The original documents are located in Box D27, folder "Annual Convention of the United Services Life Agency, Washington, DC, July 23, 1969" of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

AN ADDRESS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, REPUBLICAN LEADER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, BEFORE THE ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE UNITED SERVICES LIFE AGENCY, JULY 23, 1969, AT THE SHOREHAM HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D.C.

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A Strong America
An America at Peace

It is a great pleasure to be with you this morning. I feel right at home, because there is a certain kinship between insurance agents and politicians. We're all salesmen.

I have a friend who is neither a politician nor an insurance agent and yet I would classify him as a super-salesman. He recently convinced his wife she was too fat to wear an expensive dress she had her eye on.

Another friend of mine--and this fellow is an insurance agent--had the sale of a new life insurance policy all wrapped up and was just completing the application. "Now, let's see," he said to his client, "This is to be monthly payments on a straight life. That's what you wanted, isn't it?" "Well," the customer replied slowly, "I would like to fool around a little on Saturday nights."

You know, President Nixon is quite a salesman, too. He recently invited 26 Republican congressmen to breakfast and when he finished with them 18 of the 26 voted for extension of the surtax.

I have nothing to sell here this morning, but I would like to make a case--the case for a strong American--because I most fervently believe that only a strong America can prevent World War III.

The tragic war in Vietnam has precipitated a crisis of decision in this country. The choice we must make, the overriding decision that faces us, is whether to abandon the role of world leadership we reluctantly accepted after World War 2.

Let noone misinterpret what I am about to say. I hold no brief for those who would argue that Presidential actions and policies in the field of foreign affairs should not be subject to scrutiny by the Congress. On the contrary, I believe the Congress bears a grave joint responsibility for the foreign policy of the United States.

I recall that the late great Sen. Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan once made this sage comment about congressional relations with the White House in the handling of foreign affairs: "We want to be in on the takeoffs, not just the crash landings."

In the final analysis, however, I don't believe that any thinking American would disagree that the President is and should be the architect of United States foreign policy. The Congress might succeed in shaping that policy to some degree, but it is the President who sits at the potter's wheel 24 hours a day and makes

decisions which affect the course of world history.

At present there is a great debate going on in the United States Senate. It goes far beyond the question of whether to deploy the Safeguard missile defense system.

The true issue is whether the Senate or the President is to lay out the blueprint for future American foreign policy.

The underlying questions go to the heart of our future foreign policy: Shall the United States make concessions to the Soviet Union without any return on the investment? Shall there be a quid where there is no quo? If we err, shall we err on the side of strength or weakness? Shall we foreclose on the number of options open to our President in dealing with a dangerous adversary?

These are basic questions. There also are other key questions that have been thrown into sharp focus by the tragedy of Vietnam.

How great a commitment should the United States make in seeking to block Communist expansionism? We must recognize that some areas and that are less important to our national interest than others. Conditions vary from one area to another. Some might be regarded as poor risks.

One very fundamental consideration is whether a regime which seeks our help is a viable government or at least holds promise of becoming so--or whether our support represents a knee-jerk response in a doubtful if not hopeless cause.

We are committed throughout the world. We are the hope of free peoples everywhere. But we must not rush in where only fools would venture.

We are the guardian of liberty throughout the world. But we need not race madly off to quell every breach of the peace, and indeed we must not. The free world has no right to expect that we will respond to every "riot call."

What is necessary is that we see the world as it is and not as we would wish it to be, and that our direct involvement be carried out on a selective basis. ~~Further our energies should be concentrated on the prevention of war, and the prosecution of it.~~

We must regularly review all of our foreign commitments and, in the light of that review, periodically examine our defense needs.

We must be ever vigilant. We must be ever strong.

The Atlantic and Pacific are no longer our first lines of defense. The world, with the forces for evil that it holds, our doorstep.

President Nixon has been engaged in making a reassessment and review since taking office last Jan. 20.

One result is that he has ordered the withdrawal of 14,900 military personnel from U.S. bases overseas and has reduced federal civilian employes overseas by 5,100. I applauded that order. It is indicative of the careful appraisal President Nixon has given to the need for the present numbers of U.S. forces and personnel in foreign lands.

There was some speculation during this presidential review of our overseas bases and personnel that we would abandon our bases in Spain. But the President has decided these bases are vital to American security, particularly in view of Russian expansionist moves in the Mediterranean and the Mideast.

My information is that the base at Torrejon is highly important to the Air Force. It pumps more jet fuel than any other base in Europe. Its troposphere communications center is essential to Sixth Fleet operations and handles traffic from all over southern Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Obviously, our major military decisions are closely intertwined with our basic foreign policy. What we in effect are saying to ourselves when we make certain weapons decisions is that this is what we need to carry out our foreign policy commitments, or this is vital to our own domestic defense and the credibility of our nuclear deterrent.

It is upon that basis that President Nixon has recommended initial deployment of the Safeguard ballistic missile system at two strategic air bases--Malmstrom in Montana and Grand Forks in North Dakota.

I strongly support the President's proposal. The President has studied all the alternatives and has made a major policy decision. I believe that when the national security is at stake it is better to risk some additional dollars than to take a gamble which the lives of our citizens jeopardizes as we move into the Seventies.

You've heard the expression, "looking down the throat of a cannon." We are staring at the warheads of Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles every minute of every hour, every hour of every day, and every day of every year.

We can't make the Soviet threat go away simply by saying everything is A-O.K. at the Kremlin. Wishing won't make it so.

But the men in the Kremlin respect power--whether it is offensive or defensive power.

I favor deployment of the Safeguard missile defense system because I believe

it is the best insurance for peace that money can buy today.

The actual amount at issue in the military procurement bill being considered by the Senate is $345.5 million in procurement items for the Safeguard sites in North Dakota and Montana. And the Safeguard system will be under annual review thereafter, both in terms of need and cost.

If we can put a man on the moon--and we have--we can make the Safeguard missile defense system work--and we will.

Is the Safeguard missile defense system a threat to peace? Ridiculous. Is Safeguard a threat to success of the anticipated arms control talks with the Russians? Nonsense.

As for the arms control talks with the Soviet Union, every American hopes they produce an enforceable agreement which will at least reduce the pace of the arms race. But the talks may drag on for years--and they may fail.

Let us not trot off into a foolish state of euphoria. Remember the spirit of Glassboro and how it exploded into nothingness? Has any American forgotten the swift surprise invasion of Czechoslovakia last August 20 by Warsaw Pact powers led by the Soviet Union? Uncomfortably successful, wasn't it?

We were shocked, and we should have been. And we should not now start dreaming about instant success in arms control talks with the Russians. They don't give anything away. If there is an agreement, it will be because they feel they have something to gain by it.

Returning to the ABM, I think it is highly significant that former Secretary of State Dean Acheson believes a congressional go-ahead on deploying the Safeguard ABM system would be our ace in arms control talks with the Russians. I have made the very same point in my arguments in favor of the Safeguard system, but not as well.

Let us, above all, be realistic in this hour when some Americans would have us make peace in Vietnam on the enemy's terms. Let us be completely aware that if the Soviet Union would stop supplying the enemy with arms and would stop fueling the enemy in the Vietnam War, the war would end.

In any case, it is impossible to win a limited war--and that has been the tragedy of Vietnam. It was in full recognition of this that President Nixon opened the door wide to peace in Vietnam with his June 8 address to the Nation. The initial withdrawal of 25,000 U.S. combat troops from Vietnam is the beginning of American disengagement in Vietnam. I support the President's initiatives for peace in Vietnam. I do not believe he should be hurried. I do not believe that those Americans who are seeking precipitous, massive, unilateral withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam are being helpful.

There will be more withdrawals U.S. troop withdrawals. There will be a gradual de-Americanization of the war. But there will be no cut-and-run operation in Vietnam. We will not abandon the goal national self-determination and hand the enemy the prize they could not win on the battlefield.

I believe we will be able to disengage ourselves from Vietnam without sacrificing the sole objective toward which we point--national self-determination for the South Vietnamese people.

This is a clear and valid goal. It is a goal I believe we will achieve.

I can understand those Americans who say we should have gone into Vietnam to win or we should not have gone in at all. I cannot understand those who believe that they are performing a public service by reading the names of America's Vietnam war dead on the steps of the United States Capitol or on the Pentagon grounds. In my view what they are doing is cruel and to no purpose. They are squeezing the hearts of American parents whose sons have died in Vietnam, making more grievous the hurt these parents have already suffered. They are among those who encourage the enemy to believe they need only sit back and wait for a complete, unilateral American pullout from Vietnam. They even minimize the bloodbath that would inevitably ensue.

South Vietnam, with the backing of our Government, has challenged North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front to end the war through jointly controlled and internationally supervised elections. What could be more fair?

Yet those Americans who parrot the VietCong line silently applaud the enemy's rejection of the offer. They smile and say Hanoi will never agree to an election in which the Thieu-Ky Government has a role. They carry the message as though it is news--that the Hanoi Government wants the Nixon Administration to take a hard look at setting up a provisional coalition government in Saigon. These Americans are not only want peace at any price, as interlopers in Vietnam..."the only foreigners there."

What they are proposing is virtual surrender in Vietnam. And what they are proposing would inevitably lead to further aggression and additional encroachment in Asia by Communist fofces there.

In addition, a precipitous U.S. pullout from Vietnam would deal a staggering blow to U.S. prestige and credibility throughout the world.

As the London Economist recently declared: "It is an illusion to imagine that the United States can agree to a compromise peace that would amount to a sell-out and retain any credibility in Asia. Nor in Asia alone; for in this shrunken world, credibility is indivisible."

Those who press for a precipitous unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam are doing a disservice to their country by making the President's peace-making task more difficult. I believe they are prolonging the war, however sincere they may be.

There is only one way to peace in today's world, and that is through strength and through devotion to principles of international justice.

It is significant, I believe, that many of the same Americans who preach coalition government as a solution in Vietnam are also urging sharp cutbacks in U.S. military strength.

I do not question their motives, but I do question their judgment.

They cite the late President Eisenhower's warning about "unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex." But they fail to quote this most telling statement in Ike's farewell address upon leaving the White House:

"A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction."

The Atlantic and the Pacific no longer are our first lines of defense. The world, with all of its forces for evil, now sits on our doorstep. There is no defense for America except in its Armed Forces and its weaponry, at the ready and ever-strong in an attempt to dissuade a potential aggressor from springing to the attack.

Americans accomplished miracles in with our entry into World War II. We converted industrial plants into a great war machine in an amazingly short time. But we no longer have time on our side.

As President Eisenhower said in his farewell speech: "Now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions."

This is the world as it is, and we have to live in it. Let us accept it and do what we must do to make America secure. Let us not shrink from the role of world leadership that America must assume if there is to be order in the world and peace for free men. Thank you.

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