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STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE MELVIN R. LAIRD
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS
OF THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION
HOTEL FONTAINEBLEAU, MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA

AUGUST 15, 1972

Mr. Chairman and Ladies and Gentlemen of the Resolutions Committee of
the Republican National Convention:

I appreciate this invitation to appear before you to discuss
the critical, non-partisan issue of national security. Because this
subject is one on which there historically has been broad agreement on
the part of the vast majority of the members of both our major parties,
and because I believe national security should continue to be placed
above partisanship, I offered this year to testify before the Platform
Committees of both major parties.

Back in 1964, when I was Chairman of the Republican Platform
Committee, I felt the same way about national defense matters, and
I invited Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara to testify. I was
disappointed that year when Secretary McNamara chose to appear only before
the Democratic Platform Committee. And, I was disappointed this year
when the Democratic Platform Committee did not want to hear from the
Secretary of Defense.

I remember that four years ago I appeared before your Platform
Committee in a different capacity -- as Chairman of the House Republican
Conference.

I called then for the formation of a great new coalition for the 1970's, made up of groups that had been far apart in the past but that were now ready to work together in meeting the new problems of the present. Since 1968, that coalition has begun to take shape in support of the realization of great national goals, both in national security and domestic policies.

Our objective -- an objective set for us by the President -- has been a generation of peace and a better quality of life for all Americans. The Nixon Administration has devoted three and a half years of constant effort in moving us toward that objective while maintaining our nation's strength. In the defense field, these have been years of progress:

- From war to peace.
- From a wartime economy to a peacetime economy.
- From a federal budget dominated by defense expenditures to one dominated by human resource programs.
- From an era of confrontation to an era of negotiation.
- From arms competition to arms limitation.
- From the draft to an all-volunteer armed force.

There is a close relationship between the domestic programs advanced by the Nixon Administration and the national security programs that have been our responsibility during the same period.

As the President said in his 1971 Foreign Policy Report to the Congress:

"Our new direction abroad and our new approach at home are parts of a whole. Both rest on the belief that decisions are made better when they are made by those most directly concerned."

I come from the grass roots, and I always have had confidence in the common sense ability of men and women at the state and local levels to solve problems and get a job done without overbearing centralized Washington control. This confidence led me to introduce the first revenue-sharing legislation in the Congress some 14 years ago. President Nixon shares this confidence in our people, and an important part of his response to our domestic needs has been his comprehensive revenue-sharing proposal.

The President also realizes -- as do the vast majority of common-sense Americans -- that it is possible to achieve both lasting peace and domestic progress if we have a strong America acting in partnership with other nations. And so he enunciated his Strategy for Peace with its three pillars -- strength, partnership and a willingness to negotiate.

This Strategy for Peace, the Nixon Doctrine foreign policy, and the supporting National Security Strategy of Realistic Deterrence are based on the concept of creative partnership:

-- A creative partnership recognizing the essential leadership role America must continue to play for peace and freedom in the world -- and rejecting outmoded, old-fashioned ideas of isolationism.

-- A creative partnership recognizing that America will no longer play policeman to the world, carry every burden, and pay every bill; but will instead expect other nations to provide more cops on the beat in their own neighborhoods and to do their fair share of the work in preserving world peace and stability.

Just as revenue-sharing represents a forward-looking approach to our domestic problems, international burden-sharing and the President's Strategy for Peace offer us a workable path to more effective solutions to foreign problems.

Vietnam became the test case and the first crucial step for implementing the Nixon Doctrine. When we assumed office in January, 1969, Vietnam was an on-going, major war and more than a half-million Americans were deeply involved in combat. The number of Americans there had been going up and up and up. There was no plan to reduce the American force. And so we began the process of Vietnamization -- helping the South Vietnamese to build up their capability to defend themselves, turning combat responsibilities over to them, and regularly bringing those half-million Americans home.

If we wanted a descriptive slogan for this massive movement of troops back to the United States, we might have called it "Come home, Americans." We think it is deeds that count, not words.

Today American forces are down more than 90 per cent from the last Administration's levels. The toll of American casualties has been cut by 95 per cent. Americans no longer have any responsibility for ground combat operations. Last weekend the last U. S. infantry maneuver battalion was ordered to come home.

Of course, nothing would be more welcome than a negotiated end to the fighting in Vietnam on our President's generous terms. But, until North Vietnam is ready to negotiate peace, South Vietnam will continue to resist aggression with ever-increasing self-reliance and ever-diminishing American assistance in the air and on the sea.

In its simplest formulation, our new National Security Strategy of Realistic Deterrence steers a prudent middle course between the policy extremes of world policeman and isolationism. It does this by providing the means for effective development and use of the military resources of peace-seeking nations to deter conflict at all levels. Except in the field of nuclear weaponry, it calls on other nations to do more to provide for their own defense -- particularly by furnishing manpower. It fosters greater readiness on the part of other nations, individually and in regional cooperation, to increase their ability to defend themselves. It offers U.S. assistance -- economic and military -- and U.S. support to such nations where our interests are involved. The partnership it establishes means that other nations now can and must do for themselves some of the things we have been doing for them.

This strategy has opened the way to peace. It requires that the United States be strong. It also requires that our friends and allies be strong. And this strategy will prevent future Vietnams.

In this year 1972, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Platform Committee, the question of how strong the United States should be has become an important public issue. I hope that your platform will call for the maintenance of our country's military strength and will reject policies of planned weakness, of white flag waving, of begging, and

of abandonment of our nation's role in helping to maintain peace.

In 1968, the platform your Committee wrote made the following pledges:

- To improve our deterrent capability.
- To redirect and stimulate military research.
- To strengthen our intelligence.
- To get more out of the Defense dollar through better management.
- To put national security planning on a firm basis once again.
- But most of all, to face up to the problems then existing and get on with effective programs, both in Vietnam and at home.

These pledges have been kept. They have been kept by a President who understands the relationship between strength and peace, between strength and successful negotiation.

Because we have not unilaterally disarmed, we have been able to exercise an important influence in maintaining a truce in the Middle East and in defusing the dangerous tensions that had been part of life for the people of Berlin for almost two decades.

Because we have been strong, we have been able to reach mutually advantageous agreements on arms limitation and to open up a new relationship with the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China.

As we build on this progress to achieve a generation of peace, nothing is more important than the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union.

There are profound differences and disagreements between us and the Soviet Union which cannot be papered over and simply ascribed to historical accidents or misunderstandings. They are rooted in different conceptions of the rights and responsibilities of men and of governments. They are rooted in different approaches in dealing with other nations. They manifest themselves in conflicting interests in different regions of the world.

Accordingly, we cannot eliminate overnight the profound differences that separate us. We and the Soviets are now and will remain for some time, if not adversaries, then at least political-military opponents with different global policies.

However, I believe great nations today can be peaceful adversaries without being belligerent antagonists.

We have made great progress toward a safer and more peaceful world under President Nixon's leadership. But we face in the years immediately ahead dangers that should not be discounted.

Our progress could quickly evaporate if we allowed our military strength to wane and if we had leadership that was not firm, calm, realistic, and experienced. It is especially essential that the nation be led by a President and Commander-in-Chief who does not waver under pressure or articulate confusing, teeter-totter views. For the pressures on a president are overwhelming. President Nixon has demonstrated the ability to devise sound policies and to successfully pursue them under the most strenuous kind of pressure.

And, although a few may want the United States to negotiate by unilaterally disarming, I strongly believe that such a course of action would be dangerous to the security of our country and the safety of our people.

While we are moving from an era of confrontation to an era of negotiation, we should not place our destiny or that of our friends and allies at the mercy of the hoped-for goodwill of any other power. We should not pursue policies that might place any President in a position where he has to beg any other nation for anything. President Nixon, the world's leader for peace, is pursuing two courses of action that are mutually supporting:

First, we are maintaining adequate strength to deter war.

In this way, we reduce the likelihood of war and remain prepared should war come.

Second, we are demonstrating a willingness to negotiate agreements that can lead to arms limitation instead of arms competition and that can help achieve peace.

Our goal remains that set by the President in his Inaugural Address:

"... where peace is unknown make it welcome; where peace is fragile, make it strong; where peace is temporary, make it permanent."

Mr. Chairman, I strongly recommend that we continue the directions we have set, directions which can, indeed, lead us to a generation of peace through partnership, strength, and negotiations.

We must continue the record of progress for our people toward peace and security. Specifically,

- We should continue to pursue the sound military policy laid down by the President -- a policy which guards our interests without dissipating our resources by committing us to police the world.
- We should maintain at all times that level of military strength required to protect our people and their vital interests against all threats and to deter conflict.
- We should continue to develop a strong partnership with our NATO allies and other peace-seeking nations so that the burdens may be equitably shared and deterrence of conflict made more effective.
- We should end reliance on the draft to provide military manpower unless threats to peace, now unforeseen, require a larger force than can be recruited by voluntary accession.
- We should seek to conclude further international agreements on arms limitation -- particularly on offensive strategic weapons and on conventional forces in Europe -- which will enhance peace and security for ourselves and other nations and which include provision for adequate verification that the agreements are in fact observed.
- We should complete the process of Vietnamization, leaving South Vietnam with the material strength needed to determine its own future by its own means. Before full withdrawal of American forces, however, we must insist on the return of

the Americans held prisoners in Southeast Asia and a full accounting of the missing. We never will abandon the Prisoners-of-War and the Missing-in-Action.

- We should continue our efforts toward a stable peace in the Middle East. Until the adversaries in that region come to an enduring settlement of their differences; we should continue to supply whatever arms and equipment are needed to maintain a military balance for the purpose of preventing a new outbreak of hostilities in that part of the world.
- We should strongly proclaim our pride in the valor and self-sacrifice of those who wear our nation's uniform, supporting them in their service and after it.

Mr. Chairman, we have broken from the sterile past and are truly embarked on an exciting journey for peace. We are on the right road -- and we should avoid detours and dead-end tracks.

I believe thoughtful Americans of both political parties want and expect our country to be strong and resolute enough to help attain peace, and to continue to be a leader in the world.