

February 26, 1957

TO : Commanding General, Third Army

FROM: Third Army Advisory Committee, Huntsville, Alabama

Dear Sir:

Our Committee, in its efforts to work closely with Redstone Arsenal and ABMA, has become familiar with the problems created at the Army Ballistic Missile Agency by the assignment of operational control of the land based IRBM to the U. S. Air Force.

We are familiar with certain facts involved and feel very strongly that Col. J. C. Nickerson was acting for what he thought was the best interest of the national defense as a whole and for the Army in particular. We strongly and seriously doubt that the best welfare of the missile and rocket program will be served by prosecution proceedings against this fine officer. Although certain security regulations may have been indiscreetly treated in the Colonel's enthusiastic desire to be of service in preserving the program at Redstone, it is our understanding that most of the information involved could be declassified; and, further, that even this information was restricted to a very few highly responsible and vitally interested parties.

We strongly feel and are convinced that failure to utilize fully the ABMA team on the IRBM will result in the loss of some years in availability of this weapon to the United States. We further feel that failure to utilize this group will result in the waste of scarce scientific and engineering talent in a field critical to the national defense. We also feel strongly that the Army needs longer range missiles as an integral part of its weapons systems. We feel that these vital objectives tend to justify to a considerable extent actions taken by Col. Nickerson not in consonance with regulations.

This officer has been restricted for two months to Redstone Arsenal; he apparently faces certain transfer and possible wrecking of a most promising career; he has lost his assignment to a program in which he is deeply and devotedly interested; we are informed that his home has been searched; and he and his wife have been followed by intelligence personnel and considerably embarrassed thereby.

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It is generally believed in Huntsville that this officer was primarily responsible for obtaining the Jupiter program for the Army. His contributions to the development of new weapons for the Army have been important on quite a few other occasions, according to information that we have received from his fellow officers and scientists affiliated with the projects.

Considering the foregoing facts, that he has accomplished many things for the Army weapon program and that his actions were taken with no consideration of his own interests, we strongly feel that trial by court-martial will not reflect credit on the administration of the Department of the Army; and in our humble opinion it will impair the progress of the splendid work being accomplished at Redstone Arsenal and ABMA.

Faithfully yours,

1s/ Carl T. Jones, V. Pres  
Huntsville Industrial Association, Inc.

1s/ F.K. Nozini President  
Huntsville Industrial Expansion Committee

1s/ George M. Maloney Member  
Advisory Committee, Third Army

By M.B. Sprague Chairman  
Army Advisory Committee, Third Army  
President, First National Bank

1s/ [Signature] Member  
Third Army Advisory Committee  
Mayor, City of Huntsville

[Signature] Member  
Army Advisory Committee, Third Army