

“The Revolt of the Admirals” Reconsidered *

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The House Armed Services Committee's 1949 hearings on the B-36 program and on unification and strategy, and the events which led up to them, had a pivotal influence on the navy. At a time when naval aviation was dangerously close to enforced obsolescence, the hearings provided a forum which allowed the navy's grievances and concerns to be publicly expressed. Many of the records from 1949 have been declassified in the last decade, and in this essay, Mr. Barlow examines this important chapter in the history of the modern U.S. Navy in light of this new material.

INTRODUCTION **

Four decades have passed since the navy fought for its life in hearings before the House Armed Services Committee. The events of the summer and fall of 1949 are remembered, if at all, as “The Revolt of the Admirals”—a pejorative phrase that is as inaccurate as it is sensational. It was never a revolt, and naval officers of almost every rank were actively involved in the effort. The phrase quickly stuck not only because of its eye-catching headline but also because of the assiduousness of anti-navy propagandists.

The events that are grouped as “The Revolt of the Admirals” occurred from May to November 1949. The new Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, directed on 23 April that construction of the navy's newly-laid flush-deck aircraft carrier, the *United States*, be discontinued. Three days later, Secretary of the Navy John L. Sullivan tendered his resignation in protest of the way this action was taken. He was replaced by Francis P. Matthews, a man of no military or government experience, who saw himself as a servant of the defense secretary's policies.

In early May, several members of Congress received an “anonymous” document, subsequently revealed to have been written by Cedric Worth, special assistant to Undersecretary of the Navy Dan A. Kimball. Alleging that serious improprieties had been had taken place in the air force's procurement of the B-36 bomber, this document implied that Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington and Secretary Johnson had a financial stake in the program's outcome. The allegations contained in this document eventually led to the House Armed Services Committee's hearings on the B-36 bomber program and later hearings on unification strategy. At these hearings the navy put forth the case that the secretary of defense was stripping away its naval aviation because of a dangerous overemphasis on the war-detering and war-fighting properties of strategic bombing as propounded by the air force. In the aftermath of these hearings, the secretary of defense fired Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Louis

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** Extensive footnotes accompany this article. The article with footnotes will be included in the Index.

E. Denfield and punished other naval officers in an effort to bring the service into line behind his policies.

Since 1949 a sizeable number of books and articles of varying pretensions to significance have touched on the Navy's fight. To date {1989}, however, the navy's actual role has been inadequately analyzed. In a paper of this length, events in all their historical complexity cannot be described. Nevertheless, an outline can put the events into better perspective.

The most significant work to deal with the incident remains Paul Hammond's 1963 study, "Super Carriers and B-36 Bombers." It is a well-written study, being thorough and judicious in tone, and had become the standard account of the events. Several aspects, however, have diminished its final accuracy. For one thing, it is too dependent upon newspaper accounts for its facts. For another, its version of the incident is affected by a pro-air force perspective on the events—one no doubt influenced by air force briefing materials. Other accounts which have followed in the wake of Hammond's study, even those by authors partial to the navy, have used many of his basic judgments uncritically.

Largely as a result of historians continuing to rely on press stories and dated or biased information, we have little more insight into the actual circumstances behind the so-called "Revolt of the Admirals" than did contemporary observers. This no longer needs to be the case. Most of the navy's classified files relating to the events are free of security restrictions, and the U.S. Naval Institute released a large oral history (the first of several projected volumes) in 1983, giving a detailed account of Op-23, the pivotal organization behind the preparation of the navy's case. This oral history, which includes a substantial written text, was the product of a dedicated effort from 1979 to 1983 by Admiral Arleigh Burke, who had headed Op-23 {Research and Policy} during that organization's fateful ten-month existence.

"REVOLT OF THE ADMIRALS": IMPRESSIONS AND REALITY

A review of the writings on "the Revolt of the Admirals" shows that all suffer from certain misconceptions about the navy's involvement and, more specifically, the role that Op-23 played in organizing the navy's presentation before the House Armed Services Committee. One reason for this is that the authors lacked sufficient detailed background on the navy-air force fight to enable them to explain why certain things happened as they did. It is necessary to fill in a bit of that background before examining a few of the major misconceptions about the navy's role.

Background

The first point to understand is that, from 1946 to 1949, the air force was highly effective in putting its view of a proper defense posture before Congress and the press and in propagandizing against the navy's view. Much of the initial focus of this effort was on establishing its status as a separate service. Nonetheless, from the first, air force publicity was designed to accentuate the positive aspects of its doctrine on air power (even to the extent of distorting the record on occasion) and to minimize the positive aspects of the doctrines espoused by the other services.

From the beginning of its postwar drive for separate service status, the air force was aware that a strong public relations organization was a necessity. As

retired Major General Follett Bradley wrote to General Carl Spaatz, then acting commander of the army air forces, in early 1946:

In my view, the Army Air Forces will never be successful in your organizational objective until you can control your own publicity....

If our objectives are to be attained, it will be necessary for one or more of the civilian organizations who back us to put on a publicity campaign employing all media, movies, newspapers, radio, etc., to convince the American public of the necessity for action now by Congress. Such a publicity campaign would be little different from marketing a new toothpaste or fountain pen.

By 1948, the air force's Directorate of Public Relations had developed into a highly effective, centralized organ for controlling every aspect of air force public relations.² The message that the air force was selling was that only the strategic air power provided by the air force could attack effectively a continental land power such as the Soviet Union. However, since sufficient air power to accomplish this task would require a larger (70-group) air force, it was time for Congress to decide that it could no longer allow competing and duplicative (air force/navy) air forces to squander available resources.

In contrast to the air force's information program, the navy's public relations effort was dismal. The navy seemed to view public relations as something of a necessary evil. The service's senior leadership had little understanding of the importance of getting their message across to the public until it was far too late to do much about it. One man who saw this deficiency all too well was Captain Walter Karig who was serving as a special advisor for public relations on the staff of the chief of naval operations (CNO). He attempted to educate Admiral Louis Denfield, the CNO, on the important nature of the navy's public relations effort throughout 1948 and 1949. Whatever success he had in educating Denfield, it did not seem to have much of an effect on the state of navy public relations which, as an organizational entity, remained under the secretary of the navy's cognizance. In June 1948, Karig wrote to Denfield:

Vice Admiral Radford said at DCNO meeting Friday that the fate of the Navy will be determined in the next two years. I think the time is shorter than that, in a public relations sense. The effort must be made to utilize every outlet of public expression to build up public appreciation for the Navy as a continuing component of national defense, by abandoning our defensive and explanatory role and adopting a policy of vigorous, sustained coordinated propaganda (in the true, and best, meaning of the word.

Karig campaigned unsuccessfully for an integrated navy public relations outfit headed by a professionally-qualified officer who would stay in the job long enough to make a difference. In November 1948, he wrote to Harold Brayman, a civilian who headed a committee making an inspection of public relations for the secretary, giving him a detailed look at his own thinking on the issue.

The Navy prides itself on precision in gunnery, precision in bombing, precision in courts martial and real estate procurement, but in public relations it still uses the technique of the manure spreader (But it isn't

spreading awfully good fertilizer). The output as a whole is dull, uninspired, tardy. The element of zeal, esprit de corps, all the devotion to a cause that the Air Force exhibits, is lacking. (I don't know how it can be acquired, either).

In June and July 1949, even as the navy was finding itself becoming involved with the events that were to lead to the B-36 and the unification and strategy hearings, Captain Karig was pressing the CNO to obtain the transfer of the Office of Public Relations (OPR) from the secretary's shop to the CNO's. He also cautioned the CNO that the navy's attitude about the value of public relations would have to change if the organization was going to work as it should. He explained:

One of the handicaps OPR has always suffered from is the attitude within the Navy itself that Public Relations is somehow on a par with garbage collecting. Too many senior officers hold the "feather merchant" concept of Public Relations, and then wonder why in hell naval aviation is on the way out, the fleet is shrinking to a ferry service, and Admirals are called "brass hats" and cartooned as pompous nitwits—all products of anti-Navy press agency, unopposed.

However, by July 1949, nothing the navy could have done about its public relations organization would have had a significant impact on the struggle that summer and fall.

Another important point concerns the navy's view of the strategic air offensive as set forth by the air force. Because the overwhelming number of studies on "The Revolt of the Admirals" fail to delve into the nature of navy thinking on strategic air warfare before the events of 1949, they imply that the navy's opposition to the B-36 and to the air force's idea of strategic bombing in mid-1949 was in direct response to Secretary Johnson's cancellation of the navy's flush-deck carrier. Since this was the gist of contemporary anti-navy news stories (many inspired by the air force and its supporters), there is the overall impression that the navy's opposition to the B-36 and the air force's idea of strategic bombing in mid-1949 was in direct response to Secretary Johnson's cancellation of the navy's flush-deck aircraft carrier. Since this was the gist of contemporary anti-navy news stories (many inspired by the air force and its supporters), there is the over-all impression that the navy's opposition was unprincipled—largely designed to strike back at the air force for what had been done to the navy. This was not the case.

The navy's concern about the likely success of the air force's proposed strategic air offensive in case of war with the Soviet Union can be traced to the early postwar period. Naval aviators, in particular, remained unconvinced that the results of strategic bombing in World War II (as analyzed in the many reports of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey and those of its British counterpart) had validated the inherent decisiveness of strategic bombing in warfare. And as navy strategic planners working on the preparation of the Joint War Plans began to compare the air force's projected strategic air offensive with its assumptions about available overseas bases, the ability to penetrate Soviet air defenses, and many other issues, they began to express serious concerns about the viability of the air offensive. The navy shared these concerns with appropriate outside agencies. It made some of its reservations clear in October

1948 in its presentation before the Eberstadt Committee, which was looking into national security organization and planning. The CNO made a blunt presentation of his concerns about the success of the strategic air offensive to Secretary of Defense James Forrestal and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) during the meetings on the 1950 budget in early October 1948. Thus, by 1949, the navy's questions about the air force's capability of carrying out the strategic air offensive were well known within the national military establishment and in other appropriate quarters.

With the above information supplied to provide a bit of background to the events of mid-1949, one can now analyze several of the major misconceptions about Op-23 and the navy's actual role in the hearings that are present in writings about the "The Revolt of the Admirals." Two have to do with Op-23 itself, while the last concerns the longer term effects of the unification and strategy hearings.

Op-23: A Dirty Business?

Paul Hammond asserted that the navy treated Op-23 like a "dirty business." He wrote:

Set up for a normal and wholly legitimate purpose—to study Navy organization, and to formulate Navy policy towards the organizational problems incident to unification—Op. 23 was treated by the Navy from the beginning like a dirty business; and the press had soon drawn the same conclusion. Upon its establishment it was located next to the Office of Naval Intelligence, and its activities from the beginning were subject to an unusual degree of secrecy. The press was soon aware of its existence, but could obtain no satisfactory explanation from the Navy.

This same negative appraisal of Op-23 (though without it being directly named) comes through in other accounts of the navy's fight, such as that by Paolo Coletta.

This a point that needs clarification. From the first, Op-23 was designed to be a regular division in the office of the CNO. It was neither devised to do "dirty business" (however Hammond might define it), nor was it an *ad hoc* organization, as its predecessor organizations, SCOROR {Secretary's Committee on Research on Reorganization} and UNICOM, had been. It was created because the secretary of the navy and the CNO believed the navy was in need of a permanent organization that could provide advice on the complex issues involving unification of the services. Brigadier General Samuel Shaw {USMC} recalled what was said by Marine Corps Commandant General Clifton B. Cates:

He said he'd spent several conferences with the Secretary of the Navy and [Admiral] Denfield, his Chief of Naval Operations. And they were determined that something had to be done to get the Navy back into believing in itself. That was the...principal thread of the problem—[to] get the Navy to believe in itself.

At first, it was thought that the new organization could just be a re-established SCOROR—a committee under the cognizance of the secretary. Eventually,

however, Secretary Sullivan, Admiral Denfield, and General Cates decided it would have to be set up under the CNO. General Shaw remarked:

First,...[SCOROR] was the Secretary's organ and that wouldn't necessarily get all the uniformed Navy to think they ought to get up and follow whoever happened to be the Secretary of the Navy. And furthermore, SCOROR had not endeared itself to lots of Navy people. So,...if I remember what Cates was saying correctly, they'd decided it [the head of the new organization] had to be a guy—a uniformed Navy guy—who when he was announced, everybody [would believe]..."lets go with that guy." So apparently...[in] one of the last conversations they had they decided it was going to be Arleigh Burke...

When Captain Arleigh Burke reported to his new boss, Rear Admiral Charles Wellborn, Jr., the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Administration (Op-02), he found that his new organization had been assigned a tough and demanding job and one that was still in the process of being defined by the navy's senior leadership. When Admiral Denfield briefed Burke the following day, he asked the CNO for concrete ideas on what Op-23 could do to help. As Admiral Burke recounted:

He [Denfield] replied to my query by saying the charter included the best guidance he could give me: OP-23 was to familiarize itself on all matters pertaining to unification; advise him and keep him and other senior officers involved and informed on all unification matters; keep other navy commands informed of the situations; and be the clearing house within the navy for unification matters.... He said it was our job to do what was necessary and proper to be able to advise navy groups on unification matters. The navy was being castigated for the stands it had taken, and we had not been very successful in persuading either the other services or the administration and the Congress of the correctness of our stands.

Within the first few hours of his taking over, Arleigh Burke realized he had been put on a spot.

I realized that what I was to do was to a job that nobody else would do or could do...which is [to] fight what we thought was [going] to be an effort to consolidate [the navy and the other services] into a single Service....

People were very fearful. They were very much afraid...of their own personal careers. And...everybody...felt that if you opposed...what the powers-that-be wanted—what we thought that the powers-that-be wanted—you were very likely to be in a bad way in the future, because you probably wouldn't be able to win it [the fight to avoid consolidation] and if you didn't win it, why you would be labeled, correctly so, as antagonistic to the ideas of the people who were in charge.... Nobody wanted the job. I don't blame them. I didn't want it either.

Burke also realized that in order to retain its success in the face of opposition, whether from within or without, Op-23 would have to be entirely above board in its activities. He noted:

The biggest thing—the biggest trouble—is people want you to things quietly, confidentially,...without a lot of other people knowing about it. It can't be done.... That's one thing I learned...before the Op-23 thing that...not only did God know everything you did but so did everybody else—eventually.

To insure that Op-23 would be effective and yet be permitted to continue to operate, Captain Burke established a set of rules for the staff to follow. These included: avoiding involvement in secret activities or anything that the rest of the navy could not know about; remaining scrupulously ethical in everything Op-23 did (even if people in other services were not operating that way); distributing Op-23's products through regular navy channels to all sections that could use them so that they all were aware of what the organization was doing; and making sure that facts stated by Op-23 were indeed facts and not opinions. In regard to this last rule, General Shaw recalled:

[I]n the B-36 query,...we did a lot of research. We were made available to anybody who wanted the stuff written for 'em. Burke had one requirement there—that if we put our hand to the thing and we said this is not true or this is not accurate or this is illogical, they had to accept it or quit using us at all, you see.

Probably the one aspect that most links Op-23 to "dirty business" in the eyes of authors such as Hammond is the unlikely coincidence of the actions by Cedric Worth and Captain John Crommelin which began the B-36 investigation and then helped to keep the House Armed Services Committee hearings going long enough for the navy to present its case. They remain convinced that these actions were part of an organized navy plan, and since Op-23 was the focal point of the navy's fight, they assume that Op-23 was involved in Worth's and Crommelin's activities.

This was not the case. Cedric Worth's plans to release the "anonymous document" on the B-36 were known to no one in Op-23 (and likely no one else in the Navy Department) until the day he released it. Op-23 staff member Commander Thomas Davies, who acknowledged during the navy court of inquiry that he had supplied technical information on the B-36 bomber to Worth at his request, was not informed of Worth's planned use of the material until just before the "anonymous document" was turned over to members of Congress. As Davies later recalled:

I had no idea what Cedric was going to do with the information, and, as a matter of fact, I was completely taken aback when he showed me the document that he had written, which had all kinds of stuff in it which I hadn't told him.... [He] showed it to me just—oh—a few hours before he handed it to [Congressman James] Van Zandt.... So I didn't really see it until it was essentially in Van Zandt's hands....

I knew that Cedric Worth was doing something, but on the other hand, he had done about fifteen other things.... And I didn't really know what the hell he was gonna do with it, because it never occurred to me in a million years that he would give it to a congressman to make a speech on the Hill....

Similarly, General Shaw recalled that the first time that he and Arleigh Burke learned that Cedric Worth was suspected of writing the "anonymous document" was in mid-July 1949, some two months after it had first been given to several members of Congress.

As with Cedric Worth, Captain John Crommelin's surreptitious activities were neither sponsored nor condoned by Op-23 or the senior naval officers involved in the navy's presentation. Admiral Arleigh Burke remembered:

[W]hen the situation became more critical and when it appeared that the hearings might be called off before the Navy could be heard on [Committee Agenda] items 3 to 8,... [Crommelin] had grown very tense. He deplored the inaction of the SecNav and CNO. He thought that OP-23 should take more positive action and insist that the Navy take a very strong stand.... My arguments [against this] did not convince John who wanted to take the controversy public and who felt OP-23 was not doing its duty properly because we insisted that our cause was just and that if we presented our case clearly, logically and forcefully we would eventually [sic] win.

This account is enriched by additional comments by Rear Admiral J.L. Howard, another Op-23 staff member, who noted:

I...was the only person present at one of the conversations between Captain Burke and Captain Crommelin (in Burke's office) and in capsule form, Crommelin's view was that we should (as he had been doing) leak anything we deemed appropriate to the press to make the Navy's points, make a big public "splash," call curbstone interviews, go on the stump nationwide, and "martyr" ourselves if necessary to get our message to the world. This was apparently Crommelin's opinion of the "courageous" way to go.

Burke, on the other hand, argued that we should operate completely within the system, using proper channels and forums, and conduct ourselves in a wholly correct manner...[ellipsis in text] and let the full force of our effective arguments influence the decisionmakers in both the Executive and Legislative branches.

Several senior naval officers also did their best to convince Crommelin not to speak out and thereby jeopardize the navy's case. In early September 1949, several days before Crommelin first spoke out, Admiral Radford sent Burke a message asking him "to convey the following message...to John Crommelin.... In particular the Admiral would appreciate it if John will hold his horses and not jeopardize [sic] the Navy's presentation and the selection of witnesses now being arranged by the Task Force." Vice Admiral Felix Stump, Commander Air Force, Atlantic Fleet, was similarly moved to caution Crommelin about taking unilateral action which might endanger "results you are patriotically endeavoring to accomplish." However, these appeals, too, failed to sway John Crommelin from his course of public protest.

Op-23 Poorly Prepared for the Hearings?

Another charge that is commonly made about Op-23 is that it was inadequately prepared for the unification and strategy hearings in October. For example, Paul Hammond stated:

The major avoidable handicap for the Navy was its lack of thorough preparation.... The results of their preparation indicated their inadequacies. What the witnesses said showed that their preparatory work had not been carefully coordinated, for the statements were sometimes unfounded, often exaggerated, and not always consistent;.... In short, irrespective of its inherent merits, the Navy's case was inadequately prepared and poorly coordinated.

Interestingly, Hammond contrasted what he thought to be the navy's poor presentation with the air force's highly effective one. Despite the strength of the assertion, however, it lacks merit.

Where Hammond apparently went wrong in his assessment of navy participation was in attempting to judge the navy and air force presentations according to the same set of criteria. The air force's testimony during the B-36 hearings, masterminded by Harvard Law School Professor W. Barton Leach, was designed to follow the lines of a legal presentation before a court. In their prepared remarks, the air force witnesses, for the most part, denied out-of-hand the allegations contained in the “anonymous document,” presumably because to admit that aspects of the document might have some validity could have undermined the air force case. And when air force witnesses such as Stuart Symington and General Hoyt Vandenberg returned to answer the navy's charges during the unification and strategy hearings, they stuck to the air force testimony previously given in order to avoid lending credence to the navy's positions.

The navy's case, on the other hand, was fashioned like a military-style briefing—one presented to acquaint the members of the committee with the navy's differing conception of strategic air warfare and the role which it desired to play in the country's national security. The case's preparation stressed interlocking presentations, a certain amount of repetition for effect, and the use of expert testimony delivered by relatively junior officers. While the navy's case may have proven difficult for the members to follow at times, it showed that there existed important divergences in navy and air force thinking. While in some senses it may have seemed less polished than the air force presentation, in most regards it was just as professionally handled.

The Results of the Hearings

Most of the works that touch on “The Revolt of the Admirals” appear to conclude that either the navy lost its case before the committee or that its testimony had only a very modest influence on congressional thinking. For example, Hammond noted that “the Navy appeal was not so successful as to make the House Armed Services Committee an ally of the Navy. At best, it secured a slight shift in committee sympathies.” And Paolo Coletta claimed that the navy presentation had little positive influence.

Did the navy's hard-fought campaign really have only a minor impact on the House Armed Services Committee's view of the navy? The answer to that

question is in an understanding of how far the navy had to go in attempting to change the view which the committee, and particularly its chairman, Carl Vinson, then held about the navy’s role in the atomic age.

To fully grasp the magnitude of the navy’s task, one must turn back to mid-January 1949 when newspaper columnist Stewart Alsop had a riveting interview with Vinson. He recounted the important aspects of this conversation a few days later, in a letter to an editor at *The Saturday Evening Post*.

I talked with Carl Vinson the other day. His long love affair with the Navy is now definitely at an end—if he talks to the Admirals the way he talked to me they must be muttering about the sharpness of serpents’ teeth. His line is—and it seems to me a sensible line—that our only potential enemy is Russia, that we can’t touch Russia with a navy, that we can’t hope to equal Russia in ground forces, and that the only way we can really and immediately bring our superiority to bear is by air.

Thus, it can be seen that at least six months before Cedric Worth’s “anonymous document” helped to trigger the B-36 hearings, Carl Vinson, the powerful chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and a longtime friend of the navy, had accepted, apparently without reservation, the air force’s assertion that against a continental power such as the Soviet Union,, the U.S. Navy was useless. This shows the difficulty of the task which the navy had to face in convincing the committee that it had a significant role to play in the country’s defense.

That it had achieved its goal of changing the committee’s thinking regarding the navy’s usefulness was demonstrated finally in March 1950, when the armed services committee released its report on the unification and strategy hearings. On most of the significant issues raised by the navy witnesses, the committee sided with the navy. Among the most gratifying conclusions for the proponents of naval aviation were its statements that:

6. Intercontinental strategic bombing is not synonymous with air power.
The Air Force is not synonymous with the Nation’s military air power.
Military air power consists of Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps air power,
and of this, strategic bombing is but one phase.

And

9. Difficulties between the Air Force and the naval air arm will continue because of fundamental professional disagreements on the art of warfare. Service prejudices, jealousies and thirst for power and recognition have had only a bare minimum of influence on this controversy.

Some historians, viewing these events from a vantage point of perfect hindsight, have argued that even if the navy fight had not taken place, the eruption of the Korean conflict in June 1950 would have pulled naval aviation out of its doldrums. Yet, it can be argued with even more plausibility that if the navy had not made known its case for modern carrier aviation during the unification and strategy hearings, the Korean War-generated Congressional funding for naval aviation would have gone merely for keeping the existing types of naval aircraft and carriers in commission. Under the circumstances then likely to be

obtaining, the U.S. Navy would not have gotten congressional approval for the *Forrestal*-class super carriers and the long-range attack aircraft that provided the navy with its primary offensive striking power during the bulk of the 1950s and 1960s.

Whatever the second guessing on the outcome of the hearings, the senior officers who put their careers on the line to fight the navy's fight evidently believed that it had been a sincere effort. For example, Rear Admiral Ralph Oftsie wrote to Captain Fitzhugh Lee: "Personally, Fitz, I feel that we are now well over the hump, or rather the low point, in the fortunes of the post-war Navy.... I think things are looking up very definitely and in good measure this is the result of the fracas of the last fall." Similarly, Admiral Radford wrote to Captain Roy L. Johnson, then on staff of Second Task Fleet:

I am very optimistic about the long range effects of the recent Hearings in Washington, and see no reason why any intelligent naval officer should feel otherwise. Naturally, I have no illusions as to the difficulties we face in the immediate future, but what is particularly gratifying to me is to feel that for the first time we are on the offensive. You can quote me to any individual in the Navy as saying that it behooves all naval officers to thoroughly acquaint themselves with what went on in Washington, and to make an effort to understand what was behind it all. Also tell them, before they arrive at any conclusions, to estimate what the situation would have been if the Hearings had not taken place. The Navy is not in a horrible mess, but just coming up out of a deep pit, and we have good times ahead.

And in a letter of Christmas greetings to Admiral Richard Connolly, commanding naval forces in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, Radford expressed his optimism about the future. "I look back on the last twelve months with mixed feelings, but arrive at the conclusion that, if I had to do it all over again, I would not change one thing I did or said. I sincerely hope that you feel the same way in spite of the developments of the last two months."

CONCLUSION

The events of the summer and fall of 1949 were pivotal for naval aviation and, in a larger sense, for the navy's future as a component of the country's armed forces. But for far too long, this navy fight for survival has been seen only in a highly distorted fashion.

Now that the documentation is available to analyze the true dimensions of the fight over the B-36 and over unification and strategy, the task of historians must now be to re-examine the standard interpretations of the navy's role. The naval and marine officers who took an active part in preparing and presenting the case for naval aviation when it appeared to many that all had been lost deserve to be known for what they accomplished on the navy's behalf.

Notes

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