

UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
Synopsis of Testimony by Hon. Wilber M. Brucker,
Secretary of the Army, and General Maxwell D. Taylor,
Chief of Staff of the Army

FEB 23 1953

Secretary of the Army Wilber M. Brucker and General Maxwell D. Taylor, Chief of Staff, United States Army, today told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the Army is keeping pace with momentous changes in concepts of warfare, tactics, organization and weaponry.

Both the civilian and military heads of the Army emphasized the importance which the Army attaches to the deterrent feature of its role and missions. Secretary Brucker, pointing out that a dominant part of the Soviet threat is its large and effective armies, called for a strong U. S. Army which, together with the armies of the Free World, "must remain a major deterrent to aggression and war."

General Taylor said it is becoming "increasingly apparent that unrestricted nuclear war may be total disaster for all participants," adding that "every effort must be made to develop that visible strength in being which will convince any potential enemy that aggression directed at the Free World will fail. This strength must be real and tangible....and must be tri-dimensional -- on the ground, in the air, and on the sea. There can be no chinks in the armor of deterrence."

Secretary Brucker admitted the possibility that efforts at deterrence may be unsuccessful and said that while no one can foretell the exact nature of any possible conflict, it may be a long, desperate and exhaustive struggle.

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"Certainly our people will keep the will to fight no matter what the first 30 days brings forth," he declared. "The security of the United States is too precious to gamble with in the wishful hope that war may be over quickly."

He and General Taylor said that while the present military programs generally make adequate provisions for the strength and capabilities necessary to deter general war involving the wide use of nuclear weapons, we must insure that adequate means are provided to deter aggression short of general war.

Secretary Brucker recalled that in the last 10 years alone, the communists have gained control over about 600 million of the world's people and about one-sixteenth of the earth's land surface -- and that in every case of communist armed aggression, the dominant military forces employed have been land forces. Further, he said, in every instance in which such aggression has been resisted successfully, non-communist land forces have been the decisive military element.

"In this," Mr. Brucker asserted, "there is an incontrovertible lesson to be drawn for all of us who are concerned with the composition of the Free World's armed strength."

The Army, he said, gives the Nation versatility in military means, for it is capable of applying force with discrimination, in the right amount at the right time, in all types of weather and on all types of terrain.

General Taylor cited the numerical strength of the Communist bloc, but warned against evaluating comparative fighting strength on that basis alone. Quality offsets a simple head-count, he said, and free men can be depended upon to maintain a superiority in qualitative assets--which result from such things as leadership, training, weapons, logistics, and the fighting heart.

General Taylor stated: "To be perfectly clear, I would say that the Communists have formidable armies which are a most serious threat, but I believe that the United States and its allies have the capability, if they have the will, of producing ground forces able to counter the Communist land forces. There is no reason to say that we are hopelessly outnumbered and that we are defenseless on the ground. I am convinced that our Army, equipped with the weapons which we are now developing, and supported by well-trained allies, can maintain deterrent strength on the ground sufficient to hold the Communist armies in check. It is essential to have such an Army if we are to have the required tri-dimensional deterrence."

Secretary Brucker, expressing pride in the Army's role in developing new weapons, pointed out that the Army's experience and know-how in this field are invaluable assets to the United States.

He was joined by General Taylor in pointing out that the Army has a requirement to use a wide range of robot missiles in order to carry out its primary combat mission of destroying enemy armed forces whenever and wherever they appear, including carrying out the Army's antiaircraft role.

"These missiles, in the final analysis, are artillery projectiles having extended range accuracy, and lethality," Mr Brucker said.

General Taylor indicated that in any emergency the Army needs to be prepared to employ atomic weapons.

He said the Army continues able to support conventional operations, and must continue to spend the funds necessary to maintain a conventional capability for the foreseeable future.

"The fact that we have developed powerful new weapons does not mean that we will ever put aside all of our older weapons of less power," General Taylor said. "It is the variety of its armament which gives the Army the flexibility in application of military power which is its outstanding and most valuable characteristic. With its extensive family of weapons it can apply proportioned force in accordance with requirements of the moment."

Secretary Brucker pointed out that since new weapons lead to changes in tactics and organization and are keys to increased power and combat effectiveness, he has recognized fully the importance of Research and Development. He has already taken measures to put greater emphasis on this phase of Army operations, with the result that "you may be assured that the Army will continue to wring from science the maximum military advantage that can be secured within research sources available."

Referring again to encroachment by the Communists in various areas of the world, General Taylor referred to several potential trouble spots around the world which he said inspire reflection on the varied requirements for effective military action in those areas.

While such factors as geography, climate, ethnology and politics would pose special problems in every case, all have at least one characteristic in common, the Army Chief of Staff said. "Any military action in each of these trouble spots would be essentially a land operation with a very limited role, if any, for heavy weapons of mass destruction."

Calling the individual soldier the "indispensable element in ground combat," Secretary Brucker said that "despite the tremendous importance of weapons and equipment, it must never be forgotten for a moment that trained soldiers constitute the foundation of the Army's fighting ability."

In this connection, he called attention of the Committee to the two important problems of housing for military families and the retention in service of trained personnel.

Numbers of troops and their families are living in sub-standard accommodations on posts or in nearby communities where rentals of adequate quarters are expensive, he said. Progress has been made and is being made under provisions of the Capehart Act providing for housing on and near military reservations, and the Army is "appreciative" of that legislation, he said.

He spoke of the heavy turnover of Army personnel in the face of needs for more and more highly trained, long lead-time specialists, and cited problems of military personnel and their families in obtaining adequate dental and medical care and inequities in survivors' benefits as contributing factors.

Secretary Brucker called attention to the Reserve Forces Act of 1955 and positive and aggressive action taken by the Army to carry out its provisions. The beginnings have been modest, but the program is continuing to grow, he said, with more positive indications of its reception to be expected by June with the graduation of thousands of high school students.

He said the Army's program for more effective utilization of military manpower continues to show results, with great progress being made toward the goal of increasing the ratio of combat troops to supporting forces.

"While there still are many problems for us to solve, the Army is enthusiastic about its ability to cope with any military problem of the atomic age. The Army is modernizing every part of its equipment and weaponry, as well as its concepts of tactics, strategy and logistics. This has led to a new and progressive approach to all of its problems. This attitude has resulted in a new spirit of self-reliance. Morale is high. Everywhere in the Army there is a feeling of confidence. I have the firm conviction that the Army is combat-ready to perform its mission in the best tradition of its 180 years of service for the country," Secretary Brucker concluded.

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Excerpt from Rendezvous With Destiny by Rapport and Northwood, pages 591-593.

General Taylor had been called to Washington early in December in connection with a proposed reorganization plan for airborne divisions. After his talks with Secretary Stimson, General Marshall, and other War Department officials, he had begun a round of conferences and inspections (seeing, ironically, for the first time the new recoilless 75mm gun and the latest developments in winter clothing, including shoepacs -- items which before a week was out his men would urgently need). On December 21 he had returned from a visit to the 101st wounded at Walter Reed Hospital to receive the first word that his Division had been committed to action. Bad weather held up plane travel, and he experienced the restless, worried mood of the nation as the bad news of the Bulge came through. Just before midnight on Christmas Eve the weather opened up enough for a plane to get through to Paris. He landed there on the afternoon of the 26th. General Smith briefed him on the Bastogne situation and forbade any attempt to parachute or glide into the besieged town, assuring him that the 4th Armored Division would break through that day.

On the 27th General Taylor had driven from Paris south of Bastogne. There Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey of the 4th Armored Division offered to send him up the Assenois road in a tank, but Taylor decided to go up the narrow corridor in his jeep--a trip which S/Sgt. Charles Kartus, his driver since the pre-airborne days at Camp Clairborne, remembered as his own scariest hour of the war.

They drove into Bastogne about 1600. At the CP Taylor asked McAuliffe about the situation and the condition of the Division.

"Sir, we are ready to attack."

After checking the effective Division strength (as of the 26th it had been 711 officers and 9,516 enlisted men) General Taylor radioed III Corps that the 101st was ready for offensive operations.

Excerpt from Address by General Maxwell D. Taylor to Overseas Press Club, New York - 26 January 1956

Only on one occasion did I ever fail to have a press companion during my military operations. On the 27th of December 1944, I was heading north toward Bastogne, hoping to slip in by jeep and rejoin my division, the 101st Airborne Division. I had one empty seat in the back of my jeep which I offered to a gathering of the press, seated around a hot stove at a forward CP of the 4th Armored Division. I got no takers, and somebody missed a really good ride going into the Bastogne doughnut. He also missed a warming glass of cognac with General McAuliffe and the 101st Airborne Staff. Unaware of the world attention focused on the Division when I told them, "Boys, you're all heroes," they looked about in surprise and said, "Who, us?"

In late July, Mussolini was kicked out and old Marshal Badoglio took over the tottering Italian government. In August, while the Allies were preparing for the invasion of Italy, Badoglio began secret negotiations to surrender. During the negotiations, the Germans suggested a tempting plan. Rome, they said, would drop troops into the area, the Italian forces would join with them to drive from the City. This glittering plan looked good on paper, was adopted by the Allied command, and was set for the evening of September eighth.

But Ridgway had doubts--shared by Taylor--that the Italians could live up to their promises, on which the success of the whole venture hinged. He felt that someone should be smuggled into Rome to size up the situation at first hand. Taylor offered to go, and Ridgway, knowing him to have the qualifications of language, diplomatic skill and cool military judgment accepted his offer. The higher command at first rejected the idea of the mission, but finally yielded to Ridgway's insistence. Then secret arrangements had to be made with the Italians. It was the morning of September seventh, only about thirty-six hours before the airborne troops were due to take off, that General Taylor, accompanied by the late Col. William Tudor Gardiner, of the Air Force, set out on one of the most perilous--and useful--missions of the war.

The details of that mission were first fully described in America by David Brown in The Saturday Evening Post of September 16, 1944. It may be well to recall some of the high spots here. Taylor and Gardiner wore their uniforms and insignia of rank, in the hope that if they were captured by the Nazis they would not be treated as spies. It was a slim hope. The Nazis in Italy, desperate at recent setbacks, were not likely to heed the niceties of international law. Capture would probably mean the firing squad or possibly torture to obtain their knowledge of invasion plans.

Taylor and Gardiner left Sicily before dawn by PT boat, transferred to an Italian corvette at sea, slipped ashore at Gaeta, and were put into a waiting Italian ambulance for the seventy-five-mile drive to Rome. The ambulance had semifrosted windows which permitted them to see out without being seen. Along the way they saw German soldiers, and spotted the location of numerous Nazi units. Even today, Taylor says, whenever he sees a military ambulance he wonders involuntarily who might be in it.

It was after ten at night when the emissaries entered Rome and were spirited into an old palazzo opposite the Italian War Office. There they found comfortable quarters and an elaborate feast prepared for them. Their hosts were two Italian staff officers, who obviously did not know about the imminence of the invasion and were in no hurry to get down to business--that could wait till tomorrow or the next day. The maddening thing was that the Americans could not explain the urgency of the situation because of the possibility of betrayal. They choked down the delicious courses, smiling and exchanging pleasantries. It was only later, by dogged insistence, that they were able to have the commandant of Rome, General Carboni, aroused from his bed, and then, after midnight, to have a talk with Marshal Badoglio.

The news was far worse than Taylor had feared. In the last few days the Germans had heavily reinforced the Rome area with crack troops, including elite SS units and Panzer Grenadiers. Moreover, they had practically disarmed the Italian garrisons by cutting off fuel and supplies. Badoglio gave convincing detail on the German numbers, units, artillery and tanks. Lightly armed American airborne troops would be slaughtered.

During the predawn hours of September eighth messages were drafted for transmission to Eisenhower by secret radio. As the morning wore on, Taylor and Gardiner, still sleepless, paced their hide-out quarters, waiting. First they were told that the Italian radio operator had had trouble with the encoding; then that atmospheric conditions were bad. At noon he sent the code message agreed upon for extreme emergency: "Situation innocuous"--meaning emphatically the opposite.

At 3:30 P.M. the emissaries received a message from Allied Headquarters ordering them to return. This told them their messages had been received and heeded; for otherwise they were to have stayed on to join up with the paratroops. Taylor and Gardiner were again whisked into the ambulance, heading this time for an airport. Once on the way they were halted while a long column of German troops moved by--so close that the Americans could have leaned out and touched them. They were driven to a distant corner of the airfield, where an Italian plane was waiting with propellers turning. In a moment they were on their way to North Africa.

After their return they learned that cancellation orders had reached the air-borne troops barely in time; some were already in the planes with the engines warming up. But for Taylor's mission, 2500 of our best fighting men would have gone in on the first drop to almost certain destruction; if the Germans had played it cagily other thousands might have followed them into the trap. Later General Eisenhower wrote in his book, Crusade in Europe:

"The risks he (Taylor) ran were greater than I asked any other agent or emissary to undertake during the war--he carried weighty responsibilities and discharged them with unerring judgment, and every minute was in danger of discovery and death."