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Bill Moyers' Journal

"$1,000,000,000,000 for Defense"

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$1,000,000,000,000 for Defense

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[Tease]

[McDonnell Douglas promotional film — clips]

[Interior, Bill Moyers' office]

BILL MOYERS: That is a film produced by the McDonnell Douglas Company about one of its lesser known products — the Harpoon missile. The Harpoon belongs to a new generation of super-sophisticated weapons. 'Smart' weapons, we're told, are the wave of the future in defense technology. That technology is one reason our government proposes to spend approximately one trillion dollars on the military in the next five years. In dollar terms, the largest single defense expenditure in our nation's history. In this hour, we'll visit the Navy League's annual arms fair to get some idea of where high tech is taking us. We'll talk to the people building it. And we'll listen to a couple of Senators who have to figure out how that proposed one trillion dollars should be spent. You'll not be surprised to discover they're unsure we really know how to spend wisely $548 million a day, every day, for the next five years. I'm Bill Moyers.

[Bill Moyers' Journal opening]

[Montage: clips from aerospace promotional films and exposition]

SIKORSKY MAGICIAN *[voice-over]:* Quality, dependability and maintainability always stick together. You're not going to have problems because you have advanced sophistication. And when it comes to quality and maintainability, we have the right answers for you.

[Interior, Sikorsky exhibit, Sea-Air-Space Exposition]

SIKORSKY MAGICIAN: See, that's the whole idea of my being here is to make you think about Sikorsky's Seahawk. Because we offer you quality, we offer you dependability, and you can cut yourself in for a little extra maintainability just like that with that Seahawk, because it is cost-effective. *[doing a trick; to a spectator]* Look, Chuck. If I take this one, that's quality! I take this one, that's dependability! I take this one — maintainability! Put that in my pocket. Chuck! How many did I put in your hand? No, Chuck, because you see, with that Seahawk — you get a lot more!

[Interior, Sea-Air-Space Exposition — various shots]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: A visit to the Navy League's annual Sea-Air-Space Exposition is proof that there's a lot more to *everything* the armed services buy today. We are designing and building a complex military machine that reflects the latest in technological ingenuity.

ANNOUNCER: I'd like to welcome you all to the esoteric sewing machine division of Singer Company.

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: The names of the companies building tomorrow's military are familiar enough. Names like Singer, RCA, GE, Ford. The come to trade shows like this one to exhibit their wares. Admittance is by invitation only. And the guest list includes military officers and civilian officials from the Pentagon, members of Congress and their staffs, selected European diplomats — all potential customers. The president of the Navy League, a veteran of World War II, is Cincinnati lawyer John J. Spittler.

[Interior, Sea-Air-Space exposition hall — Lockheed exhibit]

MOYERS: What's going on here, Jack?

JOHN SPITTLER: Bill, we're providing an interface between those who will be asked to build the weapons of the future and the people who will be using those weapons, primarily the Navy. We are concerned with the Navy. The Navy League, of course, is the civilian branch of the sea services. We were founded in 1902 by then President

Theodore Roosevelt, who, as you know, was probably best remembered for speaking softly and carrying a big stick. And in the seventy-eight, seventy-nine years of our history, we have constantly preached to the American people that the
only way we will ever have peace is through strength. Within a very short period of time, General Romney says, by 1982, the Russians will be able to push us off the ocean. And this of course will be very critical because over 82 percent of the natural resources that are critically used in this country for our national defense come to us by way of the ocean. And as you know, over 52 percent of our petroleum products come to us by way of the ocean. Unless we have control of the oceans, it's all over as far as this country is concerned.

MOYERS: Since you graduated from the Navy back in 1945, what's been the most significant change in the Navy?

SPITTLER: Well, I think the most significant change in the Navy has been the fact that the American people, Congress and the various administrations, have probably turned their back on the Navy and the armed forces. Over 250,000 of the members of our armed forces today are eligible for welfare based on the standards established by the Department of Labor. It may also interest you that the U.S.S. Nimitz in the Indian Ocean today, our biggest, finest carrier, over $2 billion cost the American taxpayer, each aircraft on that carrier run about $25 million a copy— the mid-grade Navy people that are fixing those airplanes, working on them, moving them around, are receiving less money than the cashier at the McDonald's hamburger stand.

MOYERS: How much defense is enough? How much can we go on spending for the kind of defense you think is necessary before inflation and all of these problems break us?

SPITTLER: Bill, I don't think there's any more important taxpayer's dollar can be spent for any cause currently than on defense. I can think of no more valuable insurance policy that can be bought than the things that you're seeing here today. The American people pay over a billion dollars in premium for life insurance annually. We must pay the billion dollars, the billions of dollars that are necessary to buy the insurance policies that are reflected here, namely the survival of the world. For, Bill, we have never been in greater danger in the history of our country than we are today.

[General Dynamics promotional film]

NARRATOR: Tomahawk is the Navy's potent cruise missile, from multiple launch platforms to multiple missions, the Navy's sea launch cruise missile, Tomahawk does it all. At high subsonic speeds and at tree top level, it hides in the valleys and follows the terrain. A guidance system so accurate it can fly within yards of its target after a flight of hundreds of miles. Performance, versatility, reliability. For peace today and a guarantee of tomorrow, Tomahawk has come of age. Tomahawk is now.

[Interior, General Dynamics exhibit]

MOYERS: So, what's the military purpose of this? What will it be able to do?

LARRY BRENNER (General Dynamics): Well, it's mission-wise, it can be used for an anti-ship mission, or a land attack mission.

MOYERS: What would it cost?

BRENNER: There really is not a way for me to answer that question. And the reason is that we're just now transitioning into production in this fiscal year.

MOYERS: This will be the first year in which the cruise has been produced?

BRENNER: That's correct. That's correct.

MOYERS: What's the rough estimate you use publicly to—

BRENNER: Well, as I say, the— having to decide to quantify a number and define which launch platform you're talking about, with or without a booster, you know, is it the short bird, is it the long bird, is it the conventional machine for anti-ship or land attack? Are you talking about including the government-furnished equipment or not? There's really no way that I can answer that question.

MOYERS: What makes it a good weapon?

BRENNER: One thing is the high payload that it can carry.

MOYERS: Lots of punch up there.

BRENNER: You bet. The long range which permits the launch platform to be out of range of enemy defenses or enemy offenses, and the high accuracy, in both anti-ship and land attack.

[Interior, Sea-Air-Space Exposition, another location — William Perry]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: William Perry is the man more than anyone else will determine the shape of tomorrow's weaponry. As the Undersecretary of Defense for Research, it is his job to turn science fiction into military hardware. To Perry, the founder and former president of a California electronics firm, American technology is our advantage over the Soviets.

MOYERS: Is our strategy one of matching them dollar for dollar, tank for tank, plane for plane, systems for systems?

WILLIAM PERRY: No, it is not, and it cannot be because we're not willing to double the size of our army, we're not willing to increase our defense budget a full 50 percent, and it need not be. We have some tremendous advantages over the Soviet Union, particularly in areas of technology. Our commercial technological base represents an asset for which there is no counterpart.

MOYERS: What do you mean by that?

PERRY: Our electronics industry, the industry that gives you the handheld calculator and the electronic wristwatch. That industry has produced a level of technology which has very high application to modern weapons systems. And there's no counterpart industry in the Soviet Union.

MOYERS: Are we ahead of them in that sense, for how long? I've heard around here people say, 'Well, we're about five to seven years ahead of the Soviets in technology.' Is that a fair assessment?

PERRY: We can look at the various components of technology, and it varies from technology to technology. In this area, which I think is perhaps the most crucial, to maintaining a United States defense technological supremacy, namely micro-electronics and computers. In that area, we are about five to seven years ahead, and in my judgment, we will maintain that on to the '80s, on into the '90s. That is, if anything, our lead is widening rather than narrowing in that particular field.

[Control Data promotional film]

NARRATOR: In today's military, you can't wait. You need facts, and you need them now. Your computers neec more data, and seconds count. Now, you can have the quick response of disc memory right where you need it wher you need it. Control Data Corporation has put big capacity into a tiny disk package. It's the MD640, the militarizec disk.

[Interior, Sea-Air-Space Exposition — United Technologies exhibit]

TOM CAMPBELL, salesman: What you are looking at here is a unsheltered mockup of the latest Marine system called the Marine Integrated Fire and Air Support System. Most Marine Corps commanders have several asset available to them. The supporting arms from the naval guns that are bringing the ships that are bringing them there the Marine air arm provides close air support for the marines on the beach, and they have their own artillery an mortars. The division commander or whomever is in command of the movement has this MIFASS equipment whic has a computer, all of the communications devices to let him communicate with forward observers or whoever controlling the battle for him. This, then, is illustrated to him on this large screen map. It displays for him the tot battle scenario. It allows him to see a target here, down here, know what guns or mortars or airplanes are available him, and then direct that to the target. The operator merely points to this, and the machine then calculates what necessary to hit this target. And each time he goes through a maneuver, he is then given a message readout that tel him what he has done, and whether the target has been hit, whether he needs to continue firing. The total thing

automated to assist the commander in the use of his combat assets. The machine is an aid to the commander, but not a replacement for. Each piece of this is very light, can be picked up and carried by an individual marine so that when he— when they go ashore, the marines take with them the batteries which are necessary to run this system in an emergency mode, or the generators, or anything that is necessary.

[Sea-Air-Space Exposition — another location]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: A veteran of the Normany invasion may have difficulty imagining a computer directed battle from a beachhead. But every element of amphibious assault is changing. Even getting the Marines to the beach will be no less futuristic.

[TRW promotional film]

Cpt. PIERSALL: What you're looking at are the amphibious ships that we'll be introducing into the fleet for the 1980-1990, year 2000 time frame. It's what you call an air cushion vehicle, in fact, has lift fans which provide a cushion of air, so you're hovering across the air-water interface as you move in, and that's why you can come right in, come across the beaches, and right up over 8-12 foot sand dunes, and unload your cargo. And— tremendous capability, because you can unload behind the enemy as well as in front of him.

MOYERS: How much does this cost?

PIERSALL: You know, that's a very difficult one for me to put a specific number on, but, as you know, today it's getting difficult as you go look at the market basket as to, you know, what the real price is with— considering what we've had with the inflation and so forth coming at us. And that of course has been taking its toll on all our programs.

[Promotional film; then interior, exposition hall]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: The cost of the military market basket has been rising steadily as the hardware grows more complex. And with increased capabilities come slower and more complicated production lines. Karl Harr is the president of the Aerospace Industries Association, the trade group that represents the nation's major aviation defense contractors.

MOYERS: Could this aerospace industry mobilize in an emergency the way it did in the early days of World War II?

KARL HARR: Well, theoretically we are mobilized. On a scale of one to ten, I'd have to— I don't know what number I'd pick. But this, if it were a big crisis, you know, it would be a come-as-you-are war, there'd be no drafting Rosie the Riveters down the road. We'd have to pretty nearly come as you are. And that's one of the differences between now and every other moment in our past history.

MOYERS: Explain that.

HARR: Well, uh— you're not going to have the time. It's all going to be decided quickly. The weapons that are in inventory are, to a considerable degree, going to be decisive. And there's not gonna be learning curves and training of workers and safe factories and plants where you can do things. You're not gonna have time to do them. You're gonna have to have a considerable amount of what you need right there in the beginning.

MOYERS: Do we have it, now, for where—

HARR: Oh, yeah, well, the whole theory of establishing this plateau of defense readiness, both military and industrial, has been that we were ready. It fails if you don't deter. I mean, if it comes, then it's failed. We've deterred for 35 years now.

MOYERS: We have deterred, there's no question about that, in a nuclear sense. But how do you deal with the proposition that— in Vietnam, one of the most technologically armed nations in the world were defeated by so-called pajama-clad guerrillas? How do you deal with the fact that in Iran, that heavily armed nation, armed by us, fell to rioters in the streets with no more than handguns? How do you deal with the fact that in Afghanistan today, the Soviet Union is fighting guerrillas in the mountains with conventional arms? How do you deal with that history during the last decade of all this technology being, in a sense, helpless before passionate, determined people?

HARR: Determined people and people who know their political catechism, too. I could give you other examples of

exactly that, and what you're really describing is the limitations of raw military power. And I— Korea, I mean Vietnam is a perfect example— Korea was an example. We had the nuclear weapons which we didn't use. Well, that's clearly a case of putting the handcuffs on our own technology. Maybe it was the smart thing to do, but that's what we did. Vietnam — we put many handcuffs on our own technology. How about the Bay of Pigs?

MOYERS: How about it?

HARR: I mean, Cuba at that point was a pretty weak country. Here we have the United States of America, thinly veiled, sending in a force, and they were clobbered. Well, we put on our own handcuffs on. I think the point there is, that technology in and of itself, military force in and of itself, is only a part of the answer.

MOYERS: What is the rest of the answer?

HARR: The rest of the answer is realizing that the achievement of the objectives of military force which is to establish political power or resist someone else who's trying to establish political power, is much broader than the military. You've got to understand how to undercut the body politic, you've got to understand how to use the students in the streets rioting, you've got to understand the pressure points that motivate the whole range of political objectives.

MOYERS: Does the record, Karl, of the last ten years in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iran and elsewhere, suggest that all of this technology that we're spending so much money on, is beside the point?

HARR: It's the absolute underpinning. In other words, it's where you start from. Where you start from, particularly vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.

[Grumman film]

NARRATOR: Today, the U.S. Navy is being challenged around the globe by a growing Soviet navy. Anti-ship missile carrying aircraft and ships, defended by sophisticated anti-aircraft systems and high performance fighters, along with the imminent introduction of aircraft carriers, underwrite the Soviet objective of controlling large areas of the world's oceans. It is the threat that we must design to counter. The F-14 Tomcat with its AUG-9 Phoenix track —while— scan weapons system is the only fighter now or projected that has demonstrated the capability to counter this threat.

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: The Grumman F-14 may be the best example of using high technology to provide an edge in combat performance. Flying at twice the speed of sound, its radar system can track 24 independent targets and fire on six of them simultaneously. But sophistication has its price. Simple World War II fighters cost $50,000. The F-14 cost $30 million. Grumman built World War II fighters at a rate of 20 a day. It requires *eighteen* months to build *one* F-14. Grumman vice-president Mike Pelehach designed the F-14.

[Interior, expositional hall — Grumman exhibit]

MIKE PELEHACH: Starting in about 1968, the Soviets have in fact changed their course of air power. At that point in time, about 90 percent of their weapons systems, their airplanes were rather straightforward, simply, gun-carrying airplanes, and 10 percent were the more sophisticated, more capability airplanes. By 1985, over 50 percent of their airplanes will be of the sophisticated type aircraft which have much more capability relative to more range, more missiles, more detection. We then have to go ahead and match that with the weapons systems that we would put to the forefront.

MOYERS: So the technology keeps becoming more sophisticated, and it keeps, in a sense, overtaking itself, doesn't it?

PELEHACH: That's correct. Normally, we tend to identify the cost overruns and costs tied in with sophistication. To a large extent what we must understand that the requirements, the specifications of our airplanes are not written in Washington, but are written in Moscow. Specifically, they establish what we must do to our airplanes more so than what we would like to do. If we were to start on a concept today for a new weapons system, that system would be in the hands of the users in 1996. So, the length of time, it's not a question of technology, but the length of time required to develop that system, go through those threshholds, milestones required to make the system happen. It's one of the items that's adding to the cost of our weapons systems.

MOYERS: Do you have a percentage of how much it adds? Can you make an estimate?

PELEHACH: Well, to give you a feel. There was a time when we could do a fullblown proposal in depth with a competition and award for somewhere under a million dollars. On the F-14 program, which was back in 1968, we had some 1700 engineers working on that program, and we probably put $25 million into that package. That will give you an insight what happens as you now talk about 1980 dollars.

MOYERS: In another area, things have changed too. How much more training, for example, does it take to prepare the men who fly the F-14 than it did to prepare the men who flew the Grumman Hellcat in World War II?

PELEHACH: Well, the whole training has to change. As the threat gets to be more sophisticated, then we add the sophistication to our airplanes. We talk about the cost of a sophisticated weapons system, but we must also talk about training the people, the spare support, the ground support equipment required to keep that airplane in the air.

MOYERS: Can you compare the difference in the ground support for the F-14, say, against one of your World War II planes?

PELEHACH: Basically— where you could end up with a support of maybe a million dollars to support one of the older type airplanes, you're now talking in terms of tens and tens of millions of dollars required to go ahead and keep these things operational.

[Promotional film; then into British Aerospace exhibit]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: As the cost of developing weapons like the F-14 continues to soar, both the U.S. and its allies are feeling a money squeeze. That pressure has made our cooperation in NATO defense something of a friendly competition. European aerospace companies are asking for a larger share of the weapons development pie. I talked about the problem with Leo Schefer of British Aerospace.

MOYERS: We've been asking, we the United States, have been asking the NATO countries to bear a larger share of the cost of NATO. I think now we spend about five percent of our GNP on defense, and most of your countries spend about three percent. What's your reaction to that?

LEO SCHEFER: I can see the American point of view, but I can also see the European point of view. And the Europeans, I think, tend to feel that America says this, but means, 'Come and buy American weapons and stop developing your own.' Whereas the Europeans do look upon technology as America does, as a very important facet of our economy in that we have a high standard of living. And technology is the coinage of world power and economic strength to many of us. And our weapons industries, particularly aerospace, is the cutting edge of the new technology. We're very keen to bear our share of developing the advanced new weapons.

MOYERS: Did I hear you— and tell me if you think I didn't hear you correctly. Did I hear you suggesting that technology is important to the western standard of living—

SCHEFER: Yes.

MOYERS: —and that sometimes these decisions should be made for that reason as opposed to their need for defense reasons?

SCHEFER: No. I do believe, and I think a lot of people in the aerospace industry believe, that technology is absolutely vital to our standard of living. I mean, essentially we have in the western world, compared to the Third World, a high standard of living because we have applied science, i.e. technology, to manufacture our productivity, so that we can produce simple goods more cheaply in some instances, or we can produce complex goods which other people cannot produce, and therefore have to buy from us. Now, we could not maintain our standard of living if we only manufactured very simple goods.

[Promotional film]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: Just what sort of military we should be building and why are questions that few of us feel competent to ask. To most people, those decisions seem more and more the exclusive domain of scientists and engineers.

[Interior, exposition floor — with William Perry]

MOYERS: Well, how can the layman ever face these issues squarely and democratically? You talk about lasers. I have no way of judging that. Nor do most of the voters out there. Do we just simply have to leave it in the hands of the Bill Perrys and Emerson Electric and Ford and General Dynamics? Is it totally out of the democratic process, the future of weaponry?

WILLIAM PERRY: No, I don't believe so, Bill. In fact, I would say that this country more than any country in the world, has a stimulating forum for discussion of weapons issues. We are in the middle now of a very controversial debate on the MX missile program, and that's as it should be. This is a program which will be developed, and deployed, it will cost more than $30 billion. It either will or will not provide the nation with a high confidence in the strategic deterrence. So we have a very important philosophic issue; we have a very important technical issues, all of those issues deserve to be debated, deserve to be debated in the public forum. And they are being debated. It is difficult for a citizen to understand all of the issues involved, but he can understand some of them and he can try hard to understand all of them.

MOYERS: If you and I meet at the Navy League's exhibit ten years from now, do you think all of this will look much different from what it does today?

PERRY: Yes, I think the changes that are going on in weaponry today, the technological changes, are close to being revolutionary in nature, as opposed to evolutionary.

[Interior, exposition hall — Honeywell exhibit]

DAVE GERRISH *[to visiting cadets]*: Hi. I'm Dave Gerrish with Honeywell. Hi. Where are all you guys and gals from?

CADETS: Ft. Lauderdale.

GERRISH: Oh, are you? How do you like the show so far? Do you know anything about Honeywell? Well, they make computers but they also make a lot of defense products and a lot of defense systems, and we've got a few of them on display here. And I'll try to show 'em to you if you would like to.

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: The revolutionary military of the future that Bill Perry prophesies will one day be manned by recruits like these ROTC cadets from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, High School.

GERRISH: This is the advanced lightweight torpedo, and it's going to replace this one eventually. This is still in development. Well, this is the accoustical front end which is the listening end, and this is where the sensor detects whatever target is in range. And the electronics and the guidance system and the control system are back in this part. The warhead is in the area where it's red, and that's the explosive part. And the engine is back in the rear that drives the propulsion system that propels it through the water.

CADET: How much explosive can you have on this?

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: Listening as the cadets ask their questions, you are struck by the possibility that technology is racing so fast that much of what they learned this day will be obsolete by the time they receive their commissions. And even today, some questions had no answers.

GERRISH: I don't think we have— at least, I don't have access to an estimated cost figure right now. But relative to the old one, it's probably going to cost slightly more, but it will have much better performance. So in comparison to what the Navy's got now, it's a better buy and it gives better performance, and probably at slightly more cost. Everything's gone up in cost these days. Now, let me show you something briefly over here that I think will be of interest to you. You've all heard of lasers? And here's a laser—

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: These cadets are the exception to the rule, as it turns out, even among their own classmates. Only one out of every twenty students at Fort Lauderdale High enrolls in the program, and those who do generally come from families of Navy veterans. School officials say the majority of their students 'are not the least interested in military service.' The discipline of the ROTC program, the uniforms, the regular haircuts have little appeal to high school students — a fact that does little to alleviate the Navy's growing manpower problem.

MOYERS: Are all of you planning to go into the Navy?

CADETS: I am.

MOYERS: Why?

CADET: If we don't, we're not going to have a Navy. The United States needs a navy or we'll be overrun by communism and everybody else. I think the Navy's a pretty good deal.

MOYERS: It's interesting to hear you say 'good deal,' because the Navy people around here are telling me that they're losing so many young people, and particularly many of their veterans, because the pay isn't keeping up, the rate of inflation is killing what the Navy is earning, and yet you still think it's a good deal?

CADET: The education that you can get from it is great — nuclear program and submarines and things like that. And then there's also retirement on top of that after 20 years, which isn't that long.

MOYERS: What about all this technology. I mean, when I was your age thinking about a career in the service, it was simple — you had a rifle or a PT boat or something you could figure out yourself. All this technology — does that intimidate you? Do you think you can handle it?

2nd CADET: Well, the Navy will train you. They'll send me to college for free. And then after college you have years of training after that, so I think they'll be able to train you well enough to understand this.

MOYERS: What do you think when you walk around and look at all this technology?

2nd CADET: I think I've got a lot to learn.

[Interior, exposition hall, another location — with Vice-Admiral M. Staser Holcomb]

MOYERS: When I walk around this exhibit hall and see all of this technology that is so foreign to people like me, I say, 'Is this the way the Navy's going to look 10 years from now? Is it going to be all technology, all sophisticated, complex, precision instruments?'

Vice Adm. M. STASER HOLCOMB: It won't all be that way, but we're certainly trending in that direction. I think if you and I sat here 15 years from now and we viewed the state of the Navy, we'd have to observe that half of what we saw either exists today in the Navy, or is authorized and approved by the Congress and is coming down the building ways to the Navy, so that at the very most, half of what we see could change. But it is clear that by— that we're increasingly demanding of military hardware and systems, sophistication and technology. It is possible for us to do things today we couldn't conceive of doing 20, 30 years ago, so we do 'em. And we put them to sea. And that means that the kind of systems we'll see on a destroyer or a frigate, for example, are different than those that we would put on a destroyer or a frigate 10 years ago or 15 years ago. The kind of people we require to operate those systems are different than those that we have required and been accustomed to having over the years.

MOYERS: What do you mean? Will they be better trained?

HOLCOMB: Smarter people, better-trained people, and I must say, better paid people than the people in the Navy are today.

MOYERS: Well, I read and I'm told that the veterans of the Navy are leaving because of the pay differential between civilian and military life, I'm told that a lot of smart people aren't joining the Navy, the Air Force or the Army today. What does that portend for the Navy of the '80s and '90s?

HOLCOMB: If we penalize them for serving, then they just simply can't afford to stay with us. And we have a situation today where people are serving as volunteers. After all, we've been an all-volunteer force for seven years now. We have people who are serving as volunteers who are finally reckoning that military compensation has not kept up with what the private sector offers, and they simply cannot afford to do what their instinct leads them to want to do, and that is to serve in a professional maritime organization.

MOYERS: So is it conceivable that 10 years from now, we might have a navy equipped with all of this hardware that we see here today—

HOLCOMB: —and tied up—

MOYERS: And what?

HOLCOMB: —and tied up some place because we can't man it and can't use it.

[End of Sea-Air-Space Exposition segment]

BULLETIN: *[teletype effect on screen]* WASHINGTON, April 11 (AP) — For the first time in 15 years, the Navy has taken a ship out of operation. The U.S.S. Canasteo, based in Norfolk, has 'temporarily suspended operations', a Navy official said, because there are not enough skilled sailors to run it.

[Interior, Moyers' office]

MOYERS: The U.S.S. Canasteo was tied up at the Norfolk Naval Base for nearly a month before additional personnel could be trained to make it seaworthy again. But the manpower problems of the Canasteo are not unique. One Navy study reports that the service is short some 20,000 skilled petty officers — the seamen who are rightfully considered the backbone of a working navy. Yet, while the Canasteo sat idle, armed service committees in both the House and the Senate were drawing up authorization bills for new ships. And neither congressional plan insures that there will be enough skilled sailors to operate them. So, while Defense Department planners move full steam ahead to exploit our technological edge, there seems to be a dangerous gap growing between our ability to design and build these systems and our ability to keep them running. In Washington, I explored these inconsistencies with two of the Senate's most respected defense experts — Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia and Senator Gary Hart of Colorado, members of the Armed Services Committee.

[Interior, Armed Services Committee Room, U.S. Senate]

MOYERS: You said a minute ago you do not believe that we can match the Soviets dollar for dollar and I interviewed the other day for this program the undersecretary of defense for research, William Perry, and he agrees with you. He says we can't match the Soviets tank for tank, gun for gun, and he said that therefore in the next 10 to 20 years we're going to have to rely on our superior technology, our microelectronics and computers. What do both of you think will be the implication of that?

Sen. GARY HART: Well, we're already seeing one implication of it where high technology, which is one area generally of American superiority over the Soviets, has been used. Let's take for example tactical aircraft. What we've been able to do is build superior tactical aircraft, but they operate less often. They are so sophisticated and so highly capable and so technical that they break down a lot, and if we've fallen down on the budget side — and I think Sam and I agree on this — it's been in operations and maintenance, what is called 'readiness'. We will provide the money more often than not for the very sophisticated weapons systems — the nuclear aircraft carrier or the nuclear submarine or advanced tactical aircraft. We won't provide the money to keep them up, because it's costing more and more to keep them up. Well, I think—

MOYERS: Why don't we provide the money? Why doesn't the Congress vote the money? One of the admirals yesterday testifying up here said that much of the blame lies at the feet of Congress because it will not.

HART: Well, I wouldn't disagree with that. Part of it is it's not sexy, it's not— there's no constituency for operations and maintenance, for mechanics with wrenches, and engineers with small screwdrivers and computers inside the aircraft themselves. It's not something you can go back home and say, 'Look what I did, I voted for a new nuclear aircraft carrier.' You say, I voted for a billion dollars more for operation and maintenance and people say, 'so what'.

MOYERS: What do you think are the implications of moving to a high technology defense?

Sen. SAM NUNN: I generally agree with what Gary has said, and I also agree that if you look at the O & M account—

MOYERS: Which is—

NUNN: Operations and maintenance — It has been cut in recent years on the House side by the Appropriations

Committee over and over again, and while there is no real forceful lobby for readiness, there is no military substitute for readiness. So, we have to put more money in readiness not just this year but in the future. Now, on the question of technology we have demonstrated without any doubt that we in this country possess the best technology and we have the potential for continuing that kind of lead. But the thing we have not done in recent years we have not demonstrated that we can use our technology to produce weapons that we can afford in sufficient numbers, nor have we demonstrated that we can produce highly technical weapons that can also be maintained in the field, as Gary already mentioned. Now, I think that's the challenge of technology in the future: not to give up our technological lead — we've got to maintain that — but to produce weapons that are maintainable and affordable.

MOYERS: You have both used the word 'readiness'. Congressman Edwards of Alabama gave us some figures which may be familiar to you — they were rather surprising to me. At Langley Air Force Base, two-thirds of the F-15 aircraft were grounded for lack of parts and for maintenance. At Cannon Air Force Base, three-fourths of the F-111Ds were grounded for lack of parts and maintenance. At Miramar, California, 50 percent of the F-14s were grounded, some for 30 days or more, while they were cannibalized for spare parts. I mean, no matter how much budget you fellows pass up here, these facts don't give the country much encouragement that it's being well-spent.

NUNN: I don't think that's altogether the fault of Congress. I think there's a tendency in the Pentagon also to go for the more sophisticated items, to go for procurement items and to believe that we can catch up with readiness. Now General Jones, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, has shifted that kind of priority within the Department of Defense, but it's come in the last couple of years, and I think we are going to see more readiness in the future. The other thing about all those airplanes I think there were some parts that got well behind because of a subcontractor strike, so I think that has something to do with the inordinate amount that's—

HART: There's an important political point here, though, that I think we've go to keep coming back to, and that is there is a constituency for the F-14 airplane, there is a constituency—

MOYERS: A political constituency?

HART: A political constituency that wants the F-14 aircraft. It provides jobs, the labor unions love it, the contractor loves it, and when somebody puts that weapon system before a service and sells it, and the service sells it to the Defense Department and the White House, and they bring it to the Congress, we get lobbied for it. I can't imagine a constituency for operations and maintenance.

NUNN: Well, let me say I agree with that, so I don't want to appear to not agree. He's absolutely right. But on the other hand, the implication is — if you don't go further — is that we're spending enormous amounts on F-14s and F-15s. The truth of it is in terms of Navy, we have more planes that are being taken out of the Naval air fleet every year than we're putting back in. The attrition rate has far exceeded the procurement rate. We simply are not putting the dollars and the resources into defense — overall.

HART: But, that's also because, Sam, that the individual aircraft are costing more.

NUNN: No doubt about that.

HART: The F-14 costs a lot more than the F-4.

NUNN: There's no doubt about that, but if you look at the relative defense budget compared to now, and compare it in past years, we're putting less resources into defense. We have had an enormous shift of priorities in this country, an enormous shift.

MOYERS: Is it— is it only that, or is it that, as Bill Perry implied the other day, that the shift toward high technology is not only going to cost more, but that it's harder to maintain as both of you have acknowledged. It's so complex it might fail in combat without combat testing; it requires specialized personnel, perhaps more than we are willing to pay for; it has a short life and is rapidly obsolescent; that the whole tendency toward technology, irrespective of how much money you two might want to vote for it, has an inherent flaw that in fact does not buy us more security and stability?

HART: I don't think you can draw from that the conclusion that we shouldn't buy superior weapons. It's that we ought to understand and cost into those weapon systems all of those factors that you mentioned — the cost of

maintenance, the cost of readiness, whether or not they're going to operate in the combat environment, and the Soviets' ability to cut across. There's also another factor, and that's the long lead time to develop and deploy a new weapons system. And in the meantime, the Soviets can cut into that— into that developmental cycle with a counter to it that's often cost a fraction of what it cost to put that weapon in the field.

NUNN: Well, another element of the whole technology question is many times in the United States the best is the enemy of the good — that is, in order to get the very best weapon we don't ever go into procurement, we keep research and development and go on and on with it, and we never get it in the field. The Soviets put things in the field, and if you compare the American weapons on the drawing board with the Soviet weapons in the field in almost every area we're ahead. We just don't get 'em out there in the field. So, we're going to have to make out technology work, but what we've got to tell the Pentagon, what we've got to tell the defense contractors is the state-of-the-art is not the only criterion for technology. We've got to make technology work for us in terms of affordability and in terms of maintainability.

HART: There's another factor also. I think we've got to outthink them. One of the things we did very well in the world up through World War II and beyond was to outproduce everyone. We had the largest and most powerful industrial base in the world. The Soviets, as Sam has indicated several times, are now able and more than willing to produce right with us and maybe outproduce us, and that's the first time the United States of America has ever had to face that fact. But that requires a degree of cunning if you will, and smarts that we haven't had to worry about in the past.

MOYERS: Talk about being smarter, that means being ingenious, that means more creative — a senior naval officer was critical of the inconsistent quality of equipment received from industry despite Government inspectors in factories and shipyards. 'We've come to expect that we're going to have to inspect a ship or a plane from the keel up before we buy it,' he said. In addition, much of what the military services get from industry is late. Army officials estimate that half of all deliveries they took from industry were behind schedule, even though many of those contracts had been renegotiated to permit later delivery. And I ask you, is all of this spending going to overburden an already burdened industry, so that we're expecting from American industry, whose productivity has been falling, what it can't deliver?

NUNN: I think that is a very good question. It's one I've been raising in the Armed Services Committee, it's one I've raised with the Department of Defense. I don't believe there's a good answer at this point in time, but there's a real danger that having let the industrial capacity to produce defense weapons go down over the last 10 or 15 years, we may, as we did in the social area in the mid-1960s, try to cure an accumulation of problems overnight. We can't do it. If we spend tremendous sums of money in given areas of the defense budget that are already behind schedule in terms of delivery, in terms of subcontractor capability, then we're simply going to inflate that area of the defense budget, put more dollars in and not get more units out. Now, we need some top quality economic analysis. We need some economists — perhaps independent, perhaps they're in-house, I don't know — going around to every program manager in the Department of Defense and finding out their sub-contractors' schedules, finding out where the backlogs are and trying to match this huge backlog agenda we have with the reality of what our industrial capacity is. There is a little bit of that going on, but I must say there is not nearly enough, and we need to do it and do it now.

MOYERS: I just came back from your state, Senator Hart, and an economist from the University of Colorado told me, talking about the MX, he said when you look at all of our defense needs for the next ten years, the competition for natural resources between domestic and military, the competition between domestic needs and defense needs for technicians, for skilled craftsmen, for scientists, is going to be so fierce, that one is going to have to pay for the other. How do you feel about that?

HART: Well, it's also raw materials. I think you're absolutely right. The question that you ask, and Sam responded to it, hasn't been asked by Congress as an institution, in this effort in effect to pump more money quickly into the defense economy — and I don't think we have the foggiest idea what the industrial base is — I disagree with one of Sam's premises, that we let it deteriorate for 10 or 15 years. Somebody was producing all the hardware that we used and left behind in Vietnam for eight or nine years, so there was an industrial base there somewhere— it's deteriorated, but hasn't been for 10 or 15 years, it's been for maybe five.

NUNN: I would say it's seven, eight, nine years would be more accurate.

HART: Well, anyway, those tanks and helicopters and mechanized equipment and the rest of it were being built somewhere within the last five years when we got out of Vietnam. In any case, it's not just trained manpower and skilled engineers and the rest, the MX missile system, when it goes into full production under the configuration originally proposed, the racetrack, will consume half of the cement produced in this country for about three to four to five years. Half of the cement. Sam worries, and correctly so, about how much resources we're going to be willing to allocate. Now, that's a very legitimate concern. I worry more about *if* we reach the decision to allocate those resources how they will be spent, and just spending the money, if it's wrongly spent, if it's spent for weapon systems that are down half the time, are poorly manufactured, that are not maintainable already, or not configured to fight the battle that we're liable to face, it's a waste of money, so we have to ask ourselves how much and we have to ask ourselves what for. And the Congress frankly has not asked the what for questions nearly enough.

MOYERS: I read recently that only 36 percent of the skilled technicians in the Navy are re-enlisting, and the question I ask, because both of you have been concerned with manpower, is this: How will we operate the existing technology, not to mention the technology to come, if we lose that skilled manpower?

NUNN: The quality has deteriorated in the active force and the reserve. We've got quantity problems — we can't procure the numbers we need — we have a missing skills kind of problem. We have terrible shortages in doctors, the volunteer force is not working, I don't think it's going to work, but at this time the country's not ready to come to grips with it. So we're going to have to, in my opinion, address that manpower question and it's going to be difficult for the country to grasp that we are simply in a situation where our manpower is the Achilles heel of our defense posture. We cannot mobilize today successfully. We cannot fulfill our treaty commitments in NATO because we do not have the number of people required in the time periods required and we are not really doing enough about it, although I applaud President Carter's decision in supporting registration. That is one step.

HART: Half of your program should have been given to manpower, because that's half — at least half — of our problem, maybe more. We could have the best ships, the best tanks and the best planes in the world, if there aren't people to run them, both in terms of pilot and drive as well as maintain, they're no good, and that's part of the reason they're down half the time. You have two problems. One, the manpower pool from which you draw people — that's the issue of all volunteer force versus draft. The second, and I think a more important and complicated problem, is how do you keep people in once they're in — the career people, the 8, 10, 12 and above year career person that keeps the services running.

MOYERS: He has the skills.

HART: He has the skills, has the experience, has the know-how and the training.

MOYERS: But he's leaving now.

HART: He's leaving. The draft won't solve that in my judgment. The draft addresses the first problem of the quality of the people you attract and the manpower pool that you have to draw from and the availability. That will not solve the more complicated second problem of how do you keep them in. There have to be financial rewards and benefit rewards, but there also has to be a kind of a psychic reward. There has to be a fulfillment in doing this, a sense that society needs and wants you, and I think that that's really what's lacking.

MOYERS: I hear you saying that irrespective of the draft we're going to have to spend more money on manpower in order to solve the manpower problem; so the defense budget on that point alone is going to increase.

HART: Well, partly more money, but also partly the internal mechanics of the services themselves, the issue that Sam was addressing, which is not a money issue—

MOYERS: Well, how do you solve the issue you raised?

NUNN: If you can go to some form of draft for the reserves, you will have a lot of people joining the active forces, and I think you will improve your quality. The additional resources that are put into manpower in my opinion should be put on the career force. If we try to solve the erosion problem with an across-the-board pay increases, we're not going to have enough money in the federal treasury to do that unless we take it directly out of procurement and research and development and readiness, which I think would be a disaster.

MOYERS: You think this is an issue that's going to be with us for a decade if we don't solve it?

NUNN: Well, I think if we do not solve it, our national security posture is going to continue to erode no matter what else we do in defense.

MOYERS: Everybody in town is talking about how much we ought to be spending and few people are talking about what we ought to spending it for. Do you believe that we have at the moment a coherent foreign policy that integrates a clear purpose in the world with a strategic military objective?

HART: No.

MOYERS: We do not.

HART: No, and that is not totally President Carter's fault. I think it's a product of a number of years of drift, some incorrect perhaps foreign policy directions in the past that he inherited. The failure of Congress to play a role in all of this, the failure of Congress to make the hard intellectual, judgmental decisions about how to relate military might to foreign policy objectives, that's— so I think there's plenty of blame to go around but I have to say unfortunately the answer to your question is no.

MOYERS: How can you get one, given all the competing interests, the Congress, the Air Force, the Navy, the Army, the White House, the Executive Office of the President, the veterans, the different constituencies throughout the country, 534 members of Congress, the allies? How do you deal with this seemingly staggering problem?

NUNN: I think the question probably is also the answer, Bill. The number of problems we have, the competing interests make it more and more difficult if— more and more difficult for those of us in public office to set priorities. But that is what we're elected for. We're going to have to start setting priorities. We're going to have to identify the areas of the federal government that we should really make the priorities in foreign policy, economic policy, national security, energy policy in my opinion — those are the ones we have to concentrate on. But if you ask the average congressman or senator or the average person in the White House what are they spending the most of their time on, it probably would not be these areas. We have gotten to the point we're city councilmen, we're county commissioners, we're state legislators, we're congressmen—

HART: That's right.

NUNN: —and finally we're senators and we are not performing the kind of role that the founding fathers envisioned. They envisioned state and local governments performing an awful lot of the task that the federal government is now performing and the more tasks we've taken on in the last fifteen or twenty years, the more we're doing a poor job on the essential task that no other governmental level can solve.

HART: I think if the average American knew how we spend our day they'd be appalled.

MOYERS: We're going to be spending at least one trillion dollars on defense in the next five years — if we don't have some agreement to keep a lid on the arms race, isn't it going to spiral far beyond what either of us can imagine today.

HART: One of the reasons I strongly supported the SALT II treaty was not because it was an ideal treaty or because it solved all the strategic disparities between us and the Soviets, but it was, I thought, a constructive but limited step in the direction of putting a lid, a reasonable lid, on nuclear weapons expansion, and at the same time making available very needed resources to address some of the conventional military deficiencies that we have. I am absolutely convinced after five and a half years at this job that we will never have the conventional forces we need so long as we have an unrestrained nuclear arms race. There probably is not an ideal SALT treaty 'til you get to SALT 'X' that is going to prevent those kind of problems. You're going to have to do it in one step at a time, a limit here and a limit there, and then keep negotiating. All I'm telling you is so long as we don't hedge in this monster it's going to drain dollars away from other defense needs.

NUNN: I believe that the greatest danger of a SALT II treaty — and have believed this for some time — is that if it is sold, which SALT I was to some degree sold, as basically arresting the arms race, making the world safer, I believe that is contrary to what SALT really accomplishes. It accomplishes primarily the step of being a foundation for a

more meaningful and more significant agreement in the future. But we're going to have a lot more strategic weapons under SALT II at the end of that period than we do now. If in the meantime SALT II acts as a tranquilizer and puts us to sleep as SALT I and detente and the post-Vietnam era combined have done, then we're going to wake up with conventional problems in every kind of measure of military power with the Soviet Union.

MOYERS: Are we with the new defense budget back to an old solution of throwing money at problems?

NUNN: Well, I hope not, Bill. I think that's why we need this careful economic analysis to not only determine the resources but to determine the industrial capacity that we have. I'm hoping that will be done.

HART: I'm afraid it won't. I don't see enough movement quickly enough in the Congress, in the appropriate committees, to ask the right questions to prevent this money from being wasted.

[End, Senate conversation]

[Interior, Moyers' office]

MOYERS: The more you study the state of national readiness, the closer you get to a national scandal. We're about to embark on the most expensive peacetime military buildup in our history, yet almost no one in Washington can say with assurance that it will be money well spent. So obsessed have the politicians been with raising the budget by a fixed percentage that they hardly pause at all to ask: for what purpose, save the perception of an uneasy parity with the Russians. On paper, the high tech weapons of the future give us a qualitative edge over the Soviet Union. But wars are not fought on paper. The clamor grows for more complex systems even as the personnel to operate them are found sorely wanting. Consider the results of a recent battery of tests given by the Army to soldiers in the field:

— Of the Hawk surface-to-air missile crews, 82 percent failed the basic skills test;
— Of the track vehicle mechanics, 89 percent failed;
— Computer programmers, 77 percent failed;
— Artillery crewmen, 86 percent failed;
— Of the nuclear weapons maintenance specialists — the men who care for our Pershing missiles — 90 percent failed the basic skills test. Ninety percent.

A scandal? It will be a scandal if all that smart weaponry proves too smart for us — too expensive to maintain, too complex to work in battle, too soon obsolete. It will be scandalous if we refuse to pay for the people required to man it, or to devise a system of selective service which calls upon all of us — and not just the poor — to share more fairly in our national defense. A scandal, too, if the officers and experts who argue for a leaner, simpler, tougher armed forces — one less reliant on fancy weapons — are ignored in the debate. Or if the debate ends, as now seems likely, without our having reached any consensus on what we want the military to do or our foreign policy to be. For there is in Washington today no coherent strategy for applying America's objectives in the world — if we knew what they were — to defense procurement and funding. Without such considerations, all that hard cold cash, one trillion dollars of it over the next five years, could represent the triumph of technology and the failure of wisdom. I'm Bill Moyers.

[Credits, over military promotional film clips]

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