

Speech to Air Force #1 Chapter, ROA

March 17, 1978 (Friday)

Noon luncheon

Bolling AFB Officers' Club

Speak at 12:40

Major Lewis W. Shollenberger will introduce

John Stirk will accompany

Leave office at 11:45

*John Stirk
Delivered*

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Congress' Obligation to the Reserves

1. New status of the Reserve
 - a. Fitting dedication of Minuteman Statue in ROA building.
 - b. Reserve must be ready to react more quickly.
 - c. Probability of short, intense wars.
 - d. Small regular force due to cost.
 - e. Even small regular force costly.
 - f. Reserves the only answer.
2. Legislators obligations to Reserves
 - a. Constituents desires for social programs.
 - b. Obligation to inform constituents on defense.
 - c. Reserves at least as dedicated as regulars.
 - d. Congress must provide incentives.
 - e. More important, Congress must provide equity.
 - f. Search for low cost, equitable incentives.
3. Inadequacy of current Reserve SBP
 - a. SBP not available to Reservist until age 60.
 - b. With death just short of 60 years, no family protection.
 - c. Reserves and families sacrifice to help reservist serve 20 years.
4. My contribution - new Reserve SBP
 - a. Survivor protection after 20 years service.
 - b. Election of plan options at 20 years service.
 - c. Actuarially sound.
 - d. Available medical and dental benefits for survivors.

Conclusion:

(Quote from G. Washington on Citizens' duties)

Congress' Obligation to the Reserves

It is very fitting that a new and magnificent Minuteman statue was recently dedicated in the ROA building in Washington. I can see that statue from the window of my office and it seems to me to be a symbol of the new role and status of the Reserve. The posture of the man with the musket in that statue is not of a man standing waiting to be called. It is the thrusting, eager stride of the citizen soldier ready to join the first wave of battle in defense of his country.

This is exactly what the Reserve has become in modern America. The time is past when we could afford the luxury of counting on the protection of our separating seas to give us time for leisurely preparations to defend against our aggressor. The modern world has shrunk those seas and shortened that time

so that all our defense forces must be ready at all times. The probability of short, intense wars is so great that the readiness state of the Regular and Reserve force components must be nearly identical.

These pressures and the cost of maintaining modern forces have dictated the development of the Total Force concept with a small, All-Volunteer Regular Force and a large, highly trained Reserve. Even the small Regular force we have is very costly. The General Accounting Office has concluded that the All Volunteer Force has caused \$18.4 billion in additional costs since FY 1971. It is clear from this figure that the cost effective Reserve is the only answer to maintaining an effective defense posture at a cost which the economy can sustain. We can train and maintain a fine, effective Reserve force with very modest expenditures

and its state of readiness will be very close to that of the Regulars. If we were to bring that same size force up those last few percentage points in the readiness measurement the cost would be totally out of proportion to the increase in capability. Thus the Reserve establishment is the only cost-effective way of providing our Total Force defense.

If we are to maintain this fine Reserve force the Congress must bear a heavy responsibility in providing for it. We are faced with the demands of our constituents for ever increased domestic social programs and government services. They also demand that we provide a defense establishment that will make our country secure so that they can enjoy those programs and services. These demands compete with one another for limited national resources. There is no real need for the Congress

to urge social program expenditures on the public. The public demand for such programs far outstrips any ability to provide for them. The public outcry for defense programs is less well articulated, however, because the threat seems remote until it is too late. Therefore, it is the obligation of the Congress to take the lead in informing the public about the needs for a strong, rational national defense.

One thing we must get them to understand is that the Reserves are as important as the Regulars and that they are at least as dedicated. They are people who offer time and talent not as a job but as a service for which they are not proportionately compensated. We must take the lead in providing incentives for people to join the Reserve, of course, but that is not the most important point. We must take the lead in providing equity and

fair treatment for the Reserves. We must search for low cost, equitable incentives, not only for recruiting and retention, but for simple justice and to maintain the morale necessary in a first class fighting force.

One significant inequity and morale problem has been the inadequacy of the current Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) for the Reserve. Unlike his active duty counterpart, the Guard or Reserve member who has served 20 or more years for retirement receives no benefits until he reaches age 60. If he elects to participate in SBP at age 60 and dies thereafter, his survivors receive an annuity. If he dies at age 59 years, 11 months they receive nothing. This is a tragic situation that happens to about 1,300 Reservists each year. The injustice is clear. During his 20 years of service the Reservist spends at least

240 weekends and 300 days away from his family. The contribution and sacrifice of the families is such that we could not have an effective Guard and Reserve without their support.

I want to try to contribute to a solution to at least this one problem. I am introducing in the Senate a new Reserve Survivor Benefit Plan. The main feature of the plan is that it will offer the option of survivor protection after 20 years service if the member dies before reaching age 60. At 20 years service the member can:

a. Remain under the current plan, meaning no election and no benefits until age 60 or

b. elect a reduced benefit deferred until the retiree would have reached age 60 or

c. elect a more reduced benefit starting immediately

upon the death of the retiree.

Both of the new options would be paid for by reduced retirement benefits to a retiree who elects these new options and lives past 60. The plan, therefore, is actuarially sound and will ultimately be at no cost to the government, just like the current active duty SBP.

In addition, this bill will provide for medical, dental, commissary and exchange privileges for such survivors (subject to availability) beginning at the time the retiree would have reached age 60.

I am acutely aware of the need to provide adequate defense. I am also acutely aware of the desire of the people and the need for balancing the budget. I believe that this bill can work toward both those objectives because it will strengthen the

Reserves and the end result will be no cost to the taxpayer.

The original Minuteman's commander, George Washington, said that "every citizen who enjoys the protection of a free government, owes not only a portion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defense of it." Our Reserve forces are the living example of that ideal; the citizen devoting his personal time and talents to be ready to defend his nation. We must make sure his treatment is equitable and his morale bright to spur him to that task.