

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD OF  
ADMIRAL ZUMWALT'S SPEECH AT THE INDUSTRIAL  
WAR COLLEGE -- 26 MARCH 1975

SUBJ: Critical Evaluation of U.S. Strategy and Posture

QUESTION: What do you think about the budget for Defense just put forward. Do you think it's adequate to meet our needs?

ADMIRAL: I think the budget that was put forward is inadequate for our needs. It has been described by the Secretary of Defense and the President as roughly last year's budget plus inflation, and in actual fact, although I think they felt they were accurate at the time, as one watches the continuing soaring rate of inflation, I think it will be even less than last year's budget. In terms of the Navy, which I watch most closely, for example there are less than the number of ships needed to replace our dwindling fleet on a 25-year basis. We're going this year under 500 ships--the lowest number since 1939--and in my judgment we will fetch up with the budget when the Congress gets through with it at a replacement rate of about 400 ships. The Air Force has taken the position, I understand, that their budget is adequate, that they can win an air war in Europe. I'll go along with that for lack of a better judgment. I certainly don't think the Army is capable of performing its mission with the level of its budget and I am absolutely confident that the Navy can't get them there and keep them there in a conventional war with the Soviet Union. In my last posture statement before

the Congress in addition to analyzing all of the traditional indicators of comparison, which both the pro and anti defense people have used, we broke down the areas of naval warfare into 15 different warfare areas; naval aviation, replenishment at sea, mining, logistics and the rest. And out of those 15 warfare areas we then put teams to work to analyze whether we or the Russians were the superior in that particular field, and we had to come to the conclusion that in 10 of the 15, the Soviets were ahead of us. Now we were, it's quite clear, superior to the Soviets with regard to our capability to project power. Our amphibious forces and our carrier aviation was superior which suggested to us that we could always do better about reinforcing an ally in Africa, South Sahara or in Latin America than the Soviets could. The only thing we couldn't do is do it if the Soviets were fighting us.

QUESTION: Your closing remarks, the need for a different kind of leadership on the hill, do you see this latest Congress as a step in the right direction or in the wrong direction?

ADMIRAL: I guess it's too early to draw the balance sheet on the new Congress. I think I'd revealed my prejudice in stating the near certainty that there would be additional catastrophic defense cuts. As I looked at the '75 new members in the Democratic side, my balance sheet showed, I think, that well over 60 of them ran on an anti-defense budget of one kind or

26 March 1975

another. Now what that really means is that we have developed a political process which in our last 25 to 30 years, I think has been appreciably different than it was in the early part of our history where people saw their duty of serving in Congress as something to do in-between tending their plantations. They could hardly wait to get back to tending their crops and they saw themselves as representing what was right and proper for the people, not in trying to seek out the consensus of their districts. Now we have in Congress a theory, which may be more democratic, that what one does is represent the mood of his people; and there is great poll-taking and talking and pulse reading and then the individual members of Congress dart around and get in front of the mob to lead it. You find yourself seeking the lowest common denominator in the public aspiration, rather than seeing members of Congress going out and lecturing to their constituents about what they ought to be doing. Important members of Congress have suggested to me that they are in their district able to do this-- they are able to tell the people, "this is why I voted the way I did, I know you don't like it but you'll see in 6 months or a year that it was the right thing to do"--that kind of thing. Let me drive it home in another way by reporting that each year I tried to call on every member of the Congress, when I was in office. I generally averaged about 85 of the Senators and about 350 of the 435 Representatives--the others wouldn't see me. They broke down roughly into thirds if I included those who wouldn't see me. There was a full third who would turn off the switch, who were not interested--committed theological, anti-defense

people. There was another third who were always for us, were as worried about the defense balance as I was and we could count on them. And there was a middle third that would say things like, "Admiral, I really believe you; I would like to vote for you, but if I did, I wouldn't be here next time and what good would I be to you." And within that group there was a subset that would go so far as to say, "Admiral, I've got to have a 70% anti-defense record in my district. You tell me which 30% to vote for." and that was a good subset to have because you could cast them against you on the easy ones and save them for the tough ones. But it demonstrates that what they were doing was watching the color of their district. If it began to get green, they'd vote for us; if it began to get pale they would vote against us.

QUESTION: ? (not audible)

ADMIRAL: Like anything one tries to do in telescoping the world scene in 30 minutes, it's an over simplification to describe it as I did in my principal remarks. I do think that the Chinese Communist must be used by us now that we are militarily inferior. I do think that their interests are generally parallel to ours. We know that they have urged the Turks and Greeks to behave in order to keep NATO strong. When I was in Iceland a year ago talking to the members of the Althing about the importance of keeping our base there, I made the statement to them, "I don't know this, but I will wager that the Chinese

Ambassador to Iceland has been urging you to keep our facilities here," and they all nodded affirmatively. The Chinese recognized that NATO, being strong, as a deterrent to the Soviet Union, is important to them. They have made it clear that they are content to have our forces remain in Korea, Japan, Thailand and even Taiwan, with some reductions, for the present. Incidentally, I think that we'll know when our interests really start to diverge, it will be that point when the Chinese come to us and say, we'd like to collect on that philosophical arrangement we made with Henry back in 1972 and it's time to remove your forces from Taiwan. The specific thing that is going on today, in my judgment, is that the Chinese want to compete with the Soviets for influence with Hanoi. They see a dying U.S. policy. They see South Vietnam going down. Clearly this would be a very bad time for them to make it tougher for the North. Rather their foreign policy would suggest to them, it seems to me, that they ought to be doing everything they can to keep their ties strong with Hanoi and try to reduce the Soviet influence down there.

QUESTION: ?

ADMIRAL: Yes I think it's a terribly worrisome part of the world, probably with much more fearsome long-term prospects for the United States than even what is going on in Southeast Asia. The thing that can't be overstated in my judgment is the extent to which we have hurt ourselves by the conscious policy

26 March 1975

decision to surrender South Vietnam to the North--conscious policy decision by the Congress. Thailand in ordering us to leave made it clear that they don't trust us. The Israelis in talking to Kissinger made it clear that they can't count on the U.S. guarantees that he was offering them. They've got to worry about their own security, "what the hell kind of an ally is the United States--it's tossing one baby out of the sled to the wolves right now. The polls show that the American people would not support fighting a war for Israel. What value are your guarantees." Similarly in the case of Ethiopia, we haven't done our homework. It was clear well a year before Haile Selassie fell that we had to begin a major reappraisal there, and it didn't get underway under a system in this government which makes a problem a problem only if it gets into the inner consciousness of Secretary Kissinger. The Cypress situation is, in my judgment, a disaster for U.S. foreign policy. In previous crises between the Greeks and the Turks over Cypress, the United States with a combination of power and policy prevented it. In this case we took our eyes off the ball and let it happen. Now we're trying to unscramble the egg. We have created in Cypress, in my judgment, a new international venality that will compete with the Israel/Arab hatred over the years and it's going to be a very, very long road back. In part it was a reflection of our reduced weakness because the Soviets were able to restrain, I think, the willingness of the United States to commit its power and policy at that time.

QUESTION: ?

ADMIRAL: With regard to the role and utility, I think that in times of weakness the role of the military man is even more important than in time of great military strength; because his job is to try to get the very most he can for that dollar's worth of defense in order to bring those probabilities as high up the spectrum as he can and to ensure that through brilliance, imagination, leadership and morale he does his very best to compensate for a government that has been unwilling to provide adequate defense. If on a strict money basis, the odds are today 35% that we could prevail in a war at sea with the Soviet Union, perhaps the extra dash of brilliance and imagination and tactical adaptation can get us another 5%. There is, I think, an additional role and that is in a democracy like ours, one has to look at that spectrum of perception. My perception is just one relatively informed belief, based on years of examination of war games and fleet exercises and talking to fleet commanders and so forth, but each member of Congress has a different perception; and when Senator Mansfield is being talked to by Dobrynin, he quite clearly, I'm sure, demonstrates a confidence in the ability of U.S. to prevail. And therefore the spike on the fever chart can't show what Bud Zumwalt thinks as the U.S. perception and it can't show what Senator Mansfield thinks, but it has to show a band of perceptions; and the Soviets are probably mashing their teeth and saying in their reports to Moscow, "Jesus Christ, these people

don't know they're whipped yet!" So that the existance of the armed forces that we do have helps to add to that band of perceptions in a way that is useful to us and to create some additional deterrence impact. Because after all, the Soviets want to pick up the chips without fighting.

The second part of your question was? Yes, only miscalculation. I can visualize the United States deploying its forces as it did in the Jordan crisis or as it did in the Yom Kippur War. At the time of the Jordan crisis when I briefed Mr. Nixon in the Sixth Fleet immediately thereafter, I showed him the calculations that we had done that led us to believe that we had something like a 50% probability of prevailing. By the time of the Yom Kippur War we thought it was like 35%. In my judgment the next time it will be no better than that, probably a little lower. Then, if one assumes a scenario in which the Arabs having announced that they weren't going to overrun Israel, get carried with themselves having seized all the territory that is in contention and then begin to revise their objectives and if the United States seeks to intervene in the face of Soviet preventive forces, I think through miscalculation we can find ourselves driven to war. My hope would be that, at that time, the rational recommendation would be don't fight the war and make the best accommodation you can make and go to the people and tell them why. Nobody in their right mind wants to fight a losing war.

QUESTION: ?

ADMIRAL: I'd put zero value on them in anything except a NATO crisis. In the Jordan crisis and the Yom Kippur War, I personally initiated both times recommendations that we get allies to provide forces under some kind of an international umbrella or NATO umbrella and it never even saw the light of day within this government because it was so clearly a non-starter. I just thought it was important to demonstrate how the Nixon Doctrine worked. And the calculations that we made had in mind, as I pointed out, that we didn't have a single allied force with us. Now it's true that there was some covert help being given of various degrees. You remember in the Yom Kippur crisis, the Dutch spoke up in our behalf and paid the penalty in terms of the oil embargo. The Greeks permitted us to use their naval facilities but we were not permitted to use their airfields for reconnaissance or strike. The Italians the same. In the case of Spain, we refueled out of radar range of their bases so that they could maintain the fiction that we weren't using their bases. But insofar as visible use of power was concerned or deployment of Air Force aircraft to come to our assistance, it was zero.

In a NATO crisis, I think that the odds are that NATO nations would be with us. It depends on the specific nature of the Soviet lunge and whether or not they're quite careful to define their objectives. In my judgment, some prospect that for

example a Soviet decision suddenly to envelope the northern most part of Norway would not be resisted by NATO.

QUESTION; I think that Senator Jackson has alleged that Dr. Kissinger has made many private concessions in the SALT negotiations. What are your views on that? Secondly, how much impact did the Joint Chiefs have in establishing of our SALT position? Was your counsel actively sought, was it used?

ADMIRAL: The questions are kind of combined. Let me me shoot at them both with a single answer. There is absolutely no doubt that there were secret agreements in which nobody in the government, with the possible exception of the President of the United States, was informed. One of them, the secret protocol that was negotiated by Secretary Kissinger with Dobrynin in July 1972 after the May SALT I talk, was so secret that we had to find out about it from Soviet delegates at the SALT delegation 11 months later. Then after we found out about it and flushed it out, it came out of the files over in the White House. An agreement which was, I think, made in embarrassment designed to close off a technical loophole which created a great big barn door--an agreement which provided that a modern ballistic missile could not be installed on the older submarines and the modern ballistic missile was defined as a missile of the type which had been installed on a submarine built since such and such a date. So all

26 March 1975

the Soviets had to do was take a missile which had never been installed on existing submarines and put it on the older ones and they could have built as many as they wanted. When we finally flushed it out, we got it closed off at the Standing Consultative Commission but we had to pay for it in terms of other trade offs. I don't think that the country knows the extent of the secret agreements that have been made. I think that one of the fascinating things about the tapes when they all come out will be the extent to which we discover what has gone on in these last four years. My own personal belief is that we're going to find that part of the way in which the trade-off leading to temporary tactical success in the Middle East in each of these crises was achieved by commitments that will sweeten the pot in SALT or in other kinds of negotiations like the trade deal. So one has this business of totaling up a balance sheet in which you have to look at a whole series of deals to see where those chips got placed; and that has never been done in any coherent way within the Executive Branch let alone in talking to Congress. And it's part of the reason why one has to understand the schizoid attitude of Congress today. They've been bamboozled and they're beginning to see it.

The Chiefs were consulted at every step of the way with regard to the overt part of the negotiations. The Chiefs didn't even know about the covert negotiations. John Newhouse did and wrote them all up in his book Cold Dawn and he has

26 March 1975

obviously, as you read that book, been exposed to codeword files that the Joint Chiefs of Staff have not to this day seen. So if you want to get the true story of SALT, which the Chiefs were never permitted to follow, read John Newhouse. Subtract a little bit for his anti-military bias and you've got an accurate accounting. I think that the White House did have to take into cognizance the Chiefs' views, having in mind that they needed to be aware of what the upper limit was on how far they could go; because they always knew that the Chiefs would be called in by the Congress to testify. And the problem that Kissinger had was in kind of asking for the Chiefs' views on issues that were close enough that he could get us to commit ourselves without really revealing what was going on in his private negotiations with Dobrynin. But he was able to use it, I think, in getting a judgment as to just how far he could push the system in accommodating to very unhealthy strategic deals.

QUESTION: It would seem that if we're going to do something about correcting this military inferiority that we're in now, we're going to have to get the story to the people of this country. And in doing so, we're going to have to utilize the news media--press, TV--yet we know that CBS in 1972 gave all of 1 minute to the strategic balance between the U.S. and the Soviets. How do you see that we can approach this problem? What can we do to overcome this obvious imbalance in reporting by the news media?

ADMIRAL: Well, it's a tough question. I've worried about it a lot, and thought about it a lot. During my four years, as I've mentioned earlier, for the last three of it I was publicly saying that we had permitted ourselves to fall behind; and did occasionally get a page 7 or 8 notice. At my retirement ceremony because of the accident that Vice President Ford came down there, press other than the normal defense press was there. And when I said the same thing it was picked up and published all around the country as major news, after three years. It was a significant news item. But then immediately that ended. I don't believe that you will ever get the press to start dealing with this in an important way until national leadership begins to speak up. Now let me tell you that at the end of the Jordan crisis when I was in the Sixth Fleet with President Nixon and ran through those calculations that I cited which came after a budget meeting that I had had with the President in which I also pictured the shifting strategic balance as well as the conventional balance, he said to me as we were breaking up he pulled me off to one side and said, "Don't misunderstand me. I understand what you are saying. I have got the following problem: First, I've got to get the best strategic deal I can get--I think I can get superiority or parity at the worst. Second, I've got to get us out of Southeast Asia. Third, I've got to get re-elected. And fourth, I can start to level with the people about what's happened to the military balance." Well, he got us tortured parity

looking toward inferiority. He did get us out of the Southeast Asia war; he did get re-elected and then Watergate descended over him and he was just simply politically not able to level with the people. And for three years we had that problem and then the terrible problem of a new President getting on top of a major national scandal and not able to focus. Mr. Ford himself as a member of Congress always worried about defense and was always one of those who were strong supporters of the President's defense budget. But he after all is kind of a lame-duck President who is not going to have that mandate until re-election or election next time if he gets it so that he's in a "holding" status. During that Watergate period, it was the conscious policy of the President of the United States not to permit the facts to come out. I can tell you from scars all over my stern that everytime I spoke up, it was a very unhealthy thing to do. The Secretary of Defense this year--a month or so ago, has now confirmed what some of us have been saying for several years that the Soviets have out-spent us in the defense field. If you calculate what it would cost us to build what we see them building, they've out-spent us by 60 to 65% in the strategic field and by 20 to 25% in the conventional field. That is a fact that has been known to this government for, in my judgment, four years. It came out a month ago. I'm encouraged that we're beginning to articulate. We're going to have to be a little more precise about just how bad the balance is before the people and the press begin to get stirred up about it. In my judgment the next political election

for that reason is one of great importance. You can visualize a Democratic candidate who will run on the platform that the Republicans have wasted money on defense, and you can visualize a Democratic candidate who will run on a platform of doing more for defense. If it's the latter kind of a candidate, we'll have a true national debate on the status of our defense.

QUESTION: ?

ADMIRAL: Yes, I think it will have a very serious impact. There's no doubt in my mind that Marcos today is in the process of reevaluating. He's more thoroughly committed than the Thais were and he's got a little bit better situation being an insular archipelago nation rather than a continental Asian nation; and the maritime aspects of the thing make his situation somewhat different in a geopolitical sense. But he has got to find himself driven toward less of a relationship with us as we continue to let our power attenuate. I think that the way he comes out on it will in large part be a reflection of how Peking decides to play it. If I were Peking, I think at the present time I would be trying to get the word to the Marcos, "Don't rush too fast, stay in bed with the Americans a while longer."

QUESTION: President Ford is expressing a need to examine our long-range foreign policy now. What do you think will be the result of this examination, and what would you like to see to be the result of the examination?

26 March 1975

ADMIRAL: I hope that at very least it will lead to a national debate on what has happened over these last 10 or 15 years. I hope that it will help to nail down the admission by both Parties that it was a mistake to get ourselves involved in that long-drawn out Southeast Asian war. I hope it will boil down to an increasing perception admission in the near years--that we've also paid a serious price for by throwing 2 allies out of the sled in Southeast Asia. I hope that it will lead to a better understanding of the extent to which what we have done to the South Vietnamese has eroded our alliance strength all around the world. We used to be feared and respected, then we became just feared and now we are no longer even feared. The Soviets have always been much better at maintaining that fear and they therefore have a great deal more leverage. I hope that these kinds of insights will come out. I hope that we will begin to admit to our public the direct correlation between the price of a gallon of gasoline and the inferiority of our military power in the Middle East and what it has permitted the Soviets to accomplish by their very wise investments in the Middle East.

QUESTION: There have been several articles written that possibly you might be entering the political field. Would you share your views on that with us please?

ADMIRAL: Like Mark Twain said of the reports of his