD CRADLE YOU IN HIS LOVING ARMS.

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#

RR
no changes

(Dolan/BE)
May 24, 1984
3:00 p.m. RR

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: VIETNAM UNKNOWN SOLDIER ENTOMBMENT
MONDAY, MAY 28, 1984

Memorial Day is a day of ceremonies and speeches. Throughout America today, we honor the dead of our wars. We recall their valor and their sacrifices -- we remember they gave their lives so that others might live. We are gathered today for a special event, the national funeral for an unknown soldier who will today join the heroes of three other wars.

When he spoke at a ceremony at Gettysburg in 1863, President Lincoln reminded us that -- through their deeds -- the dead had spoken more eloquently for themselves than any of the living ever could, and that we the living could only honor them by rededicating ourselves to the cause for which they so willingly gave a last full measure of devotion.

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It has been worth it. We Americans have learned to listen to each other and to trust each other again. We have learned that Government owes the people an explanation and needs their support for its actions at home and abroad. And we have learned -- and I pray this time for good -- the most valuable lesson of all: the preciousness of human freedom. It has been a lesson relearned not just by Americans but by all the people of the world.

Yet while the experience of Vietnam has given us a stark lesson that ultimately must move the conscience of the world, we

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For the war in Southeast Asia still haunts a small but brave group of Americans, the families of those still missing in the Vietnam conflict. They live day and night with uncertainty, with an emptiness, with a void we cannot fathom. Today, some sit among you; their feelings are a mixture of pride and fear. They are proud of their sons or husbands, fathers or brothers, who bravely and nobly answered the call of their country, but some of them fear that this ceremony writes a final chapter, leaving those they loved forgotten.

Today, then, one way to honor those who served or may still be serving in Vietnam is to gather here and rededicate ourselves to securing the answers for the families of those missing in action. I ask the Members of Congress, the leaders of veterans groups, and the citizens of an entire Nation -- present or listening -- to give these families your help and your support, for they still sacrifice and suffer; Vietnam is not over for them; they cannot rest until they know the fate of those they loved and watched march off to serve their country. Our dedication to their cause must be strengthened with these events today; we write no last chapters, we close no books, we put away no final memories. An end to America's involvement in Vietnam cannot come before we have achieved the fullest possible accounting of those missing in action. This can only happen when their families know with certainty that this Nation discharged her duty to those who served nobly and well. Today, a united

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(Dolan/BE)
May 24, 1984
3:00 p.m. RR

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: VIETNAM UNKNOWN SOLDIER ENTOMBMENT
MONDAY, MAY 28, 1984

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(Dolan/BE)
May 24, 1984
~~3:00 pm.~~

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5/24/84
copy

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Page 5

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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

May 24, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR BEN ELLIOTT

FROM: ROBERT M. KIMMITT *Bob*

SUBJECT: Presidential Remarks - Vietnam Unknown
Soldier Entombment

We have reviewed the proposed remarks and made some minor edits and one deletion for policy reasons. We are in a delicate stage with Vietnam at the current time following the February mission to Hanoi on the POW/MIA issue. They have pledged accelerated efforts and the return of eight more sets of remains at the next technical meeting which should be scheduled soon.

The quote by Truong Nhu Tang runs a very high risk of setting us back substantially. We have used the stick before with Vietnam on this issue (severely last year at the ASEAN meeting) and are prepared to do so again, if necessary. However, the timing is wrong now.

Attachment

Tab A Edited Presidential Remarks

cc: Richard Darman

4210

4 MAY 23

P 6: 24

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUMDATE: 5/23/84ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: NOON THURSDAY, 5/24/84SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: VIETNAM UNKNOWN SOLDIER ENTOMBMENT

MONDAY, MAY 28, 1984

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	☐	☐	McMANUS	☐	☒
MEESE	☐	☒	MURPHY	☐	☐
BAKER	☐	☒	OGLESBY	☒	☐
DEAVER	☐	☒	ROGERS	☐	☐
STOCKMAN	☐	☐	SPEAKES	☐	☐
DARMAN	☐	☒	SVAHN	☒	☐
FELDSTEIN	☐	☐	VERSTANDIG	☐	☐
FIELDING	☒	☐	WHITTLESEY	☐	☐
FULLER	☒	☐	TUTWILER	☒	☐
HERRINGTON	☐	☐	WIRTHLIN	☒	☐
HICKEY	☐	☐	HENKEL	☒	☐
McFARLANE	☒	☐	ELLIOTT	☐	☒

REMARKS:

Please forward comments/edits directly to Ben Elliott in room 100 by NOON THURSDAY, MAY 24, 1984, with an information copy to my office.

Thank you.

RESPONSE:

Richard G. Darman
Assistant to the President
Ext. 2702

Reed: JCS
1984 MAY 23 PM 6:00

(Dolan/BE)
May 23, 1984
5:00 p.m.

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'The whole week,' Petit said, his eyes red, 'it was worth it just for that.'

It has been worth it. We Americans have learned to listen to each other and to trust each other again. We have learned that Government owes the people an explanation and needs their support for its actions at home and abroad. And we have learned -- and I pray this time for good -- the most valuable lesson of all: the preciousness of human freedom. It has been a lesson relearned not just by Americans but by all the people of the world. [It is "the stark lesson" that Truong Nhu Tang, one of the founders of the National Liberation Front, a former Viet Cong minister and vice-minister of the postwar government in Vietnam, spoke of recently when he explained why he fled Vietnam for freedom.]

"No previous regime in my country," he wrote about the concentration camps and boat people of Vietnam, "brought such numbers of people to such desperation. Not the military dictators, not the colonialists, not even the ancient Chinese overlords. It is a lesson that my compatriots and I learned through witnessing and through suffering in our own lives the fate of our countrymen. It is a lesson that must eventually move the conscience of the world."

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DATE: 5/23/84 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: NOON THURSDAY, 5/24/84

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MONDAY, MAY 28, 1984

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McFARLANE - <i>at/d</i>	☒	☐	ELLIOTT	☐	☒

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The unknown soldier who has returned to us today and whom we lay to rest is symbolic of all our missing sons. About him, we may well wonder as others have: As a child, did he play on some street in a great American city, did he work beside his father on a farm in America's heartland? Did he marry? Did he have children, did he look expectantly to return to a bride? We will never know the answers to these questions about his life. We do know, though, why he died. He saw the horrors of war but bravely faced them, certain his own cause and his country's cause was a noble one; that he was fighting for human dignity, for free men everywhere. Today, we pause, to embrace him and all who served us so well in a war whose end offered no parades, no flags, and so little thanks. We can be worthy of the values and ideals for which our sons sacrificed, worthy of their courage in the face of a fear that few of us will ever experience by honoring their commitment and devotion to duty and country. Many veterans of Vietnam still serve in the Armed Forces, work in our offices, on our farms, in our factories. Most have kept their experiences private, but most have been strengthened by their call to duty.

A grateful Nation opens her heart today in gratitude for their sacrifice, for their courage and their noble service. Let us, if we must, debate the lessons learned at some other time; today we simply say with pride: Thank you, dear son; and may God cradle you in His loving arms.

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84 MAY 23

P 6: 24

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUMDATE: 5/23/84ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: NOON THURSDAY, 5/24/84SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: VIETNAM UNKNOWN SOLDIER ENTOMBMENT

MONDAY, MAY 28, 1984

ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI		
VICE PRESIDENT	☐	☐	McMANUS	☐	☒
MEESE	☐	☒	MURPHY	☐	☐
BAKER	☐	☒	OGLESBY	☒	☐
DEAVER	☐	☒	ROGERS	☐	☐
STOCKMAN	☐	☐	SPEAKES	☐	☐
DARMAN	☐	☒	SVAHN	☒	☐
FELDSTEIN	☐	☐	VERSTANDIG	☐	☐
FIELDING	☒	☐	WHITTLESEY	☐	☐
FULLER	☒	☐	TUTWILER	☒	☐
HERRINGTON	☐	☐	WIRTHLIN	☒	☐
HICKEY	☐	☐	HENKEL	☒	☐
McFARLANE	☒	☐	ELLIOTT	☐	☒

REMARKS:

Please forward comments/edits directly to Ben Elliott in room 100 by NOON THURSDAY, MAY 24, 1984, with an information copy to my office.

Thank you.

RESPONSE:

Richard G. Darman
Assistant to the President
Ext. 2702

URGENT

Received
1984 MAY 23 PM 6:00

(Dolan/BE)
May 23, 1984
5:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: VIETNAM UNKNOWN SOLDIER ENTOMBMENT
MONDAY, MAY 28, 1984

Memorial Day is a day of ceremonies and speeches.

Throughout America today, we honor the dead of our wars. We recall their valor and their sacrifices -- we remember they gave their lives so that others might live. *We are gathered today for a special event, the national funeral for an UNKNOWN Soldier who will today join the heroes of these other wars,*

When he spoke at a ceremony ~~like this~~ at Gettysburg in 1863, President Lincoln reminded us that -- through their deeds -- the dead had spoken more eloquently for themselves than any of the living ever could, and that we the living could only honor them by rededicating ourselves to the cause for which they so willingly gave a last full measure of devotion.

This is especially so today; for in our minds and hearts is the memory of Vietnam and all that conflict meant for those who sacrificed on the field of battle and for their loved ones who suffered here at home.

Not long ago, when a memorial was dedicated here in Washington to our Vietnam veterans, the events surrounding that dedication were a stirring reminder of America's resilience, of how our Nation could learn and grow and transcend the tragedies of the past.

During the dedication ceremonies, the rolls of those who died and are still missing were read for 3 days in a candlelight ceremony at the National Cathedral. And the veterans of Vietnam who were never welcomed home with speeches and bands -- but who were never defeated in battle and were heroes as surely as any

who have ever fought in a noble cause -- staged their own parade on Constitution Avenue.

As America watched them, some in wheelchairs, all of them proud, there was a feeling that as a Nation we were coming together again and that we had -- at long last -- welcomed the boys home.

"A lot of healing . . . went on," said one combat veteran who helped organize support for the memorial. And then there was this newspaper account that appeared after the ceremonies. I would like to read it to you:

"Yesterday, crowds returned to the memorial. Among them was Herbie Petit, a machinist and former marine from New Orleans. 'Last night,' he said, standing near the wall, 'I went out to dinner with some other ex-marines. There was also a group of college students in the restaurant. We started talking to each other and before we left they stood up and cheered.'

'The whole week,' Petit said, his eyes red, 'it was worth it just for that.'"

It has been worth it. We Americans have learned to listen to each other and to trust each other again. We have learned that Government owes the people an explanation and needs their support for its actions at home and abroad. And we have learned -- and I pray this time for good -- the most valuable lesson of all: the preciousness of human freedom. It has been a lesson relearned not just by Americans but by all the people of the world. [It is "~~the stark lesson~~" that Truong Nhu Tang, one of the founders of the ~~National Liberation Front~~, a former Viet Cong minister and vice-minister of the postwar government in Vietnam, spoke of recently when he explained why he fled Vietnam for freedom.]

"No previous regime in my country," he wrote about the concentration camps and boat people of Vietnam, "brought such numbers of people to such desperation. Not the military dictators, not the colonialists, not even the ancient Chinese overlords. It is a lesson that my compatriots and I learned through witnessing and through suffering in our own lives the fate of our countrymen. It is a lesson that must eventually move the conscience of the world."

Yet while the experience of Vietnam has given the world a stark lesson that ultimately must move the conscience of the world, we must remember that we cannot today -- as much as ~~[we]~~^{SOME} might want to -- close this chapter in our history.

For the war in Southeast Asia still haunts a small but brave group of Americans, the families of those still missing in the Vietnam conflict. They live day and night with uncertainty, with an emptiness, with a void we cannot fathom. Today, ~~they~~^{SOME} sit among you; their feelings are a mixture of pride and fear. They are proud of their sons or husbands who bravely and nobly answered the call of their country, but some of them fear that this ceremony writes a final chapter, leaving those they loved forgotten. Today, then, one way to honor those who served ^{OR MAY STILL BE SERVING} in Vietnam is to gather here and rededicate ourselves to securing the answers for the families of those missing in action. I ask the Members of Congress, the leaders of veterans groups, and the citizens of an entire Nation -- present or listening -- to give these families your help and your support, for they still sacrifice and suffer; Vietnam is not over for them; they cannot rest until they know the fate of those they loved and watched march off to serve their country. Our dedication to their cause must be strengthened with these events today; we write no last chapters, we close no books, we put away no final memories. An

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The unknown soldier who has returned to us today and whom we lay to rest is symbolic of all our missing sons. ^{And we will present him the highest decoration we can bestow, the Congressional Medal of Honor.} About him, we may well wonder as others have: As a child, did he play on some street in a great American city, did he work beside his father on a farm in America's heartland? Did he marry? Did he have children, did he look expectantly to return to a bride? We will never know the answers to these questions about his life. We do know, though, why he died. He saw the horrors of war but bravely faced them, certain his own cause and his country's cause was a noble one; that he was fighting for human dignity, for free men everywhere. Today, we pause, to embrace him and all who served us so well in a war whose end offered no parades, no flags, and so little thanks. We can be worthy of the values and ideals for which our sons sacrificed, worthy of their courage in the face of a fear that few of us will ever experience by honoring their commitment and devotion to duty and country. Many veterans of Vietnam still serve in the Armed Forces, work in our offices, on our farms, in our factories. Most have kept their experiences private, but most have been strengthened by their call to duty.

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WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 5/23/84 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: NOON THURSDAY, 5/24/84

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: VIETNAM UNKNOWN SOLDIER ENTOMBMENT

MONDAY, MAY 28, 1984

ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI		
VICE PRESIDENT	☐	☐	McMANUS	☐	☒
MEESE	☐	☒	MURPHY	☐	☐
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McFARLANE	☒	☐	ELLIOTT	☐	☒

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Thank you.

RESPONSE:

Page 3 -- Suggest adding "brothers"
m. risque

Richard G. Darman
Assistant to the President
Ext. 2702

Reed: JCS
1984 MAY 23 PM 6:00

(Dolan/BE)
May 23, 1984
5:00 p.m.

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