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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.

The past war taught us many lessons, and all too often they were learned the hard way, through trial and error. We must incorporate the lessons of the past in any consideration of our future requirements, certainly, but we must also do more than that. To look only to the past in preparation for the future is to write a charge that we are preparing to fight a future war with the outmoded concepts of a past war. If we have been guilty of that charge before we should not repeat the error.

The bill does incorporate the lessons of the past war. It gives legal status to those coordinating and command agencies which were found most effective to the conduct of global war. This is a forward-looking bill. It is in keeping with the increased tempo which modern weapons impose on warfare, and is sufficiently flexible to meet future needs.

The War and Navy Departments have always accepted the principle of unity of command in a theatre of operation. This principle was written into the publication called "Joint Action" which served as doctrine before the war. As expressed in that publication, unity of command would devolve upon the senior commander of the engaged service having the paramount interest in the operation. This provision was not as clear cut as it should have been, as became apparent with the attack on Pearl Harbor.

We were not long in correcting this deficiency, however, and orders were issued by President Roosevelt early in 1942 which eliminated all misunderstanding on the subject of theatre command. The global areas of possible military operations were divided into logical theatres of operation. An officer was designated to command all of our armed forces assigned to each theatre, be they Army, Navy or allied. The theatre commander received his orders from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and implemented them by directing the efforts of the composite forces available to him.

In practice the principle of unity of command within a war theatre proved so successful that it has been permanently adopted. The principle has been carried over from war to peace by means of a Joint Chiefs of Staff directive which, with the approval of the President, established regional unified command assigned their tasks and designated the individual commanders thereof.

The necessity for unified command is so great that I consider it wise to incorporate this accepted principle into legislation. This would be accomplished by one of the provisions of the bill now under consideration. I refer expressly to the provision that the Joint Chiefs of Staff will, in the language of the bill, "establish unified commands in strategic areas when such unified commands are in the interests of national security".

Another expedient of war, which, having proved its worth, is now given legal status in the bill under consideration, is the organization known as the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Without going into any of the details, the JCS, in brief, will serve as the senior military advisors to both the President and the Secretary of National Defense. Their responsibilities will include all of those broad aspects which have a bearing on the strategic direction of our forces, including strategic plans, logistic plans and joint training of the component forces.

An innovation which this bill provides, and I think a very excellent one, is the establishment of a Joint Staff, subordinate to and in support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Heretofore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were supported by various Joint Boards and Committees which were assigned the responsibility for preparing studies or for drawing up plans. Since the membership of the Joint Committees was in each case composed of an equal number of representatives from both services, there occurred on occasion, a failure to agree on the subject in question. In such case a so-called "split paper" was forwarded to the next higher committees, and, if the members there failed to agree, it moved to the next higher joint committees, occasionally arriving at the Joint Chiefs level without any previous recommendation having been reached.

I do not mean to give the impression that this was a frequent occurrence for, as a matter of fact, split papers were rare throughout the course of the war. I mention them merely to indicate that, under this bill, the responsibility of the staff is to the Joint Chiefs rather than to their respective Departments. The work previously accomplished through joint boards and committees will, under the provision of the bill, be carried out by the Joint Staff, and the provision for a Director of Joint Staff will insure better organization and faster action.

Undoubtedly the biggest problems we faced in the past war were in the field of logistics. We entered the last war unfamiliar with the logistic problems involved in fighting on global scale. We all remember the confusion which resulted; the setting of seemingly impossible production schedules, the critical shortages of certain basic materials, and the frantic efforts to gear ourselves for the task ahead.

To coordinate the various aspects of our armament program, there were created certain wartime agencies which, beyond any doubt, saved the day for us. Born of necessity and nurtured on the bitter reality that their efforts would mean for us victory or defeat, these wartime agencies transformed the nation from a state of unproductive confusion, to the "arsenal of democracy".

We have consolidated this lesson in the organization proposed in this bill. The provisions which establish the Munitions Board and the National Security Resources Board should ensure for us the support of the industrial capacity of the nation. Approved strategic and logistic plans initially prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff will be supported, through agencies such as the National Security Resources Board and the Munitions Board, and will be formulated in the light of all of the industrial, economic and material considerations necessary to support these strategic plans.

This integration of our military requirements with our industrial capacity to support these requirements is an important feature of the bill. We seek to eliminate harmful duplication between the services.

Our attention is definitely focused on the future in the provision for a Research and Development Board. We must assure that our weapons will be at least as good as those likely to be used by our enemies. This bill, by setting up an organization to control scientific research as it relates to our national security, will give us that assurance.

The Research and Development Board will do more than its name implies. Scientific research for the fighting services will be conducted under its cognizance, and the results therefrom will be translated into new weapons and new tactics. The research programs of the three service departments will be coordinated and allocation of responsibility for specific programs shall be made among them.

The provision for an adequate agency for intelligence is further indication that this bill looks to the future. It would establish an organization known as the Central Intelligence Agency, charged with responsibility for collection of information from all available sources, including government agencies, such as the State Department and the FBI, evaluation of that information, and dissemination thereof to all interested organizations. This plan is intended to secure complete coverage of the wide field of intelligence and should minimize duplication of effort.

The bill provides that the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, who shall be appointed by the President, may be either a civilian or a commissioned officer of the armed forces. In this provision the bill acknowledges that military intelligence is a composite of authenticated and evaluated information covering not only the armed forces establishment of a possible enemy but also his industrial capacity, racial traits, religious beliefs, and other related aspects.

I have touched only briefly on the features of the bill. Vice Admiral Sherman, who participated in its drafting, will present to you a detailed analysis of its provisions.

In my opinion this bill, when taken in its entirety, will provide us with a more effective organizational structure for our national security. I recommend it to your favorable consideration.

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