

SPEECH

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Address

by

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Secretary of Defense

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THE STRATEGIC BALANCE

I was particularly pleased when your President, Paul Miller of Gannett Newspapers, called me on a Saturday morning several months ago to invite me to speak to the Annual Luncheon of the Associated Press on the subject of the strategic balance. I told him that I regarded this forum as particularly appropriate to express my views on the need to make available to the American people additional information regarding national security.

When I assumed office 15 months ago, I immediately established as a top priority goal the restoration of credibility in the Department of Defense. Since then we have attempted to follow President Nixon's stated desire to make more information available to the American people.

The editors of the Associated Press and all members of the communications media in this country have a deep interest in this



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subject. I pledge to you that we shall continue to devote maximum attention to reducing and hopefully eliminating overclassification in the Department of Defense. And, we will provide all the information we can within the limits of national security, consistent with the safety and legal rights of our citizens.

This open news policy has brought about significant progress in at least five major areas where information was previously withheld from the American people.

1. Previous policy was to restrict public discussion of Prisoner of War matters. Present policy is to foster public discussion and to focus worldwide attention on the plight of our prisoners of war in order to gain humane treatment for them and to obtain their release.

2. Previous policy was to withhold from the public information on chemical warfare and biological research matters. Present policy is to keep the public informed about our new policies in these two areas, the reasons for these new policies, and the steps being taken to implement them.

3. Previous practices on reporting the costs of major weapons systems led to a major credibility problem in the Department of Defense. Our new policy of full disclosure on major weapons costs will help to restore the Department's credibility and will assist us in gaining better control of costs and in developing better management practices.

4. For several years, the American people were denied knowledge about our activities in Laos. Today, the American people are being informed about what we are doing and what we are not doing in Laos.

5. In the past, overuse of classification denied to the American people pertinent information on the nature and scope of the strategic nuclear threat. In my view, there is still too much classification, but we have tried and will continue to make more and more information available on this subject which is so crucial for the future security of our country.

In my remarks today I will attempt to shed more light on the crucial subject of the strategic threat. In particular, I want to discuss with you editors the nature and scope of the growing Soviet threat, recognizing full well that, in Vienna, our negotiators have just begun round two of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, commonly called SALT.

I hope for success at SALT. I want to emphasize that point. I also want to emphasize that our top military leadership hopes for success at SALT. Where the security of the United States is involved, it is this objective -- insuring national security -- which is most important. A lower-cost means to achieve that objective, lower compared to what otherwise may be required, -- if it can be achieved within tolerable risks -- is obviously most desirable to all Americans, civilian and military.

The budget we have recommended to Congress for the next fiscal year demonstrates how deeply the Nixon Administration is committed to progress at SALT. We have called this year's defense budget a transitional budget. It is transitional because in terms of military capability, it is basically a status quo, stand-pat budget. We have postponed basic national security decisions in the strategic field in order to give maximum opportunity for SALT to be successful, and to foster a meaningful beginning for the era of negotiation President Nixon and the American people seek.

The objective of the Nixon Administration is to restore and maintain peace. With regard to SALT, the President's actions and words document this Administration's accent on negotiation rather than confrontation.

In my Defense Report to Congress in February, I expressed concern that the United States, by the mid-1970's, could find itself in a second-rate strategic position with regard to the future security of the Free World.

Today, in keeping with our policy of maximum information, I intend to present additional reasons for this concern.

It is important to discuss the growing strategic threat because it is essential for the American people to understand the complex issues involved, if we are to insure our national security interests through the decade of the 1970's. The American people need to understand the reasons President Nixon

is pursuing the course he has recommended in this year's transitional budget.

As Secretary of Defense, I must face the fact that we are taking a risk by postponing hard decisions which the increasing Soviet threat poses for us. I recognize that in the interests of lasting peace, some risks must be taken. But, it is my judgment that as the American people are provided additional information, such as we are discussing here today, they will agree that we are literally at the edge of prudent risk. And the inescapable conclusion will be that if the Soviet strategic offensive buildup continues, the risk to our nation will become too great to sustain without major offsetting actions.

Therefore, what I particularly want to focus on today is the basic asymmetry between what the United States has been doing and what the Soviet Union has been doing in the field of strategic nuclear weapons in recent years.

In a word, for the past five years, the United States has virtually been in neutral gear in the deployment of strategic offensive forces, while the Soviet Union has moved into high gear in both deployment and development of strategic nuclear weapons. In the 1965-67 time period, the United States decided on a level of strategic nuclear forces, including Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicles (MIRVs), which was deemed adequate to preserve our deterrent posture for the threat of the 1970's which was projected then. No basic

change has been made in the force level decisions established in the mid-1960's.

The Soviet Union, by contrast, has engaged in a major effort since 1965 to change the balance of power. The United States then, unlike the situation today, clearly occupied a superior position.

Except for the minimum "hedge" that SAFEGUARD will provide, we have not responded to the Soviet strategic offensive buildup with new deployment programs. We did not respond in past years because the United States deliberately chose to assume that the Soviet buildup at most was aimed at achieving a deterrent posture comparable to that of the United States. We have not responded this year because, as I have said, we fervently hope that SALT can render such a response unnecessary.

As much as we might wish it otherwise, however, we must concentrate our attention on what the Soviet Union is actually doing. In the current situation of a diminishing U.S. deterrent and Soviet momentum, we simply cannot base our plans and programs on what we hope the Soviet Union may do either unilaterally or in SALT. The Soviets have a momentum going both in strategic weapons deployments and in strategic weapons developments. If their strategic posture could be expected to stay at the operationally deployed posture which exists today, I believe we would have a tolerable situation. What must concern us, however, is the momentum the Soviets have established both in deployments and developments and where that momentum may carry them.

Let me explain in more detail the basic problem.

The most crucial aspect of national security is the strategic balance between nations that have competing interests in the world. The strategic balance has a direct effect on relations between the superpowers. It has an indirect effect on other nations both in terms of their own relations with each other and in terms of their relations with the superpowers. As one example, a situation of clear superiority on the part of the Soviet Union would have profound implications for any future political or military confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In fact, a clear strategic superiority on the part of the Soviet Union would affect our interests and our obligations throughout the world.

In our continuing debate on defense matters, it has been said many times that the driving force behind the so-called strategic arms race is the "action-reaction" phenomenon. The recent ABM-MIRV discussions in this country illustrate this. The argument is made, for instance, that the deployment of defensive missiles by one side tends to generate increased offensive deployments by the other side.

I certainly agree that one side's actions definitely can influence what the other side does. But just as weapons in themselves are not the cause of wars, neither are a country's actions in weapons deployment -- in themselves -- the driving force in a so-called arms race. The fundamental driving force in an arms race is what one country perceives as possible objectives of another country's actions.

Let me explain it this way. Our goal is a stable peace. Our strategic policy to achieve that goal is deterrence. As publicly stated,

the basic rationale for United States weapons deployment in the strategic field has been and remains deterrence. Our actions of the past several years underscore the fact that deterrence is our fundamental policy and that we seek no more than a posture of effective deterrence.

Because we in the United States seek a posture of deterrence to protect our interests and those of our allies, we obviously could recognize as legitimate a Soviet desire for a comparable deterrent to protect its interests.

I know that the actions of the Soviet Union in recent years have raised questions in the minds of some of you editors and others about the true objectives they are pursuing.

As I have said many times, I do not believe that it is appropriate for me, as Secretary of Defense, to attempt to assess the strategic intentions of another country. However, under my responsibilities, I must be concerned about present and potential strategic capabilities.

You representatives of a free press understand fully the national security price an open society must pay when competing with adversaries who cloak their plans in secrecy and attempt to hide both their objectives and their hardware behind the mantle of a closed society. The whole world knows what we in the United States have and what we plan in the national security field. Meaningful essentials are laid bare in an open forum -- in official statements, in Congressional hearings, in the give and take of Congressional and

public debate and in the reports of a free and competitive press.

I would not have it any other way.

Let me emphasize again my conviction that the American people have a right to know even more than has been available in the past about matters which affect their safety and security. There has been too much classification in this country. In particular, too much has been withheld in the past about what has been going on in the closed societies of the Soviet Union and Communist China.

As we all pray for success in Vienna, let me point out that, in my view, the American people will support an arms limitation agreement only if they are confident they have the relevant facts about the strategic balance.

The facts I am about to present are not taken from external Soviet discussions of their strategic forces. They do not come from press conferences in Moscow, from testimony in the Kremlin, from news stories in Pravda, or from published annual Defense Reports by Marshal Grechko.

Rather, the information I am presenting to you is based on our own observations of what the Soviets are doing -- and on our belief that this information and these facts should not be withheld from the American people and should be made available to others in the world.

Let us examine what has happened in the past five years to shift the relationship between U.S. and Soviet strategic forces and to provide an accelerated momentum to the Soviets in the strategic field:

In 1965, the Soviet Union had about 220 launchers for the relatively old-fashioned missiles -- SS-6's, SS-7's and SS-8's -- somewhat similar to our TITAN. We had 54 TITANs in the inventory at that time.

In 1965, the Soviet Union had no relatively small ICBM launchers comparable to our MINUTEMAN. By 1965, we had 880 MINUTEMAN missiles operational and had established that the total force level for MINUTEMAN would be 1,000 launchers. In the 1965-67 time period, the United States finalized plans to convert a portion of the established MINUTEMAN force to a MIRV MINUTEMAN III configuration.

In 1965, there were no operational launchers for the large Soviet SS-9 missile which, in its single warhead version, can carry up to 25 megatons.

In 1965, neither a depressed trajectory ICBM nor a Fractional Orbital Bombardment System existed in either the Soviet or U.S. inventory.

Today, these two forces remain essentially the same. So in this category of old-fashioned multi-megaton weapons the Soviets had and still maintain a better than 4-1 advantage.

Today, the Soviet Union has over 800 such launchers operational, and a projected force that could exceed 1,000 launchers within the next two years. These launchers include both the SS-11 and SS-13 missiles. Concurrently, flight testing of an improved SS-11 missile continues. Thus, at present construction rates, the Soviets will achieve parity in MINUTEMAN-type launchers within the next two years or so and could move into a substantial lead in this category by the mid-1970's if they continue to deploy these missiles. The previously scheduled U.S. program to MIRV a substantial part of MINUTEMAN continues in progress.

Today, I can report to you that there are some 220 SS-9's operational with at least 60 more under construction. Testing of an SS-9 multiple reentry vehicle -- the triplet version -- continues. The U.S. has no counterpart to this program involving large missiles. So, in this area, the Soviets have and will maintain a monopoly.

Today, the Soviets have tested both configurations and could have an operational version already deployed. The United States has developed nothing comparable to these systems.

In 1965, the Soviet Union had about 25 launchers for Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) on nuclear submarines, and about 80 more on diesel submarines. Most were designed for surface launch only. The U.S. had 464 SLBM launchers operational on 29 submarines in 1965 and Congress had authorized the last of the 41 nuclear-powered submarines in our POLARIS Force in the previous fiscal year.

Today, the Soviets have over 200 operational launchers on nuclear submarines for submerged launch SLBMs and about 70 operational launchers on diesel submarines. In the next two years, the Soviets are expected to have some 400-500 operational launchers on POLARIS-type submarines, and at present construction rates -- 6-8 submarines a year -- could match or exceed the number in the U.S. force by 1974-75. United States POLARIS submarines still number 41 and no increase is projected in current plans. Conversion of 31 of our POLARIS submarines to the MIRVed POSEIDON missile is planned, and eight conversions have already been authorized by Congress.

In 1965, there was no development underway of a so-called Undersea Long-Range Missile System (ULMS) in the United States and there appeared to be none in the Soviet Union.

Today, the United States is spending relatively small sums in the research and development area on preliminary investigations of such a system. I can also report to you today that the Soviet Union, on the other hand, already is testing a new, long-range missile for possible Naval use.

In 1965, the Soviet heavy bomber force consisted of slightly over 200 aircraft, about 50 of which were configured as tankers. The U.S. heavy bomber force strength was about 780 in 1965.

Today, the Soviet heavy bomber force is slightly under 200, with about 50 still configured as tankers. U.S. heavy bomber strength has declined to about 550 today.

In 1965, we estimated that the Soviet Union had a complex of ABM launchers being constructed around Moscow as well as a number of radars under construction which could provide early warning acquisition and tracking functions for ABM use.

Today, we believe that 64 Moscow ABM launchers are operational together with sophisticated early warning radars and tracking capabilities. ABM testing for new and/or improved systems continues. Today, the first two SAFEGUARD sites have been authorized, but will not be operational before 1974-75. This modified deployment schedule is considerably behind the schedule Congress had approved in 1967 for the planned SENTINEL area defense, which called for initial capability in 1972, and nation-wide coverage in 1975.

Thus, in the space of five years -- from 1965 to 1970 -- the Soviet Union has more than tripled its inventory of strategic offensive nuclear weapon launchers from about 500 to about 1700 -- which includes some 200 heavy bombers in both totals -- and continues the momentum of a vigorous construction program. In that same period, the Soviet Union has virtually quadrupled the total megatonnage in its strategic offensive force. The United States, on the other hand, in the same time period, made no increase in its established level of 1710 strategic nuclear missile launchers and reduced its heavy bomber strength of 780 by over 200. In that same period the United States also reduced its megatonnage by more than 40%.

To repeat: The United States has taken no action to increase the total of approved strategic offensive delivery vehicles in the past five years in response to the rapid growth in Soviet strategic delivery vehicles. We have, of course, maintained certain options and other steps have been taken to preserve our deterrent in the face of this increase.

Two programs that have been the subject of intense public discussion are, of course, our MIRV and SAFEGUARD systems.

Let me emphasize that MIRV is needed to preserve our deterrent. Many people do not fully understand why it is necessary for us to continue the previously planned, Congressionally-approved and funded deployment of MIRV systems. The point is made that the current number of strategic nuclear weapons on alert in our force is sufficient for immediate retaliatory use in a crisis. Because MIRVing would more than double the number of deliverable weapons, the conclusion is drawn that this is unnecessary.

This conclusion could be valid, if we assumed that the POLARIS, MINUTEMAN, and Bomber forces all would survive a surprise attack and that the Soviet Union would not deploy an extensive ABM system. However, as was pointed out in my Defense Report in February, the rapidly-growing Soviet strategic offensive forces could seriously threaten both the U.S. MINUTEMAN and strategic bomber forces by the mid-1970's.

Assuming we do not take additional actions to offset the expanding threat -- and this apparently is what some people urge -- I must, as Secretary of Defense, face the disquieting possibility that in the mid-to-late 1970's we would no longer be able to rely on either the Bomber or MINUTEMAN force to survive a surprise attack. In such a situation, we would be left with only the POLARIS/POSEIDON deterrent force in our strategic arsenal for high confidence retaliatory purposes. This would pose intolerable risks for American security.

Thus, the critical choice in the face of that situation is
this:

1. Do we rely on the fraction of the 656 current weapons that will be at sea on our POLARIS force if we do not convert to POSEIDON and do not defend our land-based strategic forces?
2. Or, do we continue the previously established program to convert 31 POLARIS submarines to the long-approved POSEIDON MIRV program -- which would provide approximately the same number of sea-based retaliatory weapons on alert that we currently have today in the sea-based and land-based retaliatory forces combined, but with much reduced megatonnage?

Pending a successful outcome in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, therefore, prudence dictates that we must continue our approved program to MIRV current forces.

Moreover, as the experience of the past five years demonstrates, it would be dangerous and imprudent to place unquestioned reliance on the invulnerability of any single strategic system for more than five to seven years into the future.

This is why we must also, at the very least, preserve an option to defend a portion of our land-based retaliatory forces. That is a major part of what the proposed minimal addition to the SAEGUARD Defensive program is designed to do. I will come back to that.

Because we want to give the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks every chance of succeeding, we are deliberately accepting certain risks by postponing hard choices related to strategic offensive weapons. These risks are acceptable only in the context of proceeding with the MIRV deployments that have been programmed and approved for several years and the SAFEGUARD increment we are recommending this year.

A second and equally important reason for MIRV is that it helps preserve our deterrent by increasing confidence in our ability to penetrate Soviet strategic defensive forces which, by the mid-to-late 1970's, also could be quite formidable. In addition to the extensive air defense capabilities they already possess, the Soviets are pursuing a vigorous anti-ballistic missile research and development program designed to improve the present operational system or to develop substantially better second-generation ABM components.

We now have evidence that the Soviet Union is testing an improved long-range ABM missile. They are also expanding their radar surveillance coverage. We cannot rule out the possibility that they have or will give the extensively deployed SA-5 surface-to-air missile system an ABM role. We believe such a role is technically feasible for this system.

With regard to SAFEGUARD, which I mentioned previously, let me say this. In addition to other objectives, the reoriented SAFEGUARD program, initiated last year, is designed to provide protection for our land-based deterrent forces, the MINUTEMAN and Bombers. As you know,

the President directed that each phase of the SAFEGUARD deployment is to be reviewed each year to ensure that we are doing as much as necessary but not more than that required by the threat. The increments of SAFEGUARD proposed so far will provide protection for a portion of our land-based deterrent, and permit flexibility with regard to our future course of action.

Without approval by Congress of the Modified Phase II SAFEGUARD protection proposed by the President, we would be forced to recommend going forward this year with other strategic nuclear offensive force programs.

All of my comments so far have, of course, been focused on the more immediate and troublesome threat posed by the Soviet strategic force buildup. The nuclear weapons program of Communist China also concerns us and directly relates to the need for preserving timely SAFEGUARD options as we move toward the mid-1970's. Time does not permit a discussion of this issue and the interrelationship of maintaining adequate strategic offensive and defensive forces to meet both the Soviet and Communist Chinese threats.

Where does all this leave us, and what is President Nixon attempting to do with the decisions he has incorporated in his Fiscal Year 1971 transitional defense budget?

Clearly, this Administration has not accelerated the previously planned deployment of offensive systems during our 15 months in office. On the contrary, we have slowed it down. The only major change we have made has been modification of the previously approved SENTINEL ABM

deployment; and that change was a slowdown, not a speedup. We slowed the original deployment plan Congress approved, keyed it to the emerging threat on an annual review basis, and reoriented it to provide more timely protection needed for our land-based deterrent forces.

If the programmed forces established by the last Administration some years ago and approved by Congress were deemed appropriate and necessary for the security of the United States in the 1970's against the then projected threat, I am at a loss to understand how critics can claim that the Nixon Administration has escalated the arms race. The record clearly shows that we have not done so. We have chosen instead to defer major new weapons decisions as long as possible pending developments in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. In continuing the MIRV and ABM programs, we are simply going ahead with programs on which our deterrent policy was formulated by previous Administrations, even before the current momentum of Soviet strategic programs became clear.

With regard to the important talks which have just resumed in Vienna, the President has stated that every U.S. system is negotiable. To those who argue that the U.S. should take specific, and perhaps unilateral, action at the start of these negotiations, I would reply that the place to resolve these issues is at the conference table with the Soviets. Let us try to find out at the conference table the meaning of the Soviet Union's increased weapons deployments and let

us conduct these important negotiations with full recognition of these continuing Soviet deployments.

My appraisal today has covered some of the available evidence of the Soviet military buildup. I am not unmindful, however, of possible other directions of Soviet policy that could be relevant to our security. There have been reports that Soviet economic problems may place pressure upon their leadership to devote major attention to internal matters, thus reducing the recent emphasis on a continued military buildup.

As Secretary of Defense, I will continue to hope that the shift in national priorities we have instituted in America will be duplicated in the Soviet Union. But until evidence of that shift is discernible in weapons deployment activities, I have no alternative but to base my actions and recommendations on the evidence available, much of which I have shared with you editors today and, through you, with the American people.

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