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Address by Senator Strom Thurmond (D-SC) before the Greenville County Medical Society, Greenville, S.C., 7:30 p.m., 1958 January 16

Strom Thurmond

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MR. TOASTMASTER, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN:

The two principal issues facing this session of the 85th Congress reflect the two main threats to American freedom, one at home, the other from abroad.

The threat at home is the pressure which is being exerted with ever-increasing force against our constitutional form of government. The threat from abroad is, of course, the Soviet Union’s surge forward in the field of science, and the danger which this poses to our national defense and to our world position.

I shall discuss in some detail the constitutional problem in another address, which I plan to deliver elsewhere in the near future. Tonight I wish to devote most of my time to a discussion of the defense situation and the related problems which it brings up.

Since that memorable day of October 4 of last year, when the first Soviet Sputnik was launched into the skies, the American people have been reading and hearing a tremendous amount, not only about satellites, but also about rockets and missiles. The names of these fearsome devices have become household words: Atlas and Titan, Jupiter, Thor, Polaris, Snark, and many others. Every citizen should follow closely the development of these weapons, for our very survival as a people and as a civilization may depend upon the degree of success and the speed with which we can perfect these and other weapons.

That we are lagging behind the Russians in missile and rocket development is now tragically clear. It is not yet clear just how far behind we are, or how long it will take us to catch up.
I should like to review very briefly our present position in respect to three major categories of weapons and deterrent power: the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, the Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile, and the Strategic Air Force.

The United States has two true Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles in the development stage: the Atlas and the Titan, both being developed by the Air Force. The development of the Atlas is considerably more advanced than that of the Titan; and the Atlas has not yet reached the stage where all components can be tested. Only the propulsion system has been successfully tested. For a missile to be successful, three elements must be perfected: propulsion, guidance, and re-entry. All three are essential for the missile to be successful in its mission.

We are still very far from having an operational ICBM. According to the Secretary of the Air Force, Mr. Douglas, and the Chief of Staff, General White, we should have an operational ICBM within two years. To provide all the missiles, bases and crews needed for optimum deployment of the ICBM will, of course, take a longer time.

There is another long-range missile called the Snark which might be operational before the ICBM, but the Snark is really a subsonic, air-breathing, pilotless aircraft, vulnerable to interception and, therefore, not a true ICBM.

Meanwhile, according to the best estimates of leading figures from the military services and the world of science, who testified before the Senate Armed Services Preparedness sub-committee, the launching of Sputnik II proved that Soviets are well ahead of
us in the development of the ICBM and "...that they now have or shortly will have the capability to launch a rocket to the United States, or anywhere in the world for that matter."

Next the IRBM - Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile. This may be the principal retaliatory ballistic weapon/upon which we must rely. It is to have a range of about 1500 miles, which means it could reach into the Soviet Union from European and Asian bases provided the countries involved will give us permission to maintain bases on their soil.

Neither the Jupiter, developed by the Army, nor the Thor, developed by the Air Force, is operational at this time; but Defense Secretary McElroy has ordered production of both weapons to go ahead. He says that both should be operational by the end of this year. The Navy's IRBM, the Polaris, which uses solid instead of liquid fuel and is designed to be fired from submarines under water, will probably not be operational until some time late in 1960 or even later.

As to what is the Russian capability in IRBM's, we do not yet know. The Soviets claimed several months ago that their IRBM's were operational. Lieutenant General James Gavin, who has been in charge of the Army's research and development program, told the committee that the Russians lead us in operational capabilities of the IRBM. They may have as much as one and one-half or two years lead/over us in this field.

Finally we come to the Strategic Air Force. For over ten years, the bombers of the Strategic Air Command have been the world's greatest deterrent to aggression; they are so today/and, pending successful development of our missiles, they will be for some
time to come. President Eisenhower made this clear in his telecast of last November 13. He said, "Today, a principal deterrent to war is the retaliatory nuclear power of our Strategic Air Command and our Navy."

In view of this, it seems incredible that just six months prior to the launching of the first Sputnik, heavy reductions were made in the Strategic Air Command. It seems even more incredible that, despite Sputnik and all that it connotes, there had been of January 7 - the day Senator Symington briefed the Democratic members of the Senate on the Strategic Air situation - no restoration of these reductions.

The Strategic Air Command's bomber bases are congested. The Strategic Air Command suffers from a shortage of B-52's and still relies heavily on B-36's which have been termed obsolete. During the last five weeks of the past fiscal year, the Strategic Air Command was grounded because of lack of funds for gasoline. Lack of funds has also hampered the Strategic Air Command's training and maintenance programs.

Since the Strategic Air Command is admittedly vital to our defense, until we perfect our missiles to the extent where they can be completely relied upon, it is imperative that it be kept in the strongest and most efficient condition at all times, ready for action at a moment's notice. That this condition has not been maintained is not the fault of any lag in scientific development. Nor is it due to any failure on the part of Congress to appropriate sufficient money, for we have provided every cent that was asked for these purposes. It is simply a case of almost inexcusable administrative failure.

As for our relative inferiority to the Russians in the
missile, rocket and satellite field, it appears that the trouble here again is not so much in any fundamental scientific failure, nor again in any unwillingness on the part of Congress to appropriate funds, but rather in the defense policies of the Administration.

I say this because, as Senator Lyndon Johnson expressed the findings of the Preparedness Sub-Committee:

"Our national potential exceeds our national performance. Our science and technology has been, for some time, capable of many of the achievements displayed thus far by Soviet science.

That the Soviet achievements are tangible and visible, while ours are not, is a result of policy decisions made within the governments of the respective nations. It is not - as yet, at least - the result of any great relative superiority of one nation's science over the other's.

The heart of the matter then is the national policy of each of the two great world powers, for this fact stands higher than all others: We could have had what the Soviets have in the way of technical achievements if it had been the aim of our government to employ our resources and capabilities in comparable pursuit of comparable goals."

According to the scientists who testified before the Committee, control of space means control of the world, far more totally than any control that has ever been or could ever be achieved by weapons or troops. Some scientists even say that whoever controls space will have the power to control the earth's weather, to change the tides and raise sea-levels, to cause floods and drouth, to change temperate climate to frigid. Whether these estimates are overdrawn or not, it definitely remains true that control of space by the free world is vitally necessary.

The Soviet Union has appraised control of space as a goal of such overwhelming importance that achievement of such control has been made the first aim of their national policy. Our responsible officials have either failed to appraise properly the significance of space control or else they have failed to follow through on their
Now, what is the basic trouble? What is responsible for America's failure in this matter of supreme importance? Why is our research and development in the field of rockets, missiles and space travel so far behind that of the Russians?

In great part, our failure is due to weaknesses in the structure of our defense organization. Perhaps, as many have been saying, the failure is due also, indirectly at least, to deep flaws in our educational system, in our whole approach to education. It may be that the trouble goes even deeper, that the root of the trouble lies in a deterioration in our national character. Let us briefly examine these three contentions, seriatim.

The most immediate cause of our difficulties lies in the present organizational structure of our national defense establishment. Harmful inter-service rivalry, duplication of effort, waste and poor coordination have been prevalent in our Department of Defense, and have prevented progress which should have been made. The Department, or rather the structure of the Department, is coming in for sharp criticism from members of Congress as well as from military men and others.

The truth is that, back in 1947 when the structure of the military establishment was overhauled and the Department of Defense was created, true unification of the Armed Services was not achieved in any real sense.

In a forceful and thought-provoking "OPEN LETTER TO THE CONGRESS", the Editor of one of our leading aviation magazines has bitterly summed up the result of this so called attempt at unification, the National Security Act of 1947 and the Defense Department which it established:

"The result was a hydraheaded compromise of military, industrial and political influences......"
"The result was an economic monster whose hunger devours the national income without assuring the national defense.

"This intellectual travesty is represented to the American people as balanced power. In some respects, it is indeed balanced. It is balanced politically; balanced to usurp military leadership by secretarial bureaucracy; balanced to consume the tax payer; balanced to generate unrelenting interservice bitterness; balanced to compromise every known tenet of military command; balanced to swallow the talents of great officers in all services; ... balanced to waste manpower; balanced to assure the Soviet lead time in technology to the point that American conquest probably eventually will be accomplished without a shot in self-defense.

"But insofar as being balanced for the prevention of war; or balanced to secure the most defense for the least cost; ... or balanced to lead the United States into the cosmic phase of the air environment, no contrivance was ever more ill fitted to its mission." End quote.

It may be that this is the too-severe indictment of an especially bitter critic. But it becomes increasingly obvious/month by month/that the Defense Department needs overhauling in its basic structure. True unification of the services must be achieved, without destroying the individual services. We cannot let interservice competition/degenerate into interservice rivalry, jealousy and bitterness/that impedes our defense effort.

I realize full well that to speak of these changes/is much easier than to effect them, but I think that these goals can be accomplished through reorganization. I shall shortly introduce in the Senate/legislation designed to bring about some of these needed changes.

Meanwhile, we must press ahead with our missile development program.

We must accelerate the production of nuclear powered submarines. Submarines will constitute a vital factor in any future war; we have only 110, while the Russians have 500.
So long as the outcome of war determines who controls land and people, so long will we need to maintain strong ground forces.

Now, as to education. I do feel we are going to have to make some basic reappraisals of our educational program. It will be necessary for us to have some increase in science courses in our schools, but let us hope it will not be at the expense of the liberal arts. It is the frill courses and fringe courses that will have to be sacrificed. Increased emphasis must be placed on the traditional mental development courses, which teach our young people how to use their minds. These courses have been out of fashion in some places in these recent years of "progressive education." The teaching of science must begin earlier in our schools, even though concentration on science will not come until college or postgraduate schools.

There is one thing that our educational program does not need, and that is general federal aid to education, that is, to our State and local public schools. The National Education Association is attempting to use the science crisis as the pretext for a massive campaign for federal aid to the public schools of our States. This is, in my opinion, one of the greatest impending threats to constitutional government and to American freedom. As surely as night follows day, federal financial aid on any appreciable scale will lead to ultimate federal control of the schools -- not only control over who attends schools, but control over what is taught in them, in history and sociology courses as well as scientific courses.

Instead of screaming hysterically about the dire need for federal aid for our schools, the national leadership of the NEA would do well to reexamine some of the strange educational policies which they have been advocating. We certainly do not want more money so that we can buy more of the same
brand of education / the NEA would have us feed on. Especially, we do not need the brand of sociological experimentation in our schools, such as racial integration, which the NEA promotes.

In view of the science crisis, integration becomes a greater folly than ever. Where the emphasis is on sociological programs, education suffers. In the public schools of New York City, for example, education is strictly secondary; the primary consideration is what is known as "racial balance." Neither science nor anything else is going to be adequately learned by students, who have to work under conditions prevailing in the integrated "blackboard jungles" of our Northern cities or in Southern schools patrolled by armed federal troops.

We need to revise our present educational program. The States can do the job and they can finance the job. There is neither need nor legitimate constitutional authorization for general federal aid to State public school systems.

On the other hand, there is need, and under the common defense provision of the Constitution, there is constitutional basis for federal effort in the field of scientific research. I have introduced legislation proposing the creation of a United States Science Academy, co-equal with our present Military, Naval and Air Force Academies, which would train students in fields of science of interest to the Defense Department, up through the doctorate and post-doctorate levels. A central science library, a clearing house of scientific information, including foreign publications would be established in conjunction with the academy. The lack of such a clearing house has been one of the principal drawbacks to our program thus far.
Our failure in the scientific field may be partially due, ultimately, to weaknesses in our civilization itself, to a deterioration of our national character. Certainly, there are evidences of serious decay in many aspects of American life, moral, cultural, intellectual and governmental. The political health of the Republic has been undermined to the extent that recovery will be painful and difficult if not impossible. The people's awareness of the precious character of their liberties has been dimmed by two decades of gradual federal encroachment. The alarming prevalence of juvenile delinquency, crime, and disrupted domestic relations is a sign of something fundamentally wrong in our American life.

I will say this: The South is far less affected by this decay — of which the drive to integrate the races and to break down constitutional government is only one facet — than any other section of the country. I have never been more convinced than I am now, that the survival of the United States depends in large measure on the successful outcome of the South's lone struggle to preserve constitutional government and enduring human values.

Let us then, as we face up resolutely to the dangers and problems of the space age, as we look upon the terrible foreign threat that confronts us, keep our sense of balance at home.

With all the strength at our command, let us continue to hold fast to our values, to fight the good fight for the Constitution and for States' Rights, for individualism, for individual integrity and racial integrity, and for the deep values of our way of life. The term "Southern resistance," as John Temple Graves has recently pointed out, "Must mean more than resistance to a Supreme Court's unconstitutional usurpations...." We are battling to preserve basic truths as well as basic freedoms.
The time may well come when the South's conservative pattern of life will be seen in its proper light, not as a symbol of backwardness but as the force which saved this Republic. Or, in the words of the distinguished editor of the Richmond News Leader, James Jackson Kilpatrick, "The influence of Southern conservatism one day will be counted not bigotry but blessing. There, men may say, was the anchor by which we rode out the storm."