

AMERICA'S MILITARY MISSION

Address by Robert Morgan
United States Senate

Spring Lake Area Chamber of Commerce
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Being a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee is to experience all that it means to be a Senator, in very concentrated form. Our work is technical to its core. We deal in technological weapons systems using the latest computers, the latest physics, the latest work in lasers. We are involved with the whole world and its arguments. We must choose between selfish interest and legitimate interest in complex procurement issues. We must, on top of all this, stand back from the numbers and the details, and try to judge the national will.

That is not easy. When we choose our weapons, we also choose our mission. We are making a decision based on what we feel the American people want their military to accomplish. The shape of the national will, which must guide our choice, has been hard to determine. The consensus of the fifties vanished in the sixties and seventies. At the end of the Vietnam War, it appeared for a while that America was heading into isolationism and anti-militarism. But there are signs this is changing.

The pollsters now agree that the public's value of national defense has risen significantly. It is now clear that the American people want a defense second to none, and that they want it by an overwhelming majority. The rise in public approval of the military since the days of Vietnam has risen very close to what it was twenty years ago. Our concern for human rights shows that we are not going to try to drop out of the world community and enter an isolationist phase. I feel we are going to be a lot more cautious -- but we are intent upon standing up for our way of life. We sometimes misplace our criticism of others for supposed rights violations, but the fact that we are concerned about human freedom is reassuring.

Of course, the catalyst in all these areas is the Administration. I have been following the President's initial actions with the greatest concern and interest. Every new administration goes through a period in which its approaches to

foreign policy are subject to refinement by the process of trial and error. I believe we are witnessing the White House's coming to terms with this difficult task.

It is our duty to react to the Administration's policy, not in any spirit of conflict, but to offer what help we can. In my opinion, the President's affirmation of our commitments in Europe, and his willingness to help with a shift in strategy there, is admirable. I cannot say, however, that I am in agreement about our Asian policy, including withdrawal from South Korea.

In Europe, We and our NATO allies have been pursuing a strategy of nuclear warfare. I have thought that to depend on such a strategy, to the detriment of our conventional forces, would be a mistake. Successful foreign policy -- whether based on human rights or anything else -- has got to go hand in hand with a flexible military capability able to do any job that needs

doing.

In response to Soviet buildup of conventional forces in Europe, the NATO strategy has changed to conform to this principle. A crucial element which nobody could predict was the opinion of the new American President, and I am glad to say that President Carter made an early commitment to our allies and to the strategy of maintaining a strong conventional defense.

It is in Asia that I am most concerned about our military posture. Our apparent willingness to honor our commitments in Europe is encouraging. But in Asia, I believe our policy is mistaken.

When I took my seat in the Senate, we had just been through our pull-out from Southeast Asia. In Siagon, Communist troops were marching through the streets. In Cambodia, the people were being driven on mass forced marches, and the sick and the old were dying. Throughout an area we had sworn to protect,

execution squads were at work. It has been estimated that in Cambodia, several hundred thousand people have been done away with, and the figure may be as high as a million and a half.

Next door, in Thailand, the government was scrambling to realign itself economically and militarily, turning away from its alliances with the United States.

I knew that the next question, the next call of "Come home, America," would concern South Korea. The debate had begun even then.

In keeping with my campaign statement that I would travel to those parts of the world I knew my votes in the Senate would effect, I went to South Korea. I went at the taxpayers' expense, to do the taxpayers' business. On the way, I saw the industrial giant of Japan, which competes with us economically, but which is also a huge market for North Carolina soybeans and tobacco. I studied our export to the Philippines, and saw that South Korea

itself buys a considerable amount of North Carolina produce. It became clear to me that our relationships in that part of the world are not purely military -- our alliances are also involved with our trade.

In South Korea itself, I went where I wanted, and talked to whom I wanted. I talked to President Park Chung Hee, and I talked to the South Korean dissidents who oppose him, to get both sides of the story. And I can assure you a very different picture emerged in my mind, compared with that being painted to encourage our further withdrawal from Asia.

That picture is still being painted. The South Korean government is presented as being a disreputable dictatorship -- to quote words used on the floor of the Senate -- and we are presented as propping up that dictatorship with our military strength. I cannot agree.

There is no question that South Korea is more of a

disciplinarian, as a society, than we are, and that this goes back a long way in their history. There is no question that they are on a war footing, and deserve to be -- the enemy is within easy striking distance of the capital city. President Park's wife has been assassinated. There have been attempts to assassinate him, three times. The regime in North Korea is fanatical and militaristic, and there is no doubt in my mind that withdrawing our troops would encourage them to attack.

But things are not as bad in South Korea as they have been made out to be. Park is accused of suppressing the Christian Churches, but he asked me how this could be true, since the number of Christian Churches in his country has increased by sixteen thousand. The accusation is made that dissent is suppressed. But I heard dissent on the floor of their National Assembly, I heard dissent from Park's opponents, and we hear dissent, still. All we hear from North Korea is an ominous silence, so there must be some difference worth preserving.

But this is really a side issue. Our defense commitment is not to President Park, it is to the South Korean people. Our troops are not stationed between the government and the people of Korea, but between the capital and the North Korean border. We do not "prop up" any government there, but help the people defend themselves from conquest.

When I spoke to Park's opposition, they said something that keeps getting ignored in all this. They were united in their opposition to Park, but they were united as well in making the point they did not want us to leave. They even made the point that if we did leave, there would be no bettering of the Park government, but very likely things would get worse. We are seen by the South Koreans as crucial to their defense, and in my opinion, honoring our commitment is crucial to our moral integrity as a nation.

But there is more to this question than just the defense of

South Korea. Our military presence there is the key to our posture in the remainder of northeast Asia. Japan looks to our Korean position as they key to her defense as far as conventional weapons are concerned. I believe that if we pull out, we will see a rearmed Japan, and a serious shift in the military balance of power in that part of the world. We could very well see a shift, as well, in our trade relationships, and we just might see a limited, conventional war break out in which we would be powerless to intervene.

The fact of the matter is that when we pull back our conventional forces, we rely that much more on our nuclear umbrella. And nuclear umbrellas, while they are necessary and have a deterrent effect where a big war is concerned, they are not the sort of thing which, historically, has prevented small wars between small countries.

And when we depend on nuclear strength, we lose mobility. .

and the power to bring force, or the threat of force, to bear on a deteriorating situation. I argue that while we are turning away from nuclear forces, and toward conventional forces, in Europe, we appear to be doing the opposite in Asia -- we are about to put more eggs in the nuclear basket there.

It is not my intention to nit-pick a brand-new Administration's policy, and I certainly do not want to appear too negative. But I would be remiss if I did not put forth my own views, as a member of the Armed Services Committee, as to what shape I believe our military deployment should take.

Conventional forces cannot be ignored by any nation which intends to stand for something in this world, which, I would judge from our present insistence on human rights issues, we intend to do. The Soviet Union, which will push its own ideology whenever and wherever it can, understands this.

Let me give just two examples of how conventional forces can

be important. In 1958, with civil war threatening in Lebanon, our Marines intervened there without firing a shot. Just under two decades later, things were very different. When civil war threatened in Lebanon again, one of the biggest differences was that the Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean had increased tremendously. Their deployment of conventional weapons permitted them to support their interest in continued war in Lebanon, while our much weaker position there lessened our ability to serve our interest, which was peace. Today, Lebanon is in ashes.

Let's take the Mayaguez incident. When the Communists decided to twist the tiger's tail and seize our ship, it turned out we did have a warship in the general area. But that ship was in fact rather far away, and proceeding away from the scene. The distance it had to cover was great enough that we had to stall for three days before taking action. I have to wonder what would have happened if the warship had been gone completely. What use would our nuclear umbrella have served, in such a case as that/t?

Our military deployment, is an expression both of our foreign policy and of our national will. It supports -- or fails to support -- both of them. I know we have been confused, lately, about what sort of effect we intend to have in the world. We are interested in protecting human rights, and extending the franchise of freedom. But we will speak, at the very next moment, of ceasing to be "the world's policeman." To some degree, both of these elements will have to be accomodated in our foreign policy. We will not go to war easily, not even in a conventional struggle of arms. But neither can we expect to bear witness for the cause of human rights from a position of weakness.

There have been many questions, in recent years, as to what America stands for, and where she will make a stand. I don't think there is any question about what we still represent, in the eyes of the world. We think they all hate us, but it isn't so. America is still the dream of an imperfect world.

Somewhere in this world, right now, there is a man scratching out a meager living, in a country with no tradition of economic freedom, and no resources to make that kind of freedom possible.

And when that man stands up from his plow, and wipes away the sweat, and allows himself to dream for just a moment of a place in which he could prosper by his effort -- it is America of which he dreams.

And somewhere in this world at this moment -- perhaps in one of the nations of Eastern Europe -- there is a man who stops what he is doing, suddenly sick of the repressiveness of his government.

And when he dreams of the one place on earth where he could say what he wants, and go where he wants, without fear of a secret police -- it is America of which he dreams.

And still, in too many corners of the earth, there are human beings who feel the lash of government by terror. Such people dream, I am sure. They dream of an unbelievable country in which the arm of authority does not always hold a club above the people's heads. And when they dream so, they, too, dream of America. Ours is that unbelievable nation.

If the world could wake up from its unending nightmare, it is America to which it would wake. Remembering that is the key to knowing what we stand for.

I feel certain that at some time in the future, America shall be called upon to be the standard-bearer of freedom. When we do, I believe we will find out which of the nations of the earth will understand and appreciate what we are about, and which will not.

Whether in trade, or military support, or foreign assistance, I think the better course is to work with those

nations which admire our way of life, and save our confrontation and disapproval for those who are implacably opposed to it.

While detente is worthwhile to some degree, it does us no good to establish relations with a totalitarian government like Cuba, or to begin giving foreign aid to North Vietnam, and at the same time denounce South Korea as repressive, and endanger our trade and military position throughout Asia.

We will find out, on some day of reckoning, which of the nations of the earth protect human rights imperfectly, and which abhor them for the convenience of the state. Our military policy, like our foreign policy as a whole, should be carried out as if that day of reckoning were tomorrow.