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Statement to the House Armed Services Committee on H.R. 2967

Strom Thurmond

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STATEMENT PRESENTED TO THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE ON H. R. 2967

A bill to provide for strengthening of the Reserve Forces and for other purposes.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Strom Thurmond, National President of the Reserve Officers Association. It is a pleasure and a privilege for me to appear before this distinguished group to present the views of our Association on the various steps that need to be taken to strengthen the Reserve Forces of our country. In such a program lies the real hope of strengthening our military security programs and at the same time reducing the drain on our economy which results from the necessity of maintaining a large active duty force in being.

The Reserve Officers Association supports fully the broad objectives and aspects of the administration's plan to strengthen the Reserve Forces. It does, however, disagree with some of the details of the bill being considered and also certain of the purposes which this bill is designed to accomplish.

As I am sure you gentlemen are aware, our Association has for several years been alarmed at the lack of readiness among the reserves of our armed forces and the lack of progress in improving that situation. As evidence of our feelings in this matter we were delighted to cooperate with the Congress and the Department of Defense in the enactment of the Reserve Forces Act of 1952 which, in our opinion, provided the necessary authority and plan upon which to build an adequate reserve. Other legislation, such as the Selective Service Act of 1948 and the Universal Military Training and Service Act, also contained significant authorities which should have resulted in a much better reserve structure. For many reasons, and certainly there is no need to try to assess responsibility, these laws were never utilized to the fullest extent and the present unacceptable condition of
our reserves is the result. The basic fact remains that not only must we find a way to increase the number of reservists, but we must find acceptable and equitable ways to insure their participation in reserve activities.

The Korean episode occurred at a time when our active force structure was at a low level and it was imperative that the reserves of the country be utilized. Today, we have a substantially larger active force structure of approximately three million officers and men, which should change to some degree the need to use reservists for so-called police type actions or small wars. On the other hand, our worldwide commitments have also increased to, perhaps, proportionally a higher level. Stated differently, the deployment of our armed forces and the worldwide nature of the threat which faces us, has placed a greater requirement for manpower on our active services, and, therefore, it may well be that the size of our military structure today, in relation to the problems it must face, is no greater than the size of our military structure prior to Korea and its problems at that time.

It should also be noted that numbered among the active forces today are over a quarter of a million reserve officers and many thousands of enlisted men. Many have served on active duty continuously since 1940. Therefore, in no sense of the word, can they be considered as a part of a reserve force designed to back up the active forces at this time or in the foreseeable future. Rather, they must be considered for all purposes as career officers and men.

It will be argued by some that never again will we need to call on the reserves for small wars because of the larger active forces handling such problems. On this thesis, the next time our reserves are needed it will be in an all-out war following the probable use of nuclear weapons against our homeland with its terrific and unique problems for our military as well as non-military security structure. This concept is dangerous and is strongly questioned by our Association.

Recognizing these problems, and with a complete sense of discouragement as to the current status of the reserve, we created within the Reserve Officers
Association, a Committee of extremely competent and experienced reserve officers from all services, headed by Brig. General Wendell Westover of Albany, New York. This Committee was directed to study all facets of this problem and to bring forth in general terms a plan which could serve as a basis for our Association's position in the steps being taken to improve our reserve structure. It reported on February 6, 1955, to our National Council and Executive Committee, as well as to the members of the several service sections assembled in Washington, in part, for the receiving of this report. It has also been distributed to our membership generally for comment and suggestion. The Committee had the benefit of much of the thinking that had gone on within the Defense Department and the Office of Defense Mobilization, and, in my opinion, has competently met the difficult problems presented to it.

Incidentally, Mr. Chairman, I must call your attention to the wonderful cooperation that now exists between these two government agencies and our organization. The Association has been proud of the opportunity given it to work with them in considering the various aspects of the reserve problem which led to the legislation presently before you. We feel that this Committee should know of our high opinion of the diligent effort and intelligent leadership that has been given to this problem by the Assistant Secretary for Defense for Manpower and Personnel, Mr. Carter L. Burgess, and the Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization, Dr. Arthur S. Flemming. We feel that they are to be complimented on evolving a platform on which, with certain modification, we believe a proper reserve can be developed.

The Association plan, predicated on our Committee Report, is not intended to be a substitute for the Department of Defense recommendations, but rather provides an augmentation and a more speedy implementation of certain aspects of their program. We have attached to our statement a copy of this report and request it be made a part of the official record on this bill. Our testimony from here on will
be designed to indicate how the bill presently before us needs to be modified in order to accomplish more readily, not only the purposes of the bill, as introduced, but to solve more certainly the problems which led to its introduction.

Mr. Chairman, it is difficult to establish the proper starting point for our more detailed comments. I feel I have two choices; either the size of the reserve structure which it is designed to create or the individuals who will be in the program.

The bill before you is, in essence, a manpower procurement bill dealing primarily with the problem of securing enlisted manpower for the reserves and effecting a higher degree in participation in the reserve training programs. While we believe that these are only two elements of the problem facing us today, we will start our discussion with the type of individual that we believe should be in the reserve.

This Association is in accord with the concept that every able-bodied, male American owes, as an obligation of citizenship, a certain amount of service to the Military. This is service either with the active forces, the reserve forces, or in combination thereof. It does not agree that this period of obligatory service should exceed eight years. Furthermore, it feels that this period of obligation should be subject to reduction by the President when force levels have been reached in the active forces and in the expanded reserve in order that the manpower pool may not increase beyond the minimum figure necessary to provide a source of recruitment for the regular military establishment. Failure to hold the manpower pool to minimum levels will result in many young men escaping service, and the average age of inductees increasing to unacceptable figures.

The Association believes that the sources of manpower for the reserves should be two and two only:

The first source would be from prior service personnel with remaining periods of obligatory service, or, those who have discharged their obligatory service who
can be induced to remain in the reserve on a voluntary basis. The second source would be non-prior service men who enlist in the reserve components throughout the country and immediately thereafter go on active duty for training for a period of six months. After this training is completed, they then return to their reserve units for a period of seven and one-half years. All services should be required to use both methods. The numbers who would be trained would be the maximum consistent with the existence of facilities and available funds. It should be noted that the Department of Defense recommends this training plan be on a carefully controlled basis, and it is our understanding, intends it to apply only to the Army, the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard. It should be noted that under their present program, the Navy is following a somewhat similar plan which they call "Accelerated Reservists Training." Consistent with the position stated above, we recommend that a floor be placed under the number that would be trained by this method, and that this floor would be 150,000 trained annually for all the military services. It should be borne in mind that this floor represents only 75,000 man years of trainees which should not tax the training facilities of the military establishment to a significant degree.

The size of the reserve is the next logical point to discuss.

The bill before you establishes a total of five million men in the reserves, divided between a 3,000,000 man re-defined Ready Reserve and a 2,000,000 man re-defined Standby Reserve.

It is the opinion of the Association that the total reserve should consist of approximately three million reservists. We would recommend that the three million Ready Reserve, as recommended in this legislation, be the total reserve and that the Standby Reserve as recommended in this legislation, revert to the general manpower pool. The Standby Reserve, as recommended in this bill, can not be ordered to active duty except with the approval of the Selective Service. Furthermore, this bill provides no opportunity for training in the Standby Reserve except on a volunteer, unpaid basis, and offers no opportunity for promotion or advancement to
its members. It is our opinion that it is not a reserve at all and adds nothing to the security of our country.

The Association would not change the present definitions contained in the Reserve Forces Act of 1952 for the Ready, Standby, and Inactive reserves, although we would suggest changing the name of the Standby Reserve to "Mobilization Reserve". A careful study of these existing definitions shows clearly that they accomplish precisely the same objectives as the new definitions suggested by the Department of Defense, with the exception of the control by Selective Service over the proposed "Standby Reserve".

The main difference between our positions is one of size. The Association would divide the three million men in the Ready Reserve, as recommended by the Department of Defense, into a Ready, Standby, and Inactive Reserve, as established by present law. The Ready Reserve would be the only part of the reserve, which would be subject to the call of the President. In our opinion this should not exceed one and a half million men. It will be noted in the Association plan, attached hereto, that the million and a half in the Ready Reserve would be divided into two groups of similarly trained and equipped units and individuals. The first would be a so-called "Hurricane" force, the second, the "Support" force.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the term "Hurricane force" is not intended to be a legal term but is rather a descriptive term. This force, backed up by the "Support" force, with only a slightly less degree of immediate readiness, would constitute our Ready Reserve. Membership in the "Hurricane" force and "Support" force would be encouraged by special inducements and incentives, including but not limited to, extra emoluments, identifying and distinctive uniforms or markers, and priority receipt of full combat equipment and realistic training facilities. To the greatest extent possible, it would be manned by prior service personnel who would be induced to serve in the Ready Reserve force. This Ready Reserve would be subject to the call of the President.
The balance of the three million total reserve would be in the Standby Reserve and would be organized, equipped, and trained, precisely the same as the Ready Reserve. It would have, however, a lower degree of priority of achieving operational readiness.

It is the belief of the Association that everything possible should be done to put the so-called "Hurricane" force into a high degree of readiness at the earliest practicable date. We would put a target date of 1 July 1956 for completion of organizing, equipping and starting of intensive training.

As previously indicated we would call the reserve, other than those in the Ready reserve, a "Mobilization Reserve" instead of a "Standby Reserve". This is a much more descriptive title, particularly since it can only be called to duty, for other than training, by the Congress.

We know that it will be argued that a larger Ready Reserve is required, but we believe that such a concept, as expressed in the legislation before you, stems from war plans designed to meet the requirements of full mobilization. It is recognized that the next war may start by an all-out attack on our country. That, of course, would bring in all reserves with the fullest support of the Congress.

However, we cannot accept the concept that we should tie our ready reserve structure to a plan that would require the use of 3,000,000 men in addition to our active forces. There may be other types of small wars which will require a partial mobilization on a very urgent basis. If such is the case, a relatively small Ready Reserve is imperative. If, however, the entire three million is needed, then it is our opinion that such a need stems from total war. Certainly there will not be such damage that the Congress could not take any action necessary to permit the use of all reserves.

The Association supports the concept of developing methods to enforce participation in reserve training. It is in accord with plans to periodically order to active duty, against their will, those reservists who do not participate
in training activities in order to maintain their readiness. Furthermore, it supports the concept that reserves who entered the program through the six-months training method must participate actively in reserve training. Failure to meet the required standards should result in that reservist being ordered to active duty by the appropriate Secretary concerned for an additional period of 24 months. This is not a punitive measure. The decision to enter the reserves through the six-months route was a voluntary choice on the part of the individual. If, at a later time, he changes his mind and decides not to carry out his original plan he merely reverts to the service he had originally rejected. The Department of Defense only recommends that such reservists become liable for induction for an additional 18 months. We feel he should assume the same degree of service which he had previously elected to reject.

The Association also recommends that this proposed reserve legislation be amended to include specific authority for twelve weekend training periods with the pay equivalent of 48 drills. It is possible that this can be done administratively, but that a Congressional directive as expressed in law for such training, where appropriate, would do much to improve the degree of readiness of all units and particularly those in the Ready Reserve. While it has been previously stated, it is believed to be necessary for emphasis, to repeat that members of the recommended Mobilization Reserve, or as is presently called the Standby Reserve, with the exception of those who are on the Inactive duty list, should be organized, equipped, and trained in precisely the same way as those in the Ready Reserve. The only difference between the "Ready" and "Mobilization" Reserve would be in the priority of completing these arrangements and the fact that the "Mobilization" reserve is only subject to the call of the Congress.

The Association concurs in the theory of constantly screening the reserves, and eliminating those whose skills are such as to require their being in the
domestic economy. However, it is noted in the bill as introduced that there is a provision contained on page 19, line 7, subsection (d), which would permit an appropriate Secretary to discharge any member of the reserve component who is in excess of mobilization requirements in any category of skill or qualifications. The Association believes that this section must be revised to make certain that such separations are made only to implement the program of protecting essential skills in industry. In its present form, it is too broad and too general to do other than cause concern.

One of the major deficiencies in the bill under discussion was its failure to recognize the absolute need to provide for an orderly flow of young reserve officers into the reserve program. We are pleased to note from the testimony of Mr. Burgess that he intends to recommend amendments to correct this omission. Basically, such officers come into the Reserve through the ROTC program. Under present conditions, the purposes of this program have been distorted to become a procurement program for the needs of the active services. The primary purpose of the ROTC program is to provide young officers to meet mobilization requirements. The Association feels that this bill should include specific authority and direction that the ROTC program be re-designed to meet its established mission to provide the officer personnel for mobilization requirements. We recommend that the numbers in the program be consistent with that objective and that upon graduation all ROTC graduates will be commissioned. Those in excess of mobilization requirements will be ordered to active duty for training for six months and then attached to reserve units for a period of seven and one-half years obligatory service.

There is much talk of inducements and incentives to improve interest in and the morale of reservists. The Association has a strong and fundamental belief that in substantial part, the present low morale and low efficiency of the reserves stems from certain easily correctible faults on the part of the regular establishment. There has, in the past, not been an acceptance of the concept
by a part of the regular establishment that the reserves are an integral part of our total military structure and not a mere adjunct to the regular establishment. This has resulted, unfortunately, in discrimination and attitudes, particularly in personnel procedures, which can only indicate that in the minds of some regular personnel/a reservist is a second-class member of the military team.

Therefore, the Association believes that morale can only be soundly improved when four relatively simple, but perhaps difficult to achieve, criteria are met.

First: We must, through every device possible, so educate every American to accept the concept that there is an obligation of citizenship on the part of each American to support our security programs, in general, and that every able-bodied American of appropriate age owes eight years of obligatory service to the military.

Second: The services must give each individual such progressive and worthwhile training that he will believe that what he is doing is worthwhile and that it is a proper discharge of this citizenship obligation.

Third: The services must develop and constantly maintain proper systems of administration to provide equitable procedures for promotion, retirement, pay, etc., and

Fourth: The reservist must be recognized as an important part of, and not an adjunct to, our military establishment and be treated accordingly.

If these criteria are met, the details of the incentives and inducements become easier to accomplish. For example, they might take the form of certain additional payments for the signing of a contract to insure active and continued service in the reserve, or a discharge of their eight years of obligatory service at an accelerated rate by service on active duty/or for participation in the Ready
reserve as distinct from the Mobilization (standby) reserve. There are many relatively inexpensive methods that can be developed to make an individual anxious and willing to serve in the reserve as a whole.

The Association has a further suggestion to make. We recognize that this bill was primarily designed to solve the enlisted manpower procurement program. We have already suggested a broadening of this concept, although we have also indicated that we believe there is little need to change much of the existing law dealing with the reserves. We feel, however, that this bill, which in the eyes of the people will be labeled as the "National Reserve Plan" or some other distinctive title, should solve some of the other problems which have impeded the reserves in various ways under existing law.

Therefore, we recommend the addition of a new title to the bill into which will be placed some of the various bits of legislation presently before the Congress, to the end that when this bill is enacted we will have cleaned up a great many of the legislative problems that presently are disturbing us. By way of example, we suggest that this new title include rehabilitation pay for reserves on continuous active duty who are separated involuntarily due to reductions in force after long tours of continuous active duty. There is a plan, which has already been submitted to your staff, which has approval within the Department of Defense, and is designed to cushion the shock of the separation of these individuals who in fact have been career employees for periods extending up to 19 years on active duty.

Similarly, there is a question of broken service for SPARS and WACS, which has been a personnel problem for some time and which should be resolved.

Another matter which we earnestly recommend for the consideration of the Committee, is the fact that we should endeavor to clean up once and for all the problem of reservists who have served on continuous active duty for such periods of time that they, in fact, have become career personnel. We are constantly
recommending bits and pieces of legislation designed to correct inequities which result from this problem.

Without such reservists, the armed forces cannot possibly meet their commitments. Over 80% of the officers of the Air Force and Army on active duty today are reservists. Smaller percentages prevail in the Navy and Marine Corps. We know of no line of endeavor where an employee who works for the same employer for a period of ten, fifteen, or twenty years is not considered a career employee. Yet these reserve officers who are holding responsible positions on active duty and are as well qualified as the so-called regular, who frequently has had the same education and the same type of service training and record as the reservist, are not "career" men. Human nature being what it is, the reservist on active duty is constantly being discriminated against in matters of promotion, command assignment, retirement, etc.

Therefore, we suggest to this Committee that an amendment be written into this Reserve legislation to provide that, except in time of war or general mobilization, when a reserve has been on continuous active duty for a period of eight years that he will at that time be screened for fitness to be retained on active duty. If he is deemed to be fit for retention he will be given the opportunity to be integrated in his present rank and status. This will solve a great many of the problems which now plague us all and it certainly will bring about a higher degree of morale and efficiency on the part of individuals who have been living under the shadow of forces beyond their control.

There are undoubtedly other items of this type which should be considered and the Association earnestly urges that this be done. We do not believe that they will jeopardize the passage of the bill as a whole. Similarly, we do not feel that the discussions which involve the enactment of this bill, as a whole, will slow down the passage of these items. In fact, we believe that the presence of a rounded program with a clean-up of existing defects will smooth the way for prompt
Congressional approval of this legislation.

In closing, I want to reaffirm our Association's belief that the enactment of reserve legislation to accomplish the objectives set out in the Department of Defense bill, is essential. The amendments we have suggested are constructive, and will, in our opinion, give us the type of reserve that the Department of Defense needs to meet their obligations.

We hold firmly to the belief that the minimum number of personnel should be placed under the control of the President, and that the majority of the reservists should be subject only to the will of the people/speaking through the Congress.

We believe that the real heart of the improvement in our Reserve Program is in the development of realistic training supported by proper facilities at the earliest possible date. Along with this broad plan should go a crash program to bring the Ready Reserve, as outlined in our plan, to a high degree of readiness at the earliest possible moment.

It is our sincere belief that as our reserve improves, we can have confidence in its readiness. It should then be possible to more safely reduce the size of our regular establishment without jeopardizing our country's security.

THANK YOU!