

79TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

DALLAS, TEXAS

AUGUST 21, 1978

I AM PLEASED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 79TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS. FOR THE V.F.W., WITH ALL THAT IT STANDS FOR AND ALL THAT IT REPRESENTS, IS A VERY PROUD PART OF MY OWN LIFE.

I SHARE YOUR PRIDE IN THE FACT THAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO LEAVE OUR CHILDREN A VALUABLE LEGACY OF OUR OWN EXPERIENCE, THAT CONSTANT VIGILANCE IS SURELY THE ENDURING PRICE OF PEACE. AT THE SAME TIME, I SHARE YOUR VERY REAL CONCERN ABOUT THE COURSE OF EVENTS IN RECENT MONTHS.

REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
79TH NATIONAL CONVENTION
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Dallas, Texas
Sunday, August 21, 1978

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I share your pride in the fact that we have been able to leave our children a valuable legacy of our own experience, that constant vigilance is surely the enduring price of peace. At the same time, I share your very real concern about the course of events in recent months.

AMERICAN COMMITMENT DOUBTED

I have been especially concerned about the direction in which our national foreign policy has been moving because, as the leaders of the non-communist world, it is essential that we project an image of strength and firm adherence to consistent principles in our relations with other nations. Unfortunately, American foreign policy, at present, does not project such an image. Our goals are blurred, our commitment to allies questioned, our resolve to deal firmly with adversaries doubted. Uncertainty, contradiction, frequent shifts in policy, and inconsistency characterize American foreign policy today. More and more, our image is becoming that of a nation which has lost its grip on the rudder of free world leadership.

This is especially troubling at the present time, when we face many challenges, many tests. We must not lose sight of the practical fact that competition between democracy and the forces of tyranny continues. Regardless of what we, as a peaceful people, may want to believe, a very real military and ideological competition continues between East and West. No amount of self-delusion, or wishful thinking on our part will alter that fact. We cannot afford to lose sight of it as the essential context in which all foreign policy decisions must be shaped.

AN IMAGE OF RETREAT

I am concerned that America's image today is one of weakness and uncertainty, rather than of strength and determination of purpose. This Administration's efforts to accomplish too much too quickly led to poorly prepared initiatives, such as the inglorious decision to pull all American ground troops out of South Korea, and the humiliating agreement to surrender the Panama Canal at the bargaining table. A set of misguided priorities led to early pre-occupation with "normalization" moves towards Cuba and Vietnam, and an ill-advised arms sales "package" for the Middle East, even before efforts to defuse the volatile situation through diplomacy have succeeded. On issue after issue -- the Korean troop withdrawal, the neutron bomb, the B-1 bomber, the slowdown in development of "M-X mobile missile" -- the Administration has refused to seek out or thoroughly consider well-formulated advice from the Joint Chiefs of Staff or from thoughtful foreign policy analysts outside of government.

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These seriously flawed Panama Canal Treaties, and uncertain progress in the Middle East and Strategic Arms Limitations negotiations, have raised serious questions about the skill and judgment of this Administration in dealing with major international controversies. They have raised serious questions about decision-making processes and negotiating skills at the highest levels of this Administration.

The Middle East crisis is a particular case in point. We are hopeful that the September summit meeting at Camp David will succeed. But simply bringing Israeli and Egyptian leaders together to talk is no guarantee of success--particularly if the President seeks to impose a solution of some sort on the two parties. Our role should remain that of mediator, not of arbitrator, of Middle East peace prospects. Nor should we seek to inject American troops into the region to act as a buffer force, as has been rumored in some Washington circles.

Even more disconcerting than our diplomatic fumbles is our steady decline in defense preparedness. The President's decision last week to veto the Defense Authorization Bill raise fundamental questions. I do not necessarily argue with the contention that defense spending might be more wisely distributed. However, many of us are troubled by what we see as constant American cutbacks in the face of consistent Soviet military build-ups. For the irrefutable fact is that the Soviet Union is today engaged in the most massive weapons program since the rearmament of Nazi Germany. And nothing the United States has either done or said since the SALT Talks began ten years ago has put a stop to it.

SOVIET ADVANCES

In the early fifties, our deliverable nuclear warheads outnumbered those of the Soviets by at least ten to one. By the early 60's, the ratio was still two to one. By the early 70's, the Soviets had achieved nuclear parity.

Today they have more missiles and bigger ones than we do. Their medium bomber force outnumbers ours one to one. They have passed us in submarine launch tubes and they are fast catching up with us in numbers of missile warheads, survivability of forces, and missile accuracy.

AMERICAN CONCESSIONS

Yet, United States defense has been characterized by cancellations, deferrals, and cutbacks of systems and of forces critical to future security and stability. This Administration has exercised a policy of unilateral self-denial of major weapons systems, with the cancellation of the B-1, deferral of the neutron weapon, slowdowns in development of the M-X mobile missile, and serious cutbacks in naval ship construction.

With regard to NATO, we certainly applaud those of the President's initiatives both short and long term, which are aimed at modernizing and strengthening the conventional forces at NATO's disposal.

On the other hand, what has been significant for the future of America's defense posture has been President Carter's cancellation and deferral of advanced weapons which emphasize America's technological genius and industrial know-how. These qualities are vital if we hope to remain competitive in the face of the large and growing numerical superiority of Soviet military forces at all levels.

The most significant result of the President's defense policy has been to throw into question the ability of our nation's strategic nuclear forces to achieve their day-to-day objectives. These objectives include deterring nuclear blackmail to direct military attack against American allies, and reinforcing the credibility of American and allied general purpose forces.

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The Soviets sense they are moving past us. With show trials of Soviet dissidents and arrests of American newsmen, they mock President Carter's campaign for human rights. They openly deploy their Cuban proxy forces in Angola, Zaire, and Ethiopia. Soviet influence extends into Afghanistan, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. And they are now maneuvering into a position to blockade our Middle East oil sources and tanker routes.

Yet the President's only response thus far has been to cancel the sale of a computer to the Soviet news agency TASS for use in the 1980 olympics.

COMMITMENT TO STRENGTH MUST BE DEMONSTRATED

In his Annapolis foreign policy address last June, the President stated "the Soviet Union can choose either confrontation or cooperation. The United States is adequately prepared to meet either choice." The Soviet choice has been all too clear. Is the cancellation of a computer sale the best we can do in response?

The sincerity of the President's commitment at Annapolis can be demonstrated best by decisive steps in the days ahead. It can be demonstrated by shoring up our national defense posture in our conventional and strategic capabilities, to match Soviet advances in troop strength, tanks, and missile throw-weight. It can be demonstrated by maintaining our superior naval strength -- proceeding with an active naval construction program, and fortifying our naval reserve. And it can be demonstrated by proceeding with development of a neutron weapon if the Soviets do not offer reciprocal restraints by the end of this year. We can, and should reaffirm our unequivocal commitment to NATO, and dedicate our active and consistent efforts to the support of universal human rights in Eastern Europe, Cambodia, and around the globe.

That sincerity can be reflected in a firm commitment by America to cooperate with the forces of democracy and peaceful transition on the African continent, including active support for the internal four-party agreement in Rhodesia. And it can be effectively demonstrated by insisting upon certain assurances before proceeding with normalization of diplomatic realtions with Cuban or China, and before withdrawing all American ground troops from South Korea.

And these steps are only the beginning. They must be followed by renewed recognition that there is no easy road to peace, no simplistic formula by what we can escape the demands of vigilance. And the leadership for this recognition can only come from the presidency of the United States.

THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE VETERAN

One of the few clearly understood domestic policies of the current Administration is the attitude towards American veterans.

We have seen the President reward those who evaded military service or served in a less than honorable manner.

We have seen attempts to totally eliminate veterans' federal employment preference.

We have seen a distinguished General, who voiced a professional opinion in the interest of his country, reprimanded and stripped of his military command. . .and ultimately his military career.

We have seen the Administration cut the VA budget, cuts which affect veterans' hospital care, cost of living increases for the service-connected disabled, and other benefits.

We have heard the Administration boast of hiring programs for veterans, such as the "Hire" program in the Department of Labor, only to see it fall short of its goals in providing employment for veterans.

SALT TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

Like most American's I had high hopes for the 1972 Strategic Arms Treaty President Nixon negotiated at Moscow. But the success of those accords was dependent on our continued vigilance against Soviet violations and advances in areas not covered by them.

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NOW THE RESULTS ARE IN. DURING THE FIVE YEARS OF SALT I, THE SOVIETS INCREASED THEIR MISSILE SUBMARINE FORCE BY MORE THAN 60 PERCENT, ADVANCING TO 909 MISSILES FROM 560 WHILE WE REMAINED STEADY AT 656.

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Now the results are in. During the five years of SALT I, the Soviets increased their missile submarine force by more than 60 percent, advancing to 909 missiles from 560 while we remained steady at 656.

To make possible this advance within the terms of the SALT I Treaty, the Soviets retired a few land-based missiles, going from 1,530 to 1,077. We remained constant at 1,054. The Soviet long-range bomber force dropped from 140 to 135. The U.S. bomber force declined from 552 to 441.

Our gain from SALT was the retirement of 53 obsolete Soviet missiles. For that we agreed not to exploit the overwhelming advantage in anti-missile technology we held in 1972.

And while we deactivated our ABM's the Soviets retained their older system and have even now increased fixed air-defense missiles from 10,000 to 12,000. Their advanced Civil Defense System, far from indicating they believe nuclear war unthinkable, suggests they see it as a very real possibility.

Nor is their momentum slowing in any respect. Their land-based missiles are being replaced by a new generation, with multiple warheads, equal to or better than ours. Still newer generations are in the planning stages.

Mobile SS-20's easily upgradeable into mobile intercontinental missiles, are being deployed within range of Europe. The Soviets are steadily deploying their backfire bomber and improving their conventional Army and Naval forces.

Fortunately, the United States retains some advantages. Although the President has unilaterally sacrificed the B-1 bomber and the neutron bomb, we are building a new Trident submarine and a new mobile intercontinental missile. And, most promisingly, we are developing the subsonic -- but very accurate -- cruise missile.

SALT II

But just as a principal consequence of SALT I was the abandoning of our ABM system, so one effect of SALT II, according to what we know now, may be to eliminate our advantage in cruise missile technology, and in other areas.

I believe that a good treaty, one which adequately protects the United States' interest, would be welcomed at an early date. But indications so far are that the SALT Treaty will have several major flaws.

According to press reports of verification terms already agreed to by the Administration, the Senate will be asked to trust the Russians or the Soviets not to cheat on restrictions or not to repudiate the Treaty altogether whenever the move would benefit them.

Can we accept that much on good faith? That's a question we'll have to answer as members of the Senate. And I believe as we look at it now, the answer is no .

The stakes are too high and Soviet ability to stretch interpretation is too well-established for us to accept anything less than ironclad -- ironclad-- verification by national technical and other means and by extensive on-site inspection by both sides.

I think we have to keep in mind, all the time, that recognized self-interest will be the principal determination of whether or not the Soviet Union fully complies with any agreement.

It just seems to me that we're going to have to give something of this magnitude a great deal of sober reflection.

A CREDIBLE COMMITMENT

I personally tend to doubt that our negotiators can achieve a truly reciprocal arms control agreement until we can convince the Soviets -- and, perhaps, ourselves -- that we are willing to do what is necessary to assure the success of liberty. For we have now reached a point where, in many quarters,

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it has become almost unimaginable that our government would, in support of any objective at all, undertake military action anywhere in the world.

The President, of course, continues to speak of our "commitments". And we continue to maintain mutual defense treaties with Western Europe, Japan, Israel, South Korea, and the Republica of China. But who among us is truly convinced that the government now in Washington would do anything substantive to honor those commitments? Who in our national government even thinks we should do anything?

THE PRICE WE PAY

Soviet adventurism in Africa, the contempt for the 1975 Helsinki Accords shown by the Scharansky, Ginzburg, Orlov, and Petkus trials, the scorn for the 1972 SALT Treaty demonstrated by the accelerating Soviet military build-up -- they are the price we pay for apathy and wishful thinking. And the price will surely rise if we do not act now to prevent Soviet advances from becoming clear-cut strategic advantages.

Nuclear war, it is suggested by some, has become just as unthinkable to the Soviets as it is to us: We need only assure them we are not trying to challenge them. Others contend the U.S.S.R. is a mature, stable country which has abandoned its expansionist dreams.

From within the present Administration, we have heard the same feeble contentions: "The Soviets are just reacting to our nuclear arsenal." "Only arms control can prevent the Soviets from achieving nuclear superiority." "The U.S.-Soviet Arms race resembles 2 apes on a treadmill." The arguments are familiar to each of us.

But so is the disastrous effect of these policies on strategic thinking.

OUR DUTY, OUR OPPORTUNITY

As the world's foremost democratic power, our global responsibilities are not insignificant, our burden not light. So long as the forces of tyranny threaten peace, the United States must remain vigilant.

We don't want to return to the day-to-day tension of the Cold War. We ask only for realism in foreign policy, for faithful adherence to American principles of democracy and decency, and for our government to boldly confront those who challenge our commitment to international peace.

But to meet that challenge, the climate of opinion in this country must change. The passive, apologetic, and self-deprecating attitude of our government, and of our people, must be transformed into a new spirit of courage, dignity, and self-esteem. We must fashion a foreign policy that places more value on strengthening enduring alliances than on accomodating perpetual antagonists. If we, as one nation, commit ourselves to preserve and cultivate those ideals we cherish, we can be assured of earning the favorable judgment of history.

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