

Arithmetic of War

Extracted From a Statement
by Robert S. McNamara

Secretary of Defense

We have today a total active-duty military strength approaching three million men. U.S. forces now in Southeast Asia represent only about ten per cent of that strength. Moreover, the three million figure does not include the organized reserve of about one million men receiving regular-paid drill training in the reserve components of the Armed Forces. Nor does it include the other trained reserves and the vast civilian manpower resources of our Nation . . .

During the Korean War, we undertook a "limited" or partial mobilization, increasing our military forces from about 1.5 million men in June 1950 to about 3.7 million men by the spring of 1952.

Wartime controls (wage and price controls, material allocations, and excess profit taxes) had to be invoked and the reserve forces had to be called up to meet our military manpower requirements. In the Berlin Crisis of 1961, we had to call up a total of 150,000 reservists and extend the tours of men already on active duty.

In the current military buildup, no mobilization has been decreed, partial or otherwise, no reserve forces have been ordered to active duty and, with the exception of relatively small numbers of men in the Navy and Marine Corps, no involuntary extensions of active duty tours have been imposed.

In this respect, the Southeast Asia effort is unique in our military history.

Never before has this Nation, or any other nation, been able to place so large a force in combat in so short a period of time and some 10,000 miles from its shores, without calling up reserves, extending active duty tours on a widespread basis and invoking the kinds of strict economic controls normally associated with military emergencies.

Obviously, a military effort of this scope, undertaken without resort to the usual emergency measures, cannot be accomplished without some difficulties. But the more important question in assessing our over-all military

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capabilities is not whether there were difficulties but rather how was it possible to carry through such a major military operation without invoking the usual emergency measures.

The answer is that during the last five years we have greatly strengthened our military establishment for precisely this kind of a contingency. Excluding the extraordinary requirements for the large-scale military operations in Southeast Asia, which have been reflected in the FY [fiscal year] 1966 Supplemental and the FY 1967 Budget, we had already added some \$50 billion of expenditures to the pre-FY 1961 level. That is, Defense expenditures had been raised from about \$40 billion a year in the FY 1954-60 period to about \$50 billion a year in the FY 1962-66 period . . .

In the Army, the number of combat maneuver battalions will have increased from 141 on June 30, 1961, to 192 on June 30, 1966. The number of Army aviation companies (primarily helicopter units) will have more than doubled during the same period, from 70 to 161. But equally important, Army procurement of equipment and ammunition was increased from a level of about \$1.5 billion a year in the FY 1955-60 period to almost \$2.5 billion a year in the FY 1962-65 period.

In the Navy, the number of General Purpose Forces ships will have increased from 781 on June 30, 1961, to 912 on June 30, 1966, and the Navy General Purpose Forces ship construction program has virtually doubled.

In the Air Force, the number of tactical fighter wings will have increased from 16 to 21, and the number of tactical reconnaissance squadrons from 14 to 17.

Procurement of the kinds of equipment and consumables required for non-nuclear war was vastly increased in the FY 1962-65 period as compared with the four preceding fiscal years. For example, contract awards for ammunition for all the services were virtually doubled — from \$1682 million in FY 1958-61 to \$3227 million in the FY 1962-65 period. Contract awards for weapons, i.e., rifles, machine guns, artillery, etc., were increased from \$663

million to \$945 million or about 43 per cent; and contracts for tanks and automotive equipment doubled from \$1828 million to \$3672 million.

Finally, our airlift capability to Southeast Asia will have just about tripled between June 1961 and June 1966, and, on the basis of the program planned for the FY 1966-71 period, it will increase ten-fold by FY 1972 as compared with FY 1961.

It was these increases in our military strength, achieved over the last five years, that made possible the tremendous feat of deploying within a matter of months a combat-ready force of 300,000 men some 10,000 miles away and supporting them in combat — without calling up the reserve forces, without a general extension of tours on an involuntary basis, and without invoking the usual economic controls . . .

And, at the same time we were increasing our non-nuclear forces, we also increased our nuclear forces. For example, the number of nuclear warheads in our strategic alert forces will have been increased from 835 in June 1961 to about 2600 in

June 1966 and the total megatonnage of these weapons more than tripled. Moreover, by June 30, 1966, we will have doubled the number of tactical nuclear warheads on the soil of Western Europe, and large numbers of tactical nuclear weapons are available for use in other areas of the world, if required.

Procurement Effort

But the question still remains: Why, if we had acquired what we needed, do we now have to increase our procurement so substantially in order to support our military effort in Southeast Asia? The answer to this question has three parts.

First, we are increasing the size of our active forces because we do not wish at this time to call up the reserve forces. These new forces must be equipped and supplied.

Second, we do not normally provide idle inventories of such major weapon systems as aircraft and ships in advance for com-

bat attrition. Rather, we find that we can get far greater total effectiveness for the resources invested by providing active combat-ready forces in peacetime of sufficient size to allow for attrition at the beginning of a war, and then relying on new production to offset continuing attrition.

Third, we provide in our war reserve stocks only those quantities of combat consumables needed to tide us over until additional stocks can be acquired from new production. This means that as soon as we start to consume significant quantities of war reserve stocks in combat, we must start to procure replacement stocks . . .

The acid test of our logistics system is the ability of our forces to take the field and engage in combat, and that ability has been demonstrated in full measure during the last six months.

It can be stated categorically that no shortages have impeded our combat operations in Southeast Asia or affected the morale or welfare of our men. The fact has been attested to by Gen. Westmoreland, our Commander in South Vietnam, Adm. Sharp, our Commander in the Pacific, Gen. McConnell, Chief of Staff of the Air Force; and by Gen. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Johnson, the Army Chief of Staff, and Gen. Greene, Commandant of the Marine Corps, all three of whom recently visited Vietnam and talked with commanders down to the battalion level.

Indeed, we are moving more than 700,000 measurement tons per month to Southeast Asia by ship and these ships are now being unloaded promptly. In November of last year we had 122 ships with military cargoes awaiting unloading in South Vietnam ports or in holding areas. This total is now down to 41 ships, well within the normal range for an operation of this size. The cargo backlog, which rose as high as 257,000 measurement tons on the 27th of November, is now down to less than 100,000 tons, the equivalent of four days of work at the current

unloading rate.

With regard to ammunition, the buildup of stocks and production over the last five years has placed us in a position where we could plan on annual rates of con-

sumption in Southeast Asia, in the month of February, of:

- 1.7 million bombs
- 4.8 million 2.75-inch rockets
- 88 million rounds of air-to-ground fire
- 1 billion rounds of small-arms ammunition (including 30-caliber machine gun)
- 16 million 40-mm grenades
- 11 million mortar and artillery rounds

Our consumption in February of air-delivered munitions alone will be running at about 2½ times the average monthly rate in the three years of the Korean War, and we are prepared to support even higher rates in the months head. The \$7.8 billion included in the FY 1966-67 budgets for ammunition will not only support these higher rates of consumption, but will also provide substantial additions to stocks . . .

In summary, including the



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three new division forces which are being added to the active force, we will have a total of 22½ active division forces—18½ Army and four Marine Corps. In addition, we will have ten high-prior-

emergency, we could deploy into combat 2300 tactical fighter and attack aircraft within 90 days, in addition to those now in Southeast Asia, Korea and Europe.

The major increase in our production and logistics base, achieved during the last six to eight months, will enable us to support in combat forces considerably larger than now deployed. The gearing up of this production base was financed from the \$700 million Supplemental added to the FY 1965 Budget last spring and the \$1.7 billion added to the FY 1966 Budget last August. The higher levels of production thus made possible are financed in the FY 1966 Supplemental and the FY 1967 Budget transmitted to the Congress this January.

It is clear, therefore, that far from overextending ourselves, we have actually strengthened our military position.

Our active-duty forces are

ity division forces, in the reserve components, one Marine Corps and nine Army—with six divisions and supporting forces manned at 100 per cent.

Including both the active and reserve division forces, we have today a substantial "central reserve" of ground forces upon which we would be able to draw to meet contingencies anywhere in the world, and we will have more in the future. Simply by calling up the reserves and extending tours we could make ready for deployment over approximately the next three months a total of nine additional combat-ready division forces.

Air Power Reserve

With regard to tactical air power, we now have a total of about 4700 tactical aircraft, including both the active and reserve forces of the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. Only a fraction of these has been committed to Southeast Asia. In an

being expanded, our reserve forces are being strengthened and made more combat ready, and our production and logistics base is being vastly increased — all without calling up the reserve forces, generally extending involuntarily active duty tours of military personnel or imposing price, wage and material controls on our economy. The very fact that we have not taken these steps means that we still have great untapped resources upon which we can quickly call to meet any other major contingencies which may confront us in the future.

It is essential that this point be clearly understood by friend and foe alike so that there may be no miscalculation as to our capabilities to meet our commitments anywhere in the world and to safeguard our national security and other vital interests.