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Statement before Senate Committee on Armed Services

Strom Thurmond

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STATEMENT OF STROM THURMOND, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES CONCERNING H.R. 6573 THE RESERVE OFFICER PERSONNEL ACT

July 20, 1954

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee; I am Strom Thurmond, National President of the Reserve Officers Association. Our organization is composed of well over 50,000 reserve officers, located throughout the entire country. They are in all branches of the service. Many are on continuous active duty with the regular establishment. We congratulate the Chairman on his decision to hold hearings on this legislation and appreciate the opportunity of testifying.

In our opinion this legislation represents an important step in developing the type of reserve structure which our security requires and which will be supported by reserves generally.

From its inception this legislation has been controversial. Segments of the regular establishment have opposed not only the need for the legislation, but its contents. They have devoted considerable effort to delay its final presentation until time would not permit its enactment, and now propose to amend it so as to completely destroy its original purpose. These are not unusual roadblocks in legislation designed to develop programs to improve the status of reserves in their relationship to the regular establishment. Traditionally, all
reserve legislation of this type has had to be written in the Congress of the United States. It is unfortunate, but true, that in their desire to solve the problems of the regular establishment, our military planners have paid little attention to the problems of the reserves.

This legislation is a very good example. In its original form it was prepared by the Department of Defense and introduced as H. R. 1222. This was as a result of a specific directive from the House Armed Services Committee to come up with legislation in this area. The bill we are considering, therefore, was initiated by Congress, drafted by the Department of Defense, and then perfected in the House Committee.

I can assure you that we would not be meeting here today on such a necessary bill if the Congress had not taken the initiative.

Recent history has shown the increasing reliance that must be placed on the use of our reserves and our reserve officers. This Committee has heard, during testimony in support of such bills as the UMT legislation and others, that our military posture must be based on a small, well-trained regular establishment, and a large, well-trained, ready reserve. In order to develop the vital reserve component in our total military structure, the steps that have been taken in the
past must be augmented by additional ones which will be supported enthusiastically by our citizen soldiers.

If our country's security depends on the efficiency, morale, and readiness of our reserve officers and men, we can no longer afford the luxury of having any reserve structure that is not staffed by the best officers obtainable. I am sure that you gentlemen recall that, in World War II, reserve officers supplied 98% of the strength of the Army and Air Force, and almost that much in the Navy and Marine Corps. The wars of the future will require an even greater reliance on them.

This is perhaps best evidenced by the situation that exists during the present period of limited mobilization. The military structure today is relying heavily on our reserve officers. The figures speak for themselves. As of 30 April 1954, the officers on full-time duty with the military establishment are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Army Command</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Marine Corps</th>
<th>Air Force Command</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Officers on Active Duty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>352,115</td>
<td>128,455</td>
<td>78,410</td>
<td>18,463</td>
<td>126,797 b/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>107,988</td>
<td>29,260</td>
<td>43,405</td>
<td>11,155</td>
<td>24,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve</td>
<td>230,061</td>
<td>89,578 a/</td>
<td>35,005</td>
<td>7,308</td>
<td>98,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Guard</td>
<td>6,899</td>
<td>3,138</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Avs</td>
<td>9,167</td>
<td>6,469</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,698</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a/ Includes 160 Naval Reserve officers on duty with Army.
b/ Includes 94 Regular Army, 993 Army Reserve, 52 Naval Reserve, 26 National Guard of the U. S., and 165 Army of the U. S. officers on active duty with the Air Force.
With this condition existing today, if we get into a full mobilization, the only place additional officers can come from is the reserve structure.

Fortunately, there are available additional Reserve officers as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reserve Components Officers</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Army Command</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Marine Corps</th>
<th>Air Force Command</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not on Active Duty</td>
<td>679,004</td>
<td>221,126</td>
<td>258,492</td>
<td>23,625</td>
<td>175,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve</td>
<td>637,059</td>
<td>184,760</td>
<td>258,492</td>
<td>23,625</td>
<td>170,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Guard</td>
<td>41,945</td>
<td>36,366</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,579</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes "Inactive" National Guard*

Therefore, gentlemen, this legislation is most important to improve our reserve officer structure. I think it is crystal clear that we must stop gambling in futures where they are concerned. The security of our nation demands it.

Today we address ourselves, through this bill, to one portion of the total reserve problem. This problem is how to improve the terribly low morale that has existed in the Army and the Air Force reserve officer structure for so long, and, as a result of the ill-advised amendments now offered here by the Navy Department to avoid undermining the present high morale and efficiency of Naval and Marine Corps reserve officers. With the exception of a few minor points, the debatable issues in this legislation deal with matters of rank and a promotion system for the reserves. These are most vital factors in determining whether or not civilians will encumber themselves with military responsibilities.
Incidentally, irrespective of any future reorganization of the reserve structure, we must insure a promotion system and a relative rank structure, which will insure that qualified officers maintain pace with the contemporaries with whom they will serve in time of war. Therefore the Association takes the position that current studies designed to bring about a better reserve — and with these objectives this organization associates itself — have no bearing whatsoever on the present need to solve the basic problems of human and official relationships that are contained in this bill.

The present system of rank structure in the Army and the Air Force, and their method of promotion for reservists can do nothing other than to perpetuate the tremendous existing dissatisfaction among officer personnel. Furthermore, it will compound the present evil of over-age-in-grade officers who are in that category, not because of lack of ability, but because the present system will not permit them to keep pace with officers who are in many cases less qualified and have not had comparable combat service.

Mr. Chairman, I think there is one primary issue here. Clearing away all the underbrush, the issue is the principle, recognized by this bill, that in time of war the reserve is as good as the regular. It is just that simple.
Apparently the regulars do not believe this principle. If studies have been made, or if there is evidence to support a belief that the millions of reserves, both officers and men, who served in war time did not properly carry out their duties as efficiently and as bravely as the regulars, then the time has come for these facts to be made public. For we must then stop giving pious lip service to our need for a large reserve organization and find other solutions to our national security problems.

It would appear to me that the approach taken to this bill by the regular establishment, if accepted, would force this Committee and the security planners of our country to re-evaluate the presently accepted principle of basing our military posture on a small and well-trained professional organization and a large and well-trained reserve. If these reserve officers cannot properly perform their war-time duties — and remember they are the ones who fight our wars —, then we will be forced to maintain a regular establishment of such size as to permit us to win in war-time, but undoubtedly to destroy us by its cost and inefficiency.

I think that there may also be some selfish interest influencing the regulars of the Army and Air Force, and now, the Navy; for apparently, there are
who view with a jaundiced eye any program that would promote reservists and thereby slow down accelerated temporary promotions of regulars in time of full mobilization.

I think that this Committee needs to study the personnel components of a military establishment before it considers turning down the principles embodied in the bill under consideration. Obviously, we are always going to need a certain number of regular officers and men. They are the hard core. They are the military technicians. They are the ones to develop theories of tactics and spearhead research and development which make these theories come true.

Military personnel, regular and reserve alike, divide broadly into two groups, those who are specialists in their activities and those who perform general functions. I do not believe any thinking person would argue for one moment that the reserve specialists - such as communications experts, procurement experts, electronic specialists, doctors, lawyers, scientists generally, governmental specialists, and others - are not acquiring through their civilian occupations knowledge and skill far in excess of those of their regular contemporaries, who are operating in the more limited field of the regular establishment. The facts in these cases speak for themselves. Yet the Department of Defense seems to think...
that such reserves should not maintain a rank or promotion status on par with regular officers.

Now, insofar as combat officers are concerned - and here so many fall into the junior brackets -, when we are looking for platoon leaders, company commanders, battalion commanders, or comparable jobs in the other services, what does war-time military service require? It needs men who have leadership qualities, maturity of judgment, organizational ability, and at least a minimum knowledge of military tactics. These qualities, history shows, the average reserve officer gives you, provided he is not shackled with such rank structures and promotional procedures as to make him fall far behind his contemporaries in age, and therefore make the job he is required to perform much more difficult.

Furthermore, most regular officers devote a relatively short portion of their service career to taking part in the type of field training which most reservists are required to take every year as a matter of routine.

When general mobilization comes from our total pool of needed manpower, each member of the war-time team changes from his peacetime occupation into a new one - that of war-time military service. It is as new to the regular as it is to the reserve. The problems of planning, managing, and fighting are
handled equally well by reserves and regulars. Yet, since our reserves outnumber our regulars on a ratio of 90 to 10, it is clear that they must be the rock on which our war-time structure is based. So, as a matter of principle, we believe that a reservist must be so treated in peace-time as to insure his properly discharging his war-time obligations.

We know that our security is built on the belief that the reservist is up to his job. Therefore we can no longer have the concept of first- and second-class commissioned officers. We must stop this business of kicking around in peace-time the personnel on whom we must depend in war-time.

We in the Reserve Officers Association do not care how high the regular establishment sets its standards for original procurement of reserve officers. We have urged that they be at the highest level. Similarly, we want the highest possible standard for promotion for reserves and regulars alike.

But, when these criteria are met, we want the reserve officer recognized as an essential part of the military team. We want the fact recognized that those who hold reserve commissions are worthy of those commissions and rank with any other officer who has the same date of rank.

Accordingly, we urge the enactment of this legislation. However, while
we agreed with this bill as it has passed the House of Representatives, we now recommend certain amendments. Our friends in the House of Representatives, out of their great knowledge and wisdom, developed certain compromises to meet the objections of the regular establishment. While we went along with these compromises in the spirit in which they were developed, we now feel that the recommendations for amendments that have been made to this Committee by the Department of Defense are so overt and so misguided that the compromises made in the House of Representatives are no longer in force.

We, therefore, recommend that the bill be amended in these particulars:

1. That the date of commission for reserves of the Army and the Air Force establish their date for all purposes,

2. That no officer, after a period of adjustment to be written into the law, serve on an active-duty assignment in a rank lower than that held in the reserves, and that permanent reserve promotion be continued for those on active duty, and

3. That, in establishing the relative seniority among regulars and reserves of the Army and the Air Force, the readjustment include all officers on the reserve rolls and not be tied into any cut-off date
as is presently contained in the legislation.

Our staff is prepared to work with your staff in perfecting these amendments.

I thank the Committee for its attention. We have other witnesses to testify on other phases.