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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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FEB 19 1974

Honorable William Proxmire
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Proxmire:

This responds to your letter of January 23, 1974, alluding to the outcome of a potential US/USSR naval confrontation in the Mediterranean and questioning the views of Admirals Moorer and Zumwalt on this issue.

I share your desire that we not quibble over the precise words which may have been employed by either the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, or the Chief of Naval Operations. It is, however, important that you understand that there is neither any essential difference between the views of these two officers nor anything approaching deliberate deception.

Last year in his report to the Congress on the United States military posture, Admiral Moorer stated:

"The Soviet Union still cannot match our capabilities to project sea power and control the sea lines of communication. However, it already has a formidable capacity, particularly in its large and varied antiship missile forces, to attack our sea power projection forces and to sever our sea lines of communication. The problem we face with the continuing growth in Soviet naval capabilities relative to our own is a matter of increasing concern to the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

Admiral Zumwalt and I share this view.

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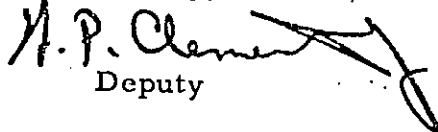
In public statements and in executive session with Congressional Committees, Admiral Moorer has stressed the fighting and leadership qualities of US naval personnel and expressed his confidence that in any confrontation between US naval forces and the Soviet fleet that the US Navy would prevail -- not, however, without losses. Any time conflict between the Armed Forces of the United States and the USSR is projected, heavy losses on both sides must be anticipated.

Admiral Zumwalt, however, when speaking to Congressional staffers, was addressing a very special set of circumstances; that is, the circumstance of the Sixth Fleet being confronted with the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron assisted by USSR long-range and tactical aviation, together with Warsaw Pact forces, while at the same time, no US or Allied force was available to support our fleet. This special scenario -- total nonsupport for the fleet -- all of us agree, would result in severe losses to the Sixth Fleet and probably eventual defeat. Admiral Moorer and I share this view.

I assure you that Admirals Moorer and Zumwalt view, in the same light, each of these differing possibilities. The perceived discrepancies are nonexistent, and there certainly was no deliberate deception.

One thing, however, is clear. Unless we accelerate the modernization of our fleet, the Soviets will increasingly challenge our control of the sea in those maritime regions, including the Mediterranean, essential to our success of our forward defense and deterrent strategy as well as in the ocean areas closer to our shores. I know we can count on your support for necessary Navy modernization and for US defense and foreign policies designed to assure that support is available for the Sixth Fleet.

Sincerely,


Deputy