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Statement by Senator Mansfield

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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STATEMENT BY SENATOR MANSFIELD

Mr. President, a statement by the Defense Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmut Schmidt, was published in the April 2 issue of the Washington Post. Entitled "Bonn and the U.S. Presence," the statement sets forth most articulately the German Defense Minister's views on U.S. force levels in Germany. Like his predecessors, Mr. Schmidt is apparently opposed to any reduction in the level of our forces in Germany unless certain conditions, including some reduction of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe, are met. I ask unanimous consent that the full text of Mr. Schmidt's statement be printed in the Record at the conclusion of my remarks.

I have spoken on the subject of our forces in Europe many times on the floor of the Senate in connection with resolutions I have proposed calling for a substantial reduction of those forces. I will not impose on the time of my colleagues to recapitulate today the remarks I have made previously. I would like, however, to make a few
brief comments on Mr. Schmidt's statement, principally to set the record straight on this matter that is of such importance to the United States.

I would refer, first of all, to Mr. Schmidt's observation that there seems to be a "great debate" regarding the relationship between Europe and the United States "every ten years" and that another great debate is in the offing which will "revolve around the questions of America's future political position in Europe and of the number of American troops that would have to be kept in Europe to maintain the credibility of the American commitment to the defense of the old world." I most respectfully beg to differ with the implication that the number of American troops that should be kept in Europe is a new subject of discussion in this country. On the contrary, the question has been debated for many years. It was more than three years ago that I first introduced a resolution, Senate Resolution 49, calling for a substantial reduction of United States forces permanently stationed in Europe. And the debate had begun far earlier than that. In an
interview published in the Saturday Evening Post of October 26, 1963, President Eisenhower stated:

"Though for eight years in the White House I believed and announced to my associates that a reduction of American strength in Europe should be initiated as soon as European economies were restored, the matter was then considered too delicate a political question to raise. I believe the time has now come when we should start withdrawing some of those troops . . . One American division in Europe can 'show the flag' as definitely as can several."

I ask unanimous consent that the full text of the interview with President Eisenhower also be printed in the Record at the conclusion of my remarks.

Mr. Schmidt makes a number of factual assertions in his statement, facts that he says speak for themselves, which I think deserve some mention. He states that the twelve West German divisions "are, in fact, twelve divisions." It is my understanding that three of these divisions are short one brigade each and that there are certain other deficiencies in the West German Army that need to be made up in such areas
as reserve training and the supply of noncommissioned officers. I should add that I have full confidence in the West German Government's determination to overcome these deficiencies.

Mr. Schmidt also states that the West German defense budget for 1970 represents an increase of 6.8 percent over the previous year. To set that figure in context, I would like to point to a number of other percentages. According to the latest figures available, 8.7 percent of the men of military age in the United States are in the armed forces compared to 4 percent in Germany. In 1968, the last year for which such figures are available, defense expenses per capita totaled $396 in the United States and $87 in West Germany, and I should note that the defense expenditure per capita in Germany was lower than that in Britain or France among the NATO countries. Again taking the figures for 1968, defense expenditures as a percentage of the gross national product were 9.2 percent in the United States compared to 3.9 percent in West Germany, a percentage lower than that of Britain, France, Greece and Portugal, among the members of NATO. These facts, too, speak for themselves.
Mr. Schmidt concludes his statement with a frank admission that further offset agreements to balance some portion of the foreign exchange costs we incur by maintaining the present level of our forces in Europe are going to be difficult because there is no longer a need to place large arms orders in the United States, and he notes that budgetary contributions would have to come out of the German defense budget and thus apparently are not being contemplated. An editorial in the Washington Post, which also appeared in the April 2 issue, commented on Mr. Schmidt's statement by saying that this part of the Defense Minister's article "ought not to satisfy an American Administration already hard pressed by urgent defense and domestic needs." I agree. I ask unanimous consent that the full text of the editorial be printed in the Record at the conclusion of my remarks.