
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR
and the New Deal**

File No. 679

1934 January 28

Message to Congress re Armaments for Defense

6/29/5
R.R.F.
1F
File

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

The Congress knows that for many years I have sought in many Capitals with the leaders of many Governments to find a way to limit and reduce armaments and to establish at least the probability of world peace.

The Congress is aware also that while these efforts on the part of the President, supported by the hopes of the American people, continue and will continue they have nevertheless failed up to the present time.

We as a peaceful Nation cannot abandon active search for a world agreement to limit armaments and end aggression. But it is clear that until such agreement is reached -- and I have not given up hope of it -- we are compelled to think of our own national safety.

It is with the deepest regret that I report to you that armaments increase today at an unprecedented and alarming rate. At least one-fourth of the world's population is today involved in merciless devastating conflict in spite of the fact that most people in most countries, including those where conflict rages, wish to live at peace. Armies are fighting in the Far East and in Europe; thousands of civilians

are being driven from their homes and bombed from the air. Tension throughout the world is high.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States it is my constitutional duty to report to the Congress that our national defense is in the light of the increasing armaments of other Nations made inadequate and requires increases.

In spite of the well-known fact that the American standard of living makes our ships, our guns and our planes cost more for construction than in any other Nation and that the maintenance of them and of our Army and Navy personnel is more expensive than in any other Nation, it is also true that the proportion of the cost of our military and naval forces to the total income of our citizens or to the total cost of our Government is far lower than in the case of any other great Nation. Specifically and solely because of the piling up of additional land and sea armaments in other countries, I make the following recommendations to the Congress:

(1) That there be authorized for the Army of the United States additions to antiaircraft materiel in the sum of \$8,800,000 and that of this sum \$6,800,000 be appropriated for the fiscal year 1959.

(2) That there be authorized and appropriated
for the better establishment of an Unlisted Reserve for the
Army the sum of \$450,000.

(3) That there be authorized the expenditure of
\$6,080,000 for the manufacture of gauges, dies and other aids
to manufacture of Army material, the sum of \$5,000,000 thereof
to be expended during the fiscal year 1959.

(4) That the sum of \$2,000,000 be authorized and
appropriated toward the making up of deficiencies in ammunition
for the Army.

(5) That the existing authorized building program
for increases and replacements in the Navy be increased by 20%.

(6) That this Congress authorize and appropriate
for the laying down of two additional battleships and two
additional cruisers during the calendar year 1958. This will
call for the expenditure of a very small amount¹ of Government
funds during the fiscal year 1959.

(7) That the Congress authorize and appropriate
for the expenditure of a sum not to exceed \$15,000,000 for the
construction of a number of new types of small vessels, such

construction to be regarded as experimental in the light of new developments among Navies; and to include the preparation of plans for other types of ships in the event that it may be necessary to construct such ships in the future.

It is necessary for all of us to realize that the unfortunate circumstances of today have resulted too often in the discarding of formerly well established principles of international law; and they have resulted in the entrance of many new factors into the actual conduct of war.

Whether we like it or not the fact remains that the national defense of the United States can no longer be conducted within sight of our long coast line on two oceans. Adequate defense means that for the protection not only of our coasts but also of our communities far removed from the coast, we must keep any potential enemy hundreds and even thousands of miles away from our continental limits.

We cannot assume that our defense would be limited to one ocean and one coast and that the other ocean and the other coast would with certainty be safe. Adequate defense affects therefore simultaneous defense of every part of the United States of America.

-5-

It is our clear duty to further every effort toward peace
but at the same time to protect our Nation.

(End)

(To be put on separate sheet and
inserted by the President)

In addition to these recommendations I believe that the time has come for the Congress to enact legislation aimed at the prevention of profiteering in time of war and the equalization of the burdens of possible war. Such legislation has been the subject of full study in this and previous Congresses.

- - - - -

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

The Congress knows that for many years I have sought in many Capitals with the leaders of many Governments to find a way to limit and reduce armaments and to establish at least the probability of world peace.

The Congress is aware also that while these efforts on the part of the President, supported by the hopes of the American people, continue and will continue they have nevertheless failed up to the present time.

We as a peaceful Nation cannot abandon active search for a world agreement to limit armaments and end aggression. But it is clear that until such agreement is reached -- and I have not given up hope of it -- we are compelled to think of our own national safety.

It is with the deepest regret that I report to you that armaments increase today at an unprecedented and alarming rate. At least one-fourth of the world's population is today involved in merciless devastating conflict in spite of the fact that most people in most countries, including those where conflict rages, wish to live at peace. Armies are fighting in the Far East and in Europe; thousands of civilians

are being driven from their homes and bombed from the air. Tension throughout the world is high.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States it is my constitutional duty to report to the Congress that our national defense is in the light of the increasing armaments of other Nations made inadequate and requires increases.

In spite of the well-known fact that the American standard of living makes our ships, our guns and our planes cost more for construction than in any other Nation and that the maintenance of them and of our Army and Navy personnel is more expensive than in any other Nation, it is also true that the proportion of the cost of our military and naval forces to the total income of our citizens or to the total cost of our Government is far lower than in the case of any other great Nation. Specifically and solely because of the piling up of additional land and sea armaments in other countries, I make the following recommendations to the Congress:

(1) That there be authorized for the Army of the United States additions to antiaircraft materiel in the sum of \$8,800,000 and that of this sum \$6,800,000 be appropriated for the fiscal year 1939.

(2) That there be authorized and appropriated
for the better establishment of an Enlisted Reserve for the
Army the sum of \$450,000.

(3) That there be authorized the expenditure of
\$6,000,000 for the manufacture of gauges, dies and other aids
to manufacture of Army material, the sum of \$5,000,000 thereof
to be expended during the fiscal year 1939.

(4) That the sum of \$2,000,000 be authorized and
appropriated toward the making up of deficiencies in ammunition
for the Army.

(5) That the existing authorized building program
for increases and replacements in the Navy be increased by 20%.

(6) That this Congress authorize and appropriate
for the laying down of two additional battleships and two
additional cruisers during the calendar year 1938. This will
call for the expenditure of a very small amount¹ of Government
funds during the fiscal year 1938.

(7) That the Congress authorize and appropriate
for the expenditure of a sum not to exceed \$15,000,000 for the
construction of a number of new types of small vessels, such

construction to be regarded as experimental in the light of new developments among Navies; and to include the preparation of plans for other types of ships in the event that it may be necessary to construct such ships in the future.

It is necessary for all of us to realize that the unfortunate circumstances of today have resulted too often in the discarding of formerly well established principles of international law; and they have resulted in the entrance of many new factors into the actual conduct of war.

Whether we like it or not the fact remains that the national defense of the United States can no longer be conducted within sight of our long coast line on two oceans. Adequate defense means that for the protection not only of our coasts but also of our communities far removed from the coast, we must keep any potential enemy hundreds and even thousands of miles away from our continental limits.

We cannot assume that our defense would be limited to one ocean and one coast and that the other ocean and the other coast would with certainty be safe. Adequate defense affects therefore simultaneous defense of every part of the United States of America.

-5-

It is our clear duty to further every effort toward peace
but at the same time to protect our Nation.

(End)

(To be put on separate sheet and
inserted by the President)

In addition to these recommendations I believe that the time has come for the Congress to enact legislation aimed at the prevention of profiteering in time of war and the equalization of the burdens of possible war. Such legislation has been the subject of full study in this and previous Congresses.

It is our clear duty to further every effort toward peace but at the same time to protect our Nation. That is the purpose of these recommendations. Such protection is and will be based not on aggression but in defense.

(end)