THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

The military security of the United States requires armed forces, disposed and alerted for instant action, quickly reinforceable by units ready for mobilization, assured an adequate pool of trained manpower for necessary expansion. Three elements are necessary to this military posture — (1) active forces in the strength and effectiveness necessary to meet, to repel and to punish a first massive assault or to conduct a lesser operation that does not require mobilization; (2) reserves so organized and trained as units that they can be speedily mobilized to reinforce the active forces in combat or to man defense operations at home; (3) an unorganized reserve pool, adequate in training and numbers, to permit a quick general mobilization of all our military strength.

Never, in peacetime, have we achieved this proper military posture. The penalties of our unreadiness have been manifold — in treasure, in blood, in the heartbreak of a mighty nation buying time with the lives of men. Now, in an uneasy peace, we can and must move toward this proper posture — at tolerable cost, with due regard for tradition, without disruption of human plans or the material economy.

Korea and Indo-Chinas are bitter reminders of the ever-present threat of aggression. The masses of armed men and the vast array of war-making machines, maintained by the Soviets and their satellites along the frontiers of the free world, sharpen the reminders.

The first purpose of our defense planning remains the maintenance of a just, secure peace. If, however, unwanted war should come, it should find us ready with every resource at our command to repel and defeat the enemy. And, at home, we must have forces trained for every emergency, should an aggressor be so criminally unwise as to attempt an atomic attack.

In seeking to attain these goals, we must remember that the active military forces are only the cutting edge of our nation’s full strength. A vigorous economy, a strong mobilization base and trained citizens are the invincible elements in our military striking power.

But we cannot possibly keep armed and in uniform the total forces that might ultimately be required in all-out war. The inescapable burdens would endanger the liberties and the economic system we are determined to defend.

On the other hand, in case of a global war, the nation could not count on having time to marshal its strength while the enemy was engaged elsewhere. Unquestionably, the United States would be involved from the outset of such a conflict. We must be prepared.

The Defense Establishment, through the past two years, has concentrated on effectiveness, economy and efficiency within the active military forces. The result is a formidable assurance to any aggressor that we would react to attack, instantly and powerfully.