

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement and at this time I ask your permission to have just 3 or 4 minutes here to make some additional comments that have come into focus since my prepared statement was submitted to the committee on Friday. I know that these hearings are not occasions to award merit badges of good conduct medals, and I appreciate the give and take that they employ.

However, I would like to deal with a part of the record of Thursday's hearings in two particulars. There are many others I would like to deal with, but these particular two seem to me to be a matter that I should like to make on the record.

The chairman gave me honorable mention in the course of Thursday's hearings in referring to a speech of March 23, in which he indicated that I had assured the public that the estimated defense percentages for fiscal 1967 were good estimates, and that this was somewhat contrary to general information that existed at the time. This is characterized not by the chairman but by the press as not being forthright.

I want to ask the chairman if he would permit me to include in the record not only the paragraph of the speech of March 23 that he referred to, containing the assurance, but the preceding paragraph which makes very clear—and presents a very different picture of—what the intent of my statement was at that time. My statement was perfectly consistent with the large number of other statements made before congressional committees in January, February, March, May, and September, and I would be glad to provide them for the record if that is necessary. I did say on March 23, and I will read the paragraph which apparently you had reference to—

Chairman PROXMIRE. If I might interrupt at this point, Mr. Secretary, if you will, read both paragraphs.

Secretary FOWLER. I am going to read both paragraphs. That is the whole purpose of this exercise:

At the same time let me emphasize that our current estimates of Vietnam expenditures remain, in the view of those most qualified to judge, an accurate evaluation of our needs so far as we can now foresee, and I would hope that, when the need for responsible restraint is so great, no one will base his economic decisions on the purely speculative assumption that our Vietnam needs will exceed current expectations.

Now the preceding paragraph which I would like to include in the record reads as follows:

Over the longer run, of course, no one can predict whether we will need to schedule additional expenditures—expenditures beyond those contemplated in the fiscal 1966 and 1967 budgets—to meet our commitments in Vietnam. And Vietnam remains, therefore, an inevitable element of uncertainty in our budgetary as in our overall economic picture—an element of which we must always remain fully aware.

Now I have here a supplementary statement which I would like to submit for the record. I will not burden the committee's time with a full reading.

Chairman PROXMIRE. Without objection that will be printed.

Secretary FOWLER. I would like to read the first portion of my supplementary statement.