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ADDRESS BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC), PRESIDENT OF THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION BEFORE THE ROA NATIONAL COUNCIL BANQUET, FEBRUARY 5, 1955

The Reserve Officers Association does not seek to participate in the determination of our war policy, its overall strategy, or to intrude on prerogatives of the State Department. However, we are definitely concerned with the development and maintenance of reserve forces which will provide the utmost in our national security.

In view of the mission and objectives of the Reserve Officers Association, it may be prudent at this time to define the ROA's position on national defense. First of all, we believe our nation must be strongly prepared at all times. Our armed forces must be prepared to meet aggression anywhere at anytime.

Maintenance of a strong defense establishment in the past, however, has been largely responsible for keeping our national economy in the red. Thus, our problem in these perilous times is to find a way to squeeze the most out of our defense dollars. We must remain strong both militarily and economically, if we are to resist the Communist designs of aggression that imperil the western world, and that may continue to be a menace for years to come.

There has been some talk about reducing the strength of the regular defense establishment in order to remain strong economically. Personally, I am in accord with this plan, but only after we have built up a strong combat-ready reserve to help shoulder the responsibilities of our national security. Until this is done, I believe it is inadvisable to reduce the regular establishment.

We do not want a national budget written in red ink any longer than is necessary, but if the choice is between red ink on our books and red soldiers on our door-steps, then I know we would all choose the red ink on our books.

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--page two--

At present, our reserves comprise almost skeleton units that are not in what we would call a state of combat-readiness. We lack the personnel, adequate training facilities, modern equipment, and the latest weapons of war. Once our needs are fulfilled, however, we can build a strong combat-ready reserve, and we can maintain ^{several} ~~several~~ reservists for the cost of one regular.

We would then be in a position to kill two birds with one stone: remain strong both militarily and economically. Regardless of whether the regular establishment is reduced, the position of the ROA is that a strong reserve force be built up as the reserve is the heart and core of our national defense program. It is imperative that the full energies of our nation's military and civilian authorities be translated into positive action for the buildup and maintenance of a strong ready reserve force.

In closing, I would like to state that it is important for extreme caution and the coolest judgment to be exercised in the final determination of our defense posture. When a ripple may be the forerunner ~~to~~ to a tidal wave, we can ill afford to flirt with unpreparedness in fact. We must be prepared to sustain the freedoms and liberties for which so many Americans have fought and died to preserve.