The original documents are located in Box D32, folder "West Contra Costa County Business and Professional Association, Richmond, CA, November 18, 1971" of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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CONGRESSMAN GERALD R. FORD HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER

NEWS RELEASE

--FOR RELEASE AT 6 P.M., P.S.T.-November 18, 1971

Excerpts from a Speech by Rep. Gerald R. Ford before the West Contra Costa County, Calif., Business and Professional Association, Thursday evening, Nov. 18, 1971, at Richmond, Calif., Civic Auditorium.

I sincerely hope the SALT talks are successful. But if those talks fail, there is no doubt in my mind that the United States will have to act to offset the arms momentum now being displayed by the Soviet Union.

I say this fully aware of Federal budget considerations and fully cognizant of the fact that the neo-isolationists have succeeded in turning the American people against the military. They have, in fact, declared war on the military, in my view.

I find this most unfortunate because I firmly believe it is the first duty of our National Government to "provide for the common defense." That is a duty which can be shirked only at our common peril.

I know the neo-isolationists are sincere. They think the way to stop the arms race is for the United States to disarm unilaterally. They would like to see us abandon most of our commitments around the world and devote ourselves almost exclusively to domestic affairs. They have adopted the idea that the threat of Communist aggression is a bogeyman held up to scare the American people. Some believe it matters not whether other lands fall to Communist aggressors.

I strongly support President Nixon's efforts to turn the world around--to turn it from confrontation to negotiation. But I do not believe the way to do this is through appearement, unilateral disarmament or negotiation from weakness. Only the strong survive. The United States must remain strong if there is to be peace in the world.

I expect the debate over defense spending to grow in volume and intensity in the years ahead. I hope every American will study and ponder the questions involved rather than simply adopt an anti-military stance. It is time we got rid of knee-jerk reactions to the phrase, military-industrial complex.

I have helped to cut military budgets, having served 12 years on the defense appropriations subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. But those were judicious cuts, sensibly arrived at. By contrast, some Senate liberals swing a meat-axe at the military budget.

(more)

They ignore such reports as that of the President's Blue Ribbon Defense

Commission which earlier this year warned of "a significant shifting of the strategic

military balance against the United States and in favor of the Soviet Union."

They ignore the statement by Jane's Fighting Ships that the Soviet Union now has a "super-navy" while American naval strength is declining.

They ignore the growing Soviet superiority in Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles.

They ignore the fact that the Soviets are committing greater resources to strategic offensive and defensive weapons than is the United States.

They ignore the strong possibility that the U.S. will lose its technological superiority to the Soviet Union.

They ignore the convincing evidence that the Soviet Union seeks a preemptive first-strike capability vis-a-vis the United States.

Instead of recognizing the dangerous position in which we find ourselves, Senate liberals feed the mounting hostility of the American public against the military, the defense establishment and the so-called military-industrial complex.

They pay no heed to the woeful fact that their irresponsible criticism of the military is undermining and weakening the only force capable of providing security for the American people.

The latest example of irresponsible behavior by the Senate liberals was the vote Oct. 29--since remedied, thank God--which sank a bill providing aid for Southeast Asia.

To cut U.S. aid to Indochina at the very time that we are stepping up the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam is to threaten the program of withdrawal. There is a direct link between U.S. aid and our allies' ability to tie down North Vietnamese forces as we pull our troops out of Vietnam.

Had we sharply reduced or cut out economic aid to South Vietnam, it would have crippled that country's weak economy.

Had we cut back aid to South Korea, we would have jeopardized our program of troop withdrawals there because the aid funds are being used to modernize the South Korean armed forces as an offset to our pullout from that country.

The attitude of the Senate liberals has signalled to the rest of the world that the U.S. word is suspect, that the U.S. cannot be depended upon in defense of freedom.

The nation which values anything more than its freedom will lose its freedom. I pledge unfailing hostility to those who, wittingly or otherwise, would have the United States abdicate its responsibility for advancing peace and freedom in the world.

I say we must guard our legacy of the second with all the resources at our command. Freedom is our most precious possestion. ###



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