

The original documents are located in Box 32, “5/14/76 - Remarks at the 50th Annual Armed Forces Day Dinner, Louisville, Kentucky” 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 Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections.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.....

ARMED FORCES COMMITTEE

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

FRIDAY, MAY 14, 1976

THANK YOU GENERAL VAN STOCKUM

AMBASSADOR COOPER

CONGRESSMAN TIM LEE CARTER

CONGRESSMAN MAZZOLI

CONGRESSMAN SNYDER

MEMBERS OF THE ARMED SERVICES

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I AM PROUD TO BE HERE IN LOUISVILLE THIS EVENING

TO ADDRESS THE ARMED FORCES COMMITTEE AND THEIR FRIENDS.

IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO ADDRESS THIS DISTINGUISHED GROUP

OF FINE AMERICANS - CITIZENS WHO ARE VITALLY INTERESTED,

AS I AM, IN THE DEFENSE OF THIS COUNTRY.

I WAS HAPPY TO SEE THAT EVEN IN THE MIDST

OF ALL THE EXCITEMENT OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY,

ONE OF OUR NATIONAL GUARDSMEN, SERGEANT GARY WALL /

WHO IS HERE TONIGHT / WAS ON THE ALERT. I SALUTE HIM

FOR HIS QUICK THINKING AND QUICK ACTION IN SMOTHERING

THAT SMOKE BOMB THROWN ONTO THE TRACK.

WE SURE COULD USE A FEW MORE LIKE SERGEANT WALL

TO SMOTHER SOME OF THE SMOKE THAT IS CLOUDING THE REAL ISSUES

before the American people in 1976,
~~IN THE PRIMARY RACES.~~

BUT I AM NOT HERE TONIGHT TO TALK ABOUT RACES,

~~HORSE OR POLITICAL.~~

I CAME HERE TO TELL YOU MY FEELINGS ABOUT DEFENSE

AND MILITARY PREPAREDNESS.

THE FIRST PERSON TO ADDRESS THIS DISTINGUISHED

ORGANIZATION AT ITS FIRST ARMED FORCES DAY BANQUET IN 1919,

WAS ONE OF AMERICA'S GREAT MILITARY LEADERS,

GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING.

PERSHING SPOKE AFTER THE END OF WORLD WAR ONE --

A WAR THAT HAD FOUND AMERICA UNPREPARED•

PERSHING KNEW WHAT IT MEANT TO GO TO WAR UNPREPARED•

HE HAD SEEN FOR HIMSELF THE TERRIBLE PRICE IT HAD COST

IN AMERICAN BLOOD, SPILED IN THE TRENCHES [AND HEDGEROWS]

OF FRANCE•

LIKE ANY MILITARY COMMANDER, PERSHING WANTED
HIS FORCES FIGHTING TOGETHER, AS A SINGLE AMERICAN UNIT --
BUT AT FIRST HE WAS FORCED TO SPLIT OFF SOME OF HIS DIVISIONS
TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE THE BRITISH AND FRENCH FORCES•

AND WHY WAS THAT?

ONE VERY IMPORTANT REASON.

~~WAS THAT~~ THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE HAD NO TANKS,

AND IN 1917 TANKS WERE RAPIDLY CHANGING THE NATURE OF THE

BATTLEFIELD. TANKS WERE THE DECISIVE PUNCH IN ANY ATTACK.

OUR FIGHTING FORCES HAVE COME A LONG WAY SINCE

THEN. SPEAKING HERE TONIGHT, NOT 30 MILES FROM THE

ARMOR CENTER OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY AT FORT KNOX,

LET ME SAY TANKS TODAY ARE A CRITICAL ELEMENT OF AMERICAN

GROUND COMBAT POWER. AS WE SAW IN THE 1973

MIDDLE EAST WAR, THE TANK PLAYS A CENTRAL ROLE IN GROUND

COMBAT.

AND AS PART OF OUR BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1977,

WE ARE GOING TO MAKE SURE THAT AMERICAN SOLDIERS HAVE NOTHING

BUT THE BEST IN THIS CRUCIAL AREA. THAT BUDGET CALLS FOR

THE PURCHASE OF BETTER THAN THIRTY PERCENT. MORE TANKS THAN

We have gone from a single production, ^{but} to a second
THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL 1975. AND WE ARE NOW TESTING

ADVANCED NEW TANKS, TO SELECT THE VERY BEST THAT CAN BE

PROVIDED TO THE AMERICAN SOLDIER.

WE CAN ALSO LOOK WITH CONFIDENCE

TO OUR SUBSTANTIAL ARSENAL OF THE WORLD'S MOST EFFECTIVE

ANTI-TANK SYSTEMS, BOTH AIR AND GROUND.

AMERICAN TECHNOLOGY AND SKILLS HAVE MADE US

THE FOUNDATION OF THE FREE WORLD'S MILITARY MIGHT, *but we*

must see that great resource to stay ahead. R. + D. is an

AS I NOTED EARLIER THIS WEEK AT THE OPENING

OF ARMED FORCES WEEK AT THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT:

*important, crucial element & in my
F.Y. 77 budget, I recommended an
11% increase in Defense Dept.
research & development*

-- WE HAVE LAID THE KEEL FOR THE FIRST OF A SERIES
OF NEW MISSILE LAUNCHING SUBMARINES, THE TRIDENT MISSILE FLEET,
WHICH WILL BE THE FOUNDATION FOR A STRONG AND TECHNOLOGICALLY
SUPERIOR FORCE THROUGH THE 1980s•

-- WE ARE DEVELOPING NEW FIGHTERS,

A NEW INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE FOR THE 1980s,

AND A NEW CRUISE MISSILE FOR OUR AIR AND NAVAL FORCES.

The B-1 is approaching its final testing & I have.

I WENT ON TO SAY THAT WE OWE OUR SOLDIERS

AND SAILORS AND MARINES AND AIRMEN THE FINEST TOOLS

THIS COUNTRY CAN PROVIDE.

*recommended the procurement funds for
the 200 plus aircraft which will
be phased in as we replace our B-52s*

THAT GOES FOR ALL THE MEMBERS OF OUR TOTAL FORCE,

BOTH ACTIVE AND RESERVE COMPONENTS. THE NATIONAL GUARD

AND RESERVE FORCES ARE A GREAT PART OF AMERICA'S

FIGHTING TEAM. AND I INTEND TO CONTINUE IMPROVING

THE COMBAT POWER AND THE READINESS OF THAT FORCE.

WITHIN THE LAST TWO HOURS I SIGNED INTO LAW A BILL

MAKING OUR NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE UNITS

AN EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT PART OF OUR TOTAL FORCE•

UNTIL TODAY, IT TOOK A NATIONAL EMERGENCY OR AN ACT

OF CONGRESS TO PUT THE RESERVES INTO ACTION•

UNDER THIS NEW LAW, THE PRESIDENT WILL BE ABLE TO MOBILIZE

UP TO 50,000 OF THE SELECTED RESERVE FOR UP TO 90 DAYS•

OF COURSE WE ALL HOPE THAT SUCH AN ORDER

WILL NEVER HAVE TO BE GIVEN. BUT IF IT IS, WE CAN NOW

COUNT ON THE EFFECTIVE DEPLOYMENT OF A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER

OF RESERVISTS TO ~~DEFEND~~ OUR NATIONAL INTEREST.

participate with our active duty forces in the defense

THIS MEANS OUR RESERVE AND NATIONAL GUARD

ARE BEING GIVEN INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY, AND GREATER

IMPORTANCE IN OUR TOTAL FORCE. SO IT IS MORE IMPORTANT

THAN EVER THAT THEY BE EQUIPPED AND TREATED AS FIRST-CLASS

units

~~SOLDIERS~~, AND SECRETARY RUMSFELD AND I ARE GOING TO SEE

THEY GET THE ADVANCED EQUIPMENT THEY DESERVE.

I WAS GLAD TO HEAR THAT THE KENTUCKY AIR NATIONAL

GUARD HAS JUST REPLACED THEIR OUTDATED R-F 101s

WITH ONE OF OUR MOST MODERN RECONNAISSANCE FIGHTERS,

THE R-F-4-C. THIS IS JUST THE TYPE OF IMPROVEMENT

WE ARE AIMING TO ACHIEVE.

ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THOSE REPRESENTED

IN THIS ROOM TONIGHT + THE 100th ARMY RESERVE DIVISION,

THE KENTUCKY AIR NATIONAL GUARD, THE RETIRED OFFICERS'

ASSOCIATION, AND THE RESERVE OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS --

ARE PART OF A GREAT FIGHTING TEAM THAT DESERVES

AMERICA'S SUPPORT.

THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY, AMERICA HAS SHOWN

ITS ABILITY TO RAISE GREAT FIGHTING FORCES ON SHORT NOTICE.

IN WORLD WAR ONE, FOR EXAMPLE, WITHIN 18 MONTHS

GENERAL PERSHING WAS ABLE TO PRODUCE AN ARMY TWO MILLION

STRONG, THAT DECISIVELY DEFEATED TROOPS HARDENED

BY FOUR YEARS OF WAR.

IN FACT, THE SPEED AT WHICH AMERICA HAS MOBILIZED /

HAS BEEN MATCHED ONLY BY THE SPEED WITH WHICH AMERICA

DISMANTLED MUCH OF ITS MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT / TIME AND

TIME AGAIN / LEAVING US ILL-PREPARED FOR THE NEXT THREAT

TO OUR FREEDOM.

AMERICA TODAY CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO RELY ON
THIS ROLLER-COASTER APPROACH TO OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE.

THE AWESOME SPEED AND TECHNOLOGY OF MODERN
WARFARE MEAN WE WOULD NOT HAVE 18 MONTHS | -- OR EVEN
18 DAYS -- TO PREPARE OUR OWN DEFENSE.

~~The Atlantic & Pacific oceans
are no longer provide a~~

IF WE ARE FORCED TO FIGHT AGAIN, THE NEXT

WAR IS LIKELY TO BE "COME-AS-YOU-ARE," *instant readiness,*

WE ARE STRONG TODAY.

WE ARE WELL PREPARED

TO DETER WAR -- BUT IF DETERRENCE SHOULD FAIL, WE ARE

WELL PREPARED TO CONTROL THE CONFLICT AND AVOID NUCLEAR

CONFRONTATION.

OUR JOB NOW IS TO MAKE SURE THAT AMERICA

REMAINS STRONG. AND I PROMISE YOU, WE WILL.

IN MY BUDGETS FOR FISCAL YEARS 1976 AND 1977,

I HAVE ALREADY TAKEN STEPS TO ^{Stop}~~ARREST~~ THE DOWNWARD TREND

IN AMERICAN MILITARY SPENDING FOR WHICH THE CONGRESS

MUST BEAR RESPONSIBILITY.

*It is hard to believe but in the last
10 years the Congress has slashed 50 billion
from the military budgets for submitted by
3 Presidents. T*

THAT TREND IN THE CONGRESS HAS REDUCED

THE DEFENSE SHARE OF OUR FEDERAL BUDGET TO ITS LOWEST LEVEL

SINCE FISCAL YEAR 1940 /- AND THE LOWEST SHARE

OF OUR GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT SINCE BEFORE THE KOREAN WAR.

THIS HAS COME TO PASS FOR ONE REASON --

BECAUSE THE CONGRESS, OVER THE LAST DECADE, HAS REDUCED

THE DEFENSE BUDGET PROPOSALS OF THREE PRESIDENTS

BY SOME 45 BILLION DOLLARS.

I FOUGHT THAT TREND AS A CONGRESSMAN FOR 25 YEARS.

FOR 14 OF THOSE YEARS I HAD THE PRIVILEGE TO SERVE

House
ON THE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE.

FOR 14 YEARS, / FOR FIVE MONTHS A YEAR, /

I SPENT MANY HOURS EACH DAY LISTENING TO SECRETARIES

OF DEFENSE, / CHAIRMEN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, /

ALL THE SECRETARIES OF THE ARMY, / THE NAVY AND THE AIR FORCE,

ALL THE TOP GENERALS AND ADMIRALS•

WHAT I LEARNED THEN CONFIRMED THE LESSON

OF MY WARTIME EXPERIENCE IN THE NAVY --

THE LESSON THAT PEACE DEMANDS PREPAREDNESS,

AND THAT WEAKNESS INVITES WAR.

AND IN MY TWO YEARS AS PRESIDENT, I ASSURE YOU

I HAVE USED ALL THAT I HAVE LEARNED / IN PUTTING TOGETHER PROGRAMS

FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE WHICH PRODUCED TWO OF THE LARGEST

PEACETIME DEFENSE BUDGETS IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES.

This year we can not let Congress slash our military budget

I KNOW AMERICA NEEDS A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE.

must be
WE HAVE TO STAY PREPARED.

must
WE HAVE TO KEEP OUR FORCES

STRONG TO KEEP THE PEACE.

as they have in the past. Several weeks ago I bluntly warned the Congress - if the defense budget is weakened, it will be vetoed. & I will go to the American people on the issue.

THAT MEANS HAVING THE BEST SOLDIERS, SAILORS,
AIRMEN AND MARINES, AND GIVING THEM THE FINEST TRAINING
AND THE MOST EFFECTIVE EQUIPMENT MONEY CAN BUY.

THAT MEANS SETTING A FIRM COURSE
FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT - NOT JUST IN THE DEFENSE BUDGET --
BUT IN ALL THE AREAS WHERE WE CAN HELP TO KEEP AMERICA
THE GREATEST NATION ON EARTH.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER, WHEN HE WAS GENERAL
OF THE ARMY, ONCE REMARKED THAT OUR FIGHTING FORCES
ARE JUST THE CUTTING EDGE OF A GREAT MACHINE.
~~AND~~ THE INSPIRATION AND POWER FOR THAT MACHINE, HE SAID,
ARE FOUND IN THE HEARTS OF OUR CITIZENS.

AND THE SPIRITUAL POWERS OF A NATION --

ITS RELIGIOUS FAITH, ITS SELF-RELIANCE, ITS CAPACITY

FOR INTELLIGENT SACRIFICE -- IKE CALLED THESE

THE MOST IMPORTANT STONES IN ANY DEFENSE STRUCTURE.

OUR DEFENSES ARE STRONG, NOT JUST

BECAUSE THEIR CUTTING EDGE IS SHARP, BUT BECAUSE AMERICA'S

SPIRIT IS UNBEATABLE. AMERICA IS PROSPEROUS,

PEACEFUL AND PROUD ON ITS 200th BIRTHDAY.

ALL OF US MUST DO OUR PART TO SEE THAT AMERICA

REMAINS STRONG IN EVERY RESPECT. ~~AND I AM CONFIDENT~~

America will

~~THAT~~ WE WILL DO OUR PART, ~~AND THAT WE~~ STAND READY TO MEET

THE CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OUR THIRD CENTURY.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

END OF TEXT