

STATEMENT IN THE SENATE BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) WITH REFERENCE TO PROPOSED REDUCTION OF RESERVE FORCES, AUGUST 22, 1957.

Mr. President, I am deeply concerned about plans which have been disclosed by the Department of Defense for the reduction of personnel in military reserve units at the same time reductions are being made in the regular forces.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Mr. W. H. Francis, Jr., has advised the Reserve Officers' Association that dollar savings will be effected by the reduction and that advances and improvements will make it possible to increase the combat potential of the reserves while reducing their number.

Mr. President, I am as anxious as anybody, and perhaps a great deal more anxious than some, for the Congress to take such actions as necessary to effect more real economy in the Federal Government. However, I do not believe that it is real economy to reduce our reserve forces. The United States has never been a country which depended upon a large standing army to fight its wars. On the other hand, the United States has depended upon its civilian soldiers -- the reserve forces -- to bear the heaviest burden of warfare. In World War II, 98 percent of our fighting forces were either civilians or members of the reserves.

The reserves are particularly valuable to our Nation because they have both the civilian and the military points of view. They know and understand the technical problems of modern warfare. At the same time, they can understand the civilians' views with reference to these problems.

It has been estimated that up to 4 or 5 reservists can be maintained for the same amount of money it requires to maintain one member of the regular military forces. How then can it be claimed that a reduction in our reserves will be in the interest of real economy?

As to the claim of the Assistant Secretary of Defense that new concepts will make it possible to get along with fewer men, I would also disagree.

New methods and new concepts can increase the striking power of combat units but they cannot replace fighting men. There is no substitute for a minimum essential number of combat troops.

I realize that the number of 6-month volunteers has been in far greater volume than was anticipated and that perhaps this has caused the Defense Department to have less concern for the reserve program. However, the 6-month volunteers cannot take the place of more mature men who have been in the reserve program for years and received valuable training through those years.

Instead of reducing the reserve program by reducing the number of trained reservists, every effort should be made to keep those men in the reserves. That would be the way to make the best use of their training and experience and in so doing would effect real economy.

When the Reserve Officers' Association testified on reserve needs before the Appropriations Committee in June, the Committee followed the advice of the ROA and included an additional 10 million dollars in the bill for the reserve program over the amount approved in the bill which passed the House. This increase was approved by the Senate.

However, when the bill went to conference in lieu of any indication from the Department of Defense that the additional appropriation was needed, the conferees did not include the 10 million dollars in their report. They did include a statement that in their opinion the Congress would provide an additional appropriation next January if the Secretary of Defense would indicate additional funds were needed for the reserve program.

Instead of taking this cue from the conference report, the Defense Department apparently is determined to reduce our fighting potential by reducing the number of our reserves.

Mr. President, I hope the Defense Department will re-evaluate its actions and inform the Congress at the earliest possible date the amount which would be needed to maintain our reserve program at its present level.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Record at the conclusion of my remarks an article which appeared in the Washington Evening Star, August 14, 1957, entitled "Reserves to Get Pentagon Ax; Protests Rise."

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