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On August 12 [1949], Louis Johnson and I went to the White House, where President Truman announced my nomination as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCS]. . . . The reaction to my appointment generally was positive. I was still blessed with a "favorable press." However, to the Navy I was still an enemy. With the JCS now officially enlarged to four men – [Louis E.] Denfield, [Hoyt] Vandenberg, [J. Lawton (Joe)] Collins and me – the Navy felt that even though I had no official vote, its voice would be further weakened. . . .

Meanwhile all hell was breaking loose in the Navy. The pent-up rage and frustration exploded in public. The trouble began in June, when a Navy speechwriter and propagandist leaked a document deriding the Air Force's newest intercontinental bomber, the B-36, as a "billion dollar blunder." Not only that, the memo charged, the bomber was kept in production only because Louis Johnson [Secretary of Defense] and Stuart Symington [Secretary of the Air Force] had financial interest in it, and because they owed personal and political favors to Floyd Odlum, head of Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft, which had the B-36 contract.

The leak was a shocking charge and it generated screaming headlines nationwide. Navy supporter Congressman James E. Van Zandt demanded a congressional investigation. Carl Vinson, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, reluctantly took on the chore but broadened the scope of inquiry. On June 9, Vinson's committee [had] voted to launch a sweeping investigation of the national military establishment, its decision-making process, its strategic doctrine and the roles and missions of the services. The hearings would begin in August and resume after a recess in October.

It was clear from the outset that these hearings were going to be more than routine. The Navy would use them as a platform to attack not only Johnson, the B-36 and the Air Force, but the whole concept of strategic bombing. It would be a long and bitter fight.

The Navy's revolt soon dominated all else. Never in our military history had there been anything comparable – not even the Billy Mitchell rebellion of the 1920's. A complete breakdown in discipline occurred. Neither [Francis P.] Matthews [Secretary of the Navy] nor Denfield [Chief of Naval Operations] could control his subordinates. Most naval officers despised Matthews. Denfield, in my judgment, had abandoned, or at least grossly neglected, his disciplinary responsibilities in an apparent, and unwise, effort to straddle the fence. Denfield gave lip service to unification, yet he allowed his admirals to run amok. It was utterly disgraceful.

The leader of the Navy's mutiny was Arthur W. Radford, a distinguished and brilliant naval aviator. He was assisted by many other admirals and senior captains, notable aviators Ralph A. Oftsie and John G. Crommelin, and a destroyerman, Arleigh A. (31 knot) Burke, hero of the Pacific War. Burke and Crommelin, both skilled propagandists, attempted, with varying degrees of success, to enlist the media in the Navy's cause. In any event, they kept the pot boiling with leaks or rebellious public statements, attacking Johnson's budget cuts, the Air Force, the B-36 and the nuclear retaliatory strategy.

At the commencement of the Vinson hearings in August, Symington and Vandenburg and other Air Force witnesses utterly demolished the Navy. After hearing the testimony,

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[1] Bradley, Omar N. and Clay Blair, *A General's Life*, Simon and Schuster, New York, ©1983. Permission to copy excerpts (pp. 502-512) being requested.

the committee reported officially: "There has not been . . . one iota, not one scintilla of evidence offered . . . that would support charges or insinuations that collusion, fraud, corruption, influence, or favoritism played any part whatsoever in the procurement of the B-36 bomber."

The more important and sweeping Navy charges attacking our strategy, military budgets and weapons and the concept of unification were investigated in October. Admiral Radford was the principal Navy witness. He was followed to the stand by a dozen other admirals, Marine Corps generals and senior Navy captains who supported one aspect of his case or another.

The gist of the Navy's case was as follows: that our military establishment was being wrongly tailored to a single strategy of an "atomic blitz." That strategy was wrong because an atomic blitz would neither deter nor win a war and, moreover, the use of atomic weapons was immoral. Dependence on the B-36 to deliver the atomic blitz was a bad gamble because the plane had so many deficiencies it would be "useless defensively" or "inadequate offensively" and was thus an unwise investment. Even if some B-36s managed to reach the target areas, Air Force pilots would not be able to drop bombs close enough to be effective, and anyway the destructive power of atomic bombs was far less than advertised and not likely to inflict decisive damage on the enemy or break his will to resist.

The Navy men further argued that a concentration of funds for the B-36 had forced the Air Force to dangerously neglect aircraft for other missions, such as interception of enemy bombers, tactical air support and troop lift, while cancellation of the supercarrier and reduction of naval and Marine Corps aviation units had gravely impaired the Navy's ability to carry out its wartime mission. They maintained that a plan was afoot to completely "abolish" the Marine Corps. They asserted that neither Vandenberg nor Collins nor I had a true understanding of sea power or how to properly plan for war. Finally, owing to the foregoing, morale in the Navy and Marine Corps was at a dangerously low ebb.

I was profoundly shocked and angered by the Navy's case. The main thrust of it was completely dishonest. As the Navy knew very well, we were *not* gearing our entire military strategy to a single strategy of an atomic blitz. Our strategy, as embodied in Offtackle [a new emergency war plan], now envisioned massive conventional air, sea and ground operations in concert with our NATO allies. The atomic strategic offensive, which Denfield had agreed to, was a vital element – perhaps *the* vital element – of that strategy, but not by any means the sole element. Moreover, while no one claimed the B-36 to be the perfect weapon, it was the best we had at the moment, and Denfield himself had approved, without reservations, the inclusion of funds for four groups of B-36s in the Air Force Budget. The Navy knew very well that better, all-jet bombers (the B-47 and B-52) were in the works.

The most dishonest and disturbing aspect of the Navy's testimony was the denigration of the power of the atomic bombs. The testimony was based on unclassified data on the impact of the twenty-two-kiloton Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. The Navy knew very well that the Sandstone tests had proved out new atomic bomb designs which had yielded twice the power of the original bombs, and that with further refinements in design we could build fission bombs with even greater yields. Unfortunately, owing to the highly classified nature of this data and the value its disclosure would have for the Russians, no one could rebut the dishonest impression Navy witnesses had created.

For the Navy to raise public doubt about the effectiveness – or morality – of atomic bombs was the height of hypocrisy. Ever since I had been a member of the JCS the Navy had been fighting relentlessly not to be excluded from utilizing nuclear weapons. The principal purpose of the supercarrier was to accommodate aircraft large enough to

carry atomic bombs. The cancellation of the supercarrier had, in effect, denied the Navy a decisive role in nuclear bombardment. This denial, in fact, was the main cause of the Navy's revolt.

The charges that a plan was afoot to "abolish" the Marine Corps were likewise dishonest, designed to incur the sympathy of the millions who regarded the Marine Corps as sacrosanct as motherhood. As the Navy well knew, the Marine Corps was "protected" under the 1947 National Security Act and could not be abolished without congressional repeal of that portion of the act. As I have written, Ike, Van and I, believing the Marine Corps was far too large (the equivalent of two reinforced divisions) and a wasteful duplication of the Army's mission, had proposed deep cuts in its size. But these cuts were more or less proportional to the cuts proposed for the Army and did not represent an attempt to abolish the Marine Corps. Moreover Marine Corps aviation was still wildly out of balance, consisting as it did of twenty-one squadrons, which was the equivalent of seven Air Force tactical support groups. At the peak of Twelfth Army Group operations in the ETO, we never had more than fourteen groups supporting twenty-eight to thirty divisions in the line.

Quite apart from the blatant dishonesty of the Navy's attack, I was furious about the grievous psychological damage it was bound to cause. It was, in effect, an all-out assault on the credibility of our deterrent, our capability for waging nuclear war. Conceivably it could completely undermine public trust both at home and abroad in our weaponry and military leaders. This at a time when we were doing out utmost to coax our allies to support a NATO military force.

I had hoped that Navy Secretary Matthews and CNO Denfield would seize the occasion and take drastic measures to restore order and discipline with the crisis. Matthews was far out of his depth. His testimony on the Hill and other measures merely served to intensify the rebellion. Denfield tried to talk out of both sides of his mouth at once, supporting both Radford and Louis Johnson. Of course he failed, antagonizing both sides and leaving the impression that he lacked integrity.

After the Navy had had its day, the Air Force took the stand. As in August, both Symington and Vandenberg made superb witnesses, rebutting Radford's case point by point, insofar as it could be rebutted. Symington was forceful and passionate; Vandenberg icily cool and precise. I thought their combined testimony went a long way toward restoring public confidence in our strategy and weaponry.

Knowing that I would soon be called to the witness stand, I thought long and hard about what I would say. I could be lofty, vague and "statesman-like" or I could be down to earth and hard-hitting. It seemed to me that it was time to be hard-hitting. The crybaby attitude of the naval aviators and Marines had been, in my opinion, gravely damaging both at home and abroad. The admirals were insubordinate, mutinous. No one had publicly censured them for the insubordination, and it did not seem likely anyone would. I therefore took it upon myself to administer the lash. It was the most forceful and controversial speech I ever made.

Having prepared my statement with the help of a new speechwriter, Chester V. Clifton, and not having shown it to anyone in advance, I took the stand on October 19. I began by trying to set our military strategy in proper perspective, paraphrasing the key features of Offtackle, in order to show how the plan was dependent on the conventional NATO forces and not solely on an American B-36 atomic blitz. In broad and general terms, I refuted the Navy's principal charges about the immorality and ineffectiveness of atomic strategic bombardment, pointing out the Navy's glaring discrepancies in logic and distortion of truth.

Going on, I stressed these points:

● That inasmuch as the surface navy of the Soviet Union was "negligible," it was grossly wasteful to fund a U.S. Navy beyond what was needed to cope with the growing Soviet submarine threat.

● That inasmuch as the Air Force had been assigned the primary responsibility for strategic bombing, it was militarily unsound to build supercarriers when the money was required for "other more vital needs."

● That aircraft carriers could not be justified to support future amphibious operations. I predicted that "large-scale amphibious operations" such as those in Sicily and Normandy "will never occur again." I added: "Frankly, the atomic bomb properly delivered almost precludes such a possibility. I know that I, personally, hope I shall never be called upon to participate in another amphibious operation like the one in Normandy."[2]

● That no one could abolish the Marine Corps without congressional approval. I did not recommend that it be abolished but directly and indirectly I challenged the need for a large Marine Corps. I pointed out to those who believed that a "tremendous Marine Corps" was essential for amphibious operations that at Sicily and Normandy, "two of the largest amphibious assaults ever made in history," no Marines were present. I described the bloated size of Marine aviation air tactical support, comparing it to Air Force ETO operations.

Having quietly dealt with the moral, technical and strategic aspect of the Navy's charges, I then got out the lash. I turned first to the insinuations Navy witnesses had left that neither Vandenberg nor I (nor Collins) had an adequate grasp of war or war planning. I sketched in the considerable war experience we had had, then pointedly raised a question about Denfield's qualifications: "I was not associated with Admiral Denfield during the war and I am not familiar with his experiences." I went on lashing, stating: "The truth of the matter is that very few Navy men on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations have had any experience in large-scale land operations." I said that "high-ranking Navy men" had appeared before the JCS with conclusions "that showed they had no conception whatsoever of land operations."

I turned next to the much-publicized matter of low Navy and Marine Corps morale. I blamed that on Denfield and his senior admirals: "It would seem . . . that Navy leaders have lost sight of the fact that men, not machines, win wars and protect the peace. Senior officers decrying the low morale of their forces evidently do not realize that the sprite of the men is but a mirror of their confidence in their leadership. Confidence in leaders is an accepted ingredient of organizational esprit. However, dissentions among the top command, like a single drop of poison in wine, can destroy all partakers."

Finally I got down to the heart of the matter. The fundamental problem, I said, is that "many in the Navy are completely against unity of command and planning as established in the laws passed by the Congress of the United States. Despite protestations to the

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[2] Navy critics would unfairly needle Bradley for this prediction after the carrier-supported Inchon, Korea, landing was made less than a year later. In his statement, Bradley specifically said "large-scale" amphibious operations against an enemy armed with atomic bombs. Inchon was a small-scale landing against North Korean forces armed with conventional weapons. The two quotations here are from two separate parts of the speech. In the first, when Bradley was discussing the possible course of a future all-out war, he said: "I also believe that after the initial phases are over, there will be little need for any campaign similar to the Pacific 'island-hopping' that took place during the last war, and as I will develop later on in my discussion, I also predict that large-scale amphibious operations, such as those in Sicily and Normandy, will never occur again." Later, returning to the subject, he said: "Undoubtedly, without Navy support, any amphibious operation is impossible. However, by appraising the power of the atomic bomb, I am wondering whether we shall ever have another large-scale amphibious operation. Frankly, the atomic bomb, properly delivered, almost precludes such a possibility. I know that I, personally, hope that I shall never be called upon to participate in another amphibious operation like the one in Normandy."

contrary, I believe the Navy has opposed unification from the beginning, and they have not, in spirit as well as deed, accepted it completely to date. As a policy, yes, but as the final and authoritative vehicle for planning our collective defense, no." World War II, I went on, "should have taught all military men that our military forces are one team – in the game to win regardless who carries the ball. This is no time for 'fancy Dans' who won't hit the line with all they have on every play, unless they can call the signals. Each player on his team – whether he shines in the spotlight of the backfield or eats dirt in the line – must be All-American."

My statement was beyond doubt the frankest and toughest delivered before Vinson's committee. Those who had come to perceive me as the "amiable Missouri schoolteacher" or "the nicest guy in Washington" were astonished. *New York Times* reporter William S. White called it "one of the extraordinary tongue lashings ever given to high military officers in such a forum." Naval Academy graduate Hanson Baldwin, the *Times*' special military correspondent, wrote: "The vehemence and vigor of the statement, and the bitterness that seemed to mark some of it, astounded and amazed most of the listeners . . . Here was no patient, calm and tolerant Bradley, but an aroused old soldier, smarting under the long tension of friction and the Navy's attacks of the last ten days. . . . The Bradley statement did the Navy no good but it has not added to General Bradley's past reputation for tolerance, breadth and patience."

My remarks generated headlines and editorial comments nationwide. The phrase I employed to characterize the admirals – "fancy Dans" – was quoted endlessly.

That hit the nail on the head, but elsewhere I made an imprecise, or misleading, statement in my remarks which I was compelled to correct in a brief appearance the following day. In his testimony before the committee concerning the supercarrier, Denfield had said that "It is no secret that General Bradley reversed his earlier approval of the project." He was referring to my May 26, 1948, "yes" vote to Forrestal and my April 22, 1949, "no" vote to Louis Johnson. In my remarks I said that Denfield was "carelessly misinformed," and that the JCS had not been asked "to pass on the matter" until the April 22, 1949, vote requested by Johnson. This was, of course, imprecise. In my "clarification," I explained to the committee that I had not considered the May 26, 1948, vote a "formal decision" of the JCS, that the vote of April 22, at least as I construed it, was the first. Technically, in my mind, I had not reversed myself.

Hanson Baldwin, unblushingly pro-Navy in his coverage of the hearings, wrote a follow-up article in the *New York Times*, headlined: "BRADLEY'S CHARGES UPSET WASHINGTON / General's Future Usefulness and That of Denfield Called Affected by Testimony." In this long article, Baldwin asserted: "It was generally felt that his [Bradley's] testimony, piled upon Denfield's prior charges, had made impossible a continuation of the present relationships in the Defense Department. Admiral Denfield, it was thought, might well be superseded as the Chief of Naval Operations. . . . General Bradley's position too, was not without complications; his testimony had put a great gulf between him and the Navy, had supported the Navy's charges of Bias and partisanship and had certainly lessened somewhat, even his friends agreed, the general's future usefulness and his past stature."

Despite Baldwin's biased reporting, my position was not in jeopardy. Most people supported me, including Baldwin's superiors on the *Times*, who, in an editorial, called my speech "powerful and persuasive." Louis Johnson applauded me both in private and in public, when he testified before the committee. Among many letters and phone calls of support, none cheered me more than a note from Ike, who wrote, in part, that ". . . your standing is too high, your place in public opinion too secure . . ."

It turned out that in spite of the prolonged hullabaloo, nothing substantial emerged from these so-called B-36 hearings. The official committee deplored the way the supercarrier had been cancelled, but did not recommend that it be restored. Johnson went right on wielding the economy ax. Shortly after the hearings concluded, Congress finally voted on the fiscal 1950 military budget, which had been shelved pending the outcome of the hearings. As in 1948, the House tacked on an extra $800 million for aircraft, but the Senate refused to pass the budget until another 'hooker' had been inserted to again enable Truman to impound the money, which he did later. In sum: The 1950 military budget emerged from Congress in almost exactly the shape Truman had submitted it.

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