

NATIONAL DEFENSE

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MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

A MESSAGE TO THE CONGRESS ON NATIONAL DEFENSE

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JANUARY 12, 1939.—Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed

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*To the Congress of the United States:*

In my annual message to this Congress I have spoken at some length of the changing world conditions outside of the American Hemisphere which make it imperative that we take immediate steps for the protection of our liberties.

It would be unwise for any of us to yield to any form of hysteria. Nevertheless, regardless of political affiliations, we can properly join in an appraisal of the world situation and agree on the immediate defense needs of the Nation.

It is equally sensational and untrue to take the position that we must at once spend billions of additional money for building up our land, sea, and air forces on the one hand, or to insist that no further additions are necessary on the other.

What needs to be emphasized is the great change which has come over conflicts between nations since the World War ended, and especially during the past 5 or 6 years.

Those of us who took part in the conduct of the World War will remember that in the preparation of the American armies for actual participation in battle, the United States, entering the war on April 6, 1917, took no part whatsoever in any major engagement until the end of May 1918. In other words, while other armies were conducting the actual fighting, the United States had more than a year of absolute peace at home without any threat of attack on this continent, to train men, to produce raw materials, to process them into munitions and supplies and to forge the whole into fighting forces. It is even a

matter of record that as late as the autumn of 1918, American armies at the front used almost exclusively French or British artillery and aircraft.

Calling attention to these facts does not remotely intimate that the Congress or the President have any thought of taking part in another war on European soil, but it does show that in 1917 we were not ready to conduct large scale land or air operations. Relatively we are not much more ready to do so today than we were then—and we cannot guarantee a long period, free from attack, in which we could prepare.

I have called attention to the fact that "We must have armed forces and defenses strong enough to ward off sudden attack against strategic positions and key facilities essential to insure sustained resistance and ultimate victory." And I have said, "We must have the organization and location of those key facilities so that they may be immediately utilized and rapidly expanded to meet all needs without danger of serious interruption by enemy attack."

I repeat that "there is new range and speed to offense."

Therefore, it has become necessary for every American to restudy present defense against the possibilities of present offense against us.

Careful examination of the most imperative present needs leads me to recommend the appropriation at this session of the Congress, with as great speed as possible, of approximately \$525,000,000, of which sum approximately \$210,000,000 would be actually spent from the Treasury before the end of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1940.

The survey indicates that of this sum approximately \$450,000,000 should be allocated for new needs of the Army, \$65,000,000 for new needs of the Navy, and \$10,000,000 for training of civilian air pilots.

The several items will be submitted to the appropriate committees of the Congress by the departments concerned, and I need, therefore, touch only on the major divisions of the total.

In the case of the Army, information from other nations leads us to believe that there must be a complete revision of our estimates for aircraft. The Baker board report of a few years ago is completely out of date. No responsible officer advocates building our air forces up to the total either of planes on hand or of productive capacity equal to the forces of certain other nations. We are thinking in the terms of necessary defenses and the conclusion is inevitable that our existing forces are so utterly inadequate that they must be immediately strengthened.

It is proposed that \$300,000,000 be appropriated for the purchase of several types of airplanes for the Army. This should provide a minimum increase of 3,000 planes, but it is hoped that orders placed on such a large scale will materially reduce the unit cost and actually provide many more planes.

Military aviation is increasing today at an unprecedented and alarming rate. Increased range, increased speed, increased capacity of airplanes abroad have changed our requirements for defensive aviation. The additional planes recommended will considerably strengthen the air defenses of the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Canal Zone. If an appropriation bill can be quickly enacted, I suggest that \$50,000,000 of the \$300,000,000 for airplanes be made immediately available in order to correct the present lag in aircraft production due to idle plants.

Of the balance of approximately \$150,000,000 requested for the Army, I suggest an appropriation of \$110,000,000 to provide "critical items" of equipment which would be needed immediately in time of emergency, and which cannot be obtained from any source within the time and quantity desired—matériel such as antiaircraft artillery, semiautomatic rifles, antitank guns, tanks, light and heavy artillery, ammunition, and gas masks. Such purchases would go far to equip existing units of the Regular Army and the National Guard.

I suggest approximately \$32,000,000 for "educational orders" for the Army—in other words, to enable industry to prepare for quantity production in an emergency, of those military items which are non-commercial in character and are so difficult of manufacture as to constitute what is known as "bottlenecks" in the problem of procurement.

The balance should be used, I believe, for improving and strengthening the seacoast defenses of Panama, Hawaii, and the continental United States, including the construction of a highway outside the limits of the Panama Canal Zone, important to the defense of the zone.

The estimated appropriation of \$65,000,000 for the Navy should be divided into (a) \$44,000,000 for the creation or strengthening of Navy bases in both oceans in general agreement with the report of the special board which has already been submitted to the Congress, (b) about \$21,000,000 for additional Navy airplanes and air material tests.

Finally, national defense calls for the annual training of additional air pilots. This training should be primarily directed to the essential qualifications for civilian flying. In cooperation with educational institutions, it is believed that the expenditure of \$10,000,000 a year will give primary training to approximately 20,000 citizens.

In the above recommendations for appropriations totaling \$525,000,000, I have omitted reference to a definite need, which, however, relates to the implementing of existing defenses for the Panama Canal. The security of the Canal is of the utmost importance. The peace garrison now there is inadequate to defend this vital link. This deficiency cannot be corrected with existing forces without seriously jeopardizing the general defense by stripping the continental United States of harbor defense and antiaircraft personnel. The permanent garrison in the Canal Zone should be increased to provide the minimum personnel required to man the antiaircraft and seacoast armament provided for the defense of the Canal. Such personnel cannot be increased until additional housing facilities are provided—and, in the meantime, additional personnel must be trained. I recommend, therefore, an appropriation of \$27,000,000 to provide an adequate peace garrison for the Canal Zone and to house it adequately. Five million dollars of this sum should be made available immediately in order that work on necessary construction can be initiated.

All of the above constitutes a well-rounded program, considered by me as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, and by my advisors to be a minimum program for the necessities of defense. Every American is aware of the peaceful intentions of the Government and of the people. Every American knows that we have no thought of aggression, no desire for further territory.

Nevertheless, as the Executive head of the Government, I am compelled to look facts in the face. We have a splendid asset in the quality of our manhood. But without modern weapons, and without ade-

quate training, the men, however splendid the type, would be hopelessly handicapped if we were attacked.

The young men of this Nation should not be compelled to take the field with antiquated weapons. It would be economically unsound to provide in time of peace for all the modern equipment needed in a war emergency. But it would be nationally unsound not to provide the critical items of equipment which might be needed for immediate use, and not to provide for facilities for mass production in the event of war.

Devoid of all hysteria, this program is but the minimum of requirements.

I trust, therefore, that the Congress will quickly act on this emergency program for the strengthening of the defense of the United States.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
*January 12, 1939.*

