

**The original documents are located in Box D16, folder “House Speech Defense, August 19, 1964” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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TEXT OF REMARKS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD (R.-MICH.)

Mr. Speaker:

I wish to associate myself with the remarks made by the distinguished gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. Laird on the floor of this House yesterday concerning the testimony of Defense Secretary McNamara before the Democratic Platform Committee on Monday of this week.

I too would like to discuss the Secretary's statement because I believe it constituted, among other things, a partisan political attack on the Eisenhower Administration and contained statements that undoubtedly created misleading conclusions or impressions. Some comments were less than objective.

As ranking minority member of the Defense Appropriations Committee which has been my committee through the Administrations of Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson, I believe I can speak with first-hand knowledge on the defense policies of all three Administrations.

I was amazed to hear the Secretary of Defense make the following misleading statement about the Eisenhower Administration:

"The defense establishment we found in 1961 was based on a strategy of massive nuclear retaliation as the answer to all military and political aggression. We, however, were convinced that our enemies would never find credible a strategy which even the American people did not believe."

Mr. Speaker, in the first place the nuclear policy of the Eisenhower Administration was one of selective nuclear retaliation. The option of massive nuclear retaliation was merely one aspect of a comprehensive defense and foreign policy which encompassed other approaches to both political and military situations. Examples which clearly illustrate the broad range and strength of the Eisenhower posture include the successful operations in Lebanon and Quemoy-Matsu. Above all, this comprehensive Eisenhower-Dulles policy was credible to our own people as well as to friend and foe. NATO knew that our commitment was sound; Communism knew that our position was firm. The Gulf of Tonkin incident would never have happened under the Eisenhower-Dulles policy and never did because our adversaries knew clearly before any probing action that any direct attack upon the United States, its forces or possessions, would receive a response unacceptable to the adversary. This has not been clear under the present Administration's policy. Our Communist enemies also knew that if U.S. retaliation were necessary no advanced warning to the aggressor would be forthcoming.

Further on in his statement, the Secretary continues to distort the record of the Eisenhower Administration. He says:

"In 1961, we found military strategy to be the stepchild of a predetermined budget. A financial ceiling was placed on national security and funds were allocated not on the basis of military requirements, but according to the dictates of an arbitrary fiscal policy."

I have personally discussed this matter with former Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates and he has confirmed my own belief that under the Eisenhower Administration, no essential military requirements were neglected on the basis of budgetary considerations, nor was there a budgetary ceiling imposed upon our national security. This matter was probed specifically by Congress, and in published testimony former Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy also stated in answer to a direct question that there was no budgetary ceiling imposed by former President Eisenhower.

It is true that less was spent annually on defense than in the last four years by some 10 billion dollars per year. It is also true, that under Eisenhower more security based on results was provided for less money. This was possible because Eisenhower's decisions were based upon intelligent understanding of the problems of our national security and military affairs not only for that immediate period but for the foreseeable future. Proof of this is that

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today the overwhelming majority of our defense forces are the fruition of the development efforts begun in the Eisenhower years. Projecting present policies and developments into the 1970's, one will find serious deficiencies in our defense posture.

Mr. McNamara then went on to state:

"The nonnuclear force we found was weak in combat-ready divisions, weak in airlift capability, weak in tactical air support."

Mr. Speaker I categorically deny this charge based on results in successfully meeting international crises wherever they developed. Statistical support and testimony of experts could be amassed to refute this charge. More importantly, however, all crises during the Eisenhower years were met. Despite so-called improvements under this Administration they did not prevent the erection of the Berlin Wall the introduction of Soviet military hardware and personnel into Cuba, and our flag was attacked in Panama and our ships in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Mr. Speaker, the so-called improvement under this administration -- the increase in manpower -- has cost the American taxpayer additional billions of dollars and many military authorities contend it was not needed. The basis for growth in airlift ability and tactical air support had already started and was growing during the Eisenhower years.

A little later in his statement, the Secretary discusses the role of the military. I would like to quote the Secretary at some length. He said:

"We could not have instituted the integrated system by which we have increased our strength without the wholehearted cooperation and support of our men and women in uniform. Neither this system nor any system -- will ever be a substitute for sound military judgment. Under this Administration, as never before, professional military judgment from all four services has been a critical factor in the planning of our defense strategy.

As General Taylor, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated in 1963: 'The voice of the American soldier is entitled to a serious hearing in our national councils -- and I am happy to report that today he is receiving that hearing.'"

The question of the deteriorating condition of our civilian-military relationship has been too obvious to be refuted by a brief quote for the former Chief of Staff. This is shown in various congressional hearings and in the press -- not to mention the former Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Anderson's speech before the National Press Club in the same year, 1963. General Taylor of practical necessity, would have had to make some such statement during his tenure in office. This is obviously a self-serving statement. One would be hard put to find a high ranking retired officer who served under this Administration and who would corroborate General Taylor's statement.

No military man who is not ordered to do so will say that the military views have been heard and heeded by the Secretary of Defense. In fact, military men vehemently assert the opposite and deplore the degradation of military advice. The sad history of the TFX controversy, as one example, proves this. Both the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Chief of Naval Operations backed by the proceedings of four joint military boards recommended the Boeing aircraft and this recommendation was overthrown by an arbitrary decision of the Secretary of Defense.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many statistics that can lead to erroneous impressions in this statement that it is hard to single out any particular one for special attention. One that particularly struck me because I have had a long interest in the subject is contained in the following quote:

"(This Administration) turned back to the private sector of our economy 1,100 square miles of real estate which is now tax-producing instead of tax consuming."

Mr. Speaker, this is a particularly fitting example of the loose use of figures by

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this Administration to enhance its image. They make a claim that is impressive on its face, realizing the average American has no way of checking. I felt an obligation to check this out with the defense department and found the following to be the true facts in the case:

At my request the Defense department supplied a document that contained a listing of the "Military Installations having the largest area which have been closed or reduced during the period 31 January, 1961 thru 30 June, 1964." That list contained roughly three-quarters of the 1100 square mile figure used by the Secretary in his statement.

You will notice that the description in the title states that this is land that had been "closed or reduced." You will also notice that the Secretary, in his statement, clearly stated that this land plus about 25% more had been "turned back to the private sector" and had become "tax-producing instead of tax-consuming."

Since the Secretary's statement and the information supplied by the defense department were not compatible, I requested clarification.

I was informed that the list which I had been supplied was the basis for the figure in the Secretary's statement. I was further informed that it was not possible to determine whether this land had become "tax-producing" without conducting a costly survey which had not been conducted. In other words, Mr. Speaker, an impressive claim was made that, if allowed to go unchallenged, would be politically advantageous to the Administration, without any supporting evidence.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I cannot leave this subject without making some reference to a fundamental aspect of our defense policy. In trying to assure the American people that our defenses are adequate for today and the future, the Secretary said:

"Let me assure you that our strategic forces are and will remain in the 1960's and the seventies, sufficient to insure the destruction of both the Soviet Union and Communist China, under the worst imaginable circumstances accompanying the outbreak of war."

Let me just say that this is not a sufficient goal for the defense of this country. We need forces that are sufficient today and will be sufficient in the future not only to destroy the enemy but, far more important, that will deter the enemy from unleashing war. The defense establishment of this country has only one primary goal: to maintain the peace by effectively deterring war.

One final note, Mr. Speaker. I understand that Cabinet members have broken precedent by appearing before the Democratic Platform Committee because the subjects they discuss are so serious that the American people should have the true facts from the highest sources in our government. The remarks of the Gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. Laird, and my remarks today as well as the discussion that will follow in the days ahead clearly demonstrate that the American people have been swamped with statistical data that can mislead them into inaccurate conclusions. This is a situation which I, as ranking minority member of the Defense Appropriations Committee, find deplorable. The record must be set straight and I intend to do so on other occasions when the necessary factual information can be obtained from the Department of Defense. As of this moment I have not gotten all of the cooperation I would expect on this important subject.

In the days ahead, I intend to set the record straight on at least one additional subject, that of nuclear control.

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Thursday, August 19, 1964  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From the Office of:  
Rep. Gerald R. Ford (R.-Mich.)  
351 House Office Building  
Washington 25, D.C.

There would have been no shooting in the Gulf of Tonkin under the Eisenhower-Dulles policy, because would-be aggressors well knew what the response would have been, Rep. Gerald R. Ford (R. of Mich.) told the House today.

His statement was part of a point-by-point refutation of claims about the defense establishment presented by Secretary of Defense McNamara before the Democratic Platform Committee.

Ford, who is a member of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, pointed out that no such incident occurred during the Eisenhower Administration "because our adversaries knew clearly before any probing action that any direct attack upon the United States, its forces or possessions, would receive a response unacceptable to the adversary. This has not been clear under the present Administration's policy," Ford added.

Ford also refuted McNamara's claim that "The (Eisenhower) nonnuclear force we found was weak in combat-ready divisions, weak in airlift capability, weak in tactical air support."

The Michigan legislator pointed out that "all crises during the Eisenhower years were met", while "Despite the so-called improvements under this Administration they did not prevent the erection of the Berlin Wall, the introduction of Soviet military hardware and personnel into Cuba, and our flag was attacked in Panama and our ships in the Gulf of Tonkin."

Ford was particularly concerned that McNamara tried to claim that: "Under this Administration, as never before, professional military judgment from all four services has been a critical factor in the planning of our defense strategy."

Ford said this claim must collapse of its own weight. He said: "No military man who is not ordered to do so will say that military views have been heard and heeded by the Secretary of Defense. In fact, military men vehemently assert the opposite and deplore the degradation of military advice."

Ford cited the "sad history of the TFX controversy" wherein the military recommended the Boeing aircraft which was rejected by an arbitrary decision of the Secretary of Defense.

Another McNamara claim to which Ford objected was the Secretary's statement that "our strategic forces are and will remain in the 1960's and the seventies, sufficient to insure the destruction of both the Soviet Union and Communist China under the worst imaginable circumstances accompanying the outbreak of war."

Ford replied: "...this is not a sufficient goal for the defense of this Country. We need forces that are sufficient today and will be sufficient in the future, not only to destroy the enemy, but, far more important, that will deter the enemy from unleashing war. The defense establishment ... has only one primary goal: to maintain the peace by effectively deterring war."

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