

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 2, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
IN A MEETING WITH
JOHN STENNIS
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
STROM THURMOND
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
JOHN L. McCLELLAN
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS
AND
MILTON R. YOUNG
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

THE OVAL OFFICE

11:05 A.M. EST

I think I will talk very precisely about the defense budget, and the four of you have a very important role in it.

I submitted, as all of you know, the largest defense budget in the history of the country, and I submitted it knowing, first, that we had to have it and, secondly, that we had to reverse the trend that has been developing over the last few years.

All of you know, as well as I do, that the United States does have at the present time a rough equivalency with the Soviet Union, but the situation is such that we cannot permit it to change adversely, and that is why this budget of \$112 billion in obligation authority and \$100 billion in spending, I think, is absolutely mandatory.

You four are experts, and we need your help in the months ahead in convincing others that that rough equivalency must be maintained, and the budget that I have submitted will do so.

We have had, as all of you know, a trend that was going in the wrong direction vis a vis the build-up of the Soviet Union. We are in good shape now and a one-year military budget of this magnitude will not be sufficient.

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This is an important budget this year, but I think we have to have continuing budgets of this magnitude with the growth factor in the future. I have told the Secretary of Defense that I am going to back him to the hilt in his presentation to the Congress and to the American people.

We have come to a very critical point. Last year I submitted a good defense budget. This one I think is a mandatory budget for fiscal year 1977. We put about \$1 billion 700 million more in for the strategic forces for the B-1, the Trident, with the initial procurement for the B-1.

We have about \$4 billion 700 million in there for conventional force strengthening. We have about \$1 billion more in for research and development. We have extra money in that is absolutely necessary for the maintenance and operation of our Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, but all of this money must be, as we see it, approved in fiscal 1977 in order to maintain a mandatory rough equivalency with any other superpower.

We have it today, and we are going to keep it in the future in order to deter any aggression, to maintain the peace and to protect our national security.

I know from my many contacts with all of you that you feel basically as I do. Our problem is to sell the Congress and to get the full support of the American people.

END (AT 11:15 A.M. EST)