

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
UNTIL 6:00 A.M., E.D.T.
MAY 10, 1976

MAY 9, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED AT THE
ARMED FORCES WEEK EXHIBIT

THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT

We meet today in an America at peace. But we meet in the shadow of a monument to one who said: "To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual ways of preserving the peace." Today our defenses are strong, and we will keep them strong. Not strong for the sake of war -- but strong for the sake of peace.

Around us this morning are stirring symbols of America's military might. They remind us of the advanced technology and industry which keep America's defenses strong. But let us remember, in the midst of this impressive display, that our military strength does not lie in these weapons alone. It lies in the muscle and brain, the sinew and blood and bone of those who serve in our armed forces.

And statistics like the number of missiles -- the tonnage of our ships -- the firepower of our weapons -- must not distract us from the quality of those who are trained to use them. Military history has demonstrated, over and over again, that the character of a nation's soldiers and their commanders determines military strength more than any other single factor.

The men and women in all branches of our defense establishment are not only well-trained and well-armed, but just as important, they are courageous and devoted to the American ideals of peace and freedom they may be called upon to defend. Such soldiers have no price tag. How can we measure the value of an American who has suffered or died for freedom? And how much was a Grant or a Lee, a Patton or a Nimitz or an Eisenhower worth?

We owe these people our eternal thanks and gratitude. We owe them our admiration, and our support. Our soldiers and sailors are professionals, and we owe them the finest tools this country can provide. We will give them the means to do the job. The B-1 bomber, a model of which is displayed here today, represents just one part of our commitment to this task.

We have laid the keel for the first of a series of new missile launching submarines, the Trident missile fleet, which will be the foundation for a strong and technologically superior force through the 1980s. We are developing a new main battle tank, new fighters, and a new Intercontinental Ballistic Missile for the 1980s.

And one excellent example of our advanced capability is the new cruise missile we are developing for our air and naval forces. This is a significant new technology in which we lead the world. The weapons we hold today, and those we plan for the future, give America a mighty power. But with such power comes a mighty responsibility. We must never forget the purpose for which our arsenal is intended.

M O R E

That purpose is to defend our freedom, and to maintain a foundation of strength on which a better and more peaceful world can be built. That thought should motivate every man and woman in our armed services. And their determination to fulfill that purpose must also live in the heart of every American.

We must all do our best to ensure our nation is well defended. And we must all do our best to keep America worth defending -- peaceful and prosperous and free.

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