

Nixon Links U.S. Arms, Peace Goal

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NORFOLK, Va. — President Nixon warned in an Armed Forces Day address here yesterday that a one-sided cutback in American military strength would "completely torpedo the chances for an era of lasting peace."

Speaking from a podium set up on a pier at the Norfolk Navy Base, and flanked by three giant warships, the President made no mention of the Watergate affair that has rocked his administration.

Nixon singled out the possibility of large cuts of the defense budget as the greatest threat to negotiations with other countries — and thus to world peace. In a section added to his prepared text he sharply but indirectly—criticized those who in recent days have voted to cut funds for operations in Southeast Asia.

"Because of all that is at stake in the critical period ahead, we must reject the well-intentioned but misguided suggestion that this is the time to slash America's defense by cutting billions of dollars off our budget for national defense," he said.

"THERE COULD BE no more certain formula for failure in the negotiations... no more dangerous invitation for other powers to break the peace, than for us to send the President of the United States to the conference table as the head of the second-strongest nation in the world," he added.

For the first time the President used that fact that there are still some 1,300 men missing in Southeast Asia as a major justification for continued military operations there.

Before the Jan. 27 ceasefire, those operations were justified as necessary to obtain the release of American prisoners and to permit the safe withdrawal of American servicemen.

"THE COOPERATION which North Vietnam promised to give us in making a full accounting for Americans listed as missing in action has not been satisfactory," the President declared.

"And I can assure you that we must and will insist that this promise, this pledge, this solemn agreement be kept, because just as America never broke faith with our prisoners of war, I can assure you today we will not break faith with those who are reported missing in action. They must all be accounted for by the North Vietnamese."

The crowd, estimated by the Navy at more than 18,000 gathered on the pier flanked on one side by the U.S.S. Independence, a fast attack carrier, and on the other by the U.S.S. Guam, a helicopter carrier, and the U.S.S. Newport News, a cruiser that carried the war into Haiphong harbor last summer.