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Speeches, Reduction of U.S. Troops in Europe

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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September 26, 1973

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONT.)

Mr. President,

It is time for America to replace a policy of foreign landbased military omnipresence with a policy of discerning internationalism. The amendment I have offered will stimulate that process. Its provisions are not complex. In brief it will

(1) require a reduction by 50% of the landbased military personnel stationed on foreign soil over a three-year period;

(2) provide that at least 25% of the total be accomplished in each of the three years;

(3) permit the Executive branch total discretion to determine from which countries these reductions will be made.

The amendment simply recognizes that approximately 500,000 military personnel are presently stationed on foreign soil and seeks to reduce this figure to approximately 250,000 by June 30, 1976. The amendment would not affect or reduce the additional 100,000 military personnel afloat off foreign shores. Thus, under the terms of the amendment approximately 85,000 military personnel must be returned to the United States by June 30, 1974. The President would have total discretion from which countries these 85,000 could be removed (i.e., Okinawa and Thailand could account for...
the entire 85,000 if the President chose to return these troops home). Only foreign shore based military personnel would be included in the computation for eligibility for reduction.

And lastly, the amendment remains neutral on the question of demobilization of the personnel returned. It is my belief that the pressures to maintain a standing Army in peacetime through volunteers will significantly shrink the overall size of the military force levels. In this respect this amendment would complement that forecast and complement as well the unanimous action by the Senate Armed Services Committee which recommends an overall force level reduction of 156,000 by June 30, 1974.

The enactment of this amendment would be totally consistent with the Nixon Doctrine of worldwide presence manifested by other than land forces on foreign soil.

Action by the Congress is long overdue. The United States has stationed overseas more than 500,000 military personnel. In addition another 100,000 of military personnel are afloat away from our shores. Thus approximately 30% of our military force is stationed beyond our homeland. Not since the days of the British Empire—or probably more truly, the Roman Empire—have so many been required to "maintain the peace" away from our shores. Many of our Post World War II military postures and weapons procurements, and those
of the Soviet Union as well, have been imitative or mirrored responses to each other. When one superpower develops a missile the other responds in kind.

If only that policy of mirrored action were applied to the stationing of U.S. forces on foreign soil.

The Soviet Union has stationed outside the Soviet Union approximately 345,000 military personnel; of this total 330,000 are stationed in Eastern Europe. It is presumed that many of these Soviet military forces in Eastern Europe are there for other than an external threat from the West. But notwithstanding the comparatively restrictive military overseas policy of the Soviet Union, the United States is badly overextended abroad. The presence on foreign soil of so many U.S. military presumes a policy that heavily favors the military option. In fact it is my belief that the commitment and level of U.S. forces abroad has determined our policy rather than our policy determining the level of U.S. forces abroad.

It is almost beyond belief to most Americans that our country maintains over 2,000 bases and installations on foreign soil; that the Defense Department employs directly or indirectly approximately 173,000 foreign nationals at these bases and the installations to support these U.S. Forces abroad; that over 314,000 dependents are stationed overseas with these military forces. Disbelief turns to dismay when announcements are made that bases and installations
are to be closed in the United States and persons put out of work all in the interest of economy. Economy is a desirable goal but it should apply to expenditures abroad as well as expenditures at home. The impoundment by this Administration of $12 billion for domestic programs; the devaluation and other weakenings of the dollar over the past two years approach 50%; all marshall attention to this policy of shameful overseas waste. It cannot be tolerated any longer.

The amendment now pending is directed worldwide and not specifically at Europe. The public debate over the years has focused primarily on Europe because it is there that the largest contingent of U.S. Forces is stationed. But equally forceful questions can be raised to the U.S. troops stationed in Thailand--now about 45,000; or in Okinawa--now about 40,000; or Korea--also about 40,000; or Taiwan--about 8,000; or the Philippines--about 15,000; or even Bermuda where about 1,000 men defend our national interests. In fact, this amendment could be fully carried out during the first two years of its operation by reductions entirely from the areas I have mentioned, Thailand, Korea, Okinawa, Taiwan, Philippines and Bermuda, without removing one soldier from the European Theatre.

But since Europe has become the symbol and for the opponents of any troop reduction, their strongest case, it should be useful to
examine the premises and view the weaknesses of this—the strongest case. Let us look at the realities that faced this Nation in 1951 which precipitated the stationing of four divisions in Europe. Let us look at the premises upon which the Congress assented and the representations that were made about the permanence of such a commitment of manpower abroad. Then let us look at Europe and the U.S. today, 28 years after the War, 23 years after the initial stationing of these divisions to NATO.

EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR II

World War II left Western Europe in ruins. The United States moved swiftly with the most massive reconstruction effort ever attempted with its Marshall Plan—an effort that has proven successful beyond expectations. The institutions of Europe, political, economic as well as military, were in shambles. With these weakened conditions in Europe combined with the common perception of the threat of the hordes from the East a strong military presence in Western Europe to complement the economic effort was rational. But the North Atlantic Treaty, ratified in 1949, did not commit U.S. troops to the European continent. In fact, the Treaty itself made no commitment of U.S. ground troops to Europe. It was not until 1951 that the decision was made to send four land
divisions to Europe and Congressional assent solicited to this significant commitment of troops.

The history of proceedings before the Congress are very revealing.

Secretary Marshall claimed at that time that there was nothing magical about four divisions. The level was selected based upon a judgment of our resources and their availability. If only the same standard were to be applied today. And why should it not be applied?

But even more revealing is the exchange that Senator Hickenlooper had with Secretary Acheson when it was made clear that each signatory to the NATO Treaty would unilaterally make its own determination of its contribution of military equipment, manpower and facilities. In addition, Secretary Acheson envisioned the return of troops subsequently sent if the situation got better.

But what conditions were envisioned in 1951 that initially warranted the troops to go to Europe and what thorny questions should be resolved for us to expect their return? Senator Smith of New Jersey sought this information from General Bradley in 1951 and General Bradley felt the making of a peace treaty with Germany and the state of preparedness of the other nations of Europe as well as the aggressive intentions of the East were the chief irritants
that justified U.S. action. How interesting that all of these irritants have been significantly removed!

Nineteen fifty-one was, in addition, a time when the Korean War was underway; China was an active enemy; the Soviets had come of nuclear age; the Southeast European flank was still threatened; the economies of Western Europe were just back on their feet; political instability was prevalent in most West European countries. Strong men replaced strong institutions and provided the cohesion for Western Europe. But even then the questions were raised: Should the U.S. commit four divisions to Europe as a deterrent to another European war at least until Europe is ready to assume its own defenses?

The Congress assented to that request and the American troops returned to Europe to meet the threat that was perceived at that time. However real the threat then, has it changed since that time?

EUROPE SINCE THE '50's

When U.S. troops were initially committed to the European continent, total GNP of all European NATO countries was $46.9 billion compared to $831.9 billion for 1972. The total exports from all NATO countries to the USSR and Eastern Europe in 1972 amounted to $9.89 billion. The imports from the USSR and Eastern Europe to NATO countries totaled $8.67 billion. In this one area
alone of trade between the blocs, the most dramatic change in climate must be recognized.

But even more significant than evaluating not only the strength of Western Europe and appreciating the strong trade flow between East and West is the great number of events since 1963 that manifest as well as significantly contribute to the lessening of tensions between East and West. I have selected eighty-two events I consider significant since 1963 (See appendix A). They range from the hot line to the Nuclear Test Ban to the Consular Convention to the Non-proliferation Treaty to the treaty normalizing relations between Germany and Poland; to the Soviet-West German agreement on consulates; to the German treaties with Soviet Union; to the SALT treaty; to the signing of the treaty on relations between East and West Germany. But to many the threat of an all-out conventional war with the hordes from the East remains the same. Rigidity affects not only the rhetoric but the policy. General Eisenhower testifying in 1951 about Congressional responsibility in the determination and the evolution of the level of U.S. troops in Europe said,

I do think that Congress ought to see a respectable, reasonable approach, and the second they see anything to be, let's say, cockeyed and crazy, to get into the thing with both feet.
Well, Mr. President, I think the time has come when Congress must recognize that in the words of General Eisenhower, something is "cockeyed" about U.S. troops stationed abroad. President Eisenhower later recognized that change was justified. He stated in 1963 that one U.S. division would be sufficient to fulfill our commitment to NATO.

It is evident from these indicia of engagement with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that the tension that existed in the early '50's has changed significantly.

It is time that the U.S. recognized the existence of its own policy toward the East. The policy of this government should be consistent, not one of engagement with the Soviet Union in trade and cultural exchange and confrontation in military matters. There should be but one barometer by which this government guides its actions toward the East.

But we have many barometers that provide such different readings for the same phenomenon. This dual standard for rationalizing our policies vis-a-vis the Eastern bloc cannot withstand thoughtful focus. If our policy toward the East is predicated upon a desire to open markets and develop a mutual interdependency of East and West upon each other, that policy will yield benefits beyond the economic sphere as they have with increased cultural and educational
exchanges. It is a natural evolution of the events of the past decade. But in the military sphere—in the NATO structure—what remains is a stale rigidity; a resort to old rationalizations from bygone years.

THE MBFR

Again and again over the years we have been told both by our own officials and those in Europe that some decrease in U.S. military presence should take place.

But the time is never right for such action. Two years ago the argument was the policy of detente was underway and that nothing should be done that would disrupt the process, including the U.S.-USSR SALT negotiations and the goals envisioned by Chancellor Brandt's "Ostpolitik."

Today we find ourselves in a new situation. Success has been achieved in the first and most important round of SALT talks; the Warsaw and Moscow treaties have been concluded; the status of Berlin has been regularized; through the exchanges of visits between President Nixon and Chairman Brezhnew a new and better climate has been created which allows us to talk about the Cold War in terms of the past.

Despite this movement, we are being told that this is the "worst possible time" in which to take any action on the question of our forces in Europe. The bargaining chip is back. Negotiations
on mutual force reductions are to begin on October 30th of this 
year.

At the outset we were told by all the experts that MBFR nego-
tiations will be even more complicated and lengthy than the first 
phase of SALT. Most informed and optimistic speculations are that 
the outcome of such negotiations after perhaps two to three years 
might be a reduction of no more than 10-15% on the part of those 
countries involved.

Indeed, since the preliminary talks—i.e., talks as to whether 
there should be talks—were expected to take roughly five weeks 
and took about five months, my skepticism has been increased rather 
than diminished about MBFR. I really doubt that the United States 
can remain immobilized on the troops question for a minimum of two 
and possibly even four to five years. So the argument to wait for 
MBFR really is a postponement of significant action indefinitely.

UNILATERAL ACTION

The questions of MBFR are immensely complicated even if they 
were undertaken in a bilateral framework. The positioning of 
forces, the proportionate reduction of one side as opposed to 
the other because of different logistical requirements will 
generate 19 different solutions equal to the number of participants 
at the conference. So the complexity of MBFR is magnified 19 times.
The wisdom of the North Atlantic Treaty which left the question of specific troop commitments in the NATO command to be decided unilaterally by each country is abandoned in MBFR. Unilateral action on such a matter is the only practical method. Any nation entering into negotiations whether bilateral or multilateral only agrees in those negotiations to what she determines unilaterally she can do or must do in her own national interest. No negotiation with the Soviet Union would cause the Soviet Union to reduce any of its troops from Eastern Europe if the Soviet Union determines that those troops are needed in the Eastern European countries for other than protection against an external threat. In like manner, if the Soviet Union senses a greater need for its troops on other frontiers, or if she desires to divert a greater proportion of her resources to non-military interests, then the appropriate reductions by the USSR will be made—but only then.

So unilateral action on our part to reduce U.S. troops in Europe, while still maintaining our commitment with a more wisely structured but significantly reduced level of troops could very well stimulate a similar independently arrived at response on the part of the Soviet Union. This is not unprecedented in recent history. Unilateral and independent actions taken by the United States and the Soviet Union for moratoriums on nuclear tests in the
atmosphere precipitated similar constructive independent responses on each side which ultimately led to the nuclear test ban treaty. So the arguments that unilateral action cannot lead to constructive responses are unwarranted.

Unilateral action on the part of the United States might produce surprising and constructive results. What people fail to realize is that the Soviet Union, ever since World War II, has not only been acting, but reacting, within its military establishment. Much of the Soviet force was created at a time when the United States had clear nuclear superiority. Most informed observers, here and in Western Europe, agree that the Soviet Union is considerably more conservative and suspicious than the United States because of its historical experiences and the character of its society.

Yet no one seems willing to make allowances for the inertia of this military conservatism in the USSR. We forget that the speeches by our NATO Commanders, as well as our political leaders, regarding need for NATO strength and readiness are read in quite a different light by the Soviet leadership than we intend. It seems a simple proposition, that they trust us no more than we trust them, but we do not seem to be able to absorb this view and act upon it.

But even more significant is the European reaction to any removal of U.S. troops from the continent. It is an accepted
axiom that the Europeans would follow suit and reduce their conventional forces as well.

What is the threat, then, that requires so many U.S. forces on the Continent? If there is a truly perceived threat of a conventional war from the East, would not our European allies who are closer to the "threat" then respond by an accelerated commitment of resources? But no, they would relax as well, accept the detente and devote more resources to non-military ventures. Then why should we, 3,000 miles away, assume such arrogance as to perceive a greater threat to Europe than do the Europeans?

I think the question presumes a rational answer but there is none. It does highlight, however, the dominance of the military posture in Europe by the United States. Since the formation of NATO, there has never been a Supreme Allied Commander who was not an American. U.S. perceptions of the threat are tolerated by the Europeans and why not--the U.S. is footing the greatest share of the cost. Since it is really our nuclear response that the Europeans wish committed, their tolerance for our eccentricities--including the World War II conventional war contingency--is very high.
It baffles me why a properly structured U.S. military force of one or at the most two lean, mobile divisions, in position to move rapidly along the German frontier, would not be even greater insurance against any form of pressure from the East.

It would be more realistic to the type of improbable attack that might conceivably come from the East. It would permit American forces to be engaged from the beginning, thus allaying any fears on the part of the Europeans that the United States would not be involved in the event of a quick thrust into Western Europe.

THE FINANCIAL BURDEN

Mr. President, I have not dwelled upon the question of budgetary drain and balance-of-payments costs of our troops stationed overseas. I have deliberately left this point to one side in considering these questions because I believe the United States will bear the necessary costs to fulfill its international obligations. Our history will show that! But I believe it is clear that the United States can fulfill its international obligations abroad with a significant reduction of U.S. forces on foreign soil.

I believe a focus on this issue can be gained at last because of the competition for resources at home. But these resources will be saved, not by trimming our sails on our international obligations but by trimming the waste from years of inattention to a rational international policy.
The Senate is well aware that the overall costs of our commitment to NATO amounts to something in the neighborhood of $17 billion, including everything except strategic forces; that the direct annual operating costs for the approximately 300,000 U.S. forces actually located in Europe amounts to approximately $4 billion, and with equipment, over $7 billion; that the net balance of payments drain because of the U.S. forces in Europe is approximately $1.5 billion annually; and that these figures are growing daily because of the United States' disadvantage because of inflation, successive devaluations of the dollar and other weakenings.

A return to rationality on the part of the United States and its forces abroad would yield a very significant savings in resources to the United States. I have deliberately not addressed myself to the issue of whether the troops that should be removed from foreign soil should be demobilized. It is my opinion that a very sound international policy for the United States could be implemented with a reduction of 50% of the approximately 500,000 troops stationed on foreign soil.

The return of approximately 250,000 military personnel would reflect the judgment that they were not needed to fulfill existing international and domestic obligations and therefore appropriate for demobilization. But I don't think that the question of
demobilization has to be directly addressed at this time since I believe the pressures of obtaining a military armed force without the draft will to a great extent resolve the issue of demobilization.

CONCLUSION

Mr. President, the time has come to set aside the rhetoric of the Cold War used to justify a status quo of military involvement around the world.

The time has come to recognize action that is long overdue, and to prevent deferral of that action under a cloak of multinational negotiations that could take a decade or longer to recommend less than what is justified today.

It is time now to respond to the spirit of detente, to the success of the Marshall Plan and the current economic vitality of Europe, to respond to the realities of the '70's, to respond more fully to the needs of our own people at home.

I urge the adoption of the amendment.
EVENTS FROM 1963 TO 1973 WHICH SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE LESSENING OF TENSIONS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

3. Tripartite treaty banning nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere, in outer space, and under water. October 1963.
5. U.S.-U.S.S.R. agreement of exchanges in the scientific, technical, educational, cultural, and other fields. February 1964. (Emphasis added)
Yugoslavia becomes full contracting party to GATT. April 1966.
De Gaulle's visit to the U.S.S.R. June 1966.
Fiat-Soviet agreement for construction of a Fiat factory in Russia. August 1966.
Kosygin's visit to France. December 1966.
Kosygin visit to the United Kingdom. February 1967.
Fanfani visit to Moscow. May 1967.
Italo-Soviet agreement on cooperation in tourism. May 1967.
Poland becomes full contracting member of GATT. June 1967.
Prime Minister Wilson's visit to the U.S.S.R. January 1968.


NATO declaration calling for discussions of mutual and balanced force reductions. June 1968.


Italo-Soviet long-term agreement on the supply of Soviet natural gas to Italy. December 1969.

Soviet-West German agreements on supply of Soviet natural gas to West Germany. February 1970.


NATO declaration on mutual and balanced force reductions. May 1970.


President Pompidou's visit to the U.S.S.R. October 1970.


Signature of first part of quadripartite agreement on Berlin. September 1971.

Chancellor Brandt's visit to the U.S.S.R. September 1971.


Secretary Brezhnev's visit to France. October 1971.

Franco-Soviet agreement on economic, technical and industrial cooperation. October 1971.

Romania becomes a full contracting party to GATT. November 1971.

Soviet-West German civil air agreement. November 1971.

Ratification by the West German parliament of the West German treaties with the Soviet Union and Poland. May 1972.

President Nixon's visit to Moscow. May 1972.


U.S.-U.S.S.R. agreement on expanded cooperation in science and technology and the establishment of a joint commission for this purpose. May 1972.
U.S.-U.S.S.R. agreement on cooperation between the American and Soviet navies to reduce the chances of dangerous incidents. May 1972.


Signing of the basic treaty on relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. December 1972.


Soviet-West German 10-year agreement on the development of economic, industrial, and technical cooperation, and cultural and educational exchanges. May 1973.
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Referred to the Committee on ________________________ and ordered to be printed.

Ordered to lie on the table and to be printed.

AMENDMENT

Intended to be proposed by Mr. MANSFIELD to the bill

H.R. 9286, an Act to authorize appropriations during the fiscal year 1974 for procurement of aircraft, missiles, naval vessels, tracked combat vehicles, torpedoes, and other weapons, and research, development, test and evaluation for the Armed Forces, and to prescribe the authorized personnel strength for each active duty component and of the Selected Reserve of each reserve component of the Armed Forces, and the military training student loads, and for other purposes,

viz: At the appropriate place in the bill insert a new section as follows:

Sec. (a) The Secretary of Defense shall take such action as may be necessary to reduce, by not less than 50 per centum, the number of military forces of the United States assigned to duty in foreign countries on March 1, 1973. Such reduction shall be completed not later than June 30, 1976; and not less than one-fourth of the total reduction required to be made shall be completed prior to July 1, 1974, and not less than one-half of such total reduction shall be completed prior to July 1, 1975.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no funds may be expended on or after July 1, 1974, to support or maintain military forces of the United States assigned to duty in foreign countries if the number of such forces so assigned to such duty on or after such date exceeds a number equal to the number of such forces assigned to such duty on March 1, 1973, reduced by such number as necessary to comply with the provisions of subsection (a) of this section.

Amnd. No.
(c) As used in this section, the term "military forces of the United States" shall not include personnel assigned to duty aboard naval vessels of the United States.