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Address by Senator Strom Thurmond (D-SC) before the National Security Commission of the American Legion at the Exhibition Hall, Miami, Florida, 10:30 a.m., 1960 October 15

Strom Thurmond

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Slightly less than 200 years ago there existed on the American continent 13 separate and sovereign countries. These countries differed substantially in customs, religion, and economic institutions. Except for one factor, the United States of America today would be the States of America, each existing in wholly individual sovereignty. The factor which played the most important part in the unification of the States under a federal republican system of government was the need for a common defense.

Just as the necessity for the strongest defense was a primary consideration in the thoughts of our forefathers, it has remained and is today one of the basic concerns of the people of the 50 States of this great Nation.

The United States of America is a young country. In the records of the thousands of years through which the civilization of man has progressed, our Nation has found a place in history for a period of less than 200 years. From a standpoint of rate of progress, however, we stand second to no nation in all of history. Unlike many of the early world powers, we have reached the crossroads of destiny in a short time, and find ourselves now confronted with a position of world leadership and, as such, responsible to a degree unknown to any other nation for the survival of mankind.

The Second World War was the culmination of our rise to the top as a world power and required our acceptance of the role of world leadership which we had previously been reluctant to undertake. While we are inclined to pride ourselves on the glory of our position as the leader of free peoples, acceptance of our responsibility as principal defender of liberty for the world since World War II fails to demonstrate an unexcelled ability on our part to exercise this responsibility in the field of defense.

In 1945 and '46, we followed our unbroken historical post-war practice of rapid demobilization of our Armed Forces. Thus, we began our out-in-the-open struggle with the forces of Communism from a position of weakness. By 1947, we were beginning to realize the error of our ways, and a rather slow, almost half-hearted, build-up of conventional forces was commenced. The creation of the Department of Defense and the reorganization of the Armed Forces were the most notable advances of this rebuilding effort.

In 1948, Communist capabilities had been underrated to the extent that we reversed our course and again began over-economizing our defense. These defense cut-backs continued until we were rudely shocked into an almost awakened state by the outbreak of the Korean conflict in 1950. It was here that we became initiated into the concept of "limited war." Even during this period of armed conflict, we limited our efforts largely to those required by that conflict itself.

Only after the end of the Korean War did we seriously concern ourselves with what we then thought of as weapons of the future—missiles.

We approached the development of missiles with a measured pace, comfortable in the imagined safety of our superiority in nuclear destruction and total potency of our Strategic Air Command. It was not until the fall of 1957 that we came face to face with the hard facts of life—that Russian Communists were a foe worthy of our best efforts. It took Sputnik to bring us to a realization of our peril.
Our errors in the decade following World War II are easy to detect from the vantage point of hindsight. In view of the history of the American people, our commission of errors should not be surprising to us. We are truly a peace-loving people, most reluctant to concern ourselves with war until we are backed to the wall. Our strength, and even our survival, has traditionally resided in our ability to unify and concentrate our efforts in extreme emergency.

We must first face reality with respect to our national defense responsibility. First, the large defense effort which is essential to our survival will not decrease in the foreseeable future. Indeed, it is quite apparent that an even more expensive undertaking lies ahead of us. Both presidential candidates have promised to increase defense spending. The cost of liberty has never been cheap, and we shall be indeed fortunate if in the years ahead we can preserve it with a diversion of our resources rather than an additional sacrifice of lives. Now is the time for a resolve by all people of our country to sacrifice whatever is necessary of our material wealth cheerfully and willingly in order to preserve the infinitely greater wealth of freedom.

At every mention of defense we, as Americans, in this day of rapid developments in technology are particularly inclined to think in terms of hardware and numbers of uniformed men. Unquestionably, both trained men in sufficient numbers and the best equipment possible are essential to any adequate defense effort. We should ever keep in mind that the basic strength of any nation, regardless of the size of its armed forces or the modernization of its equipment, lies in the moral fiber of its citizens. A demoralized people, whatever their outward vestiges of defense, can never know the joys of success or the fruits of victory. The most basic and essential ingredient of a successful national defense must lie in the will and determination of the people themselves to protect their liberty regardless of the sacrifice. This will and determination to fight when necessary can only be stimulated by a deep and abiding love of liberty and a realization of the constant threats to its existence.

Since this basic ingredient of our national defense—the will to fight—must stem from the people, it is the people themselves who bear the responsibility as well as the cost of our national defense effort. It is, therefore, the right—and even more, the duty—of the American people to insist on two things: First, that our defense is secure; and second, that our defense dollars are being spent wisely.

Our task will not be an easy one. Lest anyone still be deceived concerning the challenge which faces us, consider the assets of our potential antagonist. He has:

First, nuclear and thermonuclear weapons, and chemical and biological weapons, and means to deliver these to targets almost any place on the globe;

Second, an impressive aeronautical science and space exploration program, highlighted by a superior rocket thrust capability;

Third, the largest and most modernly equipped ground force in the world;

Fourth, the world's largest fleet of submarines;

Fifth, control over a ring of satellite countries responsive to his will;

Sixth, the speed and secrecy advantages of a dictatorship;

Seventh, a highly developed apparatus for conducting subversive activities in countries which he does not dominate; and

Eighth, an appealing ideology which, however false and hollow it is, has an attraction for many of the underprivileged people of the world.

Vis-à-vis the Soviet war-making potential, I am not one who would maintain that we are a second-rate power. Far from that. We are superior to the Soviets in some areas, and in others they hold an edge on us. For instance, our nuclear retaliatory power
is worthy of the highest respect by the Soviets or any other potential aggressor. I hope that our nuclear and thermonuclear capability will continue to merit aggressor respect, but I fear that our decision to suspend nuclear testing in reliance on the good faith of the leaders of a godless ideology, whose only religion is communization of the world at any price, is naivety of the highest order. When we get a foolproof system for inspecting all nuclear detonations—and some underground tests can go undetected and thereby serve of incalculable benefit in developing battlefield nuclear weapons—then and then only should we give any attention to the "ban the bomb" propaganda, which originates from behind the walls of the Kremlin.

Our highly skilled airmen and our advanced long-range aircraft of the Strategic Air Command, which are capable of delivering our weapons of destruction anywhere in the world on brief notice, are also well respected by the Communist leaders. In addition, the recent successes scored by our Navy in operating nuclear-powered submarines and in firing from these relatively invulnerable targets the intermediate-range Polaris missiles have come as good and reassuring news to all peoples of the free world.

I think that our country, stunned by the first Sputnik launching three years ago, has achieved rather remarkable progress in competing with the Soviets in the area of space exploration, which is so vital to our national security. In the continuing and elusive search for the ultimate weapon—and there is little reason to believe that there ever will be one so long as man is willing to compete for survival or world domination—the next logical step is development of a space platform relatively impregnable to destruction by enemy weapons. Should one side achieve this scientific first, then the stalemate would be broken, and the balance of power would be tilted sharply in the direction of the successful side.

We should view our space accomplishments—the successful launching of 26 satellites as compared with 8 for the Communists—with a sense of national pride, but we must not be satisfied because, while our space vehicles may be of a more sophisticated nature, they still do not measure up to the thrust potential of the Soviet Union. And, this thrust potential could figure more prominently in launching a space platform than could our lighter weight, more sophisticated means of rocket propulsion.

The unsuccessful launching of Samos I by the Air Force earlier in the week was, of course, disappointing, but the progress we are now making in our space program gives us much hope that we will soon have a reconnaissance satellite to gain valuable intelligence information which the discontinued U-2 flights can no longer provide. I do not believe that we can afford any lag in our important intelligence system. Those responsible for the gigantic amount of invaluable intelligence data gained by the U-2 flight reconnaissance program deserve the everlasting gratitude of our people for guarding our nation against a nuclear Pearl Harbor.

The advancements we have made in recent months in getting some intercontinental ballistic missiles on site and ready to fire and in moving toward the transition from the first generation liquid-fuel ICBMs to the second generation solid-propellant ICBMs have made us all feel a little more secure. The Minuteman ICBM with its solid propellant will be a less cumbersome, less expensive, smaller, and more sophisticated missile when it becomes operational in 1963 or 1964, or perhaps earlier by effectively utilizing the knowledge gained in the early breakthrough on the Polaris with its solid propellant.

During this period of perfecting the Minuteman, the Air Force is moving toward hardening sites for more Atlas and Titan ICBMs and is making plans to place some of the Minuteman ICBMs on rails so as to make them mobile and less vulnerable to enemy attack. We also have squadrons of ICBMs dispersed on sites in foreign lands poised for retaliatory action and to serve as a warning against an enemy missile attack directed at our country, since these bases
must be hit first because of the shorter distance involved. This progress is all to the good, but there is still more room for improvement, advancement, and more missiles to secure us against attack.

One of the most overlooked branches of our national defense program, our valiant and invaluable United States Army, has been moving forward steadily despite the fact that it has been receiving a smaller percentage of total annual defense outlays and despite an intentional lack of emphasis upon preparedness for the type of conflict, a limited war, in which the Army would play the principal role. The great progress made by the Army in attaining a high state of combat-readiness through skillful training, good morale, and far-sighted planning, stands as a monumental tribute to the vision, imagination, and resourcefulness of Secretary Brucker, Under Secretary Milton, and Generals Lemnitzer, Decker, Taylor, and many other bold and imaginative thinkers and leaders who have utilized their talents and their tongues to keep our vital ground forces ready for any type of conflict, whether it be for the purpose of controlling land and people in an all-out nuclear war or in a limited type of war, such as occurred in Korea and Indo-China. These are the gentlemen most responsible for the increased emphasis now being placed on the importance of balanced defense forces for limited war preparedness.

There are still those in the Congress and the Administration who are of the honest opinion that if we achieve a lead in missiles and their successor weapons of the future, our defense problems are solved. Not only do they picture "massive retaliation" as a deterrent to all-out war, but also as a deterrent to limited wars. I do not believe that such an opinion is sound.

Now the Communists are quite aware that should they commence a nuclear exchange, every destructive weapon at our command would be unleashed against them. Quite frankly, we would have no alternative, and the Communist leaders know this as well as we do.

But what about a localized aggression against a small country with satellite troops? Is the Communist leader convinced that we would commence an all-out nuclear exchange to prevent it? I seriously doubt that we as a people have convinced ourselves that we would go so far. We had nuclear retaliatory weapons at the time of the Korean War, and at the time of the Indo-Chinese War, but we refrained from using them. We decided it the wiser course to limit the conflict. Why should the enemy conclude that we would react differently in the future? For that matter, why should we assume that we would react differently now? We as a people have no less distaste for a nuclear exchange than we had earlier.

Our "massive retaliation" power is an effective deterrent to all-out war, but not to limited wars. We must have an additional deterrent if we would prevent them.

The need for the ability to wage a so-called limited war or a war of less than all-out proportion has been repeatedly demonstrated. There have been 17 such conflicts since World War II. We must not close our eyes to the probabilities that they will recur. The directors of the Communist strategy know full well that the risks involved in an isolated or limited aggression are far less than in a nuclear exchange. At the same time we should have no doubts left that the Communist program, if it is to escape death from inertia, must attempt continued advancement. In light of these two factors, anyone who denies the probability of more limited wars in the future is out of touch with reality.

One of the most vital needs in preparation for limited or all-out war is modernization of weapons and equipment for our ground forces, Army and Marines. Progress has been made in this area on limited funds—and more will be made soon, thanks to the Administration's recent decision to release some of the impounded modernization funds—but there are many more pieces of modern equipment and weapons which need to be transferred from the drawing boards to the hands of the troops. Here we lag behind the Soviets.
We are also behind the Soviets in manpower strength, having only approximately 14 divisions to 174 for the Soviets. This we can afford to a small degree because of the individual skill and courage of the American fighting man, but if we are to continue such a wide disparity in divisions, we must equip and arm our troops with superior equipment and weapons. With the bare minimum of ground troops now on active duty, we must remember that a strong, ready, and reliable contingent of reservists and guardsmen is more important today than ever.

We must also be certain that we have the airlift capability to carry our STRAC forces and their equipment to the combat areas as rapidly as possible. The recent Rivers' airlift investigation in the House Armed Services Committee and Operation Puerto-Pines showed that we are not as prepared in this important area as we should be. Thanks to Congressional action this year, we are moving to help alleviate this deficiency.

Another vital field in which we lag behind the Soviets is in the development and stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons. The Soviets have made no secret of the fact that they are well-trained and well-stocked on CBR warfare and that this type warfare will be used by them.

Marshal Zhukov, when he was Minister of Defense, told the party congress in February 1956 that the Soviet armed forces were built up on the "fact" that a future war would differ greatly from past wars. "A future war," he said:

"should it be unleashed, will be characterized by the massive use of air forces, various rocket weapons, and various means of mass destruction such as atomic, thermonuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons."

Too much emphasis has been placed on the possible consequences of the blast and radiation effects of nuclear warfare, and not enough attention has been devoted to the horrible consequences of CBR warfare. CBR weapons can be delivered in missile warheads, or, much more secretly, by enemy agents using unsuspecting aerosol sprays, disguised exhaust fumes, and various means to contaminate our highly vulnerable and necessary water supplies. It would seem to me that the Kremlin leaders would much prefer to take over our country with all buildings and other resources intact by use of nerve gas or an incapacitating agent or with some other form of CBR warfare than with nuclear devastation that would obliterate whole cities and many of our important resources. The Congress and the Administration have both shown more concern for CBR preparedness by providing more funds for CBR research and development, but we are still not on a par with Communist CBR capabilities.

The Army has been performing remarkable feats with its air defense weapons, such as the La Crosse, Hawk, Nike Ajax, and Nike Hercules missiles, but with all of this success--even in knocking down missiles with missiles--the Army has been held back in its plans to develop and make operational the only anti-missile missile in sight, the Nike Zeus. Our greatest defensive weapons hope lies in the development of anti-missile missiles. This weapon is urgently needed to balance our retaliatory forces, and its perfection should be pushed as rapidly as funds can be absorbed into the program--even if there should be any slight doubts that the investment might be wasted. Some evidently doubt the Army's assuredness in developing the Nike Zeus, but this is one area in which we cannot afford to sit back and wait on a "sure thing" before moving forward because the side which first makes anti-missile missiles operational and even fairly effective will immediately gain an upper hand in the cold war, which could over night be turned into a hot war because of this change in the armaments stalemate.

Defense is an expensive matter--let there be no question about this. And, expense is always of much concern to me, one who last year was ranked first among Congressional Quarterly's ranking Senate Democrats in voting for economy in government spending. I assure you, however, that my economy votes fell on non-defense rather than defense spending because I feel that our liberty and survival
should be and are the primary concerns of our people rather than personal economic security and government paternalism.

The complete and well-rounded deterrent force which I feel to be essential for our national well-being and that of the other peoples of the free world will cost even more than we are now spending on military forces--and in fiscal 1960 we reached an all-time high of approximately $40 billion in peacetime defense expenditures. We may as well face the fact now, however, that we have no alternative to spending whatever is necessary to be first in armed might without any question, regardless of the cost. Just as important, we must build our peacetime--or more accurately, cold-war--armed strength within the framework of a balanced budget.

Let me say here and now that economy and adequate national defense are not alternatives. If they are, we are doomed. 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. We must refrain from entering new fields of Federal spending except under the most compelling circumstances; and we must continuously examine all Federal programs with a view toward reducing their costs--and indeed, eliminating some of them altogether. 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.

The build-up of armed might must be accomplished with a steadfast knowledge that we must at the same time conserve our economic strength. The cause of Communism could realize victory over liberty just as completely through our economic collapse as through our military collapse. Property and people are destroyed as effectively through the medium of inflation as they are with bullets, and the knife of inflation has the advantage of silence and stealth. In preparing to combat the Communist menace, therefore, economic strength must be placed on an equality with military strength.

Money alone, however, is not the answer to our defense any more than it is the sole answer to any of our other problems. If we have one weak national characteristic, it is overconfidence in the poler of the almighty dollar. Without wise and far-sighted planning, without efficient organization, and without a strong moral determination by our people to succeed, we can treble our expenditures to no avail. Sufficient funds are an absolute necessity, but funds do not constitute our principal deficiency.

There is no room at this stage for pessimism, despite the breadth of our challenge. We are a young and vigorous nation, rich with potentialities and resources with which to guard our freedom. We have the most worthy cause in the history of mankind for which to fight--LIBERTY. Make no mistake, liberty must be fought for to be acquired or retained; for, like a jealous woman, liberty won't stay where it is taken for granted.

The people of the United States must demand a defense that is secure; secure not only from a nuclear exchange, but from any aggression, regardless of its nature or scope. The demand must be made with an awareness that the dollar cost is high, and will probably go higher; and that in order to preserve economic strength at the same time, services that result from non-defense government spending will have to be limited and possibly curtailed.

Due to the form of government inaugurated by our forefathers with the Constitution, the people of the United States have, during the entirety of the history of our nation, held the power of their liberty and destiny in their own hands. Since our ascension to leadership in the struggle of freedom against Communism, the people of the United States have come to hold the key to the liberty and destiny of all the peoples of the world. Let us accept this awesome responsibility, and discharge it in keeping with the heritage as champions of liberty that is ours.

-THE END-