

**Morris K. Udall -- Selected Articles:**

**"VIETNAM: This Nation Is Caught On A Treadmill"**  
*Summarized from an Address Before Congress*

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I shall vote for the supplemental Vietnam appropriation, but I am not very happy about it.

I am unhappy because we are involved in this war at all. As far as I am concerned, it is the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time. Henry Steele Commager, the great historian, appropriately described the succession of commitments we have made in Vietnam as "mindless." It is as though at each moment when a world-shaking decision was to be made, we had our minds on other matters, and as though we thought such decisions of so little consequence as to require no debate and no sober reflection.

This nation is caught on a treadmill and sometimes I think we have no interest in getting off. What in the scheme of things makes that patch of real estate in South Vietnam worth thousands upon thousands of American lives and billions upon billions of American dollars? But here we are in the middle of war. Our troops are committed on the battlefield. Our nation has set its course.

And, unhappy as I am about this war, unhappy as I am that we have been unable, or unwilling, to end it on honorable terms, I see no alternative to hanging on until a decent peace can be arranged. Like it or not, we are now deeply involved in the Asian land war our military experts have always warned against.

Yes, I shall vote for this little additional chunk of money, even though by itself it exceeds the largest total budget of the federal government during the entire New Deal. But in so doing, I shall indeed begrudge the fact that this same money cannot be spent to combat air and water pollution, to fight poverty, and to attack the problems besetting our schools, health facilities, parks and cities. And I want to make clear that there are some things I am not voting for.

I am not voting for an expanded or escalated war. If 400,000 soldiers cannot defeat an impoverished nation of 16 million, then 750,000 or a million cannot do it, either. If 18,600 air sorties a month won't "win" this war, neither would twice that many. If 5008 American soldiers killed on the battlefield in 1966 could not gain us a "victory," then several times that number of American lives will not win us that elusive prize. The really serious problems of Vietnam are not military; they are economic and social.

I am not voting today for an increase in military activity at the expense of our civil efforts in that war-torn country. I am not voting for any delay in moving to a democratic, civilian government in that country. And I want it understood I am not voting to perpetuate a military oligarchy in office.

I am not voting for any kind of "total victory" or dictated peace by the United States. This great nation of ours should be willing to negotiate with all factions and groups and indicate its willingness to settle this war on any basis which leaves South Vietnam free. I most certainly am not voting to "win and then get out," the theme of a current right-wing mailing campaign many of us have been recipients of. If there is a more contradictory or preposterous bit of advice in current circulation, I have not seen it.

While my vote for this appropriation certainly can be considered a vote to "support our boys in Vietnam," I believe the best way to support our boys, in the final analysis -- my highest obligation to those fine young men now there and those many more who will soon have to go if the fighting continues -- is to find an honorable way out of this war.

We have been told repeatedly that we can fight this war in Vietnam and continue our vital nondefense programs at home. This is nonsense. In the past two years I have seen the great promise of the war on poverty shrivel and nearly die. I have seen the great expectations of our assault on urban ghettos all but vanish. The best thing we could do for the boys in Vietnam is to bring them home to an America that is cleaner, safer, healthier, and better able to deal with its internal problems.

I am not unfamiliar with the history of other times, and I am not unfamiliar with the psychology of war. Wars tend to develop their own rationale, to feed on themselves. Limited objectives lead to less limited objectives. Power feeds on power. Bravado replaces common sense.

As a member of Congress, I represent over half a million people, and I want and expect to be consulted about changes in policy. When basic decisions are made, they should not be presented as a fait accompli, with Congress expected not to reason why but to vote "Aye."

The conduct of this war disturbs me greatly. In casting my vote to keep it going -- a vote I find necessary if our nation is not to be greatly imperiled, I simply want it understood I am not lending my unequivocal support to the policies requiring that expenditure.

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