


THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 19, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ARAM BAKSHIAN, JR. 

SUBJECT: Defense Speech

Attached is a preliminary version of the defense speech tentatively scheduled for Wednesday night. I have based it on a Defense/NSC draft and it has been reviewed by them with input from State. This has not been given a general senior staff circulation and, no doubt, there will be further labor pains Monday, but we thought you'd want time to go over a fairly complete version over the weekend.

The graphics referred to in the text simply illustrate and reinforce the wording. Obviously this is a technical presentation involving a lot of hardware and acronyms, but they're necessary to the points that have to be made. Your humanizing touch, however, will be even more welcome than usual.

(NSC/Bakshian)  
December 19, 1983  
Noon

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: DEFENSE

My fellow Americans:

Thank you for sharing your time with me tonight. The subject I want to discuss with you is an important one -- not because of any one decision that I have to announce, but because there is a very big decision that you must make for yourselves. It's about the most basic duty that any President and any people share -- the duty to protect the peace. And it's about the price of protecting the <sup>at</sup> peace.

At the beginning of this year, I submitted to the Congress a defense budget which reflects my best judgement, and the best understanding of the experts and specialists who advise me, about what we must do to protect our Nation from war and the threat of war.

That budget was much more than a long list of numbers, for behind all the numbers lay America's ability to prevent the greatest of human tragedies and preserve our free way of life in a sometimes dangerous world. It was part of a careful, long-term plan to make America strong again after too many years of defeat, neglect, and mistakes. Our efforts to rebuild America's defenses began 2 years ago, when we requested a major increase in the defense program. Since then, by searching out savings and efficiencies, we've reduced that amount by half. The budget request that is now before the Congress has been trimmed to the limits of safety. It simply cannot be cut further without seriously endangering the security of the Nation. The choice is

up to the men and women you have elected to Congress -- and that means the choice is up to you.

Tonight I want to explain to you what this defense debate is all about, and why I am convinced that the budget now before the Congress is necessary, responsible, and deserving of your support.

But first I want to say what the defense debate is not about. It is not about arithmetic. I know that in the last few weeks you've been bombarded with numbers and percentages. Some say we need only a 5 percent increase in defense spending. Others say a 3 percent increase would do it. Still others toss around nice round figures like a \$25 billion defense cut this year and a \$40 billion cut next year. The trouble with these numbers is that they tell us absolutely nothing about the kind of defense program America needs, or the benefits in security and freedom that our defense effort buys for us.

The defense policy of the United States is not based on a simple number. But it is based on a simple premise. It is one that we have held for a long time: The United States does not start fights. We will never be an aggressor. We maintain our strength to deter and defend against aggression.

What this means is that we design our defense program not to further ambitions, but to counter threats to ourselves and to our allies. Today, and for the foreseeable future, the greatest of these threats comes from the Soviet Union. The nature of that threat is clear for all to see. The Soviet Union is an expansionist power engaged in the greatest military buildup in

the history of the world. It is also the only nation which has the military power to inflict mortal damage directly on the United States.

So, we cannot afford to play a guessing game about whether the Soviet leaders really mean it when they profess peace, or really mean it when they profess the inevitable struggle between our political system and theirs.

In a case like this, deeds speak louder than words. What we have to consider is what the Soviet military forces are actually equipped and trained to accomplish. And then we have to make sure that they never come to believe that they could succeed if they use those forces against ourselves and our allies.

Since the dawn of the atomic age, we have sought to reduce the risk of war by seeking genuine arms control and by maintaining a strong deterrent. "Deterrence" means simply this: Making sure any adversary who thought about attacking the United States, or our allies, or our vital interests, concludes that he could never win. Once he understands that, he won't attack.

This strategy of deterrence has not changed. It still works. But what it takes to maintain deterrence has changed. It took one kind of military force to deter a Soviet attack when we had far more nuclear weapons than they had; it takes another kind now that the Soviets have enough accurate and powerful nuclear weapons to destroy our own missiles on the ground. It took one kind of military forces to contain the slow-moving and technologically backward Soviet army of the 1960's; it takes

another to contain their far faster and more sophisticated force today.

I want to present three facts about this threat. The first is well-known, but it bears repeating. For 20 years, the Soviet Union has been accumulating enormous military might. They did not stop when the United States and our NATO allies unilaterally restrained our own defense programs. The Soviets did not stop when their forces exceeded all requirements of a legitimate defensive capability. And, despite their rhetoric of peaceful intent, they have not stopped now. Let me give you the facts.

[ CHART: U.S.-SOVIET ICBMS ]

During the past decade and a half the Soviets have built up a massive arsenal of new strategic nuclear weapons -- these are the weapons that can strike directly at the United States. In the past 15 years, the Soviet Union has built five new classes of ICBMS, and upgraded these eleven times. During the same time, we built no new ICBMS, and upgraded only one of our existing systems. The Soviet Union built three new classes of submarine-launched ballistic missiles and over seventy new missile submarines. We built two new types of submarine missiles but eliminated nine submarines. The Soviet Union built over one hundred new bombers. Not only did we fail to build a new long-range bomber, we retired several hundred of our older B-52's.

[ CHART: LRINF DEPLOYMENT ]

Another example of the Soviet buildup shows the difference between Soviet words and Soviet deeds. In 1978, the Soviets

already had 600 intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe and Asia and were beginning to add the SS-20 -- a new, highly accurate, triple warhead, mobile missile. We had none. By the end of 1979, when Soviet leader Brezhnev declared "a balance now exists," the Soviets had over 800 warheads. We still had none, but, together with our NATO allies, we decided to build new weapons to offset the Soviet missiles and to pursue arms control negotiations. By August 1982, the Soviets had over 1,200 warheads. We still had none. Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov announced "approximate parity of forces continues to exist." Even now, the Soviets are adding an average of three new warheads a week. They already have almost 1,400. We still have none, but will begin deployment late this year unless we reach an arms reduction agreement with the Soviets. It seems that the Soviet definition of parity is a box score of 1,400 to zero, in their favor. But, at least they are now at the negotiating table -- and you can be sure that without our planned deployments they would be there, just as they rejected earlier talks when America dealt from a posture of weakness.

[ CHART: U.S.-SOVIET WEAPONS PRODUCTION ]

It's the same story when we look at the Soviet buildup of non-nuclear, or conventional forces. Since 1974, the Soviet Union has added to its forces three times as many tanks, eight times as many other types of armored vehicles, fourteen times as many artillery and rocket launchers, twice as many tactical combat aircraft, slightly more major surface warships, and more

than twice as many attack submarines as we added to our own forces during that same 9-year period.

In the past we were able to offset superior Soviet numbers with our own higher quality weapons. But today the Soviets are attaining a qualitative edge as well by building weapons at least as sophisticated and modern as our own.

As the Soviets increased their military power, they have been emboldened to extend that power around the world. This is the second fact about Soviet military power that I want to present tonight.

The Soviets have carved out a series of footholds around the world that can offer a direct challenge to our vital interests and those of our allies. They have bases on Cuba and Grenada in the Caribbean Basin where 45 percent of all American oil imports now pass, and where 50 percent of reinforcements to our NATO allies would pass in the event of a conflict. They support proxy forces in Angola, further complicating an already troubled region of Africa. They have bases in Ethiopia and South Yemen near the Persian Gulf oil fields. They have taken over the port we built at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam, and now, for the first time in history, the Soviet navy is a force to be reckoned with in the South Pacific.

Some people may still ask: Would the Soviets ever use their formidable military power? Well, again, their deeds have given us their answer more than once -- most recently in Afghanistan and Poland. They invaded Afghanistan. They have 105,000 troops there struggling to crush a brave people with chemical weapons

that violate not just international treaties the Soviets themselves have signed, but also the basic standards of civilization. The courageous struggle of the Afghan people goes on -- but Soviet intentions have been made brutally clear. In Poland, the Soviets denied the will of the people without firing a shot, but in so doing they demonstrated to the world how their military could also be used to intimidate.

The final fact I want to present about Soviet military power is that they are acquiring what can only be considered an offensive military force. They have continued to build far more intercontinental ballistic missiles than they could possibly need simply to deter an attack. Their conventional forces are trained and equipped not so much to defend against an attack by NATO -- which I'm quite sure they know will never come -- as to initiate sudden, surprise offensives into NATO territory.

We formed the NATO alliance to defend against such an attack. And this means we need military forces that can move very quickly -- like the new M-1 tank; aircraft that could meet an enemy even in bad weather or at night -- like the F-14, F-18, and the F-15 fighters; better and faster air defense systems -- like the new patriot air defense systems; and, above all, forces that are trained and ready to respond to any emergency.

In fact, every item in our defense program -- our tanks, our planes, our funds for training and spare parts -- is intended for that one all-important purpose -- to deter war. Unfortunately, a decade of neglecting our military forces had called into question our ability to preserve the peace.



When I took office in January 1981, I was appalled by what I found: American planes that could not fly and American ships that could not sail for lack of spare parts; insufficient fuel and ammunition for essential training. Our war reserve stocks were so low that we could only cope by deciding that we would only think about short wars. The inevitable result of all this was poor morale in our armed forces, difficulty in recruiting the brightest young Americans to wear the uniform, and difficulty in convincing our most-experienced military personnel to stay on.

There was a real question, then, about how well we could meet an immediate crisis. And it was obvious that we had to begin a major modernization program to ensure we could deter aggression and preserve the peace in the years ahead.

All of this meant that for the next few years the United States would have to step up its defense program. We had to move immediately to improve the basic readiness and staying power of our conventional forces, so they could meet -- and therefore help deter -- an immediate crisis. At the same time, we had to make up for lost years of investment by moving forward with a long-term plan to prepare our forces to counter the military capabilities our adversaries were developing for the future.

Believe me, it wasn't a pleasant prospect for someone who had come to Washington determined to reduce Government spending and take some of the load off of the American taxpayer. But my Administration had two jobs to do -- restoring a troubled economy and restoring our neglected defense program. There was really no choice. We had to move forward with the task of repairing our

defenses or we would lose our ability to deter war now and in the future. We had to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that their quest for superiority would not succeed, and that the only real solution was significant and mutual arms reduction -- the kind we're working for right now in Geneva.

Thanks to your support, and strong bipartisan support from the Congress, we set to work on this long, hard, but necessary, task. We began to turn things around. We developed a 5-year defense program that would fix our immediate problems and meet our long-term needs; that would guarantee security today and maintain it in the future.

Already, we are seeing some very encouraging results. Quality recruitment and retention are up, dramatically; more high school graduates are choosing military careers; and more experienced career personnel are choosing to stay. Our maintenance backlogs are finally going down, and ammunition stocks are being restored. This means our men and women in uniform at last are getting the tools and training they need to do their job.

I said earlier that a defense program can't be reduced to simple arithmetic, and I think the same thing is true about what is happening our our services. Ask around today, especially among our young people, and I think you'll find a whole new attitude toward serving their country. This reflects more than just better pay, equipment, and leadership. Americans have sent a signal to these young people that it is once again an honor to

wear the uniform. That's not something you measure in a budget, but it is a very real part of our Nation's military strength.

It will take us longer to build the kind of equipment we need to keep peace in the future, but we've made a good start. We have faced up to the increasing age and obsolescence of our nuclear deterrent, and we've taken steps to turn that around.

We had not built a new long-range bomber for 21 years. Now, we're building the B-1. We had not launched one new strategic submarine for 17 years. Now, we're building one trident submarine a year. Our land-based missiles were increasingly threatened by the huge new Soviet ICBMS. We are determining how to solve that problem. At the same time, we have begun the START talks, with the goal of achieving deep reductions in the nuclear arsenals of both sides.

We have also begun the long-needed modernization of our conventional forces. The Army is getting its first new tank since 1962. The Air Force is getting modern fighter planes to counter the Soviets' growing offensive air power. We are rebuilding our Navy to offset the expanding global reach of Soviet power. We are upgrading our obsolete air defenses to ensure better warning of a surprise attack. And we are building a real capability to deter the Soviet Union in the vitally-important Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf.

This adds up to a major effort, and it is not cheap. It comes at a time when there are many other pressures on our budget, and when the American people have already had to make major sacrifices during the recession. But we must not be misled

by those who would make defense once again the scapegoat of the Federal budget.

[ CHART: DEFENSE TO ENTITLEMENTS ]

The fact is that in the past few decades we have seen a dramatic shift in how we spend the taxpayer's dollar. Back in 1955, defense took up more than half of the Federal budget, while payments to individuals took up only about 20 percent. By 1980, defense spending had fallen to a low of 23 percent. This will rise to 28 percent in my proposed Fiscal 1984 budget -- compared to 49 percent for payments to individuals. So, it just doesn't make sense to blame our deficits on defense.

This is what bothers me most about the calls for big defense cuts so soon after I had thought we learned our lesson from the 1970's. These calls for cutting back the defense budget come in nice simple arithmetic. But they add up to the same kind of policies that endangered deterrence and stifled arms reduction in the last decade -- and they're the same kind of talk that led the democracies to neglect their defenses in the 1930's and invited the aggression that plunged the human race into the tragedy of World War II. My fellow Americans, we must not let that grim chapter of history repeat itself through apathy or neglect.

Yet, today we hear the same old siren calls for putting things off -- for sweeping our problems under the rug -- for stretching out our weapons procurement over more years, even though we have learned that this ultimately costs the taxpayer money by driving up the unit cost of each weapon. Again, we hear calls for giving up our new tank and sticking with the 1960's

model, or giving up the B-1 bomber and sticking with the 1950's model, and even calls for cutting back on our stores of ammunition before we've even ended our current backlog. One such example is the recent House Budget Committee proposal to cut \$17 billion from the 1984 defense budget and \$200 billion from our multi-year program. Such irresponsible action would simply cripple our ability to restore the military capabilities we so urgently need to preserve the peace.

Yes, we pay a great deal for the weapons and equipment we give our military forces. That's because we expect them to last a long time -- and they have. But we are paying the bill that must be paid -- the delayed cost of our neglect in the 1970's. We would only be fooling ourselves, and endangering the future, if we let the bills pile up from the 1980's as well. Sooner or later these bills always come due, and the later they come due, the more they cost in treasure and in safety.

This is why I am speaking to you tonight -- to urge you to tell your Senators and Congressman that you know we must continue along the path we have begun to restore our military strength. We have already made great strides, but our defense posture is not yet what it must be to meet the challenges ahead.

If we stop in midstream, we will not only jeopardize the progress we have made to date -- we will mortgage our ability to deter war and achieve genuine arms reductions. And we will send a signal to the Kremlin that the American people have lost sight of their responsibilities.

One of the tragic ironies of history -- and we've seen it happen more than once in this century -- is the way that evil, tyrannical systems, whose military strength is based on oppressing their people, grow strong while free societies allow themselves to be lulled into neglect and a false sense of security.

Free people must meet voluntarily, through open debate and democratic means, the challenge that tyrants pose by compulsion.

It is up to us, in our time, to choose, and choose wisely, between the hard but necessary task of preserving peace and freedom and the temptation to ignore our duty and blindly hope for the best while the enemies of freedom grow stronger day by day.

The solution is well within our grasp. But to reach it, there is simply no alternative but to continue this year, in this budget, to provide the resources we need to keep the peace and guarantee our freedom.

For this high goal, my fellow Americans, I ask for your prayers and your support. Thank you, good night, and God bless you.