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Address to Reserve Officers Association

Strom Thurmond

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During the past few weeks, you have read almost daily of various efforts to try to cause the President to reveal exactly what policy will be followed in the Pacific. This has been particularly true with regard to the islands of Matsu and Quemoy.

Some people seem to feel that President Eisenhower should spell out the plan which would be followed by the United States if the Reds should attack these islands near the Chinese mainland. The critics of the President's policy of keeping his own counsel appear to want everybody— including Red China and Soviet Russia—to know where and when we would fight and under what conditions. They want the lines drawn around the areas which we would protect from attack and to let our enemies know we would not protect areas outside those lines.

I recall a fairly recent example of bad results from letting everybody know what we were doing.

On January 12, 1950, President Truman's Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, made a speech in which he defined the defensive perimeter of the United States in the Pacific. He stated it ran from the Aleutians to Japan, the Ryukyu Islands and through the Philippines.

That left Korea out of the stated interests of this nation. Late in June 1950 the Reds marched into South Korea. We had withdrawn most of our forces in compliance with an agreement to let Korea look after its own affairs. But the Reds had been fully informed of our intentions. They knew we had withdrawn our troops. They thought because of the Acheson speech that we would not fight over Korea.

Congress has voted almost unanimously to give the President the power to determine whether we should defend Matsu and Quemoy which could serve the Reds as stepping stones for an attack on Formosa. We are already committed to fight with Chiang-Kai-Shek should the Reds directly attack the nationalist stronghold of Formosa or the Pescadores islands.

With experience gained from Korea, there is sound
reason in the President's policy of silence as to what we
would do/ if the Reds attacked Matsu and Quemoy.

So long as the Reds can be kept from making an attack/
by the policy of keeping them guessing as to what the United
States would do, I am in favor of following such a policy. It
would be an open invitation to the Reds to take over those islands/
if we told the world they were outside our perimeter of defense.

All of us must realize/ there is no fool proof policy/
against communist aggression. If the Reds believe themselves
strong enough, and decide to attack/ regardless of our strength,
we can not prevent it.

Congress has expressed confidence/ in the President's
military knowledge and in his judgment. Every American/ should
lend his support to the President's policy. We must remember/
that he is more fully informed than any other person/ as to the
dangers and necessities of this situation.

As we stand together in war, we should stand together/
without political consideration/ in trying to prevent war/ by
cooperating with our Chief Executive/ in preserving the peace and
stopping aggression.
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,
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 Committee concluded its hearings and favorably reported the bill to the House for consideration on April 26th.

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 without the consent of Congress. 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 House Armed Services Committee has set the figure at one million men.

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 provides an equitable procedure/to eliminate such individuals by proper Board action.

My statement to you has been a brief summary of the labors involved 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.

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.

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