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Statement on the Reserve Program

Strom Thurmond

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COMING

JOHN G. NORRIS IN A NEW AUTHENTIC BEHIND-THE-NEWS SERIES OF ARTICLES

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DOLLARS VS DEFENSE

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OCTOBER, 1957
MR. BROOKS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I have recently written the Secretary of Defense concerning a matter which is causing me grave concern.

I have reference to the development of new policies regarding the training of the Armed Forces Reserves.

There seems to be a trend to de-emphasize the training programs for older experienced officers in the various military services.

I have received considerable mail—and I am sure this is true of the other Members of Congress—from these citizen soldiers, sailors, and airmen who have a genuine concern for the effect these new policies may have on the national security.

There seems to be considerable dissatisfaction with the Air Force’s so-called match-merge program because it will discourage a great many Reserve officers, if not actually halt their training. There is discouragement on the part of students assigned to United States Army Reserve schools and those with mobilization designations. This comes about because these people, totaling about 22,000 experienced, trained officers, many of them battlewise, will be deprived of drill pay in the future. I fear that abandonment of this portion of the incentive program will have a serious effect upon the morale and effectiveness of these reservists. I am the first to agree that we must continue the 6 months’ training program because I understand the need for young enlisted reservists. On the other hand, I do not wish to see our Reserve officers treated in a cavalier manner merely because we seem to temporarily have a surplus of manpower.

Of course, I realize that some of the economies presently brought about are due to the necessity of having to shift funds from one type of Reserve training program to another. The 6-month program requires considerable money if we are to maintain even a modicum of training in this program. I helped develop this idea on the floor of the House the other day and was glad to receive assurance from members of the appropriations Committee—especially MR. SIKES of Florida—that the door is wide open for an appeal by the Defense Department for more money for Reserve training programs in January if such is the desire and objective of the Defense Department. I feel that a thorough study should be made by the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and that they should be ready to come up with recommendations to our subcommittee in January.

Mr. Speaker, President George Washington first proposed reliance on an “energetic national militia” and since that time the traditional military policy in this country, in peacetime, has been to maintain a comparatively small Regular Establishment augmented by trained civilians.
The Department of Defense has recently announced the necessity for reducing the size of our active forces. Other reductions may follow. It is now, in my opinion, that we must take another look at our Reserve program, for I cannot foresee the international situation allowing us the luxury of reducing our Reserve forces as well.

We have a heavy investment in our Reserve officers, many of whom are combat trained. It would be folly to so reduce the Reserve program as to render it ineffective for any of these officers. We cannot afford to allow Reserve officers to drift away from the Reserve program for lack of interest or incentive.

We are told that we must reduce the size of our active forces in order to save money. Naturally, I want to effect savings for our taxpayers, but I do not want to do so at the expense of the Nation's security. We all know that the cost of maintaining a soldier in the active forces is many times the cost of maintaining the same soldier in the Reserve. Actually, the money spent for the Reserve program is one of our best investments in national security. It is for the foregoing reasons that I have asked the Secretary of Defense to require the military departments to make a thorough and painstaking study of their Reserves so that their findings can be reported to my subcommittee when Congress reconvenes in January.

We must have the Department's recommendations on the future size and roles and missions which we can expect the various Reserve components to assume in the future. In view of the international situation, the need for economy in defense spending, and the changing concepts of warfare, this study is necessary so that the Congress may be informed and, if necessary, enact implementing legislation.

Mr. MILLER of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?
Mr. BROOKS of Louisiana. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.
Mr. MILLER of Maryland. I want to congratulate and commend the gentleman for a very important and very worthwhile statement, and wish to add my voice to what he is saying. I think he is entirely right and that it is most important that we consider this problem very carefully.

Mr. BROOKS of Louisiana. I thank my friend for his kind remarks.
Mr. CUNNINGHAM of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?
Mr. BROOKS of Louisiana. I yield to the gentleman from Iowa who is a distinguished member of the Committee on Armed Services of the House.
Mr. CUNNINGHAM of Iowa. I thank the gentleman and I also wish to thank him for his splendid remarks and congratulate him for the position he has taken. I trust something will be done along the lines suggested by him.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GAVIN], also a member of the Committee on Armed Services and very much interested in what the gentleman from Louisiana has had to say, may have permission to extend his remarks in the Record following those of the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. BROOKS].

The SPEAKER. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?
There was no objection.
Mr. DEVEREUX. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?
Mr. BROOKS of Louisiana. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.
Mr. DEVEREUX. As the gentleman knows, I have been associated with this program for some time. I want to call the attention of the membership, and I think the gentleman is in agreement with me, to one subject when he speaks of reserves. Does he include the National Guard?
Mr. BROOKS of Louisiana. Yes. The National Guard is, of course, a component part of the Reserves.
Mr. DEVEREUX. So that the National Guard people will know that the committee is very much concerned about the apparent change in policy, which I regret very much. I trust we will have a very thorough and detailed report from the Department of Defense in January.
Mr. BROOKS of Louisiana. May I say to the gentleman from Maryland, who has worked hard on this same program, that the whole country is disturbed about the changes being effected. I dare say every Member of Congress is going to hear during vacation about some of these things and some of the comment may not be very palatable to the Members.

Mr. BYRNES of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I am more than pleased to learn from the gentleman of the appropriate action that he and his committee have taken looking into this state of affairs as far as our Reserve components are concerned.

I would say to the gentleman that it has been a matter of continuing concern to me over a long period of years that it would appear that some of our military, the professionals, give lip service to the need for and the dependence which they place upon the civilian reserve, but do very little about actually implementing that and making a workable force until an emergency arises, when it is too late.

Mr. BROOKS of Louisiana. Yes; and (Continued on page 20)

MARINE CONGRESSMAN DEVEREUX
He anticipates a detailed report.