

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 2, 1976

Office of the Vice President
(Colorado Springs, Colorado)

REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY
FALCON, STADIUM
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

(AT 10:00 A.M. MDT)

Thank you very much, Reverend Shannon. General Allen, I deeply appreciate your overly generous remarks. Secretary Reed, General Jones, General James, deans and members of the faculty, members of the Bicentennial class, Mr. and Mrs. Sijan, families and loved ones who are here today on this magnificent occasion, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I have to say first that Happy and I are thrilled to be with you on this uniquely important occasion. I am pleased to be here to participate in the graduation of the Air Force Academy.

The dictionary defines graduation as passing from one stage of experience to another. Today you are leaving the role of student and beginning the life of practitioner. You move from the duties of cadet to the first tasks of command.

You do so at one of the most exciting times in our history. For just as you are moving to another stage of experience, so this Nation is moving to a new realm of experience.

You, therefore, have not only the opportunity to participate in the new developments, but you face the challenge to help shape them while defending our freedom to do so.

It is not just the coincidence of the Bicentennial but, rather, the coalescence of many forces that prompts me to say that today we stand at another watershed in our history.

In the 200 years of our national life, we have had an abundance of land and a plenitude of resources. We have had an energetic population committed to the precept that each generation should strive to make possible a better life for that which followed.

We have had the unique American enterprise system under which government set down certain basic policies and provided the general guidelines, but left economic activity principally to individuals, private groups, and voluntary associations.

We have had a free labor movement as a significant part of this enterprise system, and we progressively eliminated the barriers to equal opportunity for employment.

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We have had a society built upon the principle that government was to serve the people, not the people to serve the government. And so we have had a Federal type of government where power is shared between States and the national government; where the powers of government are separated into Legislative, Executive and Judicial, and where the rights of individual citizens are constitutionally protected against governmental aggrandizement.

We have looked pragmatically at problems and not seen them through the colorations and distortions of ideologies. We have had no Federally established religion, but we have had a very moral view of life, a concern for the dignity of undeveloped people and a compassion for the less fortunate, not only in our midst but elsewhere throughout the world.

We have demonstrated through practice what the signers of the Declaration of Independence preached, namely, that individual liberty requires economic freedom, that a person cannot be truly free to enjoy civil rights and privileges if he is held in economic bondage -- whether that bondage be indentured service to a master of the 18th century or to the dictates of an all-powerful government in the 20th century.

In these 200 years of human liberty and economic freedom, our Nation through American economic enterprise, through our democratic system of representative government, and our social commitment, has given ordinary men and women the widest opportunity for self-realization and fulfillment. And Americans have thereby achieved the highest level of individual opportunity and quality of life in the history of mankind.

In these two centuries we have also had the advantages of distance from the troubles of Europe with the protection of vast oceans from threats of invasion or attack. After the War of 1812, the British Navy ceased to be a challenge and became a buffer for us that lasted until the two World Wars of this century, when our own Navy came into its great strength and our modern Air Force was born.

We had the advantage of insulation without isolation. We have been secure on this continent between oceans and airways that protected us but also served as well as highways of international trade and commerce.

But, as I have said, we as a Nation are also graduating, moving to another stage of national and international life.

This transition raises new problems, questions long-held concepts, and strains traditional institutions. Moreover, the rapidity of change and the breadth of change are such that it is not only difficult to keep up with, but it is even hard to recognize them. It is even more difficult to evaluate and assess their likely consequence on our lives.

Just the mention of five major areas may serve to illustrate the point.

First, ours has been an energetic public. We have been motivated by the work ethic. Individuals were measured principally by the use of their talents and by their accomplishments. Their drive for self-improvement, to do better for one's self and one's family, has been a powerful force in shaping America. It has been a significant factor in our productivity as a Nation.

Today in our complex society with proper concern for the less fortunate we have created a welfare system that involves huge expenditures but moves in the opposite direction from self-reliance and productivity.

To meet this situation we must stimulate employment and other opportunities for productive involvement of our population. In addition, we must find a formula that assures compassion but not at the expense of individual motivation to seek opportunity and independence.

The second area is our economy. Our American enterprise system has out-produced all others and provided the most efficient means of distributing goods and services ever devised.

The genius of this system lies in its flexibility, its encouragement of innovation and risk-taking, and its responsiveness to consumers' demands and people's needs.

However, in the pursuit of social objectives over the years and at an accelerated rate in recent years, we have been hobbling our economic system with myriads of laws, rules, regulations, orders and procedures.

The agglomeration of all these restraints, however well-intentioned, discourages investment and compounds the costs of goods and services to the consumer.

(Applause.)

The road to continued growth and prosperity will not be built of red tape. The challenge, therefore, is to develop a framework of law, of enlightened and simplified regulation, geared to today's needs and tomorrow's potentialities.

We have no reason to apologize for our enterprise system but, rather, we should give it constructive encouragement. It has been a principal generator of our prosperity in peace and has been our arsenal of democracy in war.

The third area I would like to mention is energy. As a Nation we have enjoyed cheap, abundant fuel. It has been a major factor in our economic growth, our well-being, and our way of life. It has been a significant element in our national security.

But we are now in a totally different energy situation than we were a few years ago. No longer can we meet our energy needs from current domestic sources. Today we are seriously and increasingly dependent on imported petroleum for our day-to-day activities. In fact, we now import a greater percentage of our oil from overseas than we did at the time of the Arab oil embargo. And our domestic

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production of oil and gas is declining rather than expanding.

Moreover, the cost of energy from all sources -- coal, oil, gas and nuclear -- is higher by far than a few years ago, and still rising.

The era of cheap imported energy from abroad and easy inexpensive access to energy sources at home is over. We therefore face the necessity of developing new energy sources here at home sufficient to give us self-reliance. Our failure to act imperils our economy and our national defense by increasing reliance on imports.

The situation is far more critical than is generally recognized. Our vulnerability grows daily. We must come to grips with it. And it is indeed unfortunate that election year politics, together with obfuscation of the facts -- or unwillingness to face them -- has stymied action by the Congress on the President's far-sighted program to meet this crucial issue.

(Applause.)

I have a friend out there. Thank you again.

Unless we take steps to build our energy self-reliance through encouragement of new oil and gas exploration in areas under our control and through building coal and nuclear power facilities, while we encourage research and development in solar and geothermal energy, coal gasification and liquefaction, and recovery of oil from shale, unless we do these things, we cannot protect our national security and sustain our present level of living, nor provide for our future needs.

(Applause.)

Fourth is the area of economic growth. This is related to the energy situation. But it goes considerably beyond it. It involves consideration of environmental factors, of social, political and economic factors. Indeed, the whole concept of growth is being challenged, the dynamics of growth which has created our productive society with its enormous benefits to so many people.

Claims are now being made that progress pollutes the world, that resources are not sufficient to sustain growth, that a return to the simple life is indicated, away from mechanization, chemical fertilizers and technological development.

Indeed, fears are fostered over new discoveries, new inventions, new technologies and the newer sources of energy. Yet it is those who have had the courage and vision to think anew who have brought this country to greatness.

The facts are, of course, that the resources are available for growth while at the same time protecting our environmental and social programs. What is needed is application of science and technology, capital investment, managerial expertise to provide them.

There are on tap resources in the ground, in the seas, in the air, and in the polar regions of the earth.

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There are substitutes available for most materials today and the prospects of more as science progresses. This means a new emphasis on science and technology. It means reversing the trend that has seen the growth rate of the United States falling behind other industrialized nations in training scientists, in encouraging research and development, and encouraging experimentation, innovation and creativity.

I might say parenthetically to reverse this trend, this is the one area of the budget which the President has increased in a time when we have a huge deficit because he felt this is so important to the future security and well-being of our Nation.

(Applause.)

As a matter of fact, I shouldn't say the one area; it is one of two areas. The other is national defense, ladies and gentlemen. Those are the two fundamental areas he has increased.

(Applause.)

Trends are changing, times are changing, and the American people are beginning to understand the realities of where we are and the world we live in. That is why I am talking as frankly today as I am, because I think only in a democracy if the people understand the realities are they going to support the action that is necessary to protect our future well-being and security.

(Applause.)

The facts are also that it takes energy to clean up the air, to clean up the waters, and to improve the environment; that is, if all Americans are to have equality of opportunity to improve their standard of living and quality of life.

In our democracy, people demand growth. They know that it is essential for equal opportunity and material well-being. The challenge, therefore, is to promote growth -- growth that is compatible with environment, with health, and with human dignity.

We cannot look to dividing up a shrinking pie of goods and services as some doomsday prophets would have us do, but to expanding the pie for all to share in increasing amounts. And it can be done.

(Applause.)

The fifth area is our national security. This brings us to this gathering here today. Science and technology have collapsed space and time to a point where we confront directly the main currents of world forces. Our real frontiers are beyond our own borders. Our heartland is accessible to foreign threats as never before in our history.

Aircraft; missiles; nuclear weapons; submarines; satellites; radar, sonar; electronic listening, recording and measuring devices; lasers and other instruments have

rendered traditional frontiers obsolete for national security purposes. We might as well face these realities.

Today the independent industrialized nations of Western Europe, Japan and the United States face unprecedented challenges.

One of these, the Soviet challenge, is both overt and covert, expansionist and forceful. It moves on the diplomatic, the political, the economic, as well as the military courses, individually, collectively and coordinated. It changes its form from time to time, or alters its course, but it never deviates from its objective.

The Soviet Union supports detente but reasserts the continuation of its ideological struggle through a global effort.

We must be equally dedicated to moving towards a relaxation of tension through detente. But this can only be safely done if at the same time we preserve our own strength and determination to defend the right of freedom and respect of human dignity in the world.

(Applause.)

It is essential that this be understood. It is equally essential to understand that detente was designed as an opening to better communications and understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union, to avoid the dangers of nuclear holocaust and to seek to develop over time a better working relationship between us.

However, the very concept of such a relationship must presuppose strength and sustained determination on our part, economic, political and military strength supported by a firm national will, to at least counterbalance Soviet strength so that the dialogue and the progress of accommodation could continue.

A weak America, morally or materially, cannot pursue such a course. Only through dealing from strength can equitable accommodations be achieved.

The future of America, indeed the survival of free nations in the world, depends upon an economically, militarily and morally strong America.

(Applause.)

This in turn, ladies and gentlemen, depends upon the understanding by the American people of the realities of the world in which we live and their willingness to pursue a steady course in the defense of freedom and independence.

Let's make no mistake about these basic facts. Weakness invites probing. Weakness invites testing. Weakness invites adventure. Weakness encourages the spread of the Soviet sphere of influence, already enormous, to even more areas of the globe.

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It is not fear-mongering to say this. It is not a return to the cold war. It is common sense. It is essential to peace.

(Applause.)

If there ever was a lesson to be learned that weakness endangers freedom, it should have been learned from the years prior to World War II.

Then in the late 1930's, the democracies' weakness, the democracies' procrastinations, the democracies' debates over the value of armaments, their doubts and disbeliefs over the self-proclaimed objectives of the totalitarian powers, nearly brought total disaster to the free world.

This must not be permitted to happen again, for democracy and freedom must be preserved.

(Applause.)

The future of freedom and liberty depends on the will to assert them, promote them, and defend them on a sustained basis.

This means not only as a Nation but we as individuals must be prepared to stand up and be counted and affirm the value of our way of life -- not just yesterday or today but for all time.

It is not enough merely to say so. We must also have the instruments that make this "will" effective. This means a full spectrum of national security, from global diplomacy to a military presence that commands respect throughout the world.

(Applause.)

And it means the best intelligence and counter-intelligence system, essential to support diplomatic and military services, and essential to promote and protect our national interests in a world where open communications and accessibility are the exceptions today rather than the rule.

For this Nation to lead the forces of freedom in this world without an intelligence system, including covert operations, is like sending in a deaf, dumb and blind man as quarterback of a football team.

(Applause and Laughter.)

The tides of change challenge us as we enter this third century of America, but I am confident that in all these areas we can counter the thrusts and surmount the problems, that we can add new dimensions of freedom, liberty and quality of living for all under the shield of America's strength.

The United States Air Force is one of the vital keys to that strength.

(Applause.)

Your dedication, your imaginative pursuit of science and technology, your commitment to constant readiness for action, are all major elements in guarding not only our own safety but for the security of all free nations.

I urge upon you and I urge upon your colleagues in the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard, the continued quest for new concepts and strategic breakthroughs; the development of new initiatives and scientific and technological progress to assure our preeminence in defense.

Now in conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, as we enter our third century, the kind of Nation we become in the last analysis will depend largely on the quality of leadership which emerges. It will depend on the courage and imagination, the fortitude and patriotism of young men like you. It will depend on the depth of your commitment to the values you have inherited, the belief in individual dignity, human freedom and equality of opportunity.

You begin your careers just as the country begins its third century. And by the year 2000 your generation of Americans is going to be the command generation in America.

You have been steeped in a tradition borne of freedom fighters such as Spaatz, Mitchell, Vandenberg and Sijan. You have inherited a proud tradition that is now yours to enrich. I salute you for the hard work and qualities of mind and spirit that have brought you to this commencement.

You carry with you something that distinguishes your class from all others -- the unique spirit and esprit of the academy's Bicentennial class.

(Applause.)

Four years ago in that first challenging summer here at the academy I am told the words often passed among you were, "Remember the Spirit of '76."

I am confident that you will remain faithful to the fundamental principles which inspired American patriots in that day. In so doing, you of the Class of '76 will serve your country well, you will make your way in history, and you will assure the future of freedom, as you man the ramparts from earth to the frontiers of outer space.

You take off today to ensure American supremacy in air and space and to guarantee our freedom in the challenging decades ahead.

Good luck and Godspeed to all of you. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

END

(AT 10:30 A.M. MDT)