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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE BRIEFING FOR
REPRESENTATIVES OF MILITARY-
ORIENTED ORGANIZATIONS

THE EAST ROOM

5:30 P.M. EST

Secretary Clements, General Brown, General Scowcroft, members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, distinguished guests:

It is awfully good to see you all and to welcome you to the White House. I know that Secretary Kissinger and Secretary Clements and others have briefed you very fully on the elements of our new defense budget and the policies of their respective departments.

Actually, foreign policy and defense policy are both part of a single national policy, the policy that carries out the first duty of the Federal Government, which is to make the United States and its people safe and secure in a very dangerous world.

Throughout our 200 years of independence, we have become the strongest Nation in the history of mankind and, as President, I intend to keep our military strength certain and our powder dry.

But, our world has also become much more dangerous. It is also my duty to do all that I can to reduce the level of danger by diplomatic means, so my policy for national security can be summed up in three words -- peace through strength.

I believe it is far better to seek negotiations with the Soviet Union based on strength than to permit a runaway nuclear arms race and risk a nuclear holocaust.

Under my Administration, the United States is at peace. There are no Americans in battle anywhere in the world today. We have greatly strengthened our essential alliances with Western Europe and with Japan.

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The United States has taken a strong and very forthright stand in the United Nations on behalf of our own national interest. We challenged the Soviet Union and Cuba in their intervention in Angola, and if the Congress had stood with us, we could have preserved the opportunity to let the Angolans settle their future among themselves.

We have worked to achieve an unprecedented increase in United States foreign trade, which has insured hundreds of thousands of American jobs. The United States has used its unique position, its position of confidence, on both sides to accomplish a historic breakthrough in peace negotiations between Egypt and with Israel, and continues to seek a just and lasting peace throughout the Middle East.

A strong military presence and decisive action by the United States coupled with the elements of our Pacific doctrine have stabilized international relations in Asia and the Far East. I believe -- and believe very strongly -- that \$112 billion 700 million requested in my fiscal year 1977 defense budget represents the best way to deter war and to keep our country secure.

By maintaining unquestioned military strength, we will negotiate from strength, not from weakness. We will not prevail in this protracted struggle with the enemies of freedom, big or small, by warming over the old rhetoric of the cold war or by fast and fancy gunplay with weapons that can destroy most of the human race.

We will win this struggle, and we are winning it by the patient and painstaking pursuit of our own national interest through continuing my present policy of peace through strength.

Anyone who has ever been in the Armed Forces, especially in wartime, knows that the final objective you gain from that experience, the continuing mission you take with you when you leave the service, is to work for a peaceful world for your children and your grandchildren.

The veterans of all nations will tell you just that. But, as Americans, we have an extra responsibility. We did not seek it, but it was thrust upon us. We cannot escape it, and we will not. Circumstance, destiny, fate, or whatever you call it, the fact is the United States of America is today the world's best and perhaps its only hope of peace with freedom.

Upon our strengths, upon our power, upon our prudence and our perseverance rests mankind's best hope for a better world. Whatever chance there is for permanent peace depends upon America's resolution and national leadership.

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I am committed to such a firm and steady course.
I am greatly encouraged and pleased by your strong and
steadfast support.

I thank you very much.

END (AT 5:35 P.M. EST)