

# SPEECH

No. 4-1-70

# SERVICE

Address

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Before the Los Angeles World Affairs Council  
Los Angeles, California

10 April 1970

The Continuing Need for  
United States Forces in Europe

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honor to address this distinguished group today.

The topic I have chosen is the need for our conventional forces in Europe. This has recently been the subject of much public discussion. Increasingly one hears proposals, put forth by sincere and thoughtful men, that the United States should unilaterally reduce its forces in Western Europe.

These suggestions appear to rest on any of several assumptions. It is said:

-- that our forces are no longer needed; or

-- that they could protect Western Europe without being present there; or

-- that we bear an unjust share of the cost of NATO defense; or

-- that the domestic demands on our resources are so pressing that NATO conventional defense must be reduced as an economy measure.

These are fair questions. But, the conclusion that substantial reduction of our deployment in Europe is in order is far from self-evident.

We are at a time of decision. The factors on which that decision must rest are complex. The stakes are high. The Nation should not react without fully considering all the possible consequences.



Prepared for the OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF INFORMATION, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

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I therefore invite you to take a few minutes to examine our European position with me. I do not do so as a special pleader for the status quo or for global military deployments. Rather, I would hope simply to raise for your consideration the reasons I believe there is a continued necessity for a substantial United States military presence in Europe.

My position involves a seeming paradox. I firmly believe that our forces in Europe are more necessary than ever to preserve the stability of that region. But at the same time, I also believe that we have a more promising opportunity than has existed since the end of World War II. After 25 years of rigid confrontation in Europe, East and West are making preliminary overtures across the lines which separate the forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The long range goal of all European peoples is the reduction of political contention and military dangers, and the withdrawal of the forces of both superpowers.

We now have a good chance of advancing toward substantial political resolution of the issues dividing Europe and toward a mutual balanced reduction of military forces. That process, however, can proceed only from positions of relatively stable strength. The political and the military realities cannot be separated. However noble our objectives, if by ill-considered actions we disrupt the current balance, we may lose for many years the opportunity that is before us.

Let me turn therefore to the doubts that have been voiced about retaining our forces in Europe. For this audience I need not dwell on the essential role that Western Europe plays in our own economic, political, and military security. Western Europe has, after the United States, the greatest aggregation of economic, political and ideological strength in the world. Its population and combined gross national products are substantially greater than those of the Soviet Union. Twice in the Twentieth Century we have been forced to intervene to prevent domination of Western Europe by expansionist and essentially hostile German governments. Domination of the region by any essentially hostile power remains an unacceptable threat to our security.

The arguments of those who challenge our NATO force deployments are grouped around three separate propositions.

First, some say, the likelihood of hostile military action by the Warsaw Pact is now so small that our forces in Europe no longer are needed.

Secondly, it is argued that those forces do not constitute a significant deterrent to military adventurism by the Warsaw Pact.

Finally, critics maintain that the cost of these deployments is too great for the United States to continue at the present level.

I should like to take up each of these points in turn.

First is the claim that the forces in Europe are not necessary. The world has changed, critics say. These forces have served their purpose, and now are little more than costly relics of another era.

Even those who criticize our deployments in Europe usually recognize that our NATO commitment itself is sound and vital. They agree, as I believe most of you would, that the Alliance has worked well.

Two world wars have taught us that political stability in Europe must be founded on a policy of collective security--a common defense. For twenty-one years now NATO has helped provide Western Europe considerable political stability, while the region has attained the highest level of prosperity in its history.

But, it is said, the likelihood of war today seems remote, the threat from the East perhaps is largely imagined. Therefore, the argument is made, it is time to reassess our military contributions to European defense, and reduce them substantially.

I have no quarrel with the idea of reassessment. The world does change, and our responses must of course alter as necessary to meet new challenges.

I would agree also that at the present time an attempt by the Soviets to use military force to upset the political-military balance in Europe is not probable. But a key reason for this is the very presence of our NATO forces. We would be wrong to regard the European situation as one of self-sustaining stability. In fact, the Soviets are at present most active directly in the Mediterranean and in building up their conventional forces, and indirectly in the Near East.

We do not assume that the intentions of the Warsaw Pact are certainly aggressive. But based on past experience, we cannot with certainty conclude that they will always be peaceful, either. Unilaterally reducing the NATO forces because an equilibrium now exists disregards the fact that those forces are an essential component of that equilibrium.

We may be convinced that the Soviets have no present plans for military action against the West. But could we be sure that the Soviets

would not respond to an opportunity to spread their influence by military means if the occasion presented itself? Could we say with any assurance that Soviet policy on the central front would remain unchanged if they saw an opportunity to chip away at Western Europe, and do so with no challenge from our side, short of all-out nuclear war?

The record of Soviet military involvements since World War II shows that they are opportunists. They will use military forces as needed when they think they can do so without interference from the West. Incidents from the invasion of Hungary in 1956, to the Berlin crisis of 1961, to the Cuban missile emplacements in 1962, to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, forcibly demonstrate this.

Were we to remove or significantly reduce our forces defending Western Europe, we would present the Soviets with new temptations. If we did, we could not predict precisely what would happen. But there surely would be a greater likelihood of threats, blackmail, and attempts at domination, such as increased pressures on Berlin, or on individual members of the NATO Alliance. Each such probe would carry with it the dangers of miscalculation, over-reaction and war. Without the presence of our forces new power adjustments would have to be made. The course of readjustment would be dangerous. The ultimate result surely would be less favorable to the West.

Nor is it realistic, or adequate, to think of the Soviet threat in terms only of columns of tanks moving across Europe. It need not even take the form of piecemeal military threats aimed at limited areas. For if a vacuum of power is created, the void can be filled and the advantage gained without actual employment of military forces. Soviet military forces could dominate Europe without ever being used, if there were no substantial forces to oppose them. No doubt the Soviets would prefer this. The case of Finland is an example. That sort of domination, rather than armed invasion, would be the most likely outcome of our unilateral withdrawal.

In short, our forces are not a mere vestige of Cold War thinking, countering the Soviet threat to a prostrate Europe of twenty years ago. Their justification is not in inertia or sentimentality, but in the requirements for a stable environment for negotiation in the 1970's. The capability of Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries has not diminished. It would be ironic indeed if NATO's near-perfect success should cause us to forget the crucial mission of American conventional forces within the NATO defense structure.

A second group of arguments denies that our general purpose forces in Europe actually maintain stability. Some argue that these forces are unnecessarily large, in light of our strategic nuclear deterrent. Others say that our NATO divisions are too few to deter military adventures by larger Warsaw Pact forces.

Careful analysis shows, however, that our forces in Europe do serve an important stabilizing role, and that the size of our deployments is just about right for that purpose.

For the first fifteen years after World War II, the security of Europe really rested on the United States' strategic nuclear deterrent. But the relationship between Soviet and United States nuclear capabilities has significantly changed. Today we live in an age of approximate nuclear parity. In that condition the range of situations in which nuclear weapons are a credible deterrent narrows. Neither we nor the Soviets can use strategic nuclear weapons against the other without grave risk of being ourselves destroyed in the exchange.

Therefore the Soviet Union can no longer find believable a United States strategy founded on the notion that the United States and its Allies would meet Warsaw Pact non-nuclear aggression in Europe solely with the threat or the use of strategic or even tactical nuclear weapons. In this new era of nuclear parity, nuclear weapons cannot be the answer to all hostile acts. They leave us no option between doing nothing, or setting off a holocaust.

In this changed environment conventional forces emerge as an increasingly exploitable means for exerting either military or diplomatic pressure. The continued Soviet emphasis on such forces indicates an awareness of this trend. NATO too has anticipated nuclear parity, first by substantially improving its conventional warfare capability during the 1960's, and then by adopting in 1967 as strategic policy the doctrine of flexible response.

Given the importance of conventional forces, do those we have in Europe weigh heavily in the calculations of the Warsaw Pact? We have at present 4 and 1/3 combat divisions, as part of a total force of about 285,000 men, in Europe as our contribution to the NATO defense. They are the best trained, best equipped, and best supported forces in NATO today. We have substantial forces in the United States with which to reinforce them, and an airlift program to provide more rapid and flexible deployment capability.

To those who argue that NATO's conventional forces are not strong enough to defeat the Warsaw Pact, and therefore do not constitute a real deterrent, there are two answers:

First, this view results partly from a misreading of the relative military strengths in Europe.

Second, it fails to understand what level of force suffices for deterrence.

First, as to strengths. The appraisal cannot be made simply by counting divisions, or tactical aircraft, or riflemen. NATO divisions, for instance, average about 50% larger -- United States divisions 60% to 80% larger--than those of the Warsaw Pact. NATO combat forces have more supporting elements, for more staying power. The Institute for Strategic Studies, an independent analytical group in London, estimates that the NATO forces are fully two-thirds to size of the Warsaw Pact's in manpower, without attempting to measure qualitative differences. In addition, both we and our NATO allies have other forces not counted in NATO, but many of which could be committed to it in an emergency.

Secondly, a somewhat smaller force can inhibit potential military actions of a larger one. It has the considerable military advantage of being in a defensive position. More importantly, the purpose of our ground forces in Europe is simply to maintain stability. To attain that objective, they need only be large and capable enough to make unattractive to the Warsaw Pact nations the use or threat of force to change the balance of power in Europe.

This does not mean that NATO must be prepared to defeat the Warsaw Pact with conventional forces if the latter chose to launch an all-out attack following concealed and extensive preparations. We have tailored our conventional forces to be strong enough to deal with lesser threats including miscalculations by the Warsaw Pact of NATO resolve and capability. They need only be sufficient to introduce in the minds of Soviet military planners an uncertainty, a realization that aggressive actions against Western Europe would not be free from cost, and that the outcome of such actions could not be predicted with assurance.

The size, composition and capabilities of the land forces the United States currently has committed or oriented toward NATO are under continuous review and adjustment. There are some recognized deficiencies,

and in most cases programs are under way to remedy them. Some changes in organization and reduction of personnel may be possible. We are currently streamlining and reducing our headquarters and administrative and logistic forces. But a substantial reduction in combat personnel could not be made without measurably altering the total NATO capability. As things stand today, we expect that NATO can, with approximately its current military manpower levels and with qualitative improvements in equipment and readiness mount a sufficient defense to make Warsaw Pact leaders doubt that they would gain significantly from threatened or actual use of force.

For these reasons, I cannot agree with those who argue that a substantial conventional capability in Western Europe is not necessary.

Turning now to the question of costs. There are critics who admit the importance of conventional forces to NATO. They contend, however, that at the present levels the United States bears an unfair proportion of the costs, or that our contribution to NATO is more than we can afford, given our substantial domestic needs. We should do less, these arguments sometimes run, in order to force our Allies to do more.

It is, of course, true that the United States faces urgent domestic problems, the solution of which will cost money. At the same time, the Federal Government must take steps to end inflation and restore balance within the economy. These factors combine to force some substantial reduction in defense expenditures.

I am sure you all recognize that we have already taken steps in precisely this direction. Progress in Vietnamization has permitted substantial troop withdrawals in Vietnam. Greater reliance on our Asian Allies to provide the manpower necessary to their own defense has caused changes in our strategic objectives, permitting still further reduction in our own defense expenditures. In spite of pay raises, the Defense budget has been reduced by \$6.9 billion from fiscal years 1969 to 1971.

Consequently, our total defense expenditures for fiscal year 1971 will constitute only 7% of the Gross National Product. This is the lowest expenditure on defense since 1951, measured either as a fraction of the Gross National Product or as a fraction of the Federal budget. And this is so at a time when direct expenditures for the conflict in Vietnam are still large, representing more than 20% of total defense expenditures in the current fiscal year.

In allocating a reduced defense budget, it is particularly important that we put first things first. Even while asking our allies to do more, we must recognize the importance of both the conventional and strategic nuclear components of our NATO forces. We must allocate defense resources prudently, in order to provide for these essential elements of our security, even if this means less funding for other Defense programs.

The savings from withdrawing our troops from Western Europe would not be great. In fact, there might be no savings at all. To understand why this is so, one must distinguish three different kinds of costs that result from our contribution to the defense of Western Europe.

The first is the direct cost of maintaining in being all the forces which are committed to NATO, wherever they are located. These costs have been estimated at \$14 billion, or roughly 20% of our total Defense expenditures. Most of the amount--\$11.4 billion--is associated with the maintenance of additional forces in the United States ready to support and reinforce those deployed in Europe. The remaining \$2.6 billion which is the operating cost of the troops in Europe would not be saved by withdrawing those forces to the United States, unless they were in addition inactivated.

But the present balance in military capability between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, as well as considerations of the necessary size for the nation's ground forces as a whole, would not permit this. Many who argue that we should reduce our deployments in Europe nevertheless agree that we must maintain these forces ready to reinforce our NATO Allies in times of crisis.

A second, distinguishable kind of cost would be the incremental expense of locating our troops in Europe rather than maintaining the same force in the United States. Yet the additional cost of our forward deployments is very small. In fact, in the short run, shifting these troops to the United States would require extra expenditures because we would have to provide facilities in this country to replace those which the German government now provides.

The third kind of cost associated with our European deployments is the adverse effect on our international balance of payments. The gold flow associated with our presence in Europe can be an economic problem even though the budgetary cost is supportable. In the past, these costs

have been substantially offset by Allied purchases of United States military equipment and securities. It is obviously desirable that arrangements be maintained and improved to offset substantially these balance of payments problems. And we should press for this. But it should be possible without substantial reductions in our deployed forces.

In any case, we can depend only to a limited degree on strategic movement of land forces from the United States to Europe to meet an initial enemy attack. And in a time of political tension we might be reluctant to increase that tension by large reinforcements when there had been no actual hostilities. On the other hand, the time required to prepare United States-based forces for deployment, transport them to Europe, and move them to their designated combat positions, would keep them from being available to NATO in the critical first days of combat.

Finally, proponents of substantial unilateral withdrawal from Europe raise an issue of equity in sharing of the total NATO defense. Europeans, they say, should shoulder more of the burden. It is of course true that Western Europe enjoys a prosperous and healthy economy. But it is doubtful that this is a practical suggestion if it contemplates substitution of European troops for United States forces.

In the first place, such a change would take from three to five years to accomplish. More importantly, not all our allies are equally capable of shouldering an increased military burden at this time. Great Britain, for instance, is only now recovering from a major economic crisis. The only country which could make up the deficit of our divisions is West Germany. But an expanded German force would alter the multi-national balance of NATO and change international power relationships on the Continent. The result almost surely would be less stability between East and West, and possible within the Alliance itself.

Furthermore, even though European defense expenditures as a fraction of GNP have been and remain lower than our own, it is also true that our allies have made and continue to make a significant and substantial contribution to collective defense. They presently supply 80% of NATO forces. Obviously if their economies continue to grow they will be able to afford some increase in their defense expenditures.

Since the adoption in 1967 of the NATO strategy of flexible response, most of our West European Allies have adopted general plans that imply some increase in their defense expenditures.

There are, of course, areas in which the Europeans can do more to help. I have mentioned the balance of payments. Another is modernization and improvement of their present forces, which they already have undertaken. In addition, Europeans may be able to take over some support functions which Americans now perform.

To those who would argue that it is up to the Europeans to defend Europe, and their own problem if they do not, I would reply that the defense of Europe involves directly the security of the United States itself. We are not working to keep Western Europe free simply out of altruism. Where our own interests are involved, it is up to us to make an independent assessment and act accordingly.

We certainly cannot make the simple assumption that Europeans would automatically feel impelled to replace any forces which we withdrew. Instead of spurring them to greater efforts, a substantial American withdrawal would very likely have the opposite effect. The Europeans could not by themselves restore NATO to its current strength for several years; and seeing it weakened below the level of effective deterrence, they might well abandon further efforts to maintain a credible conventional deterrent.

The most encouraging reason for maintaining our military strength in Europe, however, is the one I mentioned at the beginning of this talk. There is now a general balance of military power strategically between the United States and the Soviet Union, and tactically NATO has adequate forces to maintain a credible deterrent. On both sides there is a desire to lessen defense expenditures to the extent national security will permit.

We appear to be at a turning point in European history. Whatever settlement is reached will take into account the military realities. It would be a great misfortune to abandon our Allies, leaving them weakened, to reach a political settlement on Soviet terms, when a continued military balance can help achieve a political arrangement consistent with our own security and fair to all concerned.

Former Ambassador Kennan recently observed that the Soviets would pay a high price to get United States forces out of Western Europe, and that they should be made to do so. A mutual reduction of forces would be a great step towards lasting peace. A unilateral reduction would be likely instead to decrease stability. With mutual force reductions one of the most promising areas for East-West negotiations, this is not the time for us to act unilaterally.

We must be mature enough to realize that peace has its cost; but they are as nothing compared with the costs of war. The ultimate answer must lie in mutual reductions of forces. In that direction lies the only safe road to peace and a lessening of world tensions. Keeping our forces in Europe will put us closer to that goal. And until that goal is achieved, a strong conventional force in Europe remains our soundest investment in national security. It is also the best hope of maintaining the conditions of peace upon which attainment of all our other goals, at home and abroad, depends.

Thank you.