STATEMENT OF SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) ON ARMY REDUCTION IN FORCE PROGRAM ON SENATE FLOOR, AUGUST 2, 1958.

MR. PRESIDENT:

Many of us recall with dismay, and considerable distaste, the outstanding military event of last fall when Congressional adjournment signalled the beginning of the infamous reduction in force in the armed services, known as "RIF".

With virtually no warning, and at the expense of national security, thousands of Reserve Officers were discharged from their posts and sent home.

For the privilege of this shattering and disrupting cutback, which brought hardships and injustices to many fine patriots, the armed services squandered some $25 to $50 millions of dollars.

At least this price tag was attached to the "RIF" operation. But there were additional costs. Morale of all the Standing Forces was shaken. The confidence in their government was undermined in the hearts of thousands of military leaders of all ranks. Many young officers changed their minds and decided against a military career. Many retired officers viewed sorrowfully what had been wrought in institutions they loved. Wives and children of dedicated service men were disillusioned and embittered.

We all know what happened. We heard about it from the folks back home. We found out that the taxpayers of the United States are not so eager to save a few dollars that they were willing to see this thing done to their fighting men. In short, the price in morale, faith, and good judgment was too high. As Bernard Baruch once observed, we have no ambition to be the richest in
the graveyard.

Called before the House Armed Services Committee to defend the RIF, the Assistant Secretary of Defense sorrowfully admitted that it did not make much sense.

Even while Administration spokesmen explained, defended, or apologised for the RIF, which saved some few dollars, with equal vehemence they were asking for more than a half-billion dollars to raise the pay of all those remaining in the Military. I supported the pay raise; but, had I been consulted about it, I would have been more eager to have insisted that we keep in the Standing Forces the trained, experienced Reserve Officers who had demonstrated through ten to eighteen years of service their ability to perform in their military assignments.

I recall the tragedy of the RIF at this time because the Congress is nearing adjournment.

With increasing regularity, we now hear reports and rumors that the Defense Department again is preparing to institute a "RIF".

We had repeated promises, real and implied, that the Services had enough of the RIF disaster.

Yet, sad to relate, we know too well how little faith may be placed in such promises.

I was one of the many members of Congress who, during this session, had looked forward to the opportunity of voting for an anti-RIF bill. I appeared before the House Armed Services Committee last January to urge such legislation. The members of the House committee had intended to produce such legislation.

It is my understanding that such a bill was ready in the
House committee at the beginning of this Congress. Dilatory tactics of the Department of Defense in reporting on such legislation precluded any action at this session of the Congress.

It is my understanding, that both in the Senate and in the House, the Armed Services Committees already are preparing to consider the "RIF" problem at the very beginning of the next Congress in January. For a fact, I believe both such committees already have rather definite principles to which they will commit such legislative efforts.

In view of these facts, and in the light of the demonstrated folly of the 1957 RIF, it is to be hoped that the Department of Defense will defer any substantial reduction program for at least six months.

Any less consideration will be, in my opinion, an act of bad faith on the part of those in the Administration responsible for such decisions.

I believe I know something of the character and ability of the chairman and members of this body's Armed Services Committee. No committee of this Congress works more faithfully, more conscientiously, nor with a greater dedication than does that group of Senators. We all know, too, that this committee seeks to carry out its duties in a non-partisan manner, and, for a fact, partisanship has no part in its deliberations.

The members of that committee, from both sides of the aisle, surely will bring their good offices to bear upon the Secretary of Defense and the Bureau of the Budget, so that this nation will not again witness the shame of this most obnoxious of military defeats---the "RIF".