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United States Senator

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United States Senator

United States Senate

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 14, 1999

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SENATORS WRITE TO PRESIDENT ON BEHALF OF KIMMEL AND SHORT **Roth and Biden urge Clinton to honor May 25th Senate vote**

WASHINGTON -- Senators William V. Roth, Jr., Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and 10 of their Senate colleagues today sent a letter to President Clinton, urging him to honor a Senate vote calling for the restorations of the reputations of Admiral Husband Kimmel and General Walter Short.

Kimmel and Short commanded United States forces in Hawaii at the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Both were charged with dereliction of duty, and were unfairly blamed for the disaster. After World War II ended, this scapegoating was given permanence when Kimmel and Short became the only two flag rank officers excluded from advancement on the military's retired list to their highest grade of wartime command. This, despite the fact that numerous investigative panels cleared them of the dereliction charge and of singular responsibility.

On May 25, 1999 the Senate affirmed the conclusion that these two officers performed their duties competently.

"The Senate's May 25th vote was an historic step. It officially recognizes the injustice suffered by Admiral Kimmel and General Short. The fact that these officers remain the sole officials sanctioned for their role in that fateful day contradicts the US government's conclusion that responsibility for the Pearl Harbor disaster 'must be broadly shared,'" the Senators' letter states. "Mr. President, we urge you to advance Kimmel and Short on the retired lists to their highest wartime ranks, as was done for all their peers over the Officer Personnel Act of 1947. After 58 years, this correction is long overdue."

The Senators' letter coincides with one written by a group of high-ranking retired military officers -- three former Chairmen, Joint Chiefs of Staff and three former Chiefs of Naval Operations among them -- requesting a White House meeting on behalf of Kimmel and Short. In the meantime, a measure calling for the advancement of Kimmel and Short has been introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressmen John Spratt (D-SC), Chairman Floyd Spence (R-SC) and Ranking Minority Member Ike Skelton (D-MO) of the House Armed Services Committee.

A copy of the Senators' letter is attached (3 pages).

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 14, 1999

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On May 25th of this year, after careful and studied consideration, including two days of debate, the Senate took an historic step and voted to request the advancement of the late Rear Admiral Husband E. Kimmel to the grade of admiral on the retired list of the Navy and the advancement of the late Major General Walter C. Short to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list of the Army.

Admiral Kimmel and General Short commanded US forces in Hawaii at the time of the disastrous December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The Senate's May 25th vote asserted the Senate's conclusion that these two officers performed their duties competently and professionally and were unfairly scapegoated as singularly responsible for the success of that attack -- an injustice that was given the stamp of permanence because they were the only two eligible officers under the Officer Personnel Act of 1947 to be denied retirement at their highest grades of wartime command. (Admiral Kimmel, a two star admiral, served in a four star post as Commander of the US Fleet and the US Pacific Fleet. General Short, a two star general served in a three star post as Commander of the Hawaiian Department.)

We urge you to correct this longstanding wrong by advancing Admiral Kimmel and General Short to their highest grades of command in World War II, as was done for all their peers who were called upon to serve in positions above their regular grade.

The scapegoating of Kimmel and Short has its roots in the hastily prepared, yet high profile January 1942 report of the Roberts Commission. Less than seven weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack, the Commission issued its report accusing Kimmel and Short of being "derelict in their duty" and "solely responsible" for the success of that attack. Yet these accusations, which set the stage for the unfair treatment of Kimmel and Short under the Officer Personnel Act of 1947, were found untrue by numerous wartime and post-war military, governmental, and Congressional investigations. These reports, which span over fifty years, all yielded clear evidence that these two commanders were scapegoated for errors committed by higher officials in Washington. These reports include:

Naval Court of Inquiry ('44)
Congressional Inquiry ('46)
Dorn Report (Dept. of Defense, '95)

Army Pearl Harbor Board ('44)
Board for the Correction of Mil. Records ('91)

These investigations reached the following conclusions:

- The Hawaiian commanders were not provided vital intelligence that they needed, and that was available prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Their senior commanders had better information about Japanese intentions, plans, and actions, but neither passed this on nor

attempted to correct the disposition of forces under Kimmel's and Short's commands.

•Based on the information available to the Hawaiian commanders, the forces under their command at Pearl Harbor were properly disposed.

•The handling of intelligence in Washington was characterized by "ineptitude...limited coordination...ambiguous language, and lack of clarification and follow-up," among other serious faults. (Dept. of Defense, 1995)

•"Responsibility for the Pearl Harbor disaster should not fall solely on the shoulders of Admiral Kimmel and Lieutenant General Short; it should be broadly shared." (Department of Defense, 1995)

The 1944 conclusions of the Naval Court of Inquiry and the Army Pearl Harbor Board cleared Kimmel and Short of the dereliction of duty charge, found the forces under their respective commands to have been properly disposed according to information they had received, and found that their superiors had not shared with them vital intelligence. **These findings were kept secret on the grounds that it was detrimental to the war effort.** The 1991 Army Board for the Correction of Military Records actually recommended General Short's advancement to his highest grade of wartime command.

Our conclusion that U.S. government actions and inactions have unfairly scapegoated Admiral Kimmel and General Short is one shared by many, including numerous retired officers of the highest rank and a number of public organizations, the latter including: the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Naval Academy Alumni Association, the Pearl Harbor Commemorative Committee, the Admiral Nimitz Foundation, and the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association.

The Senate's May 25th vote was an historic step. It officially recognizes the injustice suffered by Admiral Kimmel and General Short. The fact that these officers remain the sole officials sanctioned for their role in that fateful day contradicts the U.S. government's conclusion that responsibility for the Pearl Harbor disaster "must be broadly shared" -- a contradiction that continues the unfair scapegoating of Kimmel and Short.

Mr. President, we urge you to take the steps necessary to correct this injustice. To reverse this wrong would be consistent with this nation's sense of military honor, its reputation for fairness, and its cherished tradition of justice. To provide these two officers with the dignity and honor they deserve is to ensure that justice and fairness fully permeate the memory and lessons learned from the catastrophe at Pearl Harbor.

Mr. President, we urge you to advance Kimmel and Short on the retired lists to their highest wartime ranks, as was done for all their peers under the Officer Personnel Act of 1947. After 58 years, this correction is long overdue.

William V. Roth, Jr.

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Strom Thurmond

Edward M. Kennedy

Jesse Helms

Jesse Helms

John F. Kerry

John F. Kerry

Pete V. Domenici

Pete V. Domenici

Thad Cochran

Thad Cochran

Ernest F. Hollings

Ernest F. Hollings

Richard J. Durbin

Richard J. Durbin

Frank H. Murkowski

Frank H. Murkowski

George V. Voinovich

George V. Voinovich