

From the Office of
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey
1311 New Senate Office Building
Washington 25, D. C.
Capitol 4-3121, Ext. 2424

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UNITED STATES DEFENSE AND DISARMAMENT POLICIES

(Remarks of Senator Hubert H. Humphrey on the Senate
floor, June 4, 1959)

Mr. President:

As the three nuclear powers (the U. S., and Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom) move closer to an agreement to stop nuclear weapons tests under an effective and workable control system, those who question the wisdom of such an agreement continue to voice their doubts.

In a free society each citizen has the right to give his opinions and to present his arguments. An informed citizen on a particular question not only has the right to present his case; he has an obligation to share his knowledge and views with others. When many of our fellow-citizens, including some of my good friends, champion the cause of continued nuclear testing they are performing a service by stimulating debate and discussion on a subject of vital concern to all Americans. I feel sure that these friends will welcome the fact that I, too, wish to join with them in debate, and to offer some comments and arguments of my own.

Those who oppose an international agreement on the cessation of nuclear weapons tests have two main arguments. One argument is that the control and inspection system would not be good enough to detect secret tests in violation of any test ban treaty that might be agreed to. I have discussed aspects of a control system on three separate occasions on the Senate floor since the beginning of this Congress. I do not at this time intend to dwell at length on the nature of the control system now being negotiated except to reiterate my own position. My position, in short, is that, while no system can be perfect, it is possible to install an effective and workable control system to monitor an agreement to suspend all nuclear weapons tests. Such a control system must have as its main elements five basic features:

- 1) The establishment of appropriately instrumented control posts at specified intervals throughout the territories of the nuclear powers, and including provision for the improvement of the system.
- 2) The staffing of the control posts and all other personnel connected with the control system to be international in character so that objectivity and impartiality in the operation of the system will be guaranteed.
- 3) The right of the control commission to conduct an unimpeded on-site inspection of any event which the control system cannot identify as being natural in origin.
- 4) A time schedule whereby the agreement and the control system shall extend to other nations and areas in addition to the territory and test areas of the three nuclear powers.
- 5) A control organization which can conduct its business without being thwarted by the use of a veto on key decisions.

So far as I am aware, the United States and the United Kingdom in their negotiations with the Soviet Union for a test ban treaty have not sacrificed any of these five fundamental features of a control system. I do not agree with those who say that the control system cannot be made to work. Furthermore, I do not agree with those who say that the United States has already accepted aspects of a control system which are not sufficient to deter a violator or to catch him if he tries to sneak a few tests undetected.

Atomic Tests and Limited Nuclear War

The second argument that is given in opposition to a test ban treaty concerns a thesis of military strategy. The advocates of this thesis would have us reject a test ban agreement regardless of the type of control and inspection system that the nuclear powers might agree to.

What is this thesis and why do these people feel so strongly about the need to continue nuclear weapons tests?

First, they believe that war with the Soviet Union and perhaps Communist China is probable and, therefore, we must do everything in our power to prepare for such a war.

Second, since a war is likely, they believe it is vital that we try to prevent it from spreading to envelop the whole world in a nuclear holocaust with the consequent possible result of the end of civilization as we know it. In order to prevent the spread of such a war, it is necessary to limit the weapons used and also, insofar as possible, to restrict the geographical area of combat.

Third, if we are to limit the weapons and restrict the area of combat, they believe it is imperative that we have a large family of tactical nuclear weapons at our disposal. These weapons cannot be the large megaton hydrogen bombs which are not really weapons of war so much as they are weapons of mass destruction of innocent peoples. Furthermore, it is argued, we cannot use non-nuclear weapons because these weapons are not powerful enough to fight a limited war. What power they have is further handicapped by their heavy weight. In other words, conventional armaments are considered no longer adequate for the United States because in helping to defend the entire free world we must be able to move large numbers of weapons quickly and with great mobility to the scene of crisis or actual combat. The use of our armed forces in limited wars without the resort to nuclear weapons is likewise considered inadequate because the Soviet Union and Communist China, having a combined population vastly greater than ours, and having less appreciation than we of the worth of human lives and the dignity of individual human beings, would have an insurmountable advantage.

The advocates of a program of continuous atomic weapons tests say that when big hydrogen bombs are eliminated as too powerful and when conventional armaments are eliminated as not powerful enough, the only thing left is the category of small atomic weapons. These weapons, say these advocates of continued testing, have the advantage of being light in weight, and therefore highly mobile, and of being sufficiently powerful to destroy an opponent's armed forces, but not so powerful as to be weapons of mass destruction. Only in this way, they say, can limited wars be fought and won without great destruction to human life around the globe.

The proponents of continued testing claim that the United States does not now have a sufficient number and variety of small atomic weapons for the purpose of defense in limited wars. Furthermore, the opponents of a nuclear test ban also contend we have not reached the necessary stage of development of these weapons. They conclude that under no circumstances should the United States enter into an agreement to discontinue tests of atomic weapons at this time.

The advocates of continued atomic testing for the purpose of assuring an arsenal for defense in limited nuclear war ignore, in my view, many of the realities of present day international political life. Their thinking, I submit, is based on a faulty concept of the nature of the crises facing us. They have constructed hypothetical situations about fighting wars which do not correspond to the actual situation in which we are apt to find ourselves.

What are the weaknesses in these arguments?

Weaknesses of Limited Atomic War Thesis

Weakness Number One: The assumption that small nuclear weapons must be used as a defense against the large armies of the Soviet Union and Communist China fails to recognize that the Soviet Union also has a large supply of nuclear weapons and that if we use such weapons there is nothing to prevent her from using them, or making them available for use against us. If small atomic tactical weapons are effective against the large armies of the Communist bloc, they are no less effective against smaller armies of the Western bloc. The idea that small nuclear weapons will give us a decisive military advantage in a war in which both sides use nuclear weapons is fallacious. This is not to deny that the small weapons may be militarily useful in a nuclear war. But there is no evidence that they will be substantially more useful to us than to the other side. And to assume that the Communists will not recognize their utility and be prepared to exploit it would be to repeat an old error. We have no monopoly on these weapons, large or small.

Indeed, we must accept the fact that if we use these weapons there is no assurance that an enemy would not reciprocate in kind. To some extent, this concept about having nuclear weapons to use against large armies of a potential enemy is a hangover from the days back in the mid '40's when the United States had a monopoly on the atomic bomb and when the U. S. armed forces were cut back way below those of the Soviet Union. Then we could say that our nuclear weapons stockpile was an active deterrent to aggression by the swollen Soviet armies, but this comforting idea has become increasingly outdated during recent years as the Soviets have developed a stockpile of nuclear weapons comparable to our own. The deterrent may still exist but it is a deterrent that now applies to both sides.

Weakness Number Two: If the United States ever became involved in using nuclear weapons against the land armies of the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Union this would probably not remain a limited war. It would become a major conflict. It is extremely difficult to envisage a situation whereby the United States, the Soviet Union, and Communist China would be engulfed in a nuclear war without large strategic weapons being used. It seems almost impossible to contemplate a nuclear war in which tactical weapons of small size are used against the large Communist armies but in which the war is politely limited to these weapons. It is unlikely that the belligerents in such a major war would limit the size and nature of the weapons through fear of retaliation in kind. And even if the "big bombs" were not used, the Soviets would have the small weapons just as we.

The conclusion seems unavoidable that when the advocates of limited atomic war capabilities speak of a limited atomic war, they are thinking primarily in terms of conflict on territory controlled neither by the United States nor the Soviet Union. As I shall suggest in a moment, it is not at all clear that third parties welcome the idea of being used as a nuclear battlefield.

Weakness Number Three: If the United States is the first to use nuclear weapons, be they tactical or strategic, this country will be stigmatized throughout many parts of the world. We would deliver to the Communists a political victory of such proportions that any military victory, if one were achieved, might not offset the political defeat. I have tried to test my viewpoint in this matter by addressing to the Department of State and the Department of Defense questions related to the attitudes of other nations on the use of nuclear weapons. I asked, for example, whether the difference in kind between the conventional weapons - even the largest - and nuclear weapons - even the smallest - is not such that it is inevitable that a distinction be present in

minds of people. The Department of State did not deny that such a distinction exists. It merely held that the development of tactical nuclear weapons "would help to correct the distinction now made between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons and obtain recognition that there is a continuous spectrum of yields." The Department of Defense answered my question by saying that it was not "attempting to propagandize the fact that nuclear weapons are no different than conventional weapons. The nuclear weapon is different and this fact stands up by its own recognition." What this means to me is that nuclear weapons are regarded by many, if not by most people in the world, as a class of weapons quite different from so-called conventional weapons.

Of course, the nation that commits the act of aggression should and would be stigmatized and condemned by all peace-loving nations. But since many people do place nuclear weapons in a special category and since it is doubtful that we could succeed in changing their attitudes, then we must live with the reality that such attitudes exist.

My concern on this score is echoed in a letter recently received by the Committee on Foreign Relations from a distinguished career diplomat now retired. He pungently states the case in the following comment:

"It is said that we need not worry over this eventuality because we will more than counter a conventional aggression with the use of our nuclear weapons. This does not reassure me because I, for one, am anything but convinced that in a showdown we will dare to loose a nuclear war if the other side does not. The responsibility is too great, the moral obloquy too heavy, the danger to our own existence too overwhelming. If my suspicion is correct, where would this leave us? . . ."

Weakness Number Four: We cannot assume that all countries would risk the total devastation that would probably result from the use of nuclear weapons as the price of defense against Communist imperialism. No country wishes to be the victim of Communist aggression and each would want to have help defending its people against Soviet and Chinese tyranny. In fact, a number of countries have accepted our aid in building their defenses and in preventing Communist aggression from being successful. But the defense that we employ must be commensurate with the threat.

There is a tendency to talk about small tactical nuclear weapons as though they were similar to the weapons of World War II, but these weapons are not similar. Our small tactical nuclear weapons contain enormous destructive power. This destructive power is not only inherent in the weapon itself, but it also comes from local radioactive fallout. This local fallout can affect the water supply, the soil, foodstuffs, and all the various kinds of materials on which a population must feed itself.

Four years ago, the United States Army and Air Force held some joint maneuvers in Louisiana called Operation Sage Brush. This was one of the first attempts to use tactical nuclear weapons in a simulated way in local warfare. The exercise showed that not only was the enemy defeated, but our own troops also suffered severely from the local radioactivity. Hanson Baldwin, who witnessed

these maneuvers at the time, termed them a "frightening experience." It was found that during these maneuvers not only the State of Louisiana, but also an area the size of twelve states would have been devastated, the cities partially destroyed, and the surviving inhabitants completely affected by radioactivity. The size of weapons used in this maneuver ranged from two kilotons to over forty kilotons - the military terms such weapons small tactical weapons.

Operation Sage Brush took place four years ago. It is possible that the Armed Forces have learned how to use tactical nuclear weapons to better advantage since that time, so that the residual radioactivity will not be so damaging to civilian populations. I tried to learn something about this problem when the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff testified earlier this year before the Disarmament Subcommittee. Unfortunately, they would not be communicative even in Executive session. Their lack of candor makes me suspect that our ability to reduce local fallout in a limited atomic war has not increased in four years. I urge Representative Holifield, Chairman of the Special Subcommittee on Radiation of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, who is about to hold hearings on the results of a thermonuclear war, to hold hearings and inquire into the results of a limited atomic war as well. This study is urgently needed in light of recent efforts to underscore the importance of continued atomic weapons testing for the purpose of developing so-called smaller tactical atomic weapons.

My point in bringing up the results of Operation Sage Brush is that I question whether any nation wants to be the battlefield for a limited atomic war, to defeat an enemy only to turn around and find even its agricultural produce has been well fertilized with radioactive dust. I am aware there are those who claim this problem can be solved by developing so-called clean bombs. The Atomic Energy Commission has produced large yield weapons with reduced fallout. Although the development of small weapons with reduced fallout has not yet been achieved, some of our scientists think this too can be realized. But even if the fallout hazard can be reduced, it is doubtful that it can be completely eliminated. Moreover, it does not help our safety and those of people everywhere if our weapons are 60 to 90 percent "clean" and those of an opponent are not.

Weakness Number Five: Our defense officials have persuaded us that the free world with its armed forces, conventional armaments, and industrial power cannot without nuclear weapons withstand the armies and armaments of the Soviet bloc. Again, we are presented with reasoning that is inconsistent. If the full land armies of the Soviet Union and Communist China were ever thrown into battle the war would no longer be limited. Both sides - starting perhaps with the side that seemed to be losing - would use nuclear weapons.

Another of our high officials in the Foreign Service stated recently to the Committee on Foreign Relations with respect to our NATO strategy:

"... a military policy that reaches for nuclear weapons as its main ingredient, is a self-defeating policy, in that it guarantees a dead Europe. Moreover, a military policy tailored to the concept of 'limited nuclear war' is also a policy which is likely to lose us our European allies. For what this notion comes down to, is a confession that America and Russia realize that the nuclear weapons are too dangerous to use against each other. Hence they will be used against Europe or on European terrain alone."

"What we need is a military policy leading to military forces in being that will not be more terrifying than the fear of hostile threats . . ."

A number of experts in military strategy contend that conventional armed strength can be made to offset that of the Soviet bloc, without the use of nuclear weapons, at least if the conflict is not all-out war. In other words, if the full force of Soviet and Chinese Communist armed forces are not used in a conflict, the conflict would already be significantly limited. In such a case the use of nuclear weapons by us might well not be appropriate, indeed, their employment by the defense might serve only to breach the limits and bring on total war.

It is in the area of conventional armaments and armed forces that the United States and the free world should build up its defenses. Unfortunately, the Administration and some of the advocates of continued nuclear testing at all costs have persuaded the American people that a defense consisting of nuclear weapons is about all that we need to have. They have tried to lull us into the concept that we can be strong and deter aggression without sacrifices in men and money. This is a new type of defense panacea -- a kind of automation. These same people argue that wars can be prevented, or if they break out, can be won, with only limited participation of our manpower and without the cost of paying for an adequate defense establishment based on the principle of balanced forces and balanced weapons. We have been so brainwashed about this automation of our defenses that today when a member of Congress rises to point up the tragic lack of balance in our defenses, people are likely to accuse him of undermining the deterrent effect of our nuclear arms.

New Concept Needed of Defense and Disarmament

I have attempted to cite the weaknesses in the arguments of those who advocate continued atomic tests at all costs because I am convinced that the faulty and misguided strategies on which this concept is based must be revealed and brought forth for debate.

I wish to make it quite clear that I am not arguing that we should unilaterally forego the use of atomic weapons, their testing, development and production, and the determination to employ them if the world situation became so intolerable that our very existence and survival was at stake. Furthermore compared to the military strategists who would place most of our reliance for defense on the very large multi-megaton hydrogen bombs and on long range missiles, I think the advocates of a diversified atomic stockpile have the stronger case. And so long as the nuclear powers fail to reach an agreement based on effective and workable controls I support them in their efforts to expand and diversify our nuclear weapons stockpile.

Where I part company with many of my friends in the atomic weapons field is in their notion that continued atomic weapons development is more important than anything else we can do, that it is more important than trying to have an effective test ban agreement based on effective controls, more important than trying to slowdown the arms race, more important than trying to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons production throughout many countries, and more important than getting the Soviet Union to accept and implement the principle that control and inspection must be part of the reduction of armaments. It is here that balance is lost and judgment becomes blurred. It is on this point that certain military factors are overlooked and political and psychological factors are almost ignored completely. And it is here that the fatalism about the inevitability of another war and the skepticism and cynicism about the prospects for progress on disarmament produce a distorted concept of what the goals of our defense and foreign policy should be.

I shudder to think of the military situation that ~~would~~ confront this nation and, indeed, the world if several other nations achieved a nuclear weapons and missile delivery capability of their own. To prevent such a situation is one of the main reasons why a total ban on nuclear weapons tests is more desirable and more urgent than a ban only on tests in the atmosphere and underwater. It is to our own national interest, and indeed to the interest and well-being of humanity to try to limit the membership of the nuclear power club.

For too long now the words defense and disarmament have been treated in our thinking as though they represented the opposite points on a compass or the extremes in the thermometer. Writers on defense and military strategy compose long and scholarly dissertations without once mentioning the subject of armaments control; or occasionally they may throw in a sentence or two, almost as a sop. At the other extreme, there are writers and organizations who prepare equally long and learned theses on the subject of disarmament without mentioning weaknesses in our defense establishment.

I do not see why disarmament and defense cannot be made the inseparable twins of national security policy. I would like to illustrate this concept by referring to the present missile gap.

Ample evidence has been presented that the United States has allowed the Soviet Union to move dangerously ahead in the development and production of long range ballistic missiles. We now know that unless we put forth great effort, within the next two years especially, this gap will so widen that the Soviets may feel able to attempt a major surprise strike. The Soviet Union may be tempted to strike because the Kremlin will know that we do not have enough long range missiles, well enough protected and dispersed, to strike back after an initial attack and that our strategic bomber command would not have sufficient time to get off to deliver a major blow against the Soviet Union in retaliation. A military balance of terror is not very comforting, in fact it is a horrible thing. But this horror is exceeded by the prospect of an imbalance of terror, an imbalance favoring the Soviets!

I am no defense expert, but insofar as I am aware no one in the Administration and no one in the military departments of our government has argued that these are not facts. As a consequence the United States is inviting disaster through a failure to take the necessary steps to close the missile gap and to take the necessary steps to harden our strategic air bases.

At the same time the United States has not persisted in the development of plans whereby the threat of an attack by long range missiles might be removed and the missiles eliminated or their production and testing curtailed. The Surprise Attack Conference was a start but at that conference the United States terms of reference were limited to inspection only. Measures of control and reduction of missiles, for example, were not included. We were not prepared for that conference and neither were the Soviets. But that conference is over now and we should not be standing idle. We must start to talk and to prepare for the next one. We ought to have a plan and a policy which is pursued vigorously for the control or the eventual elimination of these missiles. Soon the missiles will be installed in their launching platforms and readied for instant firing. A mistake, a miscalculation, or madness on the part of one or a few people could send these gigantic birds of destruction on their way to foreign territory. Yet, months and years go by and little serious effort is made toward their control.

The noted scientist, Dr. Harrison Brown, has stated the problem very well. He has said:

" . . . we are faced during the course of the next twenty-five years with the prospect of seeing one nation after another achieve the means of manufacturing nuclear explosives and of delivering them with planes, missiles, and submarines. With the addition of each new nation to the list, the problem of achieving control of any sort will increase enormously. As missiles become more dependable agents for delivery, increased emphasis will be placed upon the use of nuclear explosives for defensive purposes. Eventually most nations will be heavily armed with these weapons. Stockpiles for offensive purposes will be numbered in the hundreds of thousands and those for defensive purposes will be numbered in the millions."

We must simultaneously increase our efforts and our expenditures, if necessary, to close the missile gap on the one hand and to devise plans for missile control on the other. Such an effort should be pursued all down the line in areas of defense and disarmament. Alongside such a program of action, our negotiators, our information service, and our diplomats should be waging a campaign to bring pressure on the Soviet Union and other nations to enter into serious negotiations. This campaign should be waged at every level -- at the United Nations, at Summit Conferences, at Foreign Ministers meetings, and at any other forum where representatives of the major powers meet.

The American people are not unwilling to make sacrifices for adequate security and defense. They will make the sacrifices provided two conditions are met. First, they must be told the truth -- the hard facts about the world situation -- facts that are military, political, social and economic. And secondly, they must be shown that these sacrifices may one day contribute to the emergence of a better world -- a world in which competing systems, be they religious, economic, social, or political, can compete without the fear that the competition must lead to all-out war.

The international crises demand that we adopt such a program for our national security and for the security of the rest of the world. Military preparedness alone cannot give us the security we want. A policy of defense only is inadequate and promotes attitudes of hopelessness on the part of our people. And we can use beautiful words about disarmament and peace but these will be futile also unless we apply ourselves and make the necessary efforts both to control and reduce the weapons of war and to build a defense establishment that is balanced and meets the nation's defense requirements.

If we do these things then our sights can be lifted beyond the terrible thought that a nuclear war, large or small, is probable. So long as the United States views the world crisis primarily in military terms, and exclusively as crisis against Communism, its moral stature and its leadership qualities will be seriously questioned and may be irrevocably undermined in nations and among peoples throughout the world who have not a prayer of a chance to defend themselves against aggression by a major power. It is one thing to build varied and strong defenses but quite another to say this defense is all we have. If the democracies of the world are to survive they must place more emphasis and put more effort into works of peace at the same time that their defense efforts act to deter war from breaking out. Defense is a shield designed to give protection and buy time while we pursue with courage, imagination and purpose the war against man's ancient and relentless enemies -- poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, injustice and economic stagnation.



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