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Address before Reserve Officers Association Departmental Meeting

Strom Thurmond

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ADDRESS BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC), NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION, BEFORE ROA DEPARTMENTAL MEETING AT ITHACA, N.Y. ON APRIL 15, 1955

The pleasure and privilege of being here today is one I have long awaited. In this distinguished group, there is one who has served his nation long and well. His many decorations attest to his patriotism and bravery on the field of battle. His sustained interest in ROA reflects his untiring efforts to bolster the defense structure of his nation. His participation in Association affairs over many years has directly and indirectly led to many of its more important accomplishments. The most recent was the ARMED FORCES RESERVE 3-cent postage stamp which will be recognized officially in Washington on May 21st.

For these and many similar reasons, Brig. Gen. Wendell Westover, we of ROA salute you and commend you with a "well done" for your devotion to a cause close to the hearts of good Americans.
No one has to be a master of the crystal ball to realize these are troublesome days. Ominous rumblings in the world disturb us every day. Man can now make weapons capable of reducing the world to the primitive conditions of pre-historic days.

We are told by some that man even has, within the range of his grasp, the means to exterminate the human race.* Thus, we must be concerned lest civilization itself perish.

In many parts of the world we find freedom in chains and the tyranny of communism running rampant. Our job in fighting this threat, this deadly evil, is by being prepared, by being strong, and by having faith in ourselves and in God.

Let us remind ourselves of the words of Walt Whitman when he said:

"There is no week/nor day nor hour/when tyranny may not enter this country, if the people lose their supreme confidence in themselves - and lose their roughness and spirit of defiance. Tyranny may always enter; there is no charm, no bar against it. The only bar against it is a large, resolute breed of men."

History records the courage and stamina of our forefathers, the men who with musket stood their ground against trained British Regulars at Lexington and Concord. Their descendants possessed this same breed at San Juan Hill, Chateau-Thierry, the Normandy hedgerows, Iwo Jima and Korea. History speaks for itself.

Today, as in those by-gone days, our nation needs 20th century Minutemen, trained and dedicated to the cause of freedom. We of ROA believe implicitly our 20th Century Minutemen must develop as a stronger, better trained, and better equipped reserve.
We support the various efforts being made in this direction. We recognize it will probably place upon us, as individuals, additional responsibilities of citizenship. We, as Americans, are prepared to accept such responsibilities and we, as Reserve Officers, are willing and eager to support them.

We all pray for peace, but in praying for peace, none of us fails to recognize that only the strong are in a position to sustain themselves against the will of a dictator. We must ask the Almighty, whom we have the freedom to worship, to give us wisdom. And we must endeavor to help by providing sufficient defensive power and accepting God’s guidance. Thus we may yet avoid the evils of a third World War fought with atomic and nuclear weapons. If it should come, then we would be better prepared to survive as a free nation.
Sometimes we in the Association fail to recognize the part that we are playing in contributing to the total defense picture. Certainly on all sides, from the President to the man in the street, we find an acceptance of the fact that the country's strength depends on a strong and ready Reserve structure.

That Reserve structure consists of many bits and pieces, such as promotion systems, retirement, armories, training, facilities and methods of procurement of personnel. From these bits and pieces come the morale, the trained organizations, and the willingness to support Reserve programs in peace times, not only through the payment of our taxes, but through the personal sacrifices and efforts that each of us is willing to contribute to the cause of freedom and security. Without this acceptance and support by the individuals and public at large, no Reserve program can be made to work.

And to attain the objective of our Association — adequate national
defense— it is essential that reserve officers maintain sufficient interest in the military to keep active commissions.

We believe reservists must receive adequate training in order to be qualified militarily when their services are required; that as participating members of the Defense team they should be insured against the potential inequities in the management and administration of this big business—of the military forces.

I am confident that Mr. Wilson, the Secretary of Defense, would be among the first to testify accordingly.

A good example of how things can go wrong in military affairs is highlighted by our Vice President for Naval Affairs, Rear Admiral Charles L. LaBarge:

"In 1921 the Naval Department became panicky concerning drill pay
for Naval Reserve officers. Superficial and inaccurate analysis of the subject resulted in ALNAV 67, immediately discharging every Naval Reserve officer on the rolls. This left the United States without any Naval Reserve and six months later the ALNAV was cancelled but the damage had been done.

"In the early 1930's the Navy Department was instructed to reduce its budget 10 percent. Instead of reducing the Naval Reserve budget the normal share, they took away 85 percent of it in order to help toward the over-all total. This eliminated all drill and active duty training pay for everyone.

"At this time there was a form of retirement benefit in effect for Naval Reserve officers. A lump sum payment was made to the individual after 20 years of satisfactory service. Without any warning or notice, the law was repealed by Congress. With 19 years and 9
months of service, at the time of the repeal, one of our officers received nothing. Just such things can happen again if Reserve officers are not represented by a strong, unified association to protect their interests and welfare. That's why reservists need the ROA."

Those were the words of our Navy Vice President, Admiral LaBarge.

Prior to the inception of the new Reserve Plan in legislative form, the action of the Defense Department made it impossible for our Association and even their own Reserve Policy Boards to study carefully this so-called "new look" and advise with the Regulars who were charting its course. This was disturbing. While we are most anxious to support anything designed to give us a better defense through better reserves, we could not support a plan of which we knew nothing.

The Director of Defense Mobilization was willing to permit our Executive Director to examine this plan and make recommendations to him.
for transmittal to the National Security Council. Only in this way could we learn the details of the program.

We did, however, reserve the right to take such position as we thought best when this "new look" was transformed into legislative action. We resolved the plan and the law must be such as is capable of being accepted by, supported and made to work by, those of us who have Reserve responsibilities.

Then a new face appeared in the high echelons of the Defense Department. He closed the gap between Pentagon planners and interested organizations outside the Defense Department. The man responsible for this new policy in Pentagon circles was Carter Burgess, the present Assistant Secretary of Defense. He is a Reserve officer himself. He understands and appreciates the reservists' desire to participate in framing the rules and laws affecting his own military destiny. Since the advent of Mr. Burgess' role in Pentagon operations,
progress has been a matter of record. We of ROA regard him highly, as do Members of Congress. He is fair, just and sympathetic to the Reserve Forces. America can be proud of such a man who, at great personal sacrifice, is rendering an outstanding service to his country.

Over the months your ROA national representatives have worked constantly and closely with our associates, in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill, concerned with the Administration's Reserve Plan. An initial hurdle was overcome when the Armed Services Subcommittee, of which Rep. Overton Brooks of Louisiana was Chairman, concluded its hearings and referred the bill to the full committee for consideration on April 18th.

If enacted in its present form, certain significant changes in
Manpower procurement for the reserves will be effected. First of all, the bill creates a Ready Reserve of 2.9 million men. In addition, there is a Standby Reserve without numerical limitation. Within the Ready Reserve one million members, in units or as individuals, could be ordered to active duty during a period of national emergency. If units are ordered for this purpose, they must be left intact and not cannibalized as during the Korean conflict.

Second, significant requirements are in the bill for participation in reserve activities. Any individual who is inducted or enlisted in the regular forces, unless he serves for a total of five years, is required to serve in the Ready Reserve upon leaving active duty. He must participate satisfactorily, and in order to maintain the required level of proficiency, he must either affiliate with a unit for a minimum of 48 drills annually or the equivalent thereof. If he cannot affiliate with such a unit, he may take 30 days active duty each
year. Those who are able but unwilling to participate in one of these alternative programs may be ordered to active duty for training without their consent for as long as 45 days each year.

We are convinced that, even though the compulsion to enforce participation of individuals has been reduced materially, the principles of requiring participation as written into this bill will result in a significant improvement in the over-all size and efficiency of the Reserve.

ROA worked closely with the Defense Department in bringing about agreement on certain necessary amendments. As originally presented, an individual in the Standby Reserve was not permitted to earn retirement points or to be considered for promotion. As
amended, a member of the Standby Reserve has greater opportunity to improve himself and better his chances for retirement under the Reserve Retirement Act, as well as being considered for promotion, than under present law.

Additional administrative steps are necessary to earmark units and individuals subject to call in event of national emergency declared by the President, but ROA concurred in the proposal to give the President limited authority to order Reserves to duty.

In the bill as introduced, it was requested by Defense officials that the entire Ready Reserve of 2.9 million be subject to presidential call. Our Association recommended that 750,000 men in units or as individuals be subject to call of the President in case of emergency. The subcommittee could not resolve this point. Several members favored giving Congress alone this power to order out the Reserves, and
others favored the Defense viewpoint. The subject is being referred
to the full committee for decision.

There were some technical amendments your Association helped guide
to a conclusion. One section of the original bill/would have permitted
the discharge of any member of a Reserve component/declared in excess
of mobilization requirements. Due to the Association's objections this
section was deleted entirely. ROA pointed out that present law pro-
vides an equitable procedure to eliminate such individuals by proper
Board action.

My statement to you has been a brief summary/of the labors in-
volved/in the processing of the new legislation concerning the Reserves.
With these amendments, the bill, while not perfect, would do much to
increase the size, readiness and effectiveness/of our over-all Defense
structure.

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ROA is striving constantly and expending its full energies to do everything possible to strengthen our national security. Our defense structure must provide appropriate policies and plans, well-trained personnel with high morale who are equipped with modern weapons and material. These are the objectives we are fighting for. These are what our future existence may well depend upon.

In conclusion, I wish to say that all of us must concentrate on today if we are to survive tomorrow. It is easy to be indifferent to the threat that surrounds us today. It might be more difficult to face the immediate dangers tomorrow if we neglect the threats today.

Actually, we have no choice. We must defend the freedoms fought for by our founding fathers and defended from all attacks since 1776.

The price of liberty has increased since the Minutemen of Lexington lived. Radar, guided missiles, the A and H Bombs, all make war more
complex and costly.

The training all citizens must receive, if we are to survive, requires much time and energy. During the past year we have reached the end of another long, hard road. Others lie ahead. We must pray that God will give us the wisdom, the courage, and the strength to face our problems and to succeed in our objectives.

--End--
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