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PRESIDENT REAGAN'S DEFENSE SPEECH

The principal purpose of President Ronald Reagan's nationally televised speech on defense was to win support for his defense budget. Those who failed to watch his speech live on TV, however, will probably never hear his most persuasive argument.

How do we know whether or not we are maintaining a sufficiently large force of hardware and personnel to provide for our national defense? Only by comparing our forces with those of our potential enemies.

So it is interesting to note that the following sentence was omitted from the coverage of the President's speech in both the New York Times and the Washington Post. "Between 1970 and 1985 alone, the Soviets invested $500 billion MORE than the United States in defense -- and built nearly three times as many strategic missiles." That's the standard against which we should measure our current defense budget.

The United States spends only six percent of our Gross National Product on defense, while the Soviets spend more than twice as much. But if we compare the two countries in expenditures on actual weapons and research, we spend only 2.6 percent of our Gross National Product while the Soviet Union spends 11 percent, more than four times as much.

Here's another key paragraph omitted from New York Times and Washington Post news reports on Reagan's speech. "We anticipate that, over the next five years, they will deploy on the order of 40 nuclear submarines, 500 new ballistic missiles, and 18,000 modern tanks. But my budget does not call for matching these Soviet increases. So one question must be asked: Can we really afford to do less than what I've proposed?"

It is our President's "highest duty," as Ronald Reagan said, "to preserve peace and defend these United States." Nothing the Federal Government does is more crucial. Everything else combined which the Federal Government does is not as important as defending our nation against foreign enemies.

All other problems which our nation faces can be addressed at least in part by other institutions: state and local governments, churches, schools, families, or other social or

economic organizations. Only the Federal Government, with the President and Congress working together, can defend us against the Soviet missile force.

Most mistakes that people make are the result of not considering all the alternatives. Let's consider the alternative ways of responding to the President's speech.

If we spend on national defense what President Reagan asks and he turns out to have overstated our needs, it will cost us some money, maybe even a lot of money. But if we don't spend what President Reagan asks and he turns out to be right, it will cost us our lives, our families, our freedoms, our independence, our national survival. That's not worth the risk.

Of course we have a big Pentagon establishment. We have a big, wealthy country to defend. Everyone knows that, if you have a big house, your fire insurance costs more than if you have a small house. You pay your premiums and hope you'll never collect.

The fact is that spending more on military weapons will end up by costing us less. The more we show our strength ahead of time, the less chance there is that anyone will pick a fight with us. Furthermore, when we ask young men to risk their lives for our country, we owe them the best hardware and technological support that money can buy.

In the 1960s, former SAC Commander-in-Chief Thomas S. Power recommended that the United States build 10,000 Minuteman ICBMs (instead of the 2,000 recommended by President Dwight Eisenhower or the 1,000 finally built under Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's cutback). Power's proposal was deemed far too costly and unnecessary -- there aren't 10,000 targets in the U.S.S.R.

With 20/20 hindsight, Power's suggestion would have been the most cost-effective military spending in history. Such overwhelming military superiority would have convinced the Soviets they could not possibly compete with us.

Nobody runs in a race you don't have any chance of winning. Ten thousand Minutemen would have lifted the scourge of nuclear terror from us and the world.

President Reagan's defense budget should be supported in full as the most cost-effective way of preserving our national independence. As President Reagan said, "Each generation has to live with the challenges history delivers. And we can't cope with these challenges by evasion."