

America's Deteriorating Defense Posture

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THE ARMED FORCES of the United States have been the shield of the Republic in the strife-torn years since the end of World War II. Nuclear armaments in the U. S. arsenal have deterred the Soviet Union from starting a third world war—a massive strike against the Western nations. The conventional armed forces of the United States have been busily employed in the quarter-century past in fighting limited wars against communist aggression and in checking Soviet and Red Chinese advances in many parts of the world. In the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 America's nuclear superiority and supremacy on the high seas prevented the Soviets from establishing domination over the free world.

Today, however—less than a decade after the Cuban missile crisis—the United States no longer is the first military power in the world. In a few areas such as the design of multiple warhead (MIRV) missiles the U.S. is technologically more advanced than the Soviet Union. But in terms of overall military capability the Soviet Union is ahead of the United States. Where the Soviets are now on a basis of parity with the U.S., they are moving ahead rapidly.

The American people have heard the facts from Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But the full significance of the erosion of American military strength seems to have escaped the public. In Congress the weight of opinion is on the side of reducing U.S.

military expenditures. Those national legislators who press for dramatic action to restore America's strategic superiority are in a minority. The facts they recite fail to impress many key legislators and large and influential segments of public opinion.

Yet facts are facts. The most ominous of these relate to the comparative strength of U.S. and Soviet nuclear forces. In 1965 the Soviet Union's strategic missile force consisted of approximately 220 missile launchers. The missiles were comparable to the first generation of American ICBM's. At that time the U.S. missile force consisted of 880 ICBM's. We not only had the advanced land-based Minuteman missile but we had absolute supremacy in sea-based Polaris missiles.

Today the Soviets possess—in addition to their original 220 ICBM's—more than 800 missiles with the capabilities of the American Minuteman, plus 200 giant SS-9 missiles with a capability far exceeding anything in the U.S. arsenal. In terms of land-based missiles the Soviets have a 20 percent numerical advantage. Their megatonnage lead is on the order of 200 percent.

That is only part of the story; the United States has stabilized its missile force, whereas the Soviets are pushing ahead with construction of new land-based and sea-based missiles. At the present rate of Soviet missile deployment, the USSR should have 2,500 ICBM launchers by 1975. Unless dramatic action is taken this year, the

United States will still have only 1,054 missile launchers four years from now. This dangerous imbalance is the result of the doctrine of nuclear "parity" developed by former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and continued under the Nixon administration under the guise of nuclear "sufficiency." Other nations, with no need to resort to euphemisms, will see this nuclear situation in terms of alarming U.S. weakness.

If the nuclear balance situation is gloomy now, it will be even less cheering in the future. Consider the situation with respect to missile-firing submarines. No U.S. missile-firing submarines have been built in more than two years. None are definitely announced for the future. The only significant change in the U.S. missile submarine force is in installation of advanced missiles in submarines conceived in the 1950's. There is talk and study of an ULM's (underwater long-range missile) submarine class, but no firm plans for construction.

The Soviets, meanwhile, are expanding their missile submarine force at a rapid rate. Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., USN, Chief of Naval Operations, told the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers last fall that

the Soviet strategic naval forces take the form of the modern "Yankee" class nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines similar to our Polaris boats. They currently have 13 of these submarines in operation and another 15 under construction, a clear indication of their desire to back up their land-based missile systems with a powerful strategic naval force.

Gen. John C. Meyer, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force and an expert in missiles, has cited the long-range effects of this submarine construction program, saying that

if they continue at their present rate,

the Soviets will match the U.S. sea-launched ballistic missile inventory by 1974 or 1975. The Soviets also are testing a new, longer range submarine-launched ballistic missile.

The situation with respect to manned bombers—another factor in strategic deterrence—is equally discouraging. In 1965, the United States had two and one-half times as many bombers as the Soviet Union, consisting of B-52's and B-58's. Today, the American bomber force has been reduced from about 750 to 450. All of the very fast B-58's have been retired from service. The proposed B-1 bomber, designed as a replacement, is receiving only token development funding. It is doubtful whether this weapons system will materialize. The FB-111 fighter-bomber, built on orders of former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara over service objections, has been a disaster. These bombers have been grounded because of severe technical difficulties. They cannot be considered part of the U. S. strategic deterrent. Meanwhile, the Soviets are developing a new variable sweep-wing bomber. Their older bombers are being used in increasingly bold fashion in penetrating Atlantic and Pacific air defense zones.

Another element in strategic deterrence is aircraft and missile defense. A limited antiballistic missile defense was authorized by the Congress—after the most difficult of struggles, but the Soviets are well along on building a strong ABM defense system. While SALT talks were in progress last year, the Soviets started construction of giant ABM radar units. Dr. M. B. Schneider, writing in *Ordnance*, has reported that "about a half dozen are operational or nearly so." Dr. John S. Foster Jr., director of Defense Research and Engineering in the Department of Defense, has warned that these radars "can in the near future provide the same radar coverage which we

will have some eight years from now if all the Safeguard ABM program is completed." Dr. Foster noted that the "vast network of Soviet radars and defense sites, whether antiaircraft or antimissile, has already complicated the problem of arms control of ABM to the point where it may not be practical." It is estimated that the Soviets have more than 1,000 surface to air missile sites. The United States has one-tenth this number of SAM's and no ABM radars operational today. Moreover, U.S. surface to air missiles are Bomarc and Army missiles developed in the 1950's. The Soviets have had wide experience with operational SAM's in both North Vietnam and in the Suez area.

The tactical fighter forces still have an important role in air defense against bombers armed with nuclear weapons. Here again, the United States is at a marked disadvantage. The Soviets have 3,600 jet aircraft. The United States tactical fighter strength is about 1,600 aircraft. Moreover, the Soviets have a qualitative edge. In the last decade, they introduced nine new fighter aircraft. In the same period, the U. S. failed to develop a single new aircraft for the air-to-air combat role. The new military realities are evident in Europe where the Soviet Air Force is now using the new supersonic strike version of the MIG-23 fighter in large numbers. This fighter, labeled "Foxbat" by the NATO command, is faster than comparable aircraft used by American forces. Its reported speed is Mach 3—three times the speed of sound—compared with a speed of Mach. 2.2 for the F.4 fighter.

All of these situations with respect to diminishing inventories of American weapons reflect an alarming decline in research and development—the elimination or cut-back of defense programs leading to advanced weapons systems. Existing U.S. armaments date back to programs launched

10, 15, or even 20 years ago. In many cases, there is nothing in the mill to replace them. The studies undertaken during the McNamara years proved sterile. New weapons simply were not authorized. For example, the Soviet Union's new blue-water fleet is superbly equipped with surface-to-surface rockets. The United States has yet to develop such a naval missile, though the uniformed professionals have cited the need for years.

The deterioration of America's combat strength is especially apparent in the U.S. Navy. Failure to start a major naval construction program in the 1960's lead to today's sharp curtailment of U.S. naval strength.

During the sixties, the United States depended on warships built to fight the Japanese and the Germans in the 1940's. They were patched and repaired, but replacements were not authorized. These ships have reached the end of their useful lives and are being decommissioned in large numbers. Severe budget cuts in the last two years have forced decommissioning of other ships which still have combat capability. Adm. Zumwalt is on record as noting that

the budget cuts that have been taken in the last two years have been in the field of sea control forces. As a result we have, during the last two years, come down on the order of 35 percent of these forces. We can go no further without great risk.

Robert D. Heintz Jr., a leading authority on naval affairs, has said that the U.S. Navy in 1971 is likely to reach the point at which it was in 1936 in numbers of ships in commission.

America's overseas presence in crisis situations is almost exclusively a naval presence. In the most recent Mid-East crisis, the practical symbol of U.S. intervention capability was the augmented car-

rier task force hurriedly assembled in the Mediterranean. But moves to strengthen the Navy's carrier forces are repeatedly frustrated. Work on another nuclear-powered aircraft carrier has been held up pending results of another study of carrier effectiveness. Such studies have contributed heavily to the current decline of U.S. military strength. They are "holder-uppers" in the language of the Pentagon. Indeed, prior to the last Mid-East crisis, there was widespread talk that the current level of 15 operational carriers could and should be reduced.

Control of the seas depends on a complex of naval weapons systems: carriers, submarines, destroyers, intelligence-gathering ships, mine sweepers, and service ships. The United States has need of new ships in all of these categories. The naval shipbuilding program is grossly inadequate to meet accumulated needs of many years. For example, under the fiscal year 1971 defense appropriations bill, only one new nuclear guided missile frigate was approved, only one fast combat support ship, only two general assault ships, and so forth. Great need exists for an entirely new class of fast, surface-to-surface missile armed, small destroyers. Nothing was done to provide such vessels. No funds were allocated even for research and development of the concept. Yet with the end of the draft in sight, the Navy's manpower situation will become critical in the mid-1970's and small, heavily armed ships will be more important than at any time in recent decades.

Throughout the 1960's, U. S. naval forces went unchallenged, except for a brief torpedo boat incursion in the Tonkin Gulf. In the 1970's, there may be many direct and indirect challenges. The Soviets have powerful naval forces in the Mediterranean. They have used them in daring and dangerous ways, including collision-course tactics with U.S. warships. Soviet naval vessels fre-

quently operate in the Caribbean and apparently will have access to a base in the south Cuban port of Cienfuegos, regardless of rumblings from Washington. With the installation of a Marxist regime in Chile, it seems inevitable that the Soviet Navy shortly will have access to the port of Valparaiso. Thus the Soviets will be in position to menace the Panama Canal from both the Pacific and Atlantic.

To see Soviet naval growth and operations in perspective it is necessary to survey the decade past. In 1960 the Soviets were engaged in major naval construction. High seas operations were rare. The first Soviet exercises in the Norwegian Sea were held in 1961. The next year saw new operations by Soviet maritime aircraft and the Cuban crisis, in which the USSR learned a lesson in the importance of sea power. In 1963 a pattern of bi-annual naval exercises in the Iceland-Faroes Gap was established. The Soviet Navy introduced missile-carrying warships in 1964 and the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron was established. By 1965 the Soviets were holding numerous large exercises in the North Atlantic. The year 1966 marked the maturing of the Soviet high seas fleet. Adm. V. A. Kasatonov, first Deputy Commander in Chief of the Soviet Navy, said: "The USSR Navy flag can be seen in all parts of the world's oceans." In 1967 the Soviet fleet stepped up all its activities. A Soviet-built Komar rocket boat, operated by Egypt, sunk an Israeli destroyer, impressing on the world the power of new Soviet naval weapons. In 1968 the Soviets deployed their helicopter carriers in the Mediterranean for the first time. The next year saw large-scale relief of the Mediterranean forces by the Soviet Northern Fleet and deployment of a task force to the Caribbean. The fleet was being used to "show the flag" on a worldwide basis. In 1970 the Soviets conducted major naval maneuvers in the Atlantic and Pacific and

vastly extended their Indian Ocean operations.

It is against this backdrop of Soviet military and naval activity in many parts of the world that the visible decline of U.S. strength must be viewed. In many areas, such as the Persian Gulf, the U.S. has only token forces. And many of the task units are aging vessels which compare unfavorably with the new, heavily armed Soviet fleet units in the same areas. For example, the Soviets have dispatched rocket-armed destroyers to the Persian Gulf where the commander of the U.S. Middle East Force flies his flag from an antique seaplane tender with no combat capability. The occasional U.S. destroyer in the area usually is an old gun ship built during World War II. In the 1950's American naval forces often could be buttressed by land-based air forces. But the United States has relinquished or been compelled to leave many key air bases throughout the world, such as Wheelus Air Base in Libya. Indeed America's tactical air power is locked out of North and Central Africa and the Middle East.

While the U.S. has retreated from air bases in Libya, Morocco and elsewhere, the Soviets have created a massive military bastion bridging the zone between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean and providing a jumping-off point for Central and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean lands.

U.S. Rep. Michael A. Feighan of Ohio has summed up the character and importance of this Soviet Middle East bastion, noting:

In the Middle East the Soviets have established a vast complex of sophisticated weaponry scattered in a 50-mile belt extending from Alexandria, Egypt, southward 180 miles to the Gulf of Suez. Stationed here are the most advanced surface to air missiles manned by Soviet

crews, amphibious equipment and 8-inch artillery.

The Soviet objective in this region seems comparable to the Japanese objective, prior to World War II, in creating secret naval and military bases in the South-Central Pacific mandated islands: a launching site for major operations. The Soviets are aiming at a new short route to the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the strategic islands and rich lands of Southern Africa and the Pacific beyond. In short, they seek total domination of the virtually unprotected Indian Ocean world.

Today the Soviet Indian Ocean fleet consists of approximately 15 warships including missile-armed ships. At times this force has numbered as many as 30 vessels, however. The Soviet ships call at ports around the rim of this 28 million square mile ocean, showing the flag and impressing weak nations with the growing naval power of the Soviet Union. The Soviets enjoy repair and fueling facilities in India, whose navy has been given four Soviet submarines, and the strategic island of Mauritius has become another frequent and important port of call for the Soviet squadron.

Another aspect of the Indian Ocean situation that should be more widely understood in the United States is the movement of Soviet and East Bloc ships through the area. In 1969 more than 3,900 Soviet flag ships rounded the Cape of Good Hope en route to African, Middle Eastern and Asian ports. Soviet merchant vessels have to be regarded as an arm of the Soviet fleet. Many of these ships have a military potential or carry military goods to client states of the USSR.

While the Soviet Union is engaged in the same kind of naval buildup in the Indian Ocean that it carried out in the Mediterranean, the United States has not made any attempt to provide a counter-force—except for an occasional fleet visit by ships from

the 7th Fleet in the Pacific. More than a decade ago, Adm. Arleigh Burke, then Chief of Naval Operations, cited the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean. Adm. John McCain, Commander in Chief Pacific, also has stressed the U.S. security interest in the Indian Ocean in many speeches and writings. But the failure to modernize the U.S. Navy has resulted in inaction with respect to that vital global region. The wrong-headed approach of many foreign policy planners on African questions has resulted in the exclusion of land-based U.S. airpower from the area. Action in this area is long overdue. The influential Washington *Evening Star* noted last December "the necessity of our maintaining at least modest naval forces in the Indian Ocean on a permanent basis."

If the U.S. government acknowledges this necessity, it also will have to recognize the central importance of naval and air command and control facilities at the Cape of Good Hope. This is the one point from which all Soviet and East Bloc naval and merchant traffic in the Indian Ocean—entering from the Atlantic—can be kept under surveillance. Indeed the dimension of the growing Soviet naval threat suggests Soviet naval activities throughout the southern hemisphere, particularly in the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. Computerized ship and aircraft tracking facilities at the Cape of Good Hope are imperative, therefore. More than that, however, U.S. policy planners need a new awareness of the importance of turning the southern tip of the African continent into a counterforce bastion to the vast fortified base area that the Soviet Union is establishing between the Mediterranean and the Horn of Africa. Unless there is a counterforce region to the south, communist power seems destined to flow down the African continent and across the Indian Ocean. Perhaps the most significant item in the en-

tire Soviet Middle East buildup is the fact that Soviet armed forces now are based on the island of Socotra 600 miles east of Aden. It is an ideal command center for Soviet forces aimed at South-Central Africa, Arabia and the Indian Ocean islands to the south and east. Soviet strategists are well aware of the colossal prizes in that global region, chiefly the enormous mineral wealth and industrial power located in Southern Africa. Indeed the African subcontinent—from the Congo to the Cape—is of vastly greater strategic and economic importance to the Western nations than the countries of Southeast Asia which are deficient in resources and industrial facilities.

The focus of military confrontation by the mid-1970's is likely to be the Indian Ocean world. Thus if U.S. interests are to be protected, it is essential that American defense planning be geared to the specific challenges likely to emerge in the Indian Ocean area.

First of all, the U.S. forces need military hardware for strategic deterrence: land and sea-based missiles, associated missile defense systems, and aircraft. Beyond that, however, the United States needs sea control, air control and ground control forces oriented towards the developing danger areas in the mid and late 1970's. Development of these forces has to be related to alliance systems and to the availability of bases. Given the enormous cost of new weapons and military manpower, not to speak of the difficult economic situation in the United States, it would be impractical today to suggest establishment of major U.S. bases in the Indian Ocean, although the proposed joint U.S.-British "austere naval communications facility" on the Diego Garcia atoll, 1,200 miles south of the Indian subcontinent in the British Indian Ocean territory, is a small step in the right direction. A more economical approach to

military needs in this area would be a plan of cooperation with the free world powers in the area. The Malagasy Republic, on the island of Madagascar—250 miles east of the African continent, is well-located to provide a base to cover the western Indian Ocean. Under a special agreement, France has the right to maintain air and naval bases in the country. The French, because of their assistance to South Africa in obtaining armaments, also are welcome at the Simonstown naval base near Cape Town—the key base in Southern Africa. South Africa's new French-built submarines will be based at Simonstown. Durban, South Africa's major port, has facilities for major ship repairs and an excellent airfield for large jets. Use of Malagasy, French and South African air and naval facilities by U.S. forces seems the most economical and efficient way to build up an Indian Ocean counter-base to the Soviets in the decade ahead. The British make regular use of South African naval facilities. Since the closing of Suez in 1967, an average of one hundred Royal Navy warships have called at South African ports each year. If the United States adopted a more realistic policy towards defense of Africa, and reached an understanding for use of available defense facilities in the area—at least in emergency situations, the elements of a strong deterrent force in the Indian Ocean would be put together in effective manner.

Even as we prepare for new military challenges in remote global regions where the U.S. has not been involved in the past, our people must bear in mind the importance of the technological challenge posed by the Soviet Union. It is not enough for a nation to have a strong will to win or a grasp of global strategy; a country determined to remain free must appreciate the extent to which an effective defense depends on investment in research and engineering. There is not any technological

plateau to which the United States can climb and rest comfortably thereafter. New advances in nucleonics, radar, surveillance systems, metallurgy—all have a direct bearing on America's national security. Nothing is more mistaken than the notion that the U.S. is safe against attack because it has a large stock of nuclear weapons. The element of surprise is still a key element in warfare—as much as it was at Pearl Harbor in 1941. And the enemies of freedom are constantly seeking technological means of gaining the advantage of surprise—the advantage of a first strike that would eliminate the possibility of a retaliatory strike by American forces. To deny the enemy the advantage of surprise means technological effort and vigilance on the part of the United States and this, in turn, means substantial, continuing investment in defense research and development.

To augment America's defenses in any way is extremely difficult these days. As Adm. Zumwalt has noted, "there is a tremendous disenchantment with the military, and a disinclination on the part of many of our countrymen to be concerned." There is no similar disenchantment on the part of the enemies of the United States. On the contrary, the Soviet Union's traditionally aggressive foreign policy is now wedded to the most aggressive military policy in the country's history. The Soviet leadership has set its sights on the acquisition of supremacy in every military field—on land, sea and air. The Kremlin is busily establishing a global military presence to advance both the Soviet political system and to secure national strategic objectives.

In the main the American people—or a very large segment of our population—do not want to hear about the Soviet Union's military buildup, its drive towards supremacy in all areas, any more than the French people in the late 1930's wanted to hear about Germany's rearmament. The Ameri-

can people seem tired of sustaining the defense effort—even though that effort has given them a generation free of direct enemy assault. The American people are preoccupied with social issues and with domestic expectations of one sort or another. They long to see an even more comfortable and strife-free existence at home. They respond to warnings about Soviet military expansionism with the counterstatement that there is not any real threat or that increasing Soviet military capabilities do not reflect dangerous intentions on the part of the USSR. It is very difficult to deal with such denials of reality or to reach those who persist in arguing that national danger is nonexistent. Thus defense budget levels are not in accord with national requirements. The capability of the U.S. armed forces to deal with threats to the nation is being reduced year by year.

The problem of maintaining a moderately strong defense establishment, let alone augmenting its strength to deal with new Soviet threats, may worsen in the year ahead as the Vietnam war winds down. In the past, the end of conflicts in which the U.S. has been engaged has produced hasty dismantling of essential armed forces. This was the case at the end of World Wars I and II. The U.S. Army may face the brunt of the demands for "economy" in defense spending. Certainly, the shape of the Army will have to change after the Vietnam war engagement is ended. But the Army must not be sacrificed. On the contrary, the Army will need to be re-equipped for missions elsewhere on America's strategic frontiers. For instance, U.S. forces in Europe have been allowed to rundown, or have been cannibalized in order to support the effort in Southeast Asia. The deficiencies of the Army in Europe and elsewhere must be remedied.

No one can deny that it will be expensive to refashion the Army, to undertake new

commitments in the Indian Ocean and elsewhere, and to provide new offensive and defensive nuclear systems. But since when has freedom been obtained at a cut-rate price? The British people maintained their freedom in World War II only at a staggering price in national treasure, not to speak of lives. There is no suggestion that the British are sorry they paid the price. Today the captive peoples of Eastern and Central Europe unquestionably would be willing to pay any price to be free of the Soviet yoke. If the American people, possessing the greatest amount of wealth in the world, are unwilling to make the necessary financial sacrifice for their own safety and national survival, the freedom and security they now enjoy will elude them in the future. The American people are truly fortunate in that they can, with good management, afford *both* guns and butter—missiles and desirable public services.

The principal need today—even before military hardware—is to renew the American people's understanding of the vital importance of strong national security forces. These forces are not unreasonable burdens, as some citizens insist, but an opportunity to preserve freedom. Great peoples are willing—eager, in fact—to bear heavy burdens in order to ensure their freedom. In totalitarian countries ruling elites simply commit the nation. The people have no voice on defense issues. The American people, however, must understand the issues. They must acknowledge the need for a strong national defense and give their consent to expenditures for this purpose. It would be tragic beyond words if the American people, in their period of greatest prosperity and comfort, failed to understand the necessity of defense and refused to approve the essentials. Attempting a shortcut around a strong national defense would lead to the humiliation and destruction of the United States.