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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS  
Date: MAY 24 2018

Honorable William P. Rogers  
Department of State  
Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Bill:

As you will recall, in my letter of 24 November 1971, I recommended that we initiate negotiations with the Government of Greece for the incremental homeporting of a carrier task group in Athens. Following the Greek Government's January 1972 approval in principle of the concept, we have completed Phase I, which included the homeporting of Commander Task Force Sixty (CTF-60), Commander Destroyer Squadron Twelve and staff, Destroyer Squadron Twelve, and the establishment of the U.S. Navy Fleet Support Office in Athens. I have now approved, subject to certain conditions, the Navy's plan and we are ready to proceed with Phase II which includes the homeporting of the USS INDEPENDENCE (CV-62), Carrier Air Wing Seven (CVW-7), and the dependent support ship USS SANCTUARY (AH-17) in Athens.

Phase II will involve approximately 5000 military personnel assigned to the afloat units and air wing, approximately 100 MILPERS (including one U.S. civilian) assigned to shore based support functions, and about 2550 dependents (1000 families). The military personnel can be accommodated within the Navy's share of the western European military manpower ceiling. This program, when completed (i.e., implementation of Phases I and II), will introduce a total of approximately 7100 MILPERS, 35 U.S. civilians, and 3800 dependents (1550 families) into the Athens area.

The existing support facilities -- which have been able to accommodate Phase I -- are now taxed to, if not beyond, their limits. Therefore, to avoid serious degradation of the quality of support, the implementation of Phase II will require the Navy to provide additional commissary, exchange, medical, dental and school facilities. The Navy proposes to homeport the dependent support ship USS SANCTUARY (AH-17) in Athens to augment the existing medical and dental facilities. The Navy intends to lease or lease-construct the remainder of the required support facilities.

Since there is sufficient non-government housing available on the local economy, this should present no problem as long as the introduction of dependents is phased to ease their assimilation into the area.

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There is a requirement for airfield support for the air wing, particularly during the carrier's maintenance periods or other periods of shorter duration when the carrier is in port. Since the carrier to be homeported will be CV configured (both attack and ASW mission capable), the Navy's operational concept envisions a satellite airfield operation, using Elefsis airfield as a logistic/maintenance adjunct to the carrier, in conjunction with the use of the Hellenic airfield at Souda Bay, Crete for the majority of air wing training. This concept of operations and requirements has been presented to the Chief of the Hellenic Air Force Command. Though no response has been received, Ambassador Tasca has indicated that he is optimistic that the airfield location problem will be successfully resolved since the GOG has approved the overall homeporting concept.

The concept for berthing the homeported carrier is merely a continuation of berthing arrangements traditionally employed during routine carrier visits to Athens. The carrier will anchor in Phaleron Bay and utilize the fleet landing there for support. There are, however, informal indications that Phaleron Bay may be developed into a tourist area and closed as an anchorage for shipping in the post-1973 time frame.

Costs associated with the full implementation (Phase I and II) of the Athens homeporting program are in consonance with those previously presented to you and the Congress. The costs, which include the USS SANCTUARY, and estimated airfield and alternate fleet landing costs, are now estimated to be \$13.6 million one-time, and a six year average of \$10.95 million for annual recurring costs. The cost estimates previously provided to Congress were \$14.4 million one-time, and \$13.4 million annual recurring. The International Balance of Payments deficit attributable to this homeporting program is now estimated to be \$11.8 million as compared to the \$13 million originally estimated.

There are some weaknesses and uncertainties in this plan; however, I believe they can be resolved satisfactorily with time. The lack of an airfield confirmed for our use is a decided weakness that could ultimately entail additional facilities and costs. Resolution to the airfield requirement is, of course, subject to the outcome of the on-going service-to-service negotiations between the U.S. and Hellenic Navies. The carrier berthing is also somewhat uncertain over the long term if the Greeks should close the Phaleron Bay anchorage. Such an eventuality would, of course, be an overall Sixth Fleet matter as it would affect routine carrier or other large ship visits to Athens as well as a homeported carrier. Should a move to an alternate site be required, we might propose that the Greeks support the costs involved, at least in part.

I also appreciate the concerns that have been expressed regarding the inability of the existing support facilities to accommodate the personnel and dependents associated with Phase II. This problem -- a lesson learned from Phase I -- is clearly recognized. We must now clear the way for the

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Navy to proceed with development of the facilities that will be required so that they can be fully manned and operational prior to the introduction of the Phase II dependents.

In view of the uncertainties and concerns involved, I have conditioned my approval of the Navy plan. First, a resolution to the airfield issue must be accomplished before any leases for Phase II facilities can be executed. Second, adequate support facilities (including SANCTUARY) must be in being, fully staffed and operational before Phase II dependents are introduced. Third, the Navy should revise its schedule to permit implementation of the carrier and air wing homeporting in March 1974, instead of July 1973 as proposed. This will permit careful planning for and orderly execution of Phase II. Should the Navy resolve the airfield and support facilities requirements well in advance of the March 1974 date, the Navy has been instructed to make a specific recommendation to the Secretary of Defense for an earlier implementation date. I have also cautioned the Navy that the overall costs should be kept in consonance with those presented to the Congress.

On the political side, the Athens homeporting program was expected to draw considerable press and Congressional interest and some criticism. We seem to have weathered the storm of Congressional opposition which was based on the overall concept of the program; therefore, the implementation of Phase II, though it can be expected to draw additional criticism, would not appear to be an issue at this point. I believe that we have already paid the major political price for homeporting in Athens.

Internationally, the Soviets, after their initial reaction, have been relatively quiet on this subject. They may, however, attempt to raise the specific issue in MBFR, having already raised the general issue of FBS and forward deployed carriers in SALT II. We should not be deterred by speculation on this issue.

We also recognized that the influx of additional U.S. service personnel into the Athens area would create some problems in Greece. Currently, any civil incidents involving U.S. military personnel -- homeported or not -- become highlighted. We can reasonably expect this to continue for awhile as the number of U.S. personnel increase in the Athens area. I do not believe, however, that the reaction either here or in Greece has reached -- or will reach -- unmanageable proportions.

In summary, I believe that homeporting in Greece makes little, if any, sense unless we carry through with our plans to homeport a carrier there. I am also confident that the problem areas and uncertainties can be resolved successfully with time and that the Navy implementation plan is feasible if the implementation is delayed.

I strongly support the Navy's desire to move forward with the implementation of Phase II; therefore, I request your early and favorable endorsement.

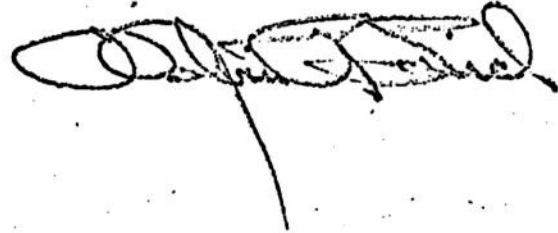
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I believe that we should move quickly to seek Ambassador Tasca's concurrence in this plan and to have him reaffirm with the Greek Government their previous agreement in principle and solicit their support to resolve the airfield problem. It is essential that we have GOG concurrence as soon as possible to permit early declassification of the plan.

I am prepared to discuss this matter with you, at any time, and have instructed my staff to provide whatever additional information you or your staff may desire.



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