

THE READINESS OF US FORCES

Remarks to: ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE  
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We're twelve days into a new decade. My colleagues in the planning business over in the Pentagon are preparing papers which will regale the Congress, and groups like yourselves, with comparisons between the past decade and what lies before the United States in the decade ahead.

Now it happens, like those of you just mentioned who have birthdays about now, that I too, have a ready anchor in memory for such comparisons, for it was on this day just 10 years ago that I landed at Baltimore Airport and met my wife very early in the morning. I recall it as being a day very much like today, cold, clear, snow on the ground. I should mention that I was at that time some 60 pounds lighter than I stand before you here today, and I was wearing a faded raincoat over jungle fatigues just having come out of the jungles north of Hue, on a two-week leave; I was to go back to continue the war for six months beyond that.

Looking back on that period I would have to tell you that, in absolute terms, the readiness of your armed forces to perform the many missions that the nation has assigned to them, compared to what it was in January of 1971, is vastly better. It wasn't just that we were, in January of 1971 pursuing a corrosive war. It wasn't just that we had in so doing suffered countless casualties, and depleted the ranks at all echelons. It was that for over five years, as

of January 1971, we in the military services had been spending our capital, both human and material. In the interest of prosecuting the war, we had deferred research and development, and the procurment of advanced weapons systems, concentrating instead on buying the wherewithall for combat in Southeast Asia. And we were expending our human capital. Among the rifle platoons of the First Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, half of them marched into combat against the finest light infantry that the United States Army has ever engaged, deprived totally of any previous experience. All of the men in those platoons, the half of which I speak, were of the same year group: the drafted soliders, the "instant" non-commissioned officers, the kids out of OCS. That was in 1971. In Europe we had companies with one officer; we had deplorable material readiness; and our Allies, as many of you will recall, were seriously questioning our ability to contribute effectively to the defense of Western Europe.

In January of 1980, I can say with certainty, all of that has changed and changed dramatically for the better. We are recapitalizing our investments in research and development. Procurements are up substantially. We are moving ahead once more with respect to acquiring weapon systems to cope with the real threats to our national interests. We have restored, by in large, the human waste of the Vietnam period, and in terms of morale and efficiency

your armed forces are incomparably better than they were 10 years ago. Unfortunately, there is little comfort in that, because in war all things are relative; and relatively compared with the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union, who pose the most direct threat to our national interest, our readiness has declined over those 10 years.

Let me comment briefly, if I may, on several aspects of that latter comparison which I submit should be foremost in any discussion of national security.

First, with respect to our strategic relationship, (referring to intercontinental missilery and comparable weapons systems) over the past ten years the nuclear equation has changed dramatically. Both of us, the Soviet Union and the United States, live in a very much more dangerous world. The total number of nuclear warheads has, over the past 10 years, been multiplied by a factor of three. The explosive power of those warheads has increased by a factor of one-third. But most significantly, from the military point of view, the pinpoint accuracy of those warheads, the ability to attack hard targets, has increased by a factor of three. We are about to enter a period in the years ahead in which, for the first time, the Soviet Union will enjoy nuclear superiority by most of the measures by which one makes such comparisons. Now I understand full well all of the dread that is implied in such comparisons, and I understand the revulsion, the repugnance that which most of you bring to consideration of such matters. What

bothers us in the military planning business is that in Soviet military doctrine, in the writings and the speeches of the men who do military planning for the Kremlim, the thought of nuclear war is entertainable. Indeed the notion of being able to prosecute and even win a nuclear war is one that is almost commonplace in Soviet strategic and tactical military writings and speeches. They are willing to contemplate such war, and from everything we can see, they are preparing to prosecute such war.

Next, let me comment on some of the less threatening, less glamorous, but nonetheless troublesome aspects of Soviet military programs over the past decade. I think some of you are aware that 10 years ago Soviet Navy was scarcely a blue water force. Today, it has demonstrated its ability to conduct operations remote from the Soviet Union. For the first time since Peter the Great, the Russians can genuinely claim to have a Navy that ranks among the most powerful in the world. Ten years ago they had no ships of reach and power. They had only one base abroad, Alexandria in Egypt. Their subs were noisy, and second rate, their antisubmarine warfare capabilities poor. This year, in 1981 they have such ships as the KIEV class aircraft carriers, and they are building more aircraft carriers in the Soviet Union. They have developed new classes of long-range auxiliary ships to support naval vessels on prolonged foreign deployments. They have built a very modern amphibious class of ships, the IVAN ROGOV class. They have bases abroad, in Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam in Aden, Dhalac, and Socotra in the Middle East, in Angola in Africa. Their subs are

still noisy, but they have demonstrated to us conclusively that they have mastered the technology of quiet undersea operations, and we have every reason to believe that in the decade ahead they will solve their ASW vulnerabilities. They have brought into being new classes of air-to-surface and surface-to-surface missiles. Somebody remarked to me before we sat down that with such missiles, of say 200 miles reach, the Mediterranean becomes a bath tub as far as naval engagements are concerned. That is an entirely accurate visualization.

Third, with respect to Soviet ground forces, ten years ago, when we assessed the Soviet Armed Forces deployed against the NATO Alliance, we detected poor capabilities to sustain a prolonged offensive. We saw them as deficient in tactical air defense. We saw them as deficient in anti-tank weapons. We saw them as very definitely behind the United States in the employment of air mobility, the helicopters units which we were employing to advantage in Southeast Asia. All of that is changed. Today in 1981 they have the most powerful suite of air defense weapons in the hands of any ground force anywhere in the world. They have fielded nine modern anti-tank missile systems. They have brought into their force self-propelled artillery with automatic loaders, tanks with automatic loaders, three-man tank crews; all very, very modern equipment. Most interestingly, they have increased the cargo-lift capability of their forces in the

central front in Europe by a factor of five and they have increased their capability to move petroleum, oil and lubricants to the front by a factor of three, using automatic pipe laying equipment that very quickly puts down pipe lines as the Army advances. In brief, what we see opposite NATO today is a force whose offensive capabilities are very substantially improved over what they were ten years ago. At the same time, and consistent with my remarks on their preparedness for war employing weapons of mass destruction, we see them substantially improving over the past ten years their ability in nuclear, chemical and biological warfare, such as hardening their command and control mechanisms. They have come abreast of us with respect to air mobile warfare with a class of helicopters of redoubtable capability, and they're building those helicopters at a rate roughly three to four times our's.

Next, as to air forces, when we looked ten years ago at the Soviets we saw them as being very vulnerable with respect to their airfield complexes. We saw them with a poor air defense capability. We saw them a force of great rigidity in which ground controllers had to control pilots through all of their evolutions. Today, we see them with hardened airfields in the central front, with an inventory of aircraft that has been substantially improved. The numbers of aircraft have increased by a factor of two thirds. The quality of those aircraft has been substantially advanced. They are not abreast of the United States in

terms of the technologies that one sees in our F-15, 16, or 18 aircraft, but they're nearly there, and they're building new aircraft at an enormous rate. With respect to their putative tactical rigidity we now see routinely in their training exercises Soviet pilots practicing the kind of independent intercept tactics that western pilots have prided themselves on over these many years.

Finally, with respect to airlift, over the past ten years the Soviet Armed Forces have doubled their lift capacity and can now carry that double pay load to a radius four times what they could ten years ago.

I could go on, but suffice to say that the Soviet Union has acted upon Mr. Brezhnev's assurances to the Soviet people, and I quote from him so you get some of the flavor of such rhetoric:

"One of the constant concerns of the Central Committee, the Soviet Government, and the entire nation is the strengthening of our glorious armed forces. Strengthening the country's defensive capabilities and the military might of the armed forces is one of the conditions indispensable for the successful accomplishment of the task of building communism."

Now that quote, made within the past year, is the same of course, as the rhetoric that has been produced by the Soviet leadership over the past 30 years. It's not unlike the rhetoric which one hears from our own leadership. The difference is that the Soviets have acted. They

act as though building armed forces is indeed a condition indispensable to their way of life. They have done so, indeed, to the neglect of most other aspects of the Soviet society. I think the Secretary of Defense captured it when he said that when US cuts its defense budget the Soviets increase their defense budget. When we increase our defense budget, they increase their defense budget. That literally has been the case.

Over the past 10 years you will recall US defense spending declined between '70 and '76, as we wound down our Vietnam involvement, and then began to increase modestly. But, again, to go back to relative comparisons, our buildup has not kept pace with the Soviets'. Over the past decade Soviet cumulative outlays for defense, using CIA dollar comparisons, have been about one third greater than those of the United States, for a total of some 300 billions of dollars more invested. Last year, by those dollar comparisons, the Soviets spent some 165 billions in military investments, around 50 percent more than the United States. I want to be clear here that the comparisons that I'm about to make involve investments; they do not include personnel costs, which are very hard to come to grips with. I am talking about procurement, military construction and research and development, the kinds of investments that produce real property or things ultimately for use in combat. Over the past 10 years such investments in the Soviet Union have *increased I*

suggest to you ~~that the~~ at a steady rate <sup>of</sup> three percent per year. Over the past decade, on the average, US investments of the same kind have declined at three percent per year. Even more deplorable, if you look at new plant construction and capital investments in factory floor space (larger ship yards, larger plants for missiles, larger factories for tanks), you'll find that among the top ten capital investments in construction, the Soviets have very substantially increased their plant, and are still building. Everything we can see tells us that the Soviets are continuing the outlays for military might that they have been putting on the line over the past ten years.

Now the Soviet Union is a country of vast natural resources, but a harsh climate, and it is a country that is unable to feed its people. I know from talking to a chap that just got back from Moscow, that when one goes down a Moscow street and sees a line, one gets in it because lines signal people waiting for one of the many goods that are in scarce supply. The USSR is a nation of enormous manpower resources, but a nation torn by ethnic tensions, problems of education, and an aging Russian population compared to the ethnic minorities. The USSR is a nation torn by deep seated animosities among its numerous nationalities. My source, who went over there just two months ago on an academic exchange, remarked how frequently he heard caustic comments expressed by Russians directed at Georgians, or other ethnic minorities. My source's joke was, of course, that we had problems with Georgians in the USA, too.

The Soviet Union is a country with an enormous and growing heavy industrial base, but a country of serious technological lags, remaining substantially behind the United States. But where it counts to them, with respect to military development, they have produced. Somebody asked me before breakfast whether I thought technologically they were abreast of us: my answer would be where it counts, they're good. No longer can we count on a qualitative edge.

The Soviet Union is a country of unitary leadership, but as you know an aging leadership. Superannuation is a problem for them, and leadership inflexibility will be in the decade ahead, an enormous problem. They have hegemony over East Europe, a buffer between them and the West, but they've also got Poland, and all similar economic and political liabilities in East Europe are a millstone around their neck.

Finally, they have no doubt appeal to the leadership of the third world, but they also have deplorable failures on their record books. The Egyptian leadership is thoroughly disenchanted with the Soviet military, despite years of education in Soviet schools. The Soviets have failed in Somalia. They are failing in Afghanistan, and they cannot look with equanimity at their present military situation.

To sum it up, if you were to ask me if I were willing to trade my range of problems in planning with those of my counterpart in the Soviet Union, I would assure you I'd rather deal with what I've got than his problems. The Soviets also face a difficult and dangerous decade, and I

suggest to you that the fundamental problem for both Soviet and American policy in the years ahead will be what it has been since World War II: how to define the relationships between the US and the Soviet Union.