

SEVENTY-EIGHTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

SEPTEMBER 3, 4, 5, 1996

RESOLUTION NO.: 156 SUBJECT: UNITED STATES MILITARY FORCES IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS Origin: Maryland Submitted by: National Security Committee WHEREAS, the stated purpose of the War Powers Act (P.L. 93-148) was to "...fulfill the intent of the framers of the Constitution to insure that the collective judgment of both the Congress and the President will apply to the introduction of the United State Armed Forces into hostilities or into situations where imminent hostilities were clearly indicated;" and WHEREAS, Our Constitution reserves for Congress alone the right to declare war, which it has done only five times in our history and has not done since World War II; and WHEREAS, During the Cold War, former Secretary of Defense Weinberger in 1985 set forth specified conditions that had to be met before American military forces were committed to combat, namely, that the United States Government had to determine that our vital interests were at stake; that we were prepared to commit sufficient forces to win; that political and military objectives were clearly defined; that there was reasonable assurance of support from the American people; that U.S. forces should be committed as a last resort; and that the United States had a clear exit strategy; and WHEREAS, The successes of the United States military operations in Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf demonstrated what our Armed Forces could achieve with well-defined goals and objectives and the unquestioned support of the American people; and the tragedies of Lebanon and Somalia have shown what can happen when they had neither; and WHEREAS, When the United Nations, through Resolution 814, changed the mission in Somalia from a humanitarian operation to one of "nation-building" involving U.S. combat operations which resulted in American casualties and one detainee, it was done without the benefit of Congressional input or the acknowledgment of the American people; and WHEREAS, According to current Department of Defense policy, United States military personnel captured during such peacekeeping, peacemaking, humanitarian, or nation-building operations are not designated as prisoners of war, but as hostages or detainees with no defined legal rights under the Geneva Convention; now, therefore, be it **RESOLVED**, by the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Salt Lake City, Utah, September 3, 4, 5, 1996, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to include the following principles as an integral part of its national security and foreign policy decision-making process when considering the commitment of United States military forces; America needs a clear definition of its vital national interests as they relate to all military operations to include peacekeeping and humanitarian operations; that United States military forces should not be placed under foreign or United Nations operational control except in exceptional circumstances where Congress grants specific approval; and that American service men and women captured during these types of operations should be granted full POW status and afforded all the protections of the Geneva Conventions; and be it further **RESOLVED**, That The American Legion is convinced that a stronger policy is required to be adopted by the United States Government to ensure that every service man or woman captured by hostile forces knows that his or her Government will take whatever measures are required to secure their release, including the use of force, and that those belligerents who violate such a policy should be held fully responsible.

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