STATEMENT BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND(D-SC) BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE, JANUARY 18, 1958.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: The injury dealt to the Reserves by the Armed Forces in the RIF debacle, committed in the name of economy, has been felt by all of us as citizens of these United States as well as members of the Congress. You and I are fully cognizant of the broad implications of this reduction program with its continually compounding dangers.

As a Reserve officer, myself, I know something of the spirit in which the Citizen-Reservist welcomes the opportunity to serve his country.

We also know of the vital necessity for maintaining during these times of world unrest and international tensions strong, well-equipped and well-trained armed forces. They stand between us and the possible loss to World Communism of our liberties and our way of life.

Without this nation's Reserve officers -- our Minute Man leaders, if you please -- we would have no such effective force. Because, I am informed that Reservists constitute fully 75% of the officer strength of our Standing Forces.

Reservists constitute virtually 100% of the strength of the supporting manpower which would be called into service in the event of any emergency demanding an all-out mobilization.

America has traditionally relied upon her citizens to provide military security; our way of life is bound to this concept of defense.

Members of this Committee and the Committee Staff do not need from me a reminder of what the nation owes to these Citizen-Reservists.
Neither do you need to have me tell you any of the details of what has happened during this RIF program -- of the betrayal of promises, of the abrogation of rights, of the compounding of inequities, and of the defeats of laudable ambitions of service to country.

Every member of Congress has been reminded by his constituents of the restlessness among our nation's citizenry because of the sudden and feverish effort to effect some questionable economies at the expense of national security and to the detriment of the morale of our Armed Forces. However, for the record I should like to submit a letter I have received from a Reservist which clearly and logically outlines many of the facets of the problem which your Committee now must solve.

Mr. Chairman, while there are many aspects to the treatment of the Reservists which are outrageous and which offend our sense of justice, I should not like to take the Committee's time in a recital of them. May I suggest, indeed, that this Committee's efforts and concern are directed to seeking an answer to these problems and to devising a system under which there can never be a "crash" program Reduction in Force again.

I would like to state, however, that if reduction in forces becomes absolutely necessary, such reduction in officer personnel should be made of the least efficient officers, regardless of whether they be reservists or regulars. This, in my opinion, would at least be in the interest of efficiency and effectiveness in our Armed Forces and it could create no more of a problem than those reductions of reservists previously made. In any event, it is imperative that some over-all reserve program be adopted which will prevent the forced release from the service prior to retirement of efficient and effective reserve officers who have devoted substantial years of their lives to the service. An
effective defense force cannot be built on an uncertain and fluctuating personnel policy.

It seems to me that the services themselves should be directing major efforts toward this end. Surely they must see that there must come an end for all time of inter-component rivalries, in the name of the vital interests of national security. The Regulars in the Services must recognize that, although in the minority, they exercise virtually all the authority and it is their responsibility to see that the Reserves are not mistreated nor discriminated against. May I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that unless they do that very thing, that is, zealously to protect the rights, the morale and THE EFFECTIVENESS of the civilian components, they will be undermining the ability of this nation to defend itself. Such a failure not only would be dereliction of duty but a violation of the oath every officer takes under the Constitution.