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REPORT TO THE PEOPLE FROM YOUR CONGRESSWOMAN

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From all present indications, the biggest, most compelling political issue of the 1960 Presidential and Congressional campaigns will be the state of American defenses.

Already, political pollsters-- both public and private-- are reporting that a significant segment of the American public is deeply disturbed as a result of the raging debate over the adequacy of present and future United States defenses. Disturbed, that is, and confused.

It is good, I think, to be disturbed, since this is nothing less than a life-and-death matter. In a democracy, where the people themselves must ultimately decide which party and which candidates are most nearly right in their understanding of our defense needs, there is no room for complacency about the matter of survival. Nor can we afford to accept-- on the basis of faith alone-- the views of any one person or any one side in the controversy. Charges and counter-charges deserve to be examined as carefully as our resources of information permit.

The current confusion, however, is another thing. It is understandable, but regrettable. While it is true that, short of the ultimate test-- an all-out nuclear war-- we can never be certain that our defenses are sufficient, it is also apparent that many factors fogging up the defense debate are manufactured rather than **inherent**.

A look at the vast variety of sources from which conflicting statements have been coming may serve to emphasize why it is we cannot accept them at face value. Spokesmen, both military and civilian, for the three services, have urgent needs which they honestly express, though from necessarily limited perspectives. Within the services equally sincere differences are expressed as to the relative importance of individual commands and their functions; for instance, the internal Air Force debate between advocates of manned bombers and missiles. Many of these same differences are further reflected in the positions of the weapons manufacturers, each of whom inevitably tends to believe his particular weapons system is superior and hence ought to be ordered in quantity.

Complicating these already complicated and highly technical differences are the politicians who, however genuinely they may believe what they say, are always ready to exploit service rivalries, weapons rivalries and manufacturers rivalries in their search for issues. With so many Presidential candidates in the field these days, the rivalry here is the most intense of all.

I say this not in disparagement of the critics nor, necessarily, in disagreement with what they say about defense. Rather, it is simply to caution against accepting criticism without, first, examining its substance and, second, looking for the often natural and unconscious elements of special interest or narrow outlook that sometimes motivate the criticism.

Like many of my colleagues here in Congress, I have spent a great deal of time reading and discussing and thinking about the adequacy of United States defenses, aided by the opportunity for close contact with some of the acknowledged experts in the field. It may be as useful to you as it has been to me to list several observations which I have found to be reliable guides through the defense maze:

- (1) It is inherent in the military system to err on the liberal side in requesting funds

for material and personnel, on the sound principle that it's safer to have a little too much than too little. But the Defense Department's budgetary process is such that this "padding" is pyramided as it moves up through successive command levels to the top budget-makers. Therefore, Pentagon officials are not necessarily reducing the military effectiveness of the services when they appear to be drastically reducing individual service requests.

(2) In preparing the final defense budget, the President is responsible, with the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (representing the military services) and the National Security Council, for determining an overall balanced force sufficient to meet the anticipated needs of the foreseeable future. As weapons and missions and needs change, the roles of the three services must change. An adequate defense is not necessarily jeopardized when one service is reduced and another expanded, or when one weapon is cut back in favor of a different one.

(3) United States and NATO defense policy is predicated on the need to have in being at all times an effective deterrent force, that is, a combined defense establishment strong enough and balanced enough and dispersed enough to survive the most devastating attack Soviet Russia could possibly unleash and still have sufficient retaliatory strength left with which to wreak unacceptable destruction to the attacking country. To achieve such a deterrent force, it is not necessarily required that we match the Russians man-for-man, bomber-for-bomber, or missile-for-missile. Factors such as reliability of weapons, dispersal of bases, civil defense preparations, early-warning systems, and the condition of readiness of our attacking forces may be of equal significance.

(4) It is generally acknowledged that the United States today has the strongest military forces in the world, equal to the task of deterring Soviet aggression.

(5) It is also generally conceded that the Soviet Union presently leads in the production of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and that no reliable anti-missile missile has yet been perfected. It is not at all certain, however, according to latest intelligence estimates, that Soviet Russia will be able to launch sufficient ICBMs, in the simultaneous manner required for an effective all-out attack, within the foreseeable future. The tremendously expensive nature of launching sites has undoubtedly handicapped Soviet leaders as much as U. S. leaders. Furthermore, there is no available evidence that the Soviet Government has embarked on a "crash" program of building ICBMs or launching sites.

(6) Meanwhile, the United States is constructing a Ballistic Missile Early Warning System which will protect about 90 percent of the country (including all the exposed areas) from sudden and unexpected ICBM attack. The Air Force, though it is not widely understood, has already embarked on a limited "airborne alert" in which a number of our long-range bombers, fully loaded, are constantly kept in the air-- relatively invulnerable to sudden attack and poised for retaliation. If and when it is necessary to counter the so-called "missile gap" in the 1961-62 period, this alert can be expanded.

In spite of the sometimes frustrating lack of precise information and the excess of confusion about United States defenses, a little logic and common-sense can go a long way toward obtaining a generally sound view of our position. We cannot, perhaps, know for certain the Soviet's precise capabilities and intentions. Our defense planning, therefore, requires sound and experienced judgment and some margin for miscalculation.

I have yet to be convinced that any of the President's critics is the President's equal in the experience, judgment and courage required of the nation's Commander-in-Chief.