

# President Harry S Truman's AEDC Dedication Speech



President Harry S Truman gave the dedication speech at the AEDC June 25, 1951.

“I am glad to be here in Tennessee to dedicate this great aviation development center. The great industrial progress of Tennessee, and of the whole South, makes it possible to build this key defense installation in this area. I am sure that the presence of this Center here will contribute further to the growth and prosperity of this region.

“It is most appropriate that this center for pioneering in the science of flight should bear the name General Henry H. Arnold. “Hap” Arnold was a great pioneer in the development of our Air Force.

“He was one of the first three officers in our Armed Forces to learn to fly a plane. He won his first flying trophy in a Wright biplane that had a 40-horsepower engine turning two propellers by the chain-and-sprocket method—the same kind of power transmission a bicycle has.

“General Arnold lived to command a mighty Air Force of eighty-thousand planes. Instead of 40 horsepower, some of the planes in that air force had 10,000 horsepower. And the power transmission system of some of those planes was more like a skyrocket than a bicycle.



President Harry S Truman pulls a cord to draw aside the curtain, revealing the dedicatory plaque mounted on a large granite rock. Mrs. Henry Arnold, widow of General of the Air Force H. H. “Hap” Arnold, looks on.

“General Arnold had a lot to do with those improvements. He knew that you can’t have a first-class Air Force with second-class aircraft. He would have been delighted with the air-research center, which will do so much to make further improvements possible.

“I am happy to dedicate this center to his memory and to name it the ‘Arnold Engineering Development Center.’

“The scientists who work here will explore what lies on the other side of the speed of sound. This is part of our effort to make our air power the best in the world—and to keep it the best in the world. This applies to the planes of the Air Force, the Navy, and our Marines. It applies to our guided missiles and all the future developments that science may bring.

“The purpose of our air power is to help keep the peace of the world. This is our fundamental objective. A large and powerful air force is one of the essential weapons we must have to help prevent aggression – or to crush aggression if it is launched.

“We need many other weapons as well – military, economic and psychological weapons – if we are to prevent a third world war. And we must keep finding new and better methods in each of these fields, just as we must keep developing faster and more powerful planes.

“We must use every possible means of securing and maintaining the peace. Our whole policy is based on world peace. That has been our policy all along, and it is still our policy. This hasn’t changed one bit.

“Since World War II, we have done our utmost to build an international organization to keep peace in the world. We have done that in the interest of the United States,

because the only sure way to keep our own country safe and secure is to have world peace. The United Nations is the most far-reaching attempt that man has ever made to protect himself against the scourge of war.

“But the rulers of the Soviet Union had a different idea. They did not want to cooperate in keeping the peace. The people of Russia (the common everyday people of Russia) want peace just as much as anyone else, but their rulers in the Kremlin saw that the nations of the world had been weakened and demoralized by the agonies of the war. They saw a chance to move in and impose their own system of slavery on other nations.

“We tried to settle postwar problems with the Soviet Union on a decent and honorable basis, but they broke one agreement after another. We offered to place the means of atomic warfare under effective international control. That was an offer to save mankind forever from the horror of the atomic war. But the Soviet Union refused to accept it.

“Our actions showed that we were for peace. Even though our efforts were rejected by the Soviet rulers, our actions won for us the confidence and trust of other free nations. In spite of all the false and lying propaganda of the Kremlin, it was clear to all the world that we wanted peace.

“At the same time, we made it clear to all the world that we would not engage in appeasement. When the Soviet Union began its campaign of undermining and destroying other free nations, we did not sit idly by.

“We came to the aid of Greece and Turkey when they stood in danger of being taken over by communist aggression in 1947. As a result, these countries today are free and strong and independent.

“We came to the aid of the peoples of France and Italy in their struggle against the political onslaught of Communism. In each of these countries, Communism has been defeated in two free elections since 1947. There is no longer any danger that they will vote themselves into the hands of the Soviet Union.

“We came to the aid of the brave people of Berlin when the Kremlin tried to take them over. We and our allies kept Berlin alive by the airlift, and it is still free today.

“We came to the aid of China when it was threatened by Communist civil war. We put billions of dollars’ worth of arms and supplies into China to aid the Chinese Nationalist government. We gave them more help than we gave Greece or Italy or Berlin. The government of Greece took our aid and fought for freedom. But many of the generals of National China took our aid and surrendered.

“We can investigate the situation in China from now until doomsday, but the facts will always remain the same: China was taken over by the Communists because of the failure of the Nationalist Government to mobilize the strength of China to maintain its freedom.

“After all, our aid can be effective only when the people help themselves. We are continuing to give aid to

the Chinese Nationalists on Formosa, and that aid will be effective if they are now willing to do their part.

“On June 25, 1950, one year ago today, the Communist rulers resorted to an outright war. They sent Communist armies on a mission of conquest against a small and peaceful country. The act struck at the very life of the United Nations. It struck at all our hopes of peace.

“There was only one thing to do in that situation – and we did it. If we had given in – if we had let the Republic of Korea go under – no nation in the world would have felt safe. The whole idea of a world organization of nations took collective military action to halt aggression. And, acting together, we halted it.

“A year ago today, Korea looked like an easy conquest to the Soviet rulers in Moscow and their agents in the Far East. But they were wrong. Today, after more than a million Communist casualties – after the destruction of one Communist army after another – the forces of aggression have been thrown back on their heels. They are back behind the line where they started.

“Things have not turned out the way the Communists expected.

“The United Nations has not been shattered. Instead, it is stronger today than it was a year ago.

“We have been fighting this conflict in Korea to prevent a Third World War. So far, we have succeeded. We have blocked aggression. And we have kept the conflict from spreading.

“Men from the United States and from many other free countries have fought together in Korea. They have fought bravely, heroically, often against overwhelming odds. Many have given their lives. No men ever did more for their country or for peace and freedom in the world than those men who fought in Korea.

“The attack on Korea has stimulated the free nations to build up their defenses in dead earnest. Korea convinced the free nations that they had to have armies and equipment ready to defend themselves.

“The United States is leading the way, with defense expenditures of 40 billion dollars. Other nations are devoting a large share of their national effort to our mutual defense.

“Never before in history have we taken such measures to keep the peace. Never have the odds against an aggressor been made so clear before the attack was launched.

“The Kaiser, and Hitler, when they started their great wars of aggression, believed that the United States would not come in. They counted on being able to divide the free nations and pick them off one at a time. There could be no excuse for making that mistake today.

“We have the United Nations – which expresses the conscience and the collective will of the free world.

“We have the Organization of American States – which is building the strength of this hemisphere.

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“We have the North Atlantic Treaty – which commits all the nations of the Atlantic community to fight together against aggression.

“We have unified land, sea, and air forces in Europe, under the command of General Eisenhower.

“We are strengthening the free nations of the Far East and setting up collective security arrangements in the Pacific.

“We are building up our defenses and the defenses of other free nations rapidly and effectively.

“Most important of all, we have shown that we will fight to resist aggression. The free nations are fighting – and winning – in Korea.

“Never before has an aggressor been confronted with such a series of positive measures to keep the peace. Never before in history have there been such deterrents to the outbreak of world war.

“Of course, we cannot promise that there will not be a world war. The Kremlin has it in its power to bring about such a war if it desires. It has a powerful military machine, and its rulers are absolute tyrants.

“We cannot be sure what the Soviet rulers will do.

“But we can put ourselves in a position to say to them: Attack – and you will have the united resources of the free nations thrown against you; attack – and you will be confronted by a war you cannot possibly win.

“If we could have said that to the Kaiser, or to Hitler, or to Tojo, the history of the world would have been very different.

“It hasn’t been easy – but it is a record of tremendous progress in man’s age-old struggle for peace and security.

“We have made great progress, but we are not yet out of danger. The Kremlin is still trying to divide the free nations. The thing that the Kremlin fears most is the unit of the free world.

“The rulers of the Soviet Union have been trying to split up the nations of the North Atlantic Treaty. They have been trying to sow distrust between us and other free countries. Their great objective is to strip us of our allies – to force us to ‘go it alone.’

“If they could do that, they could go ahead with their plan of taking over the world, nation by nation.

“Unfortunately, it isn’t only the Kremlin that has been trying to separate us from our allies. There are some people in this country, too, who have been trying to get us to ‘go it alone.’ There are people here who have been sowing distrust of our allies and magnifying our differences with them. Some of these people are sincere but misguided. Others are deliberately putting politics ahead of their country’s safety. Now, I have no objection to honest political debate. That’s the way things get decided in this country.

“But some of the people who are trying to get us to ‘go it alone’ aren’t engaging in honest political debate. They

know they couldn’t win that way. So they have launched a campaign to destroy the trust and confidence of the people in their government.

“They are trying to set the people against the government, by spreading fear and slander and outright lies. They have attacked the integrity of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They have maliciously attacked General Bradley, who is one of the greatest soldiers this country has ever produced. They have tried to besmirch the loyalty of General Marshall, who directed our strategy in winning the greatest war in history. They have deliberately tried to destroy Dean Acheson – one of the greatest secretaries of state in the history of this country.

“The political smear campaign is doing this country no good. It’s playing right into the hands of the Russians.

“Lies, slander, mud slinging are the weapons of the totalitarians. No man of morals or ethics will use them.

“As far as I am concerned, there ought to be no Democrats and no Republicans in the field of foreign policy. We are all American, all citizens of the same great republic. We have had a bipartisan foreign policy in this country since Pearl Harbor. I would like to keep it that way. I know a great many Republicans who want to keep it that way, too.

“I say to them – this is the time, now, to show the real loyalty of the Republican party to the great ideals on which this country is founded. Now is the time to put a stop to the sordid efforts to make political gains by stirring up fear and distrust about our foreign policy. Now is the time to say to the dividers and confusers: No political party ever got anywhere in the long run by playing fast and loose with the security of the nation in time of great peril.

“Partisan efforts to label our foreign policy as ‘appeasement’ – to tag it as a policy of ‘fear’ or ‘timidity’ – point to only one thing. They point to our ‘going it alone,’ down the road to World War III.

“Is it a policy of fear to bring the free nations of the world together in a great unified movement to maintain peace? Is it a policy of timidity to come to the aid of the Greeks and the Turks and the other free people who are fighting back against the Communist threat? Is it policy of appeasement to fight armed aggression and hurl it back in Korea? Of course it’s not. Anybody with any common sense knows it’s not.

“And look at the alternatives these critics have to present. Here is what they say. Take a chance on spreading the conflict in Korea. Take a chance on tying up all our resources in a vast war in Asia. Take a chance on losing our allies in Europe. Take a chance the Soviet Union won’t fight in the Far East. Take a chance we won’t have a Third World War.

“They want us to play Russian roulette with the foreign policy of the United States – and with all the chambers of the pistol loaded.

“That’s the kind of wisdom and thinking that has been coming out of the dividers and confusers in the last few months.

“That is not a policy. That is not the way to defend this country and the cause of world peace in these dangerous times. No President who has any sense of the responsibility for the welfare of this great country is going to meet the grave issues of war and peace on such a foolish basis as that.

“I am glad that we have had the recent hearing in the Senate on our foreign policy. These hearings have been thorough and have been conducted fairly. They have done a great deal to explain to our people the situation the world is in, and the way we are meeting it. They have demonstrated, again, that we are on the right course.

“But the important problem right now is not the past; it is the future. The world will not stand still while we examine the whole course of our foreign policy since 1941.

“Our military buildup, our economic strength at home, ... They are essential to our program of peace.

“We are right in the middle of a great effort to build up our defenses and to check aggression. We can’t go on with this effort unless the Congress enacts certain basic legislation.

“Every group in the country has a vital part to play in our great effort for peace. The part of the Congress is to give the country the legislation we need to go forward. Without that, none of the rest of us can do our job.

“We must have effective laws to curb inflation and to boost defense production.

“We must have the appropriations needed to build up our defense forces.

“We must have legislation to enable us to continue our policy of military and economic aid to our allies.

“To make our nation safe, we must have strong allies. We cannot have them unless we help the other free countries to defend themselves. Time is too short, and the danger too pressing to wait for these war-weakened countries to build up their own defenses without help from us. This aid is vital to our plans for defense, to our national security, to our hopes for peace.

“Let me show you just how essential it is. We all know that our Air Force is very important. But did you ever stop

to think how much its effectiveness depends on our allies?

“The Air Force has to have bases overseas to be in the right place to give full protection to our own country, as well as our allies. This is a clear example of how joining with other free countries for mutual defense helps all of us.

“Our allies cannot maintain and defend the necessary bases unless we give them aid. Giving aid to our allies is just as necessary as building airplanes if we are to have world peace.

“Our military buildup, our development of weapons, our economic strength at home, our foreign aid programs, our efforts in the United Nations are all parts of a whole. They are all essential to our program of peace.

“There is no one weapon – no single service – no particular military or diplomatic device – that can save us by itself. All our efforts are needed.

“We now have a program that is using all these elements of our national policy for the great purpose of peace. We are improving it as we go along. We are getting good results.

“We must get on with the job.

“We must build up our strength, but we must always keep the door open to the peaceful settlement of differences.

“We are ready to join in a peaceful settlement in Korea now as we have always been, but it must be a real settlement which fully ends the aggression and restores peace and security to the area and to the gallant South Korean people.

“In Korea and in the rest of the world we must be ready to take any steps which truly advance us toward world peace. But we must avoid like the plague rash actions which would take unnecessary risks of world war or weak actions which would reward aggression.

“We must be firm and consistent and level headed. If we get discouraged or impatient, we can lose everything we are working for. If we carry on with faith and courage, we can succeed.

“And if we succeed, we will have marked one of the most important turning points in the history of man. We will have established a firm peace for the whole world to last for years to come.

“That is a goal to challenge the best that is in us. Let us move toward it resolutely with faith in God and with confidence in ourselves.”

*Compiled from Beyond the Speed of Sound*

[www.arnold.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-100323-069.pdf](http://www.arnold.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-100323-069.pdf)