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Office of Legislative Counsel

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NOTE FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM:

[Redacted]

Acting Legislative Counsel

The attached letter is sent to you from Senator Glenn's office for your perusal. The letter deals with the B-1 bomber and you can expect a call from Congressman Kemp concerning this issue.

[Redacted]

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JACK KEMP
38TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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15 June 1981

The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I know that you are in the midst of one of the most important decisions this Administration will have to make in terms of our national defense posture and the budget. I want to offer you some insight as to what I believe are the feelings of a majority of my Republican colleagues with respect to the decision to deploy a new manned strategic bomber system.

During the 1980 campaign, President Reagan sharply criticized the Carter Administration for cancelling the B-1 in light of the time-urgent need to modernize our bomber force. The President also took exception to Carter's reliance upon the Advanced Technology Bomber, charging that the ATB was a 1990s' solution to a 1980s' problem.

Accordingly, I view a new manned strategic bomber as a visible commitment by this Administration to redress the serious strategic imbalance which has developed over the last 20 years, and to make a clear break with the legacy of the misguided Carter defense program. For almost two decades our nation has endlessly studied and planned bomber systems, but we have not procured one heavy strategic bomber. Today the Congress and the American people strongly favor a new manned bomber to replace the ageing B-52s. The B-1 constitutes the only reasonable candidate for the near term. This airplane is a tested, reliable proven weapon system and not merely a theoretical concept. The real and perceived impact of having a force of modern bombers in the mid-1980s versus the wishful capabilities of theoretical airplanes is truly significant, whatever the future holds for bomber design.

Better than any other aircraft, the B-1 satisfies our mandate to pursue a near-term multi-role bomber. Not only will this airplane be able to challenge an enemy's sophisticated defense network throughout the 1980s, but its superior defenses, the incorporation of elements of "stealth" technologies now, and its potential for further growth in the future will ensure its usefulness well into the 1990s. By the mid-1990s, the aircraft could evolve to standoff roles, such as cruise missile carrier, in much the same way that our B-52s are doing today. My consultations with defense experts convince me that the B-1 will be highly effective as a multi-role bomber for at least 30 years -- a truly worthwhile investment.

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In too many instances, the modernization efforts being planned for TRIAD have been hampered by delays and insufficient funding. These problems continue to worsen our already distressing strategic posture and erode confidence in America's military strength. In this regard, I have been deeply disturbed during recent years by the aggressive actions of not only the Soviet Union, but Third World nations as well. Prompt, visible examples of American force and resolve have in the past and can in the future help alleviate or at least decrease some of this adventurism in the world, and bombers are the portion of the TRIAD most capable of accelerated improvements. Today more than ever, we need to exhibit our continued leadership and our commitment to world peace.

The Air Force leadership has been unanimous in their expression of the importance of modernizing our bomber force. I share that conviction and emphasize that we need to do it now. General Ellis has voiced some reservations about the B-1 as an interim bomber, but his concerns have been focused on program costs and the potential for losing the Stealth airplane, not on the B-1's operational utility, which he has certainly supported. CINCSAC's concerns are nonetheless very important and they lead me to my last few points.

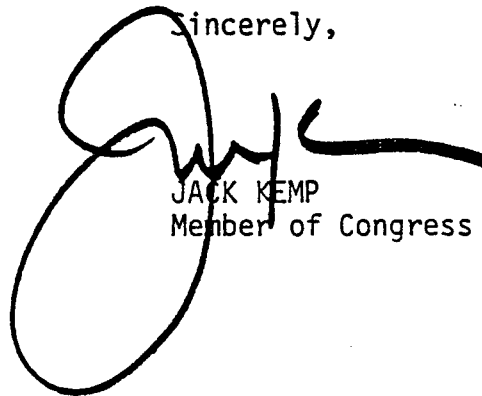
If we buy a B-1 now and a Stealth bomber later, I think we gain in several respects: (1) We do not accelerate the Stealth technology imprudently in an attempt to remedy a worrisome near term defense posture. Such an effort may well result in severe compromises in aircraft design for the sake of program pace. (2) We reduce the risk in our commitment. Otherwise, if we rely solely on a Stealth airplane for the 1980s and find that we encounter significant problems, or we find that the Soviets have concurrently developed an effective defense against it, we would have only a B-52 force that would be over 40 years old before another new bomber could be developed. Such a course would lead to an intolerably feeble U.S. bomber force. (3) On the other hand, the B-1 facilitates an orderly transition through this century regardless of Stealth developments. If the Stealth does become a viable bomber, the B-1 can assume the B-52's conventional mission and cruise missile carriage roles. Only the B-1 provides for the orderly and expeditious retirement of the B-52s. (4) In order to accommodate both aircraft within existing budget constraints, the IOC of the Stealth bomber could be put off two or three years. The B-1 would be capable of performing the penetrating bomber mission until the ATB was operational, and a delay in the advanced bomber's IOC would incur the advantages of a carefully paced development of the new Stealth technology.

During the course of your confirmation hearings, you recalled that when you were running the budget a few years back, "the B-1 was almost ready for production, and it was called back...for some redesign because some new technologies had become available. And the result is, as you know, we not only do not have [the B-1], we do not have authorization for it any more. So I think it is vital to get decisions and get them made and proceed on them."

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Mr. Secretary, I could not agree more. While we in Congress recognize the complexity of the decision, I cannot overemphasize the need to take firm, visible timely steps to improve our worsening strategic balance. It is important to recognize that we currently have a favorable political climate for remedying the situation, thanks in large part to President Reagan's elucidation of the critical defense issues facing our nation, and his promise of prompt action to correct our growing strategic force deficiencies. In my judgment, the acquisition of a new bomber force is the best alternative available to us, and the B-1 is the best choice among the proposed aircraft. I pledge my tireless efforts to you to support this important program.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

JACK KEMP
Member of Congress

JK/mkv