

The original documents are located in Box D14, folder “Military Costs, March 13, 1951” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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GERALD R. FORD, JR. - MICHIGAN

MR. SPEAKER, the high cost of our military defense program should make us realize that inflation as well as Communist aggression is damaging our national security. In January of this year President Truman in his budget message told the country the United States could get along with 41 billion for military outlays in the next fiscal year. From recent statements by the Pentagon and other official sources it appears that the President will now ask for even a larger military budget in fiscal 1952.

Defense planners contend that the cost of weapons and defense equipment is rising far faster than was anticipated. The Pentagon budget experts point out that every time raw material prices and wages increase, the cost of weapons rises. For example, the Army is now paying \$250,000 for a heavy anti-aircraft gun that cost \$160,000 before the Korean war began.

A recent Navy directive to "all hands" illustrates the problem more vividly. The clothing costs for one enlisted man have jumped from \$118.00 to \$254.75. Blankets have soared from \$6.00 to \$20.00.

At the end of World War II a fighter plane cost \$53,000. Now our fighter planes cost \$218,000. A medium bomber cost has risen from \$185,000 to \$2,500,000.

The effect of this inflationary price increase is devastating both on our military plans and our domestic economy. The military appropriations approved just before the Korean war, those approved by Congress since July of 1950 and those now proposed will by far less than was originally contemplated. In effect, inflation by increasing the cost of guns, planes



and ships, has decreased our military strength just as the Chinese Communists have done in the Korean stalemate.

It is obvious the United States must overcome the dangers of inflation if we are to win the long pull against the Kremlin. Militarily the nation is stronger now than it was when the Korean War started, even though we have 30,000 casualties and losses in equipment, but domestically, because of inflation, we are in bad shape. Our fighting men in Korea have valiantly met the Communists on the field of battle and have been successful despite the restrictions imposed on General MacArthur by the Department of State and the White House. At the same time the top administration bureaucrats and policy makers do little to stem the tide of inflation.

The President's outrageous 96 billion dollar budget is one of several basic causes of inflation. His budget does not call for any "tightening" of the government's belt. The Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, must assume the job of reducing government expenses in an all-out effort to stave off further inflation.

In addition, the President must make full and effective use of the Defense Production Act which Congress enacted in September of 1950. The White House has had the necessary authority to "hold the line" for the last six months without results. This delay has already cost the taxpayers many millions and if the bungling continues conditions are bound to be worse. For the defense of America strong and effective action on the "home front" is long overdue. The tools are and have been available, when can the public expect action?

