

Rogers Calls for 'a Little Pride'

Washington

His eyes brimming with tears and his voice breaking, Secretary of State William P. Rogers appealed for national unity yesterday and said, in a reference to the returning prisoners of war: "I think it's time we all took a little pride in our country."

The scene came at the end of a long news conference in which Rogers covered a wide range of subjects, including the administration's efforts to deal with congressional opposition to contemplated postwar American aid to North Vietnam.

During the conference, held at the State Department, Rogers handled questions easily on Cuba, the Middle East, Vietnam, China, India and Europe.

He became visibly emotional, however, when he was asked to justify the administration's hard line toward

draft evaders at the same time it is seeking reconciliation with Hanoi.

Rogers, who was attorney general in the Eisenhower administration, began by noting that while American law provided outlets for conscientious objectors, "we have a system that says that you are required to respond to a draft."

His voice rising, Rogers went on:

"Now, in cases where people resisted, and fled or deserted, that means that someone else had to take their place; someone else had to serve for them; someone else may have been killed because they refused to serve.

"We had, what, three million men serve in Vietnam, and we had 46,000 battle casualties."

He said that with the war over, it is important for the country "to attempt to get

together and to have a period of reconciliation," but he added that the administration would not permit "unjustified" attacks to remain unanswered.

"And as far as the administration is concerned," he said, his eyes visibly becoming moist, "we want very much to get on with the business of peace and reconstruction here, and I can't think of anything that gets us off to a better start than to watch these returning POWs."

"If that doesn't make America proud," he said, pausing, "then I don't know what will. I think it is time that all of us took a little pride in our country."

Many of the questions dealt with the growing signs of opposition on Capitol Hill to the administration's declared policy of providing an undisclosed amount of postwar reconstruction aid to

North Vietnam and other Indochina countries.

He acknowledged "the difficulty" faced in Congress on the issue of postwar aid, saying:

"It is certainly an understandable political argument to make that why should we help other nations, particularly one with which we have been at war, when we are not able to do all of the things that we would like to do at home."

He said that while such a "rationale" has existed ever since there was foreign aid, the U.S. had always believed it had "certain obligations to comply with, to fulfill."

"We think that, as in the past, Congress when it finally finds out all the facts and gives full consideration to the problems and the implications of failing to help—I think Congress will react responsibly," he said.

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