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THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20350

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Date: DEC 15 2015

November 18, 1977


MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (PROGRAM ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION)

This afternoon we received your draft memorandum to the Secretary of Defense and one for his signature to The President. I have attached a few suggested changes in the latter. It would take care of three major problems we have with it.

First of all, the memorandum wholly omits any reference to the major factor which is likely to drive Congress's belief in the importance of a FY 79 authorization for a new carrier. Our proposed added sentence on page 2 would take care of this. It reads "The 6-7 year lead-time required for carrier construction could lead Congress to believe that a carrier should be authorized in 1979 to replace the CORAL SEA which retires in the mid-eighties. A thirteenth carrier is required to replace her in the late '80s and '90s in order for us to have deployable large decks while each of the other twelve carriers is receiving a lengthy Service Life Extension Program (SLEP). This is well known in Congress."

Second, the draft memorandum strongly implies that the "switch" to V/STOL aircraft is an all-or-nothing proposition. We don't think this is the case, and our proposed change of language states the issue more generally.

A third serious problem is the implication in the draft memorandum to The President that our Naval Force Structure Study will recommend basing naval forces "primarily on requirements for peacetime presence and crisis response missions." We do not yet know the outcome of this study and we are examining a full spectrum of naval missions, including maintaining superiority over the Soviet Navy and conducting the naval portion of a full scale war with the Soviet Union, as well as issues related to peacetime presence and crisis response. Our proposed changes to this section in the draft memorandum to The President correct this.

  
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Finally, a comment on your forwarding memorandum. There is one small point in it with which I would disagree. The Navy Sea-Based Air Platform Study and the Force Structure Study will have much analysis and data available not later than January/February, not when review can be completed "this spring."

I have a more fundamental problem with the thrust of the two memoranda taken together. As you are aware, my rationale for support of a CVV over a CVN last spring depended heavily on using such a ship as a transition to V/STOL. If both V/STOL R&D and the AV-8B are significantly cutback or killed this fall, I believe that my rationale for delaying until FY 80 and only then initiating a CVV program is seriously weakened, and would rest only on the potential to procure smaller carriers in greater numbers, the cost effectiveness of which must be demonstrated in my on-going study for the Congress. In any event, I believe that without the prospect of a transition to V/STOL in the future, there may well be no political choice available other than a NIMITZ in FY 79.

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✓

*W. Graham Claytor, Jr.*

W. Graham Claytor, Jr.  
Secretary of the Navy

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