

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

July 28, 1971

Dear Friend:

Thank you for letting me know your concern over American involvement in Southeast Asia: more specifically, legislation designed to set a date to end American involvement by the end of the year.

I'm as much for peace as any Congressman or man in this Country. It would, however, be irresponsible in my opinion for the Congress to mandate a withdrawal deadline that would tie the hands of the only person who, under present circumstances can negotiate for us a responsible conclusion to this war. The Vietnam Disengagement Act, the Mansfield Amendment, the Hatfield-McGovern Amendment, and the Mosher-O'Neill Statement are examples of a mandated withdrawal.

Should Congress mandate a mere withdrawal deadline, I would be concerned about the repatriation of prisoners, the disposition of defense equipment, facilities, and material, and other Hue's which may ensue.

I realize that many criticize this approach. But they ignore the fact that a Congressionally directed withdrawal without any conditions whatsoever would be an abdication of our responsibility to deal with the total military, political, and economic problem in which we've become involved in Southeast Asia.

This does not mean that I have been pleased with the role of Congress in foreign affairs. On the contrary, I believe much of our Nation's problem in this area flows from the fact that the committees in Congress have not been more persistent in their efforts to get the true facts. These facts are necessary for Congress and for the Country to understand and pursue a sounder foreign policy.

The time has come for Congress to assume more responsibility for foreign affairs, but not in a way that would invade the clear prerogatives of the President as Commander-in-Chief.

Personally, I feel that peace can be achieved best through an international sharing of the problem. I recently proposed before the House Foreign Affairs Committee an immediate withdrawal of all our forces from Southeast Asia upon the creation of an International Commission which would have the following responsibilities:

- Supervise an agreed-upon cease-fire in Vietnam...
- Supervise arrangements for release and exchange of all prisoners of war...
- Supervise South Vietnamese elections,*

My recommendation, which I have conveyed to the Congress as well as to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, calls for an immediate and total withdrawal of all our forces from South Vietnam. It would, I believe, help create a stable Southeast Asia and a more lasting peace for us all.

(cont.)

May I say in closing that I very much share your concern and I assure you that I am working constantly to achieve the goal of a lasting peace.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Hastings Keith', written in a cursive style.

HASTINGS KEITH

Member of Congress

P.S. Please excuse the form letter. The large volume of mail I have received on the war prevents my answering each person individually.

*These elections would permit participation by all South Vietnamese individuals, parties and groups, including those persons who have supported, or served with, the Vietcong provided they renounce violence and agree to abide by the elections' results.

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Communication from Congressman Hastings
Keith acknowledging order adopted by
the City Council regarding the War in
Vietnam

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August 16, 1971