

The original documents are located in Box 21, “1/8/76 - Remarks at Meeting with Leadership of the American Legion” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.

January 8, 1976

TALKING POINTS: PRESIDENTIAL MEETING WITH AMERICAN LEGION LEADERSHIP, THE WHITE HOUSE, FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 1976

I am always pleased to meet with the leadership of the American Legion. We share an unbreakable bond: our common commitment to a strong defense.

We are again being tested by our adversaries -- particularly in Angola. The Soviet Union apparently is probing for our reactions to their moves in west Africa. They also appear to be testing the unity of the free world as well as the attitudes of African nations.

As you know, I believe in the relaxation of tensions and a saner, safer relationship with our adversaries. But this never meant and does not mean any lessening of our military strength or commitment to our responsibilities. On the contrary, detente depends upon maintaining our strength and doing what is necessary to maintain stability.

The key to the future of peace today is in Washington. Those who are worried about the Soviet's actions in Angola or the strength of their military forces -- as you are and as I am -- have an obligation to help us do what is necessary. I am calling for your help -- to prevent defense budget cuts in the Congress; to enable us to continue to support anti-Soviet forces in Angola and to work for a political solution; to stop the assault on our intelligence services and activities; to halt the leaks of sensitive intelligence information.

You have known me for 25 years. You know where I stand.

I am trying to maintain America's strength. I need your help.

Detente can enable us to build habits of restraint in international conduct. Soviet restraint however, doesn't come out easily. It depends on our actions. It depends on making clear that irresponsible Russian actions will be resisted. It depends on the developments of more

constructive relationships in the national interest in many fields. If we are deprived of the capacity to achieve these actions, we are left with no policy at all. The choices that the Soviet Union makes now -- and the choices we make now -- will have fundamental implications for the future of our relations.

In the meantime, I will do all I can to strengthen our defense, to maintain our treaty commitments, to defend our intelligence services, and to seek to maintain world peace and stability.

With your help, as well as that of the American people, the Congress will demonstrate the commitment of our Nation to a strong defense by passing -- and not cutting -- the defense budget I will submit later this month for Fiscal Year 1977. The security of the United States surpasses any personal or political consideration. We must have a strong defense and I pledge to you, as I always have, that your faith and confidence in my commitment will be vindicated.

#