

REMARKS BY GOVERNOR JAMES B. EDWARDS

NROTC

APRIL 8, 1976, 2:00 P.M.

IT IS A DEEP PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE WITH YOU THIS YEAR...AND AN EVEN GREATER PRIVILEGE TO SEE SO MANY YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE DEDICATED TO THE IDEALS OF OUR NATION THROUGH SERVICE IN ROTC.

YOU HAVE COMMITTED YOURSELVES TO THE SERVICE OF OUR NATION AT A VERY CRUCIAL TIME IN OUR HISTORY. YOU ARE PART OF A MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT THAT HAS EXPERIENCED SOME ROUGH TIMES IN RECENT YEARS. ALL BRANCHES OF THE SERVICE TODAY ARE SUFFERING FROM BUDGETARY CUTBACKS. AS OUR GREAT NATION'S NEED FOR DEFENSE HAS GROWN IN RECENT YEARS, IT DEEPLY CONCERNS ME THAT OUR COMMITMENT TO DEFENSE IN DOLLARS SPENT HAS DECREASED.

THERE ARE THOSE IN AMERICA TODAY WHO SAY WE HAVE DONE ENOUGH FOR OUR MILITARY TO MAINTAIN A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE. THEY ARE ALSO THE SAME ONES WHO APPLAUDED AS AMERICA PULLED OUT OF ITS COMMITMENT IN VIETNAM AND AS THE CONGRESS VIRTUALLY TURNED ANGOLA OVER TO THE COMMUNISTS FORCES. THESE ARE ALSO THE SAME PEOPLE WHO EQUATE PEACE WITH A REDUCED NEED FOR A NATIONAL DEFENSE. TO THOSE PEOPLE, I WOULD OFFER THE WARNINGS OF ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN WHEN HE SAID: "THE COMMUNIST LEADERS RESPECT ONLY FIRMNESS, AND HAVE CONTEMPT AND LAUGH AT PERSONS WHO CONTINUALLY RETREAT."

PEACE AND STABILITY IN THIS NATION CANNOT BE REALIZED THROUGH CONTINUAL ISOLATION. WE CANNOT AS A NATION AVOID OUR RESPONSIBILITY NOT ONLY TO OUR OWN DEFENSE, BUT TO THE DEFENSE OF THE FREE WORLD. MAINTAINING A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE, A MILITARY POWER SECOND TO NONE IS NOT THE EQUAL OF MAKING WAR OR ENCOURAGING WAR...AS THE CRITICS WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE.

BUT BY THE SAME TOKEN, AMERICA CANNOT CONTINUE TO BOW TO THE DEMANDS OF THE COMMUNIST NATIONS OR TO THE PETTY DICTATORSHIPS OF THE WORLD. TEDDY ROOSEVELT'S ADMONITION TO WALK SOFTLY AND CARRY A BIG STICK IS WELL WORTH HEEDING TODAY.

IN THE PAST YEAR OR SO, WE HAVE BEEN AMAZED AT WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE AMERICAN IMAGE AROUND THE WORLD. AS WE ACCEPTED THE POLICY OF DETENTE...WE SAID TO THE WORLD THAT WE WILL MAKE DEALS WITH THE ONE OTHER MAJOR POWER OF THE WORLD WHOSE OUTSPOKEN GOAL IS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE. AT THE SAME TIME, OUR FOREIGN POLICY MAKERS ARE NEGOTIATING TO PAY THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT OUR TAX MONEY TO TAKE THE PANAMA CANAL BACK. NOT ONCE HAVE OUR POLICY EXPERTS TOLD THE GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA THAT WE PAID FOR THE ISLAND AND WE INTEND TO KEEP IT...MUCH LESS SUGGESTING THAT IF ANYBODY DOES ANY PAYING FOR THE CANAL...THEY ARE THE ONES WHO SHOULD BE PAYING US. WHILE OUR NAVY HAS LESS SHIPS TODAY THAN AT ANYTIME SINCE BEFORE PEARL HARBOR...SUPERIOR SOVIET FLEETS CRUISE IN AND OUT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE INDIAN OCEAN.

ACCORDING TO FORMER DEFENSE SECRETARY JAMES SCHLESINGER, THE SOVIETS OUT-DISTANCE US IN ARMS PRODUCTION IN EVERY AREA BUT ONE... HELICOPTERS.

SINCE 1960, THE SOVIET ARMY HAS GROWN FROM ABOUT 3 MILLION MEN TO 4.4 MILLION--TWICE THE SIZE OF THE U.S. MILITARY.

DESPITE THIS, SOME CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE AS MUCH MILITARY POWER AS WE NEED.

OUR FOREIGN POLICY OF TODAY SEEMS TO ASSUME THAT AMERICA WILL BE AROUND FOREVER...WHETHER WE MAINTAIN A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE OR NOT.

LET ME RETURN TO THE WORDS OF SOLZHENITSYN WHEN HE SAYS: "YOU HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT DEMOCRACIES CAN LAST FOREVER. BUT THE DEMOCRACIES ARE ISLANDS LOST IN AN IMMENSE RIVER OF HISTORY. THE WATER IS ALWAYS RISING."

I DO NOT DOUBT THE POWER AND THE STRENGTH OF THIS DEMOCRACY. I DO NOT DOUBT THAT IT WILL BE AROUND FOR QUITE A FEW MORE HUNDRED YEARS, BUT IT CAN ONLY DO SO IF WE RECOGNIZE OUR ROLE IN THE WORLD. IT WILL ONLY BE SO, AS LONG AS PEOPLE LIKE YOU DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO THE FUTURE OF AMERICA.

IT IS THROUGH PEOPLE LIKE YOU THAT OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE WILL ONCE AGAIN BECOME SECOND TO NONE...AND AMERICA WILL MAINTAIN ITS STATUS AS THE LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD.

YOU HAVE, BY PARTICIPATING IN ROTC, SHOWN THAT YOU ARE READY TO KEEP THIS NATION STRONG AND FREE...FOR THAT YOU ARE TO BE COMMENDED AND YOU DESERVE THE THANKS OF ALL OF US.