

Remarks at U.S. Air Force Academy

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AWARDS

There are some who might be skeptical of that assertion. They claim that the future of the Air Force is mortgaged to an obsolete weapons systems, the manned aircraft, or that Air Force officers of the future will be nothing more than silent silo sitters, but nothing could be further from the truth. It is this very onrush of technology which demands an expanding role for the Nation's Air Force and Air Force officers, and which guarantees that an Air Force career in the next 40 years will be even more changing and more challenging than the careers of the last 40 years.

For some of you will travel where no man has ever traveled before. Some of you will fly the fastest planes that have ever been built, reach the highest altitudes that man has ever gone to, and lift the heaviest pay loads of any aviator in history. Some of you will hold in your hands the most awesome destructive power which any Nation or any man has conceived. Some of you will work with the leaders of new nations which were not even nations a few years ago. Some of you will support guerrilla and counter-guerrilla operations that combine the newest techniques of warfare with the oldest techniques of the jungle, and some of you will help develop new planes that spread their wings in flight, detect other planes at an unheard of distance, deliver new weapons with unprecedented accuracy, and survey the ground from incredible heights as a testament to our strong faith in the future of air power and the manned airplane.

I am announcing today that the United States will commit itself to an important new program in civilian aviation. Civilian aviation, long both the beneficiary and the benefactor of military aviation, is of necessity equally dynamic. Neither the economics nor the politics of international air competition permits us to stand still in this area. Today the challenging new frontier in commercial aviation and in military aviation is a frontier already crossed by the military -- supersonic flight. Leading members of the Administration under the chairmanship of the Vice President have been considering carefully the role to be played by the national government in determining the economic and technical feasibility of an American commercial supersonic aircraft, and in the development of such an aircraft, if it be feasible.

Having reviewed their recommendations, it is my judgment that this Government should immediately commence a new program in partnership with private industry to develop at the earliest practical date the prototype of a commercially successful supersonic transport superior to that being built in any other country of the world. An open, preliminary design competition will be opened immediately among American airframe and power plant manufacturers with a more detailed design phase to follow. If these initial phases do not produce an aircraft capable of transporting people and goods safely, swiftly, and at prices the traveler can afford and the airlines find profitable, we shall not go further.

But if we can build the best operational plane of this type -- and I believe we can -- then the Congress and the country should be prepared to invest funds and effort necessary to maintain this Nation's lead in long-range aircraft, a lead we have held since the end of the second world war, a lead we should make every responsible effort to maintain. Spurred by competition from across the Atlantic and by the productivity of our own companies, the Federal Government must pledge funds to supplement the risk capital to be contributed by private companies. It must then rely heavily on the flexibility and ingenuity of private enterprise to make the detailed decisions and to introduce successfully this new jet-age transport into world

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wjde service, and we are talking about a plane in the end of the 60's that will move ahead at a speed faster than Mach 2 to all corners of the globe.

This commitment, I believe, is essential to a strong and forward-looking nation, and indicates the future of the manned aircraft as we move into a missile age as well.

The fact that the greatest value of all of the weapons of massive retaliation lies in their ability to deter war does not diminish their importance, nor will national security in the years ahead be achieved simply by piling up bigger bombs or burying our missiles under bigger loads of concrete. In an imperfect world where human folly has been the rule and not the exception, the surest way to bring on the war that can never happen is to sit back and assure ourselves it will not happen.

The existence of mutual nuclear deterrents cannot be shrugged off as stalemate for our national security in a period of rapid change will depend on constant reappraisal of our present doctrines, on alertness to new developments, on imagination and resourcefulness, and new ideas. Stalemate is a static term and not one of you would be here today if you believed you were entering an outmoded service requiring only custodial duties in a period of nuclear stalemate.

I am impressed by the extraordinary scholastic record, unmatched by any new college or university in this country, which has been made by the students and graduates of this academy. Four Rhodes Scholarships last year, two this year, and other selected scholarships and also your record in the graduate record examination makes the people of this country proud of this academy and the Air Force which made it possible.

This country is proud of the fact that more than one out of five of your all-military faculty has a Doctor's degree, and all the rest have Master's degrees. This is what we need for leadership in our military services, for the Air Force officer of today and tomorrow requires the broadest kind of scholarship to understand a most complex and changing world. He requires understanding and learning unmatched in the days before World War II. Any graduate of this academy who serves in our Armed Forces will need to know economics and history, and international affairs, and languages. You will need an appreciation of other societies, and an understanding of our own Nation's purposes and policy.

General Norstad's leadership in NATO, General Smart's outstanding tour of duty as the senior military representative in Japan are examples of Air Force officers who use their broad talents for the benefit of our country. Many of you will have similar opportunities to represent this country in negotiations with our adversaries as well as our friends, working with international organizations, working in every way in the hundred free countries around the globe to help them maintain their freedom. Your major responsibilities, in the final analysis, will relate to military commands. Some of you may be members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and participate as advisers to the President who holds office.

Last October's crisis in the Caribbean amply demonstrated that military policy and power cannot and must not be separated from political and diplomatic decisions. Whatever the military motive and implications of the reckless attempt to put missiles on the Island of Cuba, the political and psychological implications were equally important. We needed in

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