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This Week In Congress Radio Address: Death of Alben Barkley, Former Senator and Vice
President, 1956 May 4

Speaker: Senator J. Allen Frear
Transcribed by: David Cardillo

[00:00]

Announcer: The Week in Congress, recorded on May 4th, 1956.

Mr. Kelly: From Washington, DC, transcribed, United States Senator J. Allen Frear reports again to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. Ladies and gentlemen, Senator Frear.

Senator Frear: Thank you, Mr. Kelly. The Senate has again resumed its legislative responsibilities, though saddened by the sudden passing of its great and distinguished member, the late Alben Barkley. We shall indeed miss not only his wise council, but also the genial and colorful personality of this gracious Kentucky gentleman, who I was proud to count as one of my close friends. As we paid our final respects to Senator Barkley in Paducah, the thousands of his friends who came to witness and participate in his last rites constituted a tremendous and significant tribute to one of the most memorable Americans ever to appear in public life. Back here in Washington as the Senate returns to its schedule of activities, nationwide attention is focusing on a familiar and frequently discussed phase of our national defense. The issue revolves around American air power versus that of the Soviet Union. Reduced to simplest terms, the debate seeks to determine whether this nation is sufficiently strong in strategic air power to effectively defend our country against possible attacks and to successfully strike back at any aggressor on his home territory. The struggle for air supremacy is a never-ending one, for it involves not only actual production of existing aircraft, but detailed and long-range development of bigger and better planes for the future. We hear it said frequently that aircraft in the skies, no matter how recently produced, are already obsolete by virtue of newer and better models on the drawing board. But since there is always a protracted period of time which must elapse between the successful design and the actual production of new aircraft, our defense planners and Congress must look at the overall problem, both in terms of what we have on hand as well as what we will require next year and the years to follow. It is quite natural to observe a conflict of opinion concerning the efficiency of our present strategic air power. The officers and men charged with operating our long-range bomber program undoubtedly looked first at the number and capabilities of their planes and personnel presently available, for it is the Strategic Command which has the mission of carrying the battle to any enemy if war should ever come. This arm of our national defense system must be

instantly and constantly alert every hour of every day, for time is of the essence in this era of supersonic speed and weapons capable of almost complete destruction. Behind the operating forces of our air strength, there must exist highly skilled and specialized designers and production experts whose job it is to keep the Air Force supplied with superior equipment so that America's strength in this vital category will not lag. Of equal and perhaps more urgency is a requirement for properly trained personnel who are capable of utilizing the increasingly complex aircraft that are being produced. In considering the overall problem of strategic air strength, Congress and our Defense Department must also devote the closest possible study to the rapidly developing requirement for the long-range guided missiles which are certain to be a part of any future conflict, if one should ever occur. There is no disagreement within or without government circles on the compelling necessity to keep the United States in a position of strength greater than that of any potential enemy. There is, however, a sharp divergence of views over the methods being employed to accomplish this objective. The cost factor has been raised as one of the most important considerations because it requires a staggering amount of money to adequately maintain strategic air strength. [05:00] However, while the cost of this project, like all other defense efforts, is high, yet when measured against the price we would pay, both in human lives and in material goods, if war should occur, the present investment seems well worth it. It appears evident, therefore, that Congress, after a searching examination of the whole question, will wish to ensure that our Air Force and our program of guided missiles is given every opportunity and means to carry out, with vigor and dispatch, the necessary research, development, and production of all necessary items to maintain our position of strength, and thus in turn deter any thought of aggression against our shores or those of our proven allies.

Mr. Kelly:

Thank you, Senator Frear. From the nation's capital, you have heard United States Senator J. Allen Frear in his regular report to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. Senator Frear will be heard again next week at this same time, speaking from the Senate Office Building in Washington.

[End 06:18]