P.S. to the NEWS
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18½ MINUTES/5 YEARS

A big issue in the current Congressional session is the mystery of the lost 18½ minutes on that White House tape. Those lost minutes reflect on the President's credibility, and on his selection of advisers, but they are hardly a matter of national life or death.

If Congress is really serious about impeaching the President, it should investigate the mystery of the lost five years of the Nixon Administration in which the Soviets were allowed to go ahead of the United States in the power, number and mobility of intercontinental nuclear missiles, and to widen that missile gap into a chasm which threatens our national survival.

When Richard Nixon came into office in January 1969, the United States had approximately the same number of land-based missiles and four times as many submarine-launched ballistic missiles as the Soviets. From then until the signing of the SALT Agreements in May 1972, the Soviets added 1,000 ICBMs and SLBMs to their forces. Figures from the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London show that, from 1969 to 1973, the Soviets increased their numbers of ICBMs from 1,050 to 1,618 and increased their SLBMs from 160 to 628.

In the face of this Soviet weapons-building program, the Nixon Administration did not add a single ICBM or SLBM to our forces -- not one. This self-imposed missile freeze allowed the Soviets to go decisively ahead of us in both land-based and sea-based missiles. In the SALT Agreements in the summer of 1972, President Nixon agreed to a permanent missile gap of three Soviet intercontinental missiles

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for every two that we have.

When President Nixon returned from Moscow in 1972, he told Congress: "Mr. Brezhnev and his colleagues made it absolutely clear that they are going forward with defense programs in the offensive area which are not limited by these Agreements." Last August 17, Defense Secretary Schlesinger announced that the Soviets have successfully flight-tested MIRVs, the one area in which we claimed a lead. On November 7, the Soviets paraded their new land-mobile missiles, of which we have none. At the time the SALT Agreement was signed, our Government stated: "The U.S. would consider the deployment of operational land-mobile ICBM launchers during the period of the Interim Agreement as inconsistent with the objectives of that Agreement."

In addition, the Soviets have made significant qualitative improvements, such as their new pop-up launch technique which has enabled them to more than double the throw-weight of their SS-11 missile. The Soviets have, indeed, been going forward, while we are standing still.

President Nixon said in his recent State of the Union Message: "We must never allow America to become the second strongest nation in the world." The fact is that we are already only the "second strongest nation in the world" -- and it happened under Richard Nixon. Congress should investigate the five lost years when no American missiles were built. The most solemn constitutional duty of our Federal Government is to provide "for the common defense."

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