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Our reserves must be ready

Strom Thurmond

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ARTICLE BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND FOR PUBLICATION IN "THE PALMETTO RESERVIST," FEBRUARY 4, 1957

OUR RESERVES MUST BE READY

By Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina

Never before in the history of our nation have we had a greater need for the loyal and unselfish services of the men and women whose great devotion constitutes the strength of our Reserve forces. Never before have we needed so urgently the dedicated efforts of true patriots to build a real strength in Reserve.

Our country has a great need for citizens who are proud to be called Americans, and in the ranks of the Reserve forces we have such a group. The response of the citizens of South Carolina is evidence of the lofty ideals by which we live, and positive proof to the world that uncompromising Americanism is the solid foundation upon which we are prepared to resist the communist threat.

None of us can question that this is a time of grave peril to free people. We have seen the merciless butchery of liberty in Hungary, the efforts of the Soviet Union to obtain a foothold in the oil-rich Middle East, and the constant efforts of the Kremlin to stir up trouble whenever and wherever possible.

In the light, then, of what we see around us today, there can be no doubt as to what our fate will be, should we weaken our defense. The men charged with planning that defense have wisely built their plans upon the foundation of the Nation's strength in Reserve.
The crux of our problem is simply this. We must have a Ready Reserve that is truly Ready. If it is to be effective, its rolls must contain only the names of men who can respond on M-day. I want to see our Reserve units maintained as units, but if those units are to be effective, the members must be able to perform their mission. They must first of all, be readily available when they are needed. But even above this is a precious quality that is extremely vital to our defense. The members of our Reserve units must be combat ready.

If a Reserve unit cannot climb above maintenance strength, and if its membership does not contain personnel properly trained and equipped, that unit should be disbanded and reorganized in some other community where a true ready Reserve strength is possible. We live in a time when it is necessary that every member of our Reserve units must be personally prepared and equipped to defend our nation, for this is an age of atomic missiles, round-the-world jet bombers, and electronic warfare.

Our forefathers were prepared to defend their way of life with the weapons of their time, but today's soldier must be capable of using those weapons which modern science has given us. That requires long hours of study and practice and drill. It is unfair to the taxpayer, and unsound from a military standpoint, to measure our Reserve strength simply in numbers, or drill attendance. The instant needs of modern warfare require that each unit and every Reservist be properly trained. The times are too critical to do otherwise.
Congress is studying the entire military program closely, and the citizens of our country are today more than ever conscious of our need for a defensive strength that will discourage any would-be aggressor from launching an attack against us. Our people see in the Reserve program a sane and economical means of providing that necessary strength, without draining our economy to the danger point.

Our people see in the Reserve program a means of sharing our manpower between industry and our defensive needs. They see in this plan an opportunity for our young men to perform military service without completely disrupting their civilian life.

It has been truly said that the Reservist is a double-duty American. This double service which you are giving your country is the hope of our free society - and while it does demand certain sacrifices from you, it proves without doubt the measure of your patriotism.

Our very standard of life; the vigor, the courage, the vision, the enterprise with which we have produced the advantages of our way of life, is also the standard by which we are building and maintaining our defense.

Our goal is peace - with justice and honor. With this in mind, the members of the Reserve will respond to every challenge with all the determination, courage, realistic thinking, and far-sighted vision which are inherent in our true American character.

A strong Reserve is a dynamic influence for peace and world stability. You stand shoulder to shoulder with free men throughout the world as a constant reminder that the full force of our combined might will oppose the threat of any aggressor. Only in this way can we have the peace which we, and the common man everywhere, desire.