

## President Franklin D. Roosevelt

**Address before a joint session of the Senate and House of Representatives asking for additional appropriations for national defense.**

### The Capitol

**May 16, 1940**

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives:

These are ominous days—days whose swift and shocking developments force every neutral nation to look to its defenses in the light of new factors. The brutal force of modern offensive war has been loosed in all its horror. New powers of destruction, incredibly swift and deadly, have been developed; and those who wield them are ruthless and daring. No old defense is so strong that it requires no further strengthening and no attack is so unlikely or impossible that it may be ignored

Let us examine, without self-deception, the dangers which confront us. Let us measure our strength and our defense without self-delusion.

The clear fact is that the American people must recast their thinking about national protection.

Motorized armies can now sweep through enemy territories at the rate of two hundred miles a day. Parachute troops are dropped from airplanes in large numbers behind enemy lines. Troops are landed from planes in open fields, on wide highways, and at local civil airports.

We have seen the treacherous use of the "fifth column" by which persons supposed to be peaceful visitors were actually a part of an enemy unit of occupation.

Lightning attacks, capable of destroying airplane factories and ammunition works hundreds of miles behind the lines, are a part of the new technique of modern war.

The element of surprise which has ever been an important tactic in warfare has become the more dangerous because of the amazing speed with which modern equipment can recall and attack the enemy's country.

Our own vital interests are widespread. More than ever the protection of the whole American hemisphere against invasion or control or domination by non-American nations has the united support of the twenty-one American Republics, including the United States. More than ever in the past this protection calls for ready-at-hand weapons capable of great mobility because of the potential speed of modern attack.

Let me analyze for a moment. The Atlantic and Pacific oceans were reasonably adequate defensive barriers when fleets under sail could move at an average speed of five miles an hour. Even in those days, by a sudden foray it was possible for an opponent actually to burn our national Capitol. Later, the oceans still gave strength to our defense when fleets and convoys propelled by steam could sail the oceans at fifteen or twenty miles an hour.

But the new element—air navigation—steps up the speed of possible attack to two hundred, to three hundred miles an hour.

Furthermore, it brings the new possibilities of the use of nearer bases from which an attack or attacks on the American Continents could be made. From the fiords of Greenland it is four hours by air to Newfoundland; five hours to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and to the Province of Quebec; and only six hours to New England.

The Azores are only 2,000 miles from parts of our eastern seaboard and if Bermuda fell into hostile hands it would be a matter of less than three hours for modern bombers to reach our shores.

From a base in the outer West Indies, the coast of Florida could be reached in two hundred minutes.

The islands off the west coast of Africa are only 1,500 miles from Brazil. Modern planes starting from the Cape Verde Islands can be over Brazil in seven hours.

And Para, Brazil, near the mouth of the Amazon River, is but four flying-hours to Caracas, Venezuela; and Venezuela is but two and one-half hours to Cuba and the Canal Zone; and Cuba and the Canal Zone are two and one-quarter hours to Tampico, Mexico; and Tampico is two and one-quarter hours to St. Louis, Kansas City and Omaha.

On the other side of the continent, Alaska, with a white population of only 30,000 people, is within four or five hours of flying distance to Vancouver, Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland. The islands of the southern Pacific are not too far removed from the west coast of South America to prevent them from becoming bases of enormous strategic advantage to attacking forces.

Surely, the developments of the past few weeks have made it clear to all of our citizens that the possibility of attack on vital American zones ought to make it essential that we have the physical, the ready ability to meet those attacks and to prevent them from reaching their objectives.

This means military implements—not on paper—which are ready and available to meet any lightning offensive against our American interest. It means also that facilities for production must be ready to turn out munitions and equipment at top speed.

We have had the lesson before us over and over again—nations that were not ready and were unable to get ready found themselves overrun by the enemy. So-called impregnable fortifications no longer exist. A defense which allows an enemy to consolidate his approach without hindrance will lose. A defense which makes no effective effort to destroy the lines of supplies and communications of the enemy will lose.

An effective defense by its very nature requires the equipment to attack the aggressor on his route before he can establish strong bases within the territory of American vital interests.

Loose talking and loose thinking on the part of some may give the false impression that our own American Army and Navy are not first-rate, or that money has been wasted on them.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

In recent years the defensive power of our Army, Navy and Marine Corps has, as you know, been greatly improved.

The Navy is stronger today than at any time in the nation's history. Today also a large program of new construction is well under way. Ship for ship, ours are equal to, or better than, the vessels of any foreign power.

The Army likewise is today at its greatest peace-time strength in all our history. Its equipment in quality and quantity has been greatly increased and improved.

The National Guard and the reserve strength of the two Services are better equipped and better prepared than during any other peacetime period.

On the other side of the picture we must visualize the outstanding fact that since the first day of September, 1939, every week that has passed has brought new lessons learned from actual combat on land and sea.

I cite examples. Where naval ships have operated without adequate protection by defending aircraft, their vulnerability to air attack has of course increased. All nations are hard at work studying the need of additional anti-aircraft protection.

Several months ago the use of a new type of magnetic mine made many unthinking people believe that all surface ships were doomed. Within a few weeks a successful defensive device against those mines was placed in operation; and it is a fact that the sinkings of merchant ships by torpedo, by mine and by airplane are definitely much lower than during the similar period in 1915.

Combat conditions have changed even more rapidly in the air. With the amazing progress in the design of planes and engines, the airplane of a year ago is out-of-date now. It is too slow; it is improperly protected; it is too weak in gun power.

In types of planes, we are not behind the other nations of the world. Many of the planes of the belligerent powers are at this moment not of the latest models. But one

belligerent power not only has many more planes than all its opponents combined, but also appears to have a weekly production capacity at the moment that is far greater than that of all its opponents.

From the point of view of our own defense, therefore, great additional production capacity is our principal air requisite.

For the permanent record, I ask the Congress not to take any action which would in any way hamper or delay the delivery of American-made planes to foreign nations which have ordered them, or seek to purchase new planes. That, from the point of view of our own national defense, would be extremely short-sighted.

During the past year American production capacity for war planes, including engines, has risen from approximately 6,000 planes a year to more than double that number, due in greater part to the placing of foreign orders here.

Our immediate problem is to superimpose on this production capacity a greatly increased additional production capacity. I should like to see this nation geared up to the ability to turn out at least 50,000 planes a year. Furthermore, I believe that this nation should plan at this time a program that would provide us with 50,000 military and naval planes.

The ground forces of the Army require the immediate speeding up of last winter's program to procure more equipment of all kinds, including motor transport and artillery, tanks, anti-aircraft guns and full ammunition supplies. It had been planned to spread these requirements over the next two or three years. We should fill them at once. At this time I am asking the Congress immediately to appropriate a large sum of money for four primary purposes:

First, to procure the essential equipment of all kinds for a larger and thoroughly rounded-out Army;

Second, to replace or modernize all old Army and Navy equipment with the latest type of equipment;

Third, to increase production facilities for everything needed for the Army and Navy for national defense. For it is clear that we require the ability to turn out quickly infinitely greater supplies;

Fourth, to speed up to a twenty-four hour basis all existing Army and Navy contracts, and all new contracts to be awarded.

I ask for an immediate appropriation of \$896,000,000. And may I say that I hope there will be speed in giving the appropriation.

That sum of \$896,000,000 of appropriation I should divide approximately as follows:

1. For the Army: \$546,000,000
2. For the Navy and Marine Corps: \$200,000,000

3. To the President to provide for emergencies affecting the national security and defense: \$100,000,000

In addition to the above sum of appropriations, I ask for authorizations for the Army, Navy and Marine Corps to make contract obligations in the further sum of \$186,000,000.

And to the President an additional authorization to make contract obligations: \$100,000,000

The total of authorizations is, therefore: \$286,000,000

It is my belief that a large part of the requested appropriation of \$100,000,000 and the requested authorization of \$100,000,000 to the President will be used principally for the increase of production of airplanes, anti-aircraft guns, and the training of additional personnel for these weapons. These requests for appropriations and authorizations would, of course, be in addition to the direct estimates for these purposes in the other items that are requested.

The proposed details of the appropriations and authorizations asked for will be given to the Committees of the Congress.

These estimates do not, of course, duplicate any item now in the pending War and Navy appropriation bills for the fiscal year 1941. Nor do they include supplemental or deficiency estimates which may become necessary by reason of pending legislation or shortage of funds under existing programs.

There are some who say that democracy cannot cope with the new techniques of Government developed in recent years by some countries—by a few countries which deny the freedoms that we maintain are essential to our democratic way of life. That I reject.

I know that our trained officers and men know more about fighting and the weapons and equipment needed for fighting than any of us laymen; and I have confidence in our officers and men.

I know that to cope with present dangers we must be strong in heart and mind; strong in our faith—strong in the faith in our way of living.

I, too, pray for peace—that the ways of aggression and force may be banished from the earth—but I am determined to face the fact realistically that this nation requires also a toughness of moral and physical fibre. Those qualities, I am convinced, the American people hold to a high degree.

Our task is plain. The road we must take is clearly indicated. Our defenses must be invulnerable, our security absolute. But our defense as it was yesterday, or even as it is today, does not provide security against potential developments and dangers of the future.

Defense cannot be static. Defense must grow and change from day to day. Defense must be dynamic and flexible, an expression of the vital forces of the nation and of its resolute will to meet whatever challenge the future may hold. For these reasons, I need hardly assure you that after the adjournment of this session of the Congress, I will not hesitate to call the Congress into special session if at any time the situation of the national defense requires it. The Congress and the Chief Executive constitute a team where the defense of the land is concerned.

Our ideal, yours and mine, the ideal of every man, woman and child in the country—our objective is still peace—peace at home and peace abroad. Nevertheless, we stand ready not only to spend millions for defense but to give our service and even our lives for the maintenance of our American liberties.

Our security is not a matter of weapons alone. The arm that wields them must be strong, the eye that guides them clear, the will that directs them indomitable.

These are the characteristics of a free people, a people devoted to the institutions they themselves have built, a people willing to defend a way of life that is precious to them all, a people who put their faith in God.