



U.S. Department of
Transportation

News:

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

Contact: Jennifer Hillings
Tele.: (202) 426-4570

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
SEPTEMBER 23, 1985
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

I'm deeply honored by your invitation to make history as the first woman to keynote your General Conference in 107 years. And I'm especially delighted to join you in Louisville, the largest city in the beautiful Bluegrass State of Kentucky, one of our earliest port cities and today a major Southern industrial center. It is also home to the world-famous Kentucky Derby, an annual celebration of one of the most gracious forms of transportation. And many of you who traveled here by airplane were privileged to view Louisville's new facilities at Standiford Field.

In America, we are bound together by shared ideals, by a love of home and family, a commitment to service, sensitivity to the needs of others, and above all -- love of liberty. As far as the National Guard is concerned, many people, including Elizabeth Dole, believe you are a living tribute to your recruiting theme, "America at its Best." Last year, National Guardsmen and women responded to 391 call-ups in 49 states and more-territories, assisting civil authorities during all types of emergencies -- such as tornadoes, floods and forest fires.

Since America's earliest colonial days, military forces from the community at large have been instrumental in preserving and protecting life, property and public order. This is the traditional role of the National Guard. In fact, the National Guard has given us 18 of our Presidents: from Colonel George Washington of the Virginia Regiment to Captain Abraham Lincoln of the Illinois Militia to Captain Theodore Roosevelt of the National Guard of New York.

- MORE -

Today, the Army National Guard is a major contributor to the total Army's combat readiness -- comprising 30 percent of the Army's entire organized structure and 44 percent of its combat units. And the Air National Guard -- established just four years after the Wright Brothers made their first flight at Kitty Hawk -- constitutes approximately two-thirds of the tactical air command dedicated air defense forces. Further, the Air Guard has 100 percent of the tactical air defense responsibility for Hawaii. It has been said that each and every day the National Guard is on duty somewhere in the United States. As an American, I am deeply grateful to the over 546,000 National Guard members in 2,600 communities all across this country who respond bravely and professionally when called upon to protect our national interests.

Since becoming Secretary of Transportation, I've observed with admiration the top-notch professionalism of the Department's own branch of the Armed Services, the United States Coast Guard. The Coast Guard takes justifiable pride in being our country's oldest continuous seagoing force, dating back to the very early days of our nation, and fighting in every major conflict since the Revolution. Its reputation for lifesaving and maritime law enforcement is well known throughout America. I have deep respect for the commitment to service of the Coast Guard -- and the spirit that motivates its marvelous people. I take pride in telling audiences that I'm the first woman to head a branch of the U.S. Armed Services. As times goes by, I discover more and more just what a great honor that is.

You have extended more than a personal honor in inviting me this morning. You have afforded me a much welcomed opportunity to echo President Reagan's own admiration for all that you have done and are doing as partners of those in uniform serving our country.

President Reagan has often discussed how we as Americans can best preserve and promote, in a dangerous world, the democratic ideals we hold dear. We can protect the values we cherish, he has said, and strengthen our society by meeting three important challenges. We must maintain strength in our economy, in our moral fiber and in our defense.

There can be few doubters in the strength of the American economy today, an economy described by the President in his State of the Union address as one that has had the strongest sustained economic growth in 34 years. The testament to the strength of our moral fiber fills this room today, for surely we share the belief that the source of our inner strength lies in America's families which help form our beliefs and encourage our aspirations.

Our other challenge is to maintain a strong defense. Since taking office, the President has made significant headway in rebuilding our defense and making America more secure. And that commitment, I assure you, will continue. We cannot ignore the act that skimping on a defense rebuilding program could undermine not only our own security, but the security of our closest friends.

The commitment to a strong defense is rooted in our country's ethic -- and, again, goes as far back as the days of colonial America. During a debate on the subject in 1789, at our Constitutional Convention, one delegate got to his feet and moved that "the standing army be restricted to 5,000 at any one time." This prompted George

Washington, as presiding officer, to suggest an amendment of his own -- to provide that no foreign enemy shall invade the United States with more than 3,000 troops at any time.

Because of President Reagan's leadership in changing our national attitudes about those who serve, recognition of military service for what it is -- the protection of our freedom -- and appreciation for the men and women who perform those jobs, have grown rapidly. Our enlistment and reenlistment rates are significantly improved. The importance of this cannot be exaggerated. History has proved again and again that the tenacity and character of a nation are reflected in those who wear its uniform and carry its arms.

As National Guardsmen and women, you experience daily our nation's commitment to the safekeeping of our country. As Secretary of Transportation, so do I. Transportation is vital to America's security and to its defense in a nationwide emergency. Strategic mobility and rapid deployment of forces are key points in our defense philosophy. To make them work, to sustain military operations overseas and to continue to bring in vital materials, we must be able to move equipment, supplies and personnel to ports of embarkation by air, rail and highway. Those ports and the waterways leading to them must be kept secure so the ships can be deployed quickly and without incident.

The fact is the Department of Transportation has significant, though often unheralded, national defense responsibilities. The Coast Guard -- the fifth armed force of the U.S. -- has fought in every American war since 1790, and at times of military readiness is responsible for port security, strategic mobility and coastal defense.

The Department's maritime responsibilities play an equally important role in our nation's defense. More than 5,000 merchant ships were delivered to our fleet during World War II -- ships crewed by valiant merchant seamen who transported millions of tons of supplies to every sector of the world. We remember, in everlasting credit to their devotion, that U.S. merchant marine casualties in that war were proportionately greater than all of our military services with the exception of the U.S. Marine Corps. This Academy alone gave 142 of its midshipmen to that titanic struggle for human liberty in World War II. Traditionally, the merchant marine has contributed more than its share to the protection and preservation of America and the freedoms we cherish as uniquely our own.

And, of course, the military is dependent on the highway system to provide mobilization and transportation of supplies, materials, and troops. Almost every military movement at some stage moves across some portion of the highway system. But the highway's greatest contribution would be in time of a major mobilization. The military has designated two highway networks. The larger -- 250,000 miles long -- is known as the Defense Highway Network and consists of the entire Interstate and primary systems. This system provides for strategic movement as well as connecting links to key facilities. Smaller in size but more strategically important is the second network, consisting of the entire Interstate System and 12,000 additional miles of strategically important highways.

Some of you may be surprised to hear that the Department of Transportation has the nation's largest non-military construction budget. Our 1987 budget projects an expenditure of \$18 billion -- to be given to the states -- for construction of highways, transit systems and airports. All the other civilian agencies will spend about \$20 billion in the same period.

Since passage of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act in December of 1982, we have provided \$24.3 billion in federal highway funds to the states for highway construction and rehabilitation. That legislation was essential, for America's highways were deteriorating at a rate twice as fast as they were being repaired. Today, however, the growth in the deterioration of our highways has been stopped, and we are beginning to see massive improvements taking place on thousands of bridges and on tens of thousands of highway miles all across the country. Nearly 37,000 miles of federal-aid highways are undergoing extensive reconstruction, repair and similar improvements -- nearly double the miles of improvements reported under way in 1981 and 1982.

Now let me say a bit more about the Coast Guard, this time about its peacetime responsibilities. The Coast Guard is a guardian of commerce, protector of our lives and a friend to all in need on our seas and waterways. No other nation has a military organization with such clearly defined peacetime missions -- or so extensive a jurisdiction. I am proud to note the Coast Guard has operational responsibilities in every state of the Union, in all territories and many foreign countries as well. The Coast Guard plays a large part in the responsibility that has my highest priority -- transportation safety -- through its efforts to ensure the safety of our ports, waterways and commercial vessels and as it administers and enforces recreational boating safety nationwide. The Coast Guard's search and rescue efforts save thousands of lives every year and their vigilance prevents the loss of millions of dollars in property damage. Not the least of our Department's accomplishments is one belonging primarily to the Coast Guard -- and that's drug interdiction. Last year the Coast Guard seized 218 vessels, confiscated two-and-a-half million pounds of marijuana and thousands of pounds of other drugs, preventing more than \$1.5 billion worth of illegal drugs from entering America's cities. In our nation's battle against drugs, that is a significant contribution. And indeed, we rely on the National Guard's professionalism during search and rescue missions on our seas and we rely on your support in drug interdiction.

"The history of failure in war," Douglas MacArthur once wrote, can be summed up in two words: "Too late. Too late in comprehending the deadly purpose of a potential enemy. Too late in realizing the mortal danger. Too late in preparedness. Too late in uniting all possible forces for resistance. Too late in standing with one's friends." We Americans are telling the world that we are over our brief bout with national guilt and isolation. We have rebuilt our military so that freedom once more has a sentinel standing guard. We are restoring vitality to our economy -- so that what we defend is in keeping with what the founding fathers created. We are conducting our relations with other nations as partners -- not patsies. We are making old alliances stronger -- and we are seeking out new friends. We have rediscovered our true mission in the world -- to protect freedom at home and abroad. That is the rock on which we were founded more than 200 years ago.

Across the centuries, regardless of wars and depressions and revolutionary changes in other parts of the world, this has been America's mission and your mission.

You have already given much of yourselves. Now your country demands even more. Help us keep steady on the new course we are embarked upon. Help the President as he continues the enormous task of restoring respect for America among our friends and foes alike. Help him achieve all this -- and you will help keep your own children and grandchildren out of war.

For in the end, it all comes down to this: Who can doubt the challenge of defending peace and freedom in this modern age? Who can dare not to meet it?

Because of you, the rest of us know the blessings of freedom. We will not sacrifice what you have achieved. We will not embrace short-term popularity at the expense of long-range survival. We will not turn our backs on our friends -- and we dare not turn our backs in the presence of foes. We will keep the peace -- but a peace of equals. We will insure American power -- along with a sense of American purpose. We will not lower our voice; we will never lower our flag.

And those who have protected our nation in battles long past will know that their sacrifice is honored, their country secure, and their children safe to assume their own responsibilities in the 200-year struggle for freedom -- wherever it thrives; and especially, wherever it is threatened. You have never let us down, and for this we are eternally grateful. God bless you and strengthen you as you continue to serve and defend this great land.

#