STATEMENT OF SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) WITH REFERENCE TO SECTION 631 OF THE FISCAL 1960 DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL ON SENATE FLOOR, JULY 13, 1959.

Mr. President:

No one believes more staunchly in private enterprise than do I. It has always been my inclination to be opposed to any governmental action in competition with private enterprise. At the same time, there are certain responsibilities of government, which, even when participated in to the fullest practical extent by private endeavor, can only be met, in the final analysis, by governmental activity. In other words, Mr. President, in our zeal to protect private enterprise, we can accomplish too much of a good thing, particularly when we lose sight of our ultimate objective, which is the security of our country.

Such a situation is being approached by the provisions of Section 631 of the Defense Appropriation Bill. Excessive concern for commercial aviation has caused us to progressively nibble away at the Military Air Transportation Service to such an extent as to practically immobilize it. In fiscal year 1955, MATS spent $4.5 million on business with the airlines of the United States. This amount has increased with each subsequent year to an all time high for fiscal 1959 of approximately $71 million for overseas airlift.

This year the House set a mandatory amount for procurement of commercial air transportation services. The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee earmarked $150 million of MATS funds for commercial air transportation procurement, but this was reduced to $100 million by the full Committee. The amount is still flagrantly excessive.
MATS has a specific wartime mission to perform, which I shall discuss shortly. Its crews need training to prepare for that mission. The earmarking of $100 million of MATS funds for commercial airlift, even with the flexible language now in Section 631, will merely induce untold pressures on the Secretary of Defense to spend this sum. The airline industry is now receiving a fair and adequate share of MATS business, and if we continue to increase that share, we stand in danger of subverting the national security and our survival.

No one claims that MATS is now prepared, nor should be augmented to obtain a sufficient capability, to do the job of air transport alone. The commercial carriers are needed and they are now being utilized. During this past fiscal year, the Department of Defense actually spent about $200 million for the purchase of military airlift for all purposes. Of this total MATS spent $71 million to buy augmented commercial airlift for cargo and military passengers overseas alone.

If, however, MATS is forced to spend more than that amount of money on commercial airlift, it would be uneconomical. The taxpayer would be paying twice—once for MATS training and again for commercial airlift for loads that MATS could carry while training at a five-hour per day pace. Even worse, the substantial increase in the commercial augmentation program could force MATS to reduce its integral size—in other words, to reduce personnel, dispense with part of its air fleet, close down some of its bases, disperse its efforts and become a mere cipher in our military planning. While we should be undertaking to modernize our strategic air transport fleet, we are, in effect, considering a step which could demobilize a considerable part of our air transport capability. This would throw the burden of transport and support of the
Armed Forces very heavily on commercial operators in the event of an emergency. Just what this would do to the bulk of our heavy weapons deliveries, not to mention domestic air travel, is difficult to foresee, because we cannot anticipate the extent of such an emergency.

Far from competing with the airlines, MATS is now using the airlines in a business-like and economical way when they are needed. But at the same time, the space which MATS itself has available on its training missions is used to carry material and personnel overseas and thereby save a very substantial amount of money for the Department of Defense and the three military services and the American public. What would it cost if MATS planes flew empty on their training missions? The most reliable estimate is three quarters of a billion dollars in funds which would have to be produced from taxes and added to the budgets of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Under the Industrial Fund Investment Plan, the services must pay MATS for airlift whether it is military or commercial. Therefore, the incongruous part of any sizable increase in the augmentation fund would be that MATS, in order to maintain its state of readiness, will have to fly its five hours over the same identical routes as the commercial carrier, carrying a dummy load or even worse, empty!

The more responsible and prudent course is to earmark a reasonable and more modest sum for procurement of commercial airlift. Our whole concept of defense presupposes an adequate air transport system for the Army, Navy and Air Force. In the early days of an emergency, and indeed, for the continuation of the emergency in the critical area, it is military planes and crews that will have to deliver the goods.
These military planes and crews are available only in MATS. Our full commercial airlift potential will undoubtedly be essential in such an operation, but the initial effort and all effort in the danger zone must be by the military.

MATS has been called on in emergencies repeatedly since World War II—in the Berlin airlift, Korea, and last year the twin crises of Lebanon and Formosa. Even though their planes are growing old and outdated in service—and they have no jets in the strategic air transport fleet—MATS has never been found wanting.

One factor above all is essential to the continued response of the strategic air transport fleet. They must meet the minimum training requirements, which are just as necessary for MATS as they are for the strategic and tactical air commands, the Army, Navy, Marines or Coast Guard. The MATS training mission minimum is five hours per day per aircraft on the average. This minimum of training must be maintained at all costs. On the other hand, it would be no less than fiscal foolishness to require these planes to fly their training missions empty, while procuring commercial airlift for military cargo and passengers over the same routes which military planes fly their training missions.

Both military and commercial airlift potential are essential to our defense effort. Let us seek a solution compatible with the maximum preservation of each. If our air supply lifeline is weakened or perhaps severed, our global bases and our global position as a world power are undermined. We must always bear the consequences of enemy action against that supply lifeline; but let us not, by our own neglect or devotion to business as usual, wreck the very substance of the military power on which our national existence depends.
Mr. President:

I send to the desk an amendment and ask that it be read.

This amendment would reduce the amount which shall be available for procurement of commercial air transportation service from $100 million to $70 million. This is just under the $71 million so utilized during fiscal 1959, the highest to date.

This does not mean that more, even $100 million or $150 million, could not be used for procurement of commercial air transportation by MATS. The $70 million, or the $100 million as it now stands, is a minimum figure. Surely $70 million, only $1 million less than the highest sum ever spent for this purpose, is a high enough minimum to impose on the Secretary of Defense. I sincerely hope that the Senate will see fit to adopt this lower, and more realistic minimum.