

26 MAR 1947

STATEMENT OF FLEET ADMIRAL CHESTER W. NIMITZ, USN
BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen:

The bill which you now have under consideration represents the efforts of the services to resolve their differences in pursuit of the common goal of increased national security. I believe it will work. It cannot be considered perfect from the Navy point of view, but representatives of other services can, no doubt, make the same statement on behalf of their organizations. It is a compromise, a workable over-all compromise, drawn up in a spirit of cooperation and understanding to provide this nation with a defense organization adaptable to warfare of today.

The Wartime Theater Commanders understood and practised unity of command by methods which varied with local needs and concepts in the theaters of operations.

Operational control of combatant units under the principle of unity is relatively simple. That was amply demonstrated in the Pacific where integrated planning was conducted thru the medium of a Joint Staff such as I had at Pearl Harbor. Operational Planning was largely a Theater affair, but the Logistical Planning had roots in the Washington military and civilian structure. Consequently, the whole national logistical system, including procurement, became of vital interest to the Theater Commander. For example: the Joint Chiefs of Staff direct in general terms an operation; the Theater Commander estimates his requirements in forces, men, material, and shipping to do the job; he takes inventory of his resources and requisitions the things he lacks. Each service component under his command submits its needs to its own cognizant Washington Department — and this is a vital point — because highly technical material can be designed only by technicians experienced in the needs of the naval or military service concerned. Furthermore, from design to delivery, careful follow-through has been necessary in the interest of both efficiency and speed. No fighting man would trust the procurement of his weapons and equipment to any general supply agency. He wants the technicians of his own Department to design, build, and test the specialized equipment on which depends not only his success, but the lives of his men.

Nor would the Theater Commander willingly submit to any screening of his requirements by a general supply agency which was empowered to screen, but which was not responsible for the results of the combat.

I emphasize this point even though this bill will permit the degree of procurement autonomy deemed vital by the operating forces, because I am aware of the contrary concept of an over-all centralized procurement plan. This central procurement agency may look attractive and sound plausible but it would not produce the results desired by the Theater Commander.

Logistics, utilizing as it does more manpower than actual combat, is so vital from the standpoint of military efficiency and economy that I recommend that this Committee call on Assistant Secretary of the Navy Kenney and my Logistics Deputy, Vice Admiral Carney, in order that both the commercial and military logistical implications of this bill may be explored and developed.

APPROVED FOR
RELEASE DATE:
26-Aug-2008

HR
70-14
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