

50 Sunset Drive  
Anniston, Alabama  
January 15, 1958

Congressman George Huddleston, Jr.  
U. S. Representative  
9th Alabama Congressional District  
House Office Building  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Congressman Huddleston:

I note from today's United Press release under Washington date of January 14 the announcement by Congressman John C. Watts, Democrat of Kentucky, that "The White House has rejected the suggestion that Colonel John C. Nickerson be brought back from exile in Panama to aid in the defense effort."

I have been interested in the Nickerson case ever since the preliminaries to his trial at Redstone Arsenal began and have had a number of discussions with Nickerson and his attorneys. I was prepared to appear as a witness in defense of Nickerson when the trial was suddenly called off but I have not lost interest in his case. During my discussions with Nickerson he mentioned your interest in Redstone and the development of our missile projects there and it is with this thought in mind that I am now approaching you on the subject.

You will find inclosed a copy of a telegram that I sent to the American Legion National Commander, The Honorable John Gleason, Jr., and also the copy of the letter that I wrote in reply to the National Adjutant who received this telegram. Since this time I have heard from Commander Gleason when I urged that he, in spite of having "no mandate in the Nickerson Case" take some action which would be more prompt than waiting until sometime in mid-summer to take the Nickerson matter up. Mr. Gleason still maintains that he could not act in the case until authorized to do so by the Legion's National Executive Committee. This is difficult for me to understand but I have no recourse in view of the urgency of our getting under way in developing our missile program except to turn to others, and as I say above, I am now turning to you.

I have discussed this matter with Colonel Harry M. Ayers, publisher of the Anniston Star here in Anniston and he agreed with my procedure and indicates that he will help.

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I heard your report to the Nation last night on television and was very much heartened by the purposes that you announced with respect to the operations of the House Preparedness Committee, of which I believe you are the Chairman. All that you said was so true and makes it all the more necessary that we leave no stone unturned to secure the very best thought and assistance in the development of our missile program that is obtainable.

Although a White House executive appears to have issued the final word on the Nickerson case as far as the President is concerned that does not mean to me that your Committee could not call for Nickerson, among a host of others, to testify before your committee on his views as to what is wrong with and what would improve our missile program.

I have a copy of Nickerson's court martial order and sentence in my possession and I have no doubt but that you have one. This pronouncement of guilt merely emphasizes what Nickerson really was doing, -that is, sacrificing his entire Army career in the interest of patriotic performance of duty. If we are to condemn men for such patriotism, God help this Country from now on!

You will agree, I know, that it is time for us to quit playing politics and quit being fussy about wrong decisions that we have made in the past. Nickerson's crime was that of exposing the stupidity and blunderbuss methods of the previous Secretary of Defense, Mr. Wilson, and had it not been for Wilson's anger at Nickerson's audacity and brashness I am sure that the Nickerson case would have been handled without a court martial. However, Mr. Wilson has pretty readily been proved off the beam and our Government and its actions in the past should be the first to admit it. Certainly, this is essential if we are going to make progress in the new directions in which we have oriented ourselves.

With the foregoing in mind I hope you will not fail to call Nickerson from Panama or any other place he may be to testify before your Committee. I am satisfied that he can contribute greatly to the general discussion of the topics to be taken up as you progress.

With personal good wishes to you and my hopes that your Committee accomplishes all that it has proposed in its present efforts, I am

Sincerely yours,

Edward M. Almond  
Lieut. Gen. USA (Ret)

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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C.

Room 243  
January 22, 1958

COPY

Lieut. Gen. Edward M. Almond, USA (Ret)  
50 Sunset Drive  
Anniston, Alabama

Dear General Almond:

Thank you very much for your thoughtful letter with enclosures of January 15, 1958, concerning Colonel Nickerson. It was good to hear from you and I appreciate your letting me have your sound views on this important matter.

Like you, I have long been interested in the Nickerson case and I was very disappointed to see him court martialed and sent to Panama. I have noted with a great deal of interest your suggestion that Colonel Nickerson be called as a witness before our Committee. I am sure that his testimony on our missile program will be very enlightening.

You will be interested to know that I am bringing this matter to the attention of our Chairman, Honorable Carl Vinson. Just as soon as Mr. Vinson decides whether to call Colonel Nickerson, I will get in touch with you promptly.

With best wishes, I remain

Yours sincerely,

s/ George Huddleston, Jr., MC

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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Washington, D. C.

COPY

Room 243  
January 25, 1958

Lt. General Edward M. Almond  
50 Sunset Drive  
Anniston, Alabama

Dear General Almond:

Referring further to your suggestion that Colonel Nickerson be called as a witness before my Committee, I am enclosing a letter which I have just received from the Honorable Carl Vinson, Committee Chairman.

Needless to say, I was sorry to learn that Mr. Vinson states he does not believe it would be advisable to schedule Colonel Nickerson as a witness at this time. Since Mr. Vinson is opposed to Colonel Nickerson testifying, I see little likelihood of our Committee overriding the Chairman in this respect.

You may be sure, however, that I am continuing to follow Colonel Nickerson's case with a great deal of interest.

With best wishes, I remain

Yours sincerely,

s/George Huddleston, Jr., MC

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Committee On Armed Services  
Suite 313, House Office Building  
Washington, D. C.

January 13, 1958

COPY

Honorable George Huddleston, Jr.  
House of Representatives  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Huddleston:

I have your letter of January 22 with reference to the possibility of scheduling Colonel John C. Nickerson as a witness before our Committee during the current investigation of national defense.

While I appreciate the fact that Colonel Nickerson was greatly devoted to his work while connected with the Army missile program, it seems to me that it would not be advisable to schedule him as a witness. Those who are interested in this matter should realize that the Committee has scheduled ranking civilians and officers with primary responsibility for this matter within the Department of the Army. I have no doubt that all of the pertinent information on this subject within the Army can be developed from the witnesses presently scheduled.

Sincerely yours,

s/ Carl Vinson  
Chairman

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50 Sunset Drive  
Anniston, Alabama  
January 28, 1958

Congressman George Huddleston, Jr.  
9th Alabama Congressional District  
House Office Building  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Congressman Huddleston:

I have your letter of 25 January setting forth Mr. Vinson's decision in the matter of calling Colonel Nickerson as a witness at this time before his Committee.

I regret that Mr. Vinson has seen fit to make such a decision and still cannot agree with his views although he must have high reason for making the decision he did.

My thought in seeking that he call Colonel Nickerson was for the very reason that Mr. Vinson states in his own press release that "Chairman Carl Vinson, Democrat of Georgia, said the second phase (of investigation) will involve an examination of 'the adequacy of the budget, our military manpower, its organization into combat and support units, the adequacy of the weapons with which they are armed, and other related matters'."

There is no doubt in my mind that all service officers will step gingerly in their testimony giving the best answers they can without sticking their necks out as General Gavin and Colonel Nickerson have already done. After General Twining's statement to the Congress as quoted in the Army-Navy Register, issue of 25 January, which I suggest you read again even if you have read it, wherein any sane man would be loath to give anything except a very timid opinion as to what is wrong with anything that the Defense Department now sets forth. On the other hand, Nickerson nor Gavin having taken their stand, would risk any danger in restating what they have already stated which would be to the purpose of our people knowing the things that are wrong in the Pentagon and which are caused to be wrong by the overriding actions of a Secretary of Defense as exemplified by Mr. Charles Wilson. Of course, Secretary McElroy may be an entirely different person but nevertheless the politics that are involved are bound to water down the mass of technical opinion that could be gotten from the witnesses that could be depended upon if they were free to speak what they actually believe.

After the investigation has gone further you might well bring the matter up again to Mr. Vinson from the standpoint of having both Gavin and Wickerson say what they really think and all that they think.

Thanks again for your interest in this matter and I hope to hear from you later if such is possible as heretofore discussed.

Sincerely yours,

Edward M. Almond  
Lieut. Gen. USA (Ret)

EMA/jn

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
House Of Representatives  
Washington, D. C.

Room 243  
January 30, 1958

COPY

Lt. General Edward M. Almond  
50 Sunset Drive  
Anniston, Alabama

Dear General Almond:

Thank you for your letter of January 28, 1958, in further reference to your interest in Colonel Nickerson testifying before the House Armed Services Committee during its current missile probe. It was, of course, good to hear from you again.

Like you, I was disappointed that Mr. Vinson advised against scheduling Colonel Nickerson as a witness. As you probably know, General Gavin was invited to testify before our Committee and has already done so. I can assure you that I am continuing to study the feasibility of securing Colonel Nickerson as a witness.

General Twining's remarks before the Senate Preparedness Committee concerning whether a military officer has more obligation to his Commander in Chief than to a Congressional committee certainly has a bearing in this case. Colonel Nickerson, as well as General Gavin, certainly has nothing to lose at this point by saying exactly what they think and all that they think.

With best wishes, I am

Very sincerely,

s/ George Huddleston, Jr., M C

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