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Report of National President of the Reserve Officers Association

Strom Thurmond

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Distinguished Guests and Fellow Members of the Reserve Officers Association:

As I come to the end of my tour of duty as President of the Reserve Officers Association, I am deeply aware of the great privilege and honor it has been for me to serve you.

Many persons have contributed to the success we have achieved during the past year, but none has served more faithfully and more effectively than the members of our National Headquarters Staff.

Colonel Boyer, or "Count" Boyer as he is affectionately known, has been a pillar of strength. His efficiency and ability are exceeded only by his integrity and dedication to duty. Without his faithful work as Executive Director of the Association, I do not believe it would have been possible for us to have reached the same height of accomplishments. His knowledge of military affairs has been a fortress of strength to the Association and has impressed the members of Congress and the Defense establishment with whom he
has worked. We owe a debt of gratitude to Colonel Boyer for the contribution he has made to ROA.

Colonel Boyer has been ably assisted by Colonel Joe Chambers in the role of assistant executive director. Colonel Chambers is a Medal of Honor holder of whom we are all very proud. Particularly in the field of legislative problems, Colonel Chambers has served with acumen and strength.

Major Herbert Wilson has had the task of handling the problems of individual members. He has served faithfully and efficiently in this important assignment.

Major McArthur Manchester has performed admirably as editor of and writer for our magazine and newsletter. He is a man of outstanding ability and character and is to be highly commended for the quality of the publications he has produced. None has worked more assiduously, and I know of no person more dedicated to duty. He deserves our highest praise.

Our staff employees in National Headquarters have performed well in their assigned duties. I personally appreciate the fine cooperation
I have received from each and every one of them.

Particularly, I desire to commend the elected national officers and the members of the Executive Committee for their outstanding cooperation during the past year. In my opinion, they have approached the problems confronting our nation and our association on a basis of what is best for the country, and never from the viewpoint purely of the service which they represent. No president could have asked for a finer group of people with whom to work. The three Senior Vice-Presidents have borne great responsibility, and have rendered service of immeasurable value to our Association. They deserve special recognition for their contributions.

The pleasures of serving the members of this association have been numerous, and I shall always remember my association with each of you.

As I have come to know you better as the year passed, I have learned of your determination. I know that you face the future with confidence and unceasing vigilance. Confidence and vigilance have been a trademark of Americans since our forefathers settled this country.
But nowhere is it more strongly reflected than in the spirit of the citizen-reservist, as he seeks to strengthen our national security through stronger and more virile Reserve Forces.

Never has there been a greater need for capable and unflinching leadership than exists today. This ROA convention is called upon to use maturity of judgment in our considerations, so as to achieve clarity in our decisions.

We must take full advantage of the opportunities presented in this convention, to take constructive efforts in behalf of our objective of an adequate national defense. Boston is replete with examples of the accomplishments of our forefathers. Let us in our deliberations and actions seek to perpetuate their desire that our country be strong and free.

Despite the demands upon a United States Senator, it has been possible for me to visit many of our Departments and Chapters during the past year. Frankly, it has not always been easy. However, my sincere admiration for those contributing to ROA progress and stability encouraged me to find ways and means of sharing your meetings.
Consequently, at every opportunity I accepted invitations to address ROA and reservist meetings.

I have been deeply gratified at the response of the various departments and chapters of ROA throughout the country to our efforts. We have registered a gain of about 8,000 members during the past year. Our total membership is approximately 59,000 now, an increase of about 20 per cent over the previous year.

During the past year, I have had the pleasure of at least six meetings with President Eisenhower. Our subjects of conversation concerned the Reserve Forces and ROA. We discussed the steps necessary for improving the morale, welfare and status of the Reserve officer and his counterpart in the Regular Establishment. We also discussed the need for a revitalized Reserve as featured in the National Reserve Plan.

Contacts with pentagon officials during the past year have been too numerous to mention.

On several occasions the ROA vice presidents came to Washington and joined me in Pentagon conferences. Appearances at appropriate
times were made before the Reserve Forces Policy Board of the Secretary of Defense. In all our contacts, individually and collectively, we left no doubt as to ROA's determination to achieve a truly Ready Reserve, so necessary to national defense and the future of our country.

May I say at this point, that never in the history of our Association has our relationship with Pentagon officials—both civilian and military—been as pleasant and harmonious as at present. A "new look" has developed in Defense Department attitudes toward ROA. A large portion of this change is due to Assistant Secretary of Defense Carter Burgess and the Service assistant secretaries for manpower and reserves. Mr. Burgess, reserve officers, and their broad experience in military matters and keen insight to Reserve problems have made them valuable leaders in our Defense establishment.

These far-sighted gentlemen recognize that ROA is a buttress of strength in support of adequate national defense. They are aware of the citizen-reservist's ability to walk sometimes where Regulars fear to tread.
Thus, in the past year, many positive steps toward progress have been recorded through better understanding and cooperation. We of ROA should exert every effort to promote and sustain this cooperation. We commend this policy to all who place nation above self, and defense above component.

During the past year, through the efforts of ROA, the Postmaster General, Arthur E. Summerfield, issued the Armed Forces Reserve Commemorative Stamp. The White House and the Defense Department approved the issuance of this stamp and the presentation was made at a special ceremony held on Armed Forces Day in Washington on May 21, 1955. Because of the popularity of this stamp, it has been necessary for the Post Office Department to issue many extra thousands to meet the demand. The ROA is greatly indebted to the able and distinguished Postmaster General for his fine cooperation in this respect.

During this convention your national officers and committee chairmen will render informative reports. All activities and interests of the Association will be given in detail, so that you may return to your homes, posts, camps and stations fully alert to the progress
The report of the Executive Director will discuss the role National ROA Headquarters has played during the past twelve months. Our capable legislative chairman, Major General Melvin Maas, will report on Congress and legislation pertaining to defense and ROA interests.

On several occasions I have appeared before Congressional committees in behalf of legislation concerning the national defense and ROA.

As your President, I feel it pertinent at this point to tell you that your Association played an active part in achieving the recently enacted pay raise for the Armed Services. This pay raise was deserved and long overdue. Assistant Secretary of Defense Burgess acknowledged our efforts in this respect.

One of the most significant pieces of legislation that has been enacted by Congress in behalf of our members is the Reserve Officers Personnel Act, which was passed in July, 1954. The odds against enactment of this bill appeared insurmountable, but through the
magnificent efforts of Reserve Officers throughout the country, we were able to crystallize sentiment sufficiently strong to get favorable action. Certain technical amendments to the bill are needed to correct some sections of the law and strengthen the mandate in general. I am glad to report that a bill to accomplish these amendments was passed through the Senate several weeks ago, and that it has been reported favorably by the House Armed Services Committee. It is anticipated that the House will pass it shortly, possibly this week.

Earlier this month, on June 6, the Pay Readjustment (or Rehabilitation) Bill was forwarded by the Pentagon to Congress. This bill, advocated exclusively by ROA for several years, is designed to give relief to reservists of long active service who find themselves released to inactive duty and civil life. ROA has maintained consistently that the Defense Department has an obligation to Reserve officers who, after many years in service, find themselves out of uniform. We have advocated that such persons be afforded financial assistance in the form of "readjustment pay," so that they can provide for their families.
can provide for their families while in the process of readjusting to civilian life.

There are many other matters of importance to active duty personnel in which our Association is playing a vital role: We are espousing adequate housing for military personnel, advocating legislation to provide medical aid for dependents, supporting a Survivors' Benefits Bill and working actively to see that Post Exchange and Commissary privileges are extended rather than curtailed.

One of the most important pieces of legislation now pending before the Congress is the National Reserve Plan, commonly known as the "Reserve Bill." This bill is essential to national defense and should be enacted without delay. With the enactment of this legislation, the Reserve, for the first time, will have a procurement system to provide for enlisted personnel and junior officers, and furthermore, it contains a provision which will require participation. The present laws place people in the Reserve but contain no authority to require participation. We have worked with the Defense Department for months to perfect this bill, and have cooperated in every way we
could to bring about its passage. With supersonic planes and guided missiles that will travel thousands of miles per hour, the countries of the world are close together and the time element we have had in the past is no longer with us. If this country should be attacked, we shall not have the time to prepare. It is not economically feasible to maintain a large regular establishment. The solution of our defense problem lies in a large combat ready reserve. In order to provide this, our reserve must be organized, trained, equipped, and ready to take the field within a few hours. Our nation needs the Reserve Bill, and needs it now. I am confident the members of the Congress would want to know how the Reserve Officers, who are the best posted persons militarily in their communities, feel about this legislation. Time is short. Action must be fast. If the members of this Association want this bill passed badly enough, and will so inform their Congressmen, the bill will probably be passed. Unless this needed support is given forthwith, the outcome remains dubious.

This past year has been a memorable one for me. As President of the Reserve Officers Association, it has been a privilege and an
honor to represent Reserve officers of the only unified organization of reservists in America. It has afforded me the opportunity to associate and work with many wonderful people, dedicated to a common purpose.

Together we have made progress, despite the seemingly slow pace at times. Our advancement is a direct tribute to the members of ROA, who, through their cooperation and support of the Association's programs, have rendered inestimable assistance to the work of our organization. Though they wear the uniform of five services, ROA members, true to the ideals embodied in our Constitution, prize the mantle of Americanism, first, last and always.

As I come to the end of my term as ROA President, I cannot step down without expressing my thoughts on the present world situation.

As President Eisenhower prepares to meet with the Prime Ministers of Great Britain, France and Russia, we should all be concerned with the possible outcome of the Big Four talks.

We should not, and we must not, expect all of our difficulties in international relations to be resolved by this meeting. Rather,
we should expect little, and be grateful for any small successes attained.

The President knows the Russians by experience. He has expressed a realistic view of the situation. He told his news conference of May 11 that:

"Trying to reach a clarification of issues, if such a thing is possible, is so important that you can't stand on any other principle except to do your utmost as you preserve your own strength of position, as long as you are not sacrificing, as long as you are not expecting too much..."

That is realistic. We love peace and the world desires peace more than anything else. But we would gain nothing if we go into the Big Four meeting expecting too much, and consequently, concede too much, in an effort to arrive at an agreement which in the end might be worse than no agreement at all.

One thing we must remember above all else as we watch the Big Four meeting. This is that the Soviets, who so often claim world championships in sports or championships of scientific discoveries,
certainly deserve the title of champions in one respect.

The Russians are the world champions in the breaking of solemn treaties and agreements entered into with other nations of the world.

There have been many tragic examples of lack of good faith on the part of the Russians in the past. We have no reason to believe they will now keep an agreement any longer than they believe it to be to their advantage.

We cannot take the word of the leaders of this dictatorship at face value. We cannot believe them, even if they sign new agreements pledging peace. Their actions in daily relations with other nations cannot be disregarded, no matter what they say or sign at a peace conference.

The Soviets first must prove their good faith by daily dealings with their fellow members of the United Nations and with all the nations of the world. We must not be diverted and deceived further by the continued use of old Russian strategy. They are truly champions at the art of deception.

In 1941 President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill signed
the Atlantic Charter. It promised the peoples of the world that the efforts of these two great nations would be employed in every way possible to guarantee freedom of speech and religion and freedom from fear and want.

At the Yalta Conference in 1945, Stalin joined Roosevelt and Churchill in a re-affirmation of the pledges contained in the Atlantic Charter. But neither Stalin nor his successors in the Soviet dictatorship have ever lived up to that pledge.

They have kept up constant military or political pressures on many nations. They have enveloped some of these countries in Communist control, and made them mere satellites of Russia. You are familiar with the sordid story of Soviet treaty-making and treaty-breaking with other nations.

No example of the lack of Soviet fidelity is closer to us than what happened in Korea.

In December, 1945, the Foreign Ministers of the United States, Great Britain and Russia met in Moscow. Part of the agreement they arrived at was the establishment of a Joint Commission for Korea.
This Commission was to set up a provisional Korean government "with a view to the re-establishment of Korea as an independent state, the creation of conditions for developing the country on democratic principles, and the earliest possible liquidation of the disastrous results of the protracted Japanese domination in Korea..."

But instead of assisting in carrying out the terms of this agreement, the Soviets insisted on keeping Korea divided so that one-half would be Communist under Soviet domination. We are all too familiar with the result of this breach of faith, and the toll of American men taken in the Korean War.

Russia used the same kind of tactics in Germany and in Austria, but not as effectively. In fact, the same tactics have been used all over the world where we have attempted to work with the Soviets in peace to develop mutual interests. The only difference in the other spots from Korea is that actual war has not resulted.

The Russians still apply pressures whenever and wherever they think they can subjugate peoples to Communism. Mending relations with Tito, agreement to an Austrian treaty and discussions with Japan
toward a treaty between the Soviets and the Japanese, should only serve as warnings that the Russians are now trying to take our allies from us by persuading them to assume neutrality.

So, as we await the Big Four Talks on July 18 in Geneva, we must remember the fruits of past experience. We must not be lulled into a false sense of security by the release of additional American prisoners from Red China. We owe no gratitude to the Communists for this action. It is they who owe thanks to some generous policy-makers of ours, who, during the Korean War, decided against bombing the Communist bases beyond the Yalu River which fed the supply lines of our enemy.

In view of these experiences with the Communists of Russia and the world, I hope our President demands concrete evidence of good faith at Geneva.

We must not make any concessions which might be construed to violate any of the agreements or treaties to which we are a party.

We must not consent to any new agreements which have the possibility of being labeled as appeasement.
We should not consider the admission of Red China to the United Nations. Only with outside assistance has Red China been able to seize the Chinese mainland. The Chinese have been denied self-determination because of this interference in internal affairs.

We must exercise the utmost care in dealing with the Russians on the subject of atomic energy. The Soviets have often spoken of disarmament, but they have never agreed to a fool-proof system of control through inspection of atomic energy facilities. Only through such a plan could security be attained—if it is not too late, because of increased knowledge of nuclear physics since the plan was proposed in 1945.

Finally, the United States should insist that the meetings of the Big Four in Geneva be open to representatives of all news media. Then the Soviet strategy of propaganda would be defeated, because they would be unable to misrepresent the events of the conference if all the world knew the details. As the Big Four discuss the fate of the nations, the nations have a right to know what is said.
Secrecy is justified only when the military security of our nation is at stake. Military security cannot be involved since the Russians themselves are members of the conference. Therefore, there is no reason to hold closed sessions.

We must convince the peoples of the world who are enslaved by Communism that we are interested in them, and that we shall never be content till they are permitted political self-determination. If they realize that the tactics of the Communists have not deceived or deterred us in our pledges of freedom for all, it will give those peoples new heart to seek their own freedom.

We must pursue a course which will give courage to all, by showing our determination to defend democracy according to our solemn agreements. To pursue this course, we are forced, as a nation, to remain strong militarily.

I am confident this association will continue to advocate and support the measures necessary to maintain a strong defense establishment. We dare not fail if we value freedom.