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Quotes on national defense from address by Senator Strom Thurmond, 1960 June 3

Strom Thurmond

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We read much in the press today about the "aftermath" of the summit failure. There is much talk about "picking up the pieces" and preparing to undergo the renewed cold war. There is much speculation as to how the summit failure will affect our foreign policy and as to the degree of reshuffling that will have to be made in our defense forces.

All of this would seem to indicate that the events in Paris would necessarily require a change in our plans, particularly in the area of defense. The reflection of this attitude causes me much more concern than the "failure" of the summit itself, for it indicates that there exists a general misunderstanding of the nature of our struggle with Communism.

The forces of Communism are singlemindedly pursuing a course of world conquest. Their aim is the destruction of free societies, and more particularly, the destruction of capitalistic countries. This was no less their aim and intention in the period when they were expounding great hopes for peace through the summit conference than is their aim today, or was their aim during the days of the Berlin blockade. Although their methods may vary from time to time, at all times and with any method or approach used, their goal is victory over the free world.

If, therefore, our policies must now undergo modification, based on the change in the Communist approach signaled by their rantings at the U-2 incident, then our policies were inadequate in the first place. We should and must adopt policies that will encompass any possible fluctuation in approach by the Communist leaders. Such a policy can be devised, for although we do not know and cannot anticipate their every change in approach, we
know their intention to overcome us, and we know their intention has not and will not change.

A strong and superior defense, balanced in every respect, is the principal weapon on which we must rely to deter armed attack and avert the horrible consequences of a nuclear holocaust. We must not merely seek to attain peace; for peace can be had through surrender. What we must set as our goal is peace with freedom, and this can only be achieved by surpassing the Soviets in every vital area of competition—above all, in our defense and retaliatory strength.

Any changes which now appear to be necessary in our defense forces are changes that needed to be made regardless of summit success or failure. We cannot afford, either financially or militarily, to fluctuate our military strength to respond to every frown or smile of Mr. Khrushchev, or whoever might be the Russian dictator at the time. Our defense forces must be stronger—not necessarily bigger, but stronger—than the Communist forces in every respect. If necessary, we must sacrifice for this accomplishment. Our military force does not meet this test in every respect at the present time. In some areas we have a bare minimum, in others less than the minimum requirements. Our deficiencies are due not to lack of ability, but to lack of concentration on winning the struggle with Communism instead of merely hoping for peace.

There are several steps which are essential at this time to strengthen our military power. Priority cannot be given, for they are inter-related, and all are necessary. These steps are as follows:

1. We must have a clear superiority in strategic nuclear weapons rather than the mere edge we have at present. We cannot afford to gamble with this vital area of our defense program. The
liquid-fueled Atlas and Titan missiles, both approaching operational full status, must be hastened into/operational status, and crews trained to maintain and operate them. The Minuteman missile, mobile because it is solid-fueled, must be perfected at the earliest time possible. The elusive and effective Polaris submarine missile must be produced and launched at a faster rate. While we strive to perfect these new weapons, we must provide the funds to keep the Strategic Air Force, whose potential was emphasized by the U-2 flights, on constant alert.

2. We must design and equip our ground forces with maximum firepower of tactical nuclear weapons. It is impractical to attempt to match the Communist ground forces man for man. With a lesser number of troops, we must have a potential superiority in firepower and modern equipment that can be utilized in a given geographical area. Due to the total risk involved, the Russians are more likely to commence a war of aggression in a limited area than to commence an all-out nuclear exchange. Our strategic forces are no deterrent to a limited conflict. A deterrent depends on the enemy's belief that the deterring force will be used, and even we have doubts that we would resort to an all-out nuclear exchange over some of the possible local outbreaks.

3. We must secure sufficient modern airlift capability to rapidly transport these high-firepower ground troops to any area of the world in which they are needed. MATS is under strength and equipped with obsolete aircraft. At the present time, we don't have the capability of lifting even one of the STRAC divisions to Europe in two weeks. It now appears likely that $250 million will be appropriated this year for MATS modernization. This is the minimum
that is necessary. Defense Department plans for MATS are inadequate and must be expanded.

These steps did not become necessary because of the summit failure. They have been needed all along, and many of us have fought to have them begun. They are needed because of the nature of our struggle with Communism, and without which victory may be theirs and not ours.

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