

November 23, 1959

Senator Strom Thurmond(D-SC) has urged the American people to demand and get a military defense force second to none. Action on the Labor Reform Bill earlier this year proved that the American people still retain the ultimate control over Government policy, and the public will get an adequate defense force if they demand it, Thurmond asserted.

In an address to the Association of the United States Army at Columbia on November 18, the South Carolina Democrat, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, listed the following four steps necessary to meet defense needs adequately:

First, to achieve the necessary degree of unification of our Armed Forces that will insure elimination of service bickering and delays in decision making;

Second, to provide the necessary funds and emphasis to our weapons research and development program to insure a realization of our maximum potential;

Third, to increase the numbers of our conventional forces and begin immediately on a stepped-up program of modernization of equipment and provision of transport for those forces; and

Fourth, to economize on all non-defense expenditures in order to provide for the national defense adequately within a balanced budget.

Thurmond stated that the United States now possesses a sufficient means for "massive retaliation" to constitute a deterrent to an all-out war, despite the fact that the Russians enjoy a lead in rocket propulsion and missile development. He warned, however, of the danger in our research lag behind the Russians if it is allowed to continue. "The missile with nuclear warhead is not an ultimate weapon," said the senator. "If one nation now develops a space station relatively impregnable to attack by its enemies' present state of weapon development, the stalemate is broken."

The Senator also emphasized the need for more and better equipped ground forces, and the means to transport them rapidly. He reasoned that since there was doubt that we would use an all-out nuclear exchange to prevent a limited war, our forces for massive retaliation do not constitute a deterrent to that type of aggression. A well-rounded deterrent must include sufficient numbers of modernly equipped conventional force, and the means to transport them. "Our present conventional forces are not sufficient in numbers, equipment, nor transport to constitute a sufficient deterrent to limited wars. This weakness must be recognized and corrected."

Thurmond, who stood first in voting among the Democrats from an economy viewpoint, said that although we must spend whatever is necessary to be first in armed might, that "we must build our armed strength within the framework of a balanced budget."

"It is only by the practice of the strictest economy that we can maintain the strength of our economic system essential to support a strong defensive force," Thurmond stated. "We must insure that full value is received for every taxpayer's dollar spent, and this applies particularly to the defense expenditures, since they comprise the major part of the Federal budget."

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