

Text 1

LEHRER: Okay. Next question goes to President Bush for a 2-minute answer, and it will be asked by Sandy Vanocur. SANDER VANOCUR: Mr. President, this past week your secretary of the Army, Michael Stone, said he had no plans to abide by a congressional mandate to cut US forces in Europe from 150 to 100 thousand by the end of September 1996. Now, why, almost 50 years after the end of World War II, and with the total collapse of the Soviet Union, should American taxpayers be taxed to support armies in Europe when the Europeans have plenty of money to do it for themselves?

BUSH: Well, Sander, that's a good question, and the answer is: for 40-some years we kept the peace. If you look at the cost of not keeping the peace in Europe, it would be exorbitant. We have reduced the number of troops that are deployed and going to be deployed. I have cut defense spending. And the reason we could do that is because of our fantastic success in winning the Cold War. We never would have got there if we had gone for the nuclear freeze crowd; we never would have got there if we had listened to those that wanted to cut defense spending. I think it is important that the US stay in Europe and continue to guarantee the peace. We simply cannot pull back. Now, when anybody has a spending program they want to spend money on at home, they say, well, let's cut money out of the Defense Dept. I will accept and have accepted the recommendations of 2 proven leaders, General Colin Powell and Secretary Dick Cheney. They feel that the levels we're operating at and the reductions that I have proposed are proper. And so I simply do not think we should go back to the isolation days and starting blaming foreigners. We are the sole remaining superpower, and we should be that. And we have a certain disproportionate responsibility. But I would ask the American people to understand that if we make imprudent cuts, if we go too far, we risk the peace. And I don't want to do that. I've seen what it is like to see a war, to see the burdens of a war, and I don't want to see us make reckless cuts. Because of our programs we have been able to significantly cut defense spending. But let's not cut into the muscle, and let's not cut down our insurance policy, which is participation of American forces in NATO, the greatest peace-keeping organization ever made. Today you've got problems in Europe, still bubbling along even though Europe's gone democracy's route. But we are there, and I think this insurance policy is necessary. I think it goes with world leadership, and I think the levels we've come up with are just about right.

LEHRER: Mr. Perot, one minute, sir.

PEROT: If I'm poor and you're rich, and I can get you to defend me, that's good. But when the tables get turned, I ought to do my share. Right now we spend about \$300 billion a year on defense, the Japanese spend around 30 billion in Asia, the Germans spend around 30 billion in Europe. For example, Germany will spend a trillion dollars building infrastructure over the next 10 years. It's kind of easy to do if you only have to pick up a \$30-billion tab to defend your country. The European Community is in a position to pay a lot more than they have in the past. I agree with the president: when they couldn't, we should have; now that they can, they should. We sort of seem to have a desire to try to stay over there and control it. They don't want us to control it, very candidly. So it I think is very important for us to let them assume more and more of the burden and for us to bring that money back here and rebuild our infrastructure, because we can only be a superpower if we are an economic superpower; and we can only be an economic superpower if we have a growing, expanding job base.

LEHRER: Governor Clinton, one minute, sir.

CLINTON: I agree with the general statement Mr. Bush made. I disagree that we need 150,000 troops to fulfill our role in Europe. We certainly must maintain an engagement there. There are certainly dangers there, there are certainly other trouble spots in the world which are closer to Europe than to the US. But 2 former defense secretaries recently issued a report saying that 100,000 or slightly fewer troops would be enough, including President Reagan's former defense secretary, Mr. Carlucci. Many of the military experts whom I consulted on this agreed. We're going to have to spend more money in the future on military technology and on greater mobility, greater airlift, greater sealift, the B-22 airplane. We're going to have to do some things that are quite costly. And I simply don't believe we can afford nor do we need to keep 150,000 troops in Europe given how much the Red Army, now under the control of Russia, has been cut, the arms control agreement concluded between Mr. Bush and Mr. Yeltsin, something I have applauded. I don't think we need 150,000 troops. Let me make one other point. Mr. Bush talked about taxes. He didn't tell you that he vetoed a middle class tax cut because it would be paid for by raising taxes on the wealthy and vetoed an investment tax credit paid for by raising taxes on the wealthy.