

For Gene

Quarters 811
Redstone Arsenal
Huntsville, Alabama
March 28, 1957

General James A. Pickering
2826 Alpine Road, N.E.
Atlanta 5, Georgia

Dear General:

Thanks a lot for the letters of support from yourself and your wife, and for the nice character reference that you sent my defense counsel, Col Zimmer. It is very encouraging at a time like this to have a man like you stand up for me. Your repeated expressions of confidence in me certainly helps give me the confidence I need to go through with this trial.

In your letter of 24 February you mentioned that the scientific progress was so fast that you felt that you were considerably behind the times. Actually I think you would be very much surprised to find out how well the old principles of artillery have held up and have served as a guide in the development of these new weapons. These ballistic surface-to-surface missiles have to be fired from a point which is precisely known to another point which is precisely known. They, of course, must be fired when needed and with a high degree of safety to our own troops. These basic characteristics mean that the old artillery principles that we used so much in World War II are much more applicable to utilization of these weapons than were the aircraft techniques. These basic characteristics mean that the Army is really, of the three services, the best equipped to utilize this type of weapon. We know that the fact that this missile has a 1500 mile range is a shock to many Army officers. Many ask why does the Army need a weapon of such range.

Of course there are the same old two schools of thought that existed back in World War II. The "fly boys" think that the next war will be fought by dropping bombs and that there is really no need for an Army. Many of us in the Army have studied the impact of atomic weapons on warfare for almost a decade. We think it is unsound to base the national defense on the premise that bombing alone is sufficient to defeat Soviet Russia - even if H-bombs are employed. Warfare still requires assault forces to seize, occupy and defend principal strategic features. We think that atomic fire power must be used in conjunction with these assault forces. The possibility of extremely effective action with relatively small numbers of troops is inherent in the power that comes with atomic weapons, but the consequences of lack of proper coordination between atomic fire support and the rapidly moving units is much greater. This means

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that the increased reliance on the new technologies makes obsolete forms of organization which divide the support from the assault troops to the very great extent to which it is done in the present division between the Army and the U. S. Air Force. The Army cannot build an effective fighting organization which relies for support upon the Air Force which does not in turn believe there is a need for an Army. This situation is exactly 180 degrees wrong. A very high degree of integration between the atomic fire support units and the assault troops is essential. This integration must start early in the development of the atomic fire support weapons and continue as intimately as possible through production, training, and actual combat. Any other procedure is almost certain to result in a profligate waste of the taxpayers' dollars in outmoded weapons and organizations, and will increase our casualty lists and will seriously endanger our capability of winning military campaigns.

We note that you are planning on being in Europe in May. My wife and I wish you a very pleasant visit to the Atwoods in Germany. Of course we would like you to appear as a defense witness at the trial, but since the trial is in May we think we can accomplish pretty close to the same thing by asking you for a deposition before you leave for Europe. Currently, the trial is estimated to take place about the middle of May.

Do you all think that you might have time to pay us a visit at Redstone Arsenal prior to your European trip?

Carol and I thank you again for your extremely heartwarming support.

Sincerely yours,

Jack Nickerson