THE 1949 REVOLT OF THE ADMIRALS

by

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The word "mutiny" usually brings thoughts of a group of crude, unkempt men of the sea deposing an evil captain whose tyranny they found insufferable. But this stereotype of a mutiny rarely holds true in real life. Certainly it didn't in the case of the most unusual mutiny in the history of the United States Navy. That rebellion against authority took place not at some distant time, but just 32 years ago. It took place not at some uncharted spot in an ocean halfway around the world, but in Pentagon offices and congressional hearing rooms. The "crew" was not rabble, but an elite group of decorated admirals who had devoted their lives to the Navy and their country. And the "captain" was not a crazed despot; he was President Harry S. Truman, and his "Executive Officer" was Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson. Known as "The Revolt of the Admirals," this event was a flagrant peacetime challenge hurled by top-ranking military men at the civilian leadership of the military.

Rather than an outgrowth of a new problem, the 1949 Revolt of the Admirals was a flare-up of the feud between the advocates of land-based airpower and those of sea-based airpower. From the days of Billy Mitchell on, both sides were convinced that their particular arm provided the most sound basis on which to build the nation's defense. While the unity of purpose in World War II would seem to have reduced interservice rivalry, such was not the case. In fact, in many ways the war actually increased tensions as the Army, Navy, and Army Air Corps continually bickered over missions, roles, and responsibilities. Such disputes and an obvious need for unified procurement activities led to serious consideration of military unification, but it was agreed that the midst of war was the wrong time for any drastic change in the command setup, and the question of unification was placed on the shelf until the war was over.[1]

No sooner had the fighting overseas come to an end than it was replaced by a domestic conflict which the press called "The Battle of the Potomac."[2] This conflict was a bitter clash between the Army and the Navy, wrangling over their respective unification plans. The Army, which accepted as a foregone conclusion that the Air Corps would emerge as a separate service, favored a true merger of the armed forces with control exercised by a single cabinet officer. The Navy, on the other hand, accepted only reluctantly the idea of a separate Air Force and strongly opposed a merger with the Army, instead preferring a setup that would coordinate the separate services. Throughout the fall of 1945 and the following year the battle raged. By January 1947 the Administration and both services had a plan they could accept, and after lengthy congressional hearings the National Security Act of 1947 was passed and signed into law on 26 July.

What the act provided for was not a unified command, but a coordinated national military establishment made up of three equal executive departments—Army, Navy,

and Air Force—with each headed by a secretary with cabinet status. Military input was to be provided by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, consisting of the Army and Air Force Chiefs of Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations. Provision was made for a Secretary of Defense, but the position was weakened by providing only for coordination and supervisory activities. Clearly, the Navy view of a coordinated rather than a unified command had prevailed.[3]

President Truman's choice to become the first Secretary of Defense was Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, a man who had played a major role in setting up the new national military establishment.[4] As the new Secretary attempted to implement the provisions of the National Security Act, a task that would have been difficult even in tranquil times, he was hampered in 1947 and 1948 by the challenge of the Cold War, which placed great pressure on the military establishment. At the same time, the President was pressing for major reductions in the defense budget; thus, competition among the services for the limited funds became increasingly intense. In an attempt to secure a greater portion of the tight budget and thus assure the future well-being of their respective services, the three civilian secretaries and their top military advisers intensified their contention over the missions and responsbilities they felt were needed to improve their positions.

When Truman signed the National Security Act, he also issued Executive Order 9877 setting forth the roles and missions of each military service. Because that document was vague on a number of points, however, Forrestal had to work with the secretaries to clarify responsibilities. Although some progress was made, differences remained, especially those involving various aspects of aviation. According to the Navy, the Air Force wanted control of "anything that flew" while the Air Force contended that the Navy wanted a second air force under the guise of tactical airpower. Both services felt they should have strategic bombing capabilities. The Army wanted control over anything that walked or moved on land—a goal that worried the Navy because it might lead to the loss of the Marines.[5] As the debates continued, the Navy became increasingly concerned that the Air Force wanted its aviation and the Army wanted its amphibious responsibilities.

In late 1947 the Air Force began a campaign for a 70-group Air Force as opposed to the 55-group force advocated by the President. In this endeavor it was quite successful in gaining considerable support in Congress and among the public. Forrestal indirectly opposed the Air Force campaign by urging a balanced force concept according to which funds would be divided evenly among the three services. The idea of three equal shares was not well received when it was found how small the shares would be. Before long, officials of each of the branches of the military were publicly demanding a greater portion of the defense funds, this in spite of Secretary Forrestal's request that they not do so. That Forrestal had no real control over the civilian or military leaders of the various services soon became evident.[6]

As the months of 1948 passed, President Truman grew more concerned because the Secretary of Defense seemed to have so little control over his service chiefs. Truman thought that Forrestal's problem stemmed from too much leniency in dealing with his subordinates.[7] Before the National Security Act had been passed, Truman had said he would appoint "the hardest, meanest so and so" he could find to be Secretary of Defense.[8] Obviously he had not found him. By fall, the President was in the midst of his battle for reelection, and when Forrestal chose not to

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take part in that campaign, refusing even to provide financial support, Truman made up his mind that if he were returned to office, the Defense Secretary would have to go.[9]

In September 1948, when Truman's defeat seemed virtually certain, Louis A. Johnson, of Clarksburg, West Virginia undertook the seemingly thankless and unquestionably difficult task of serving as the Democratic National Committee's finance chairman. In essence this meant raising money for the President's campaign. Johnson, who headed the prestigious law firm of Steptoe and Johnson, did a superb job of raising funds, bringing in more than $1.5 million to finance the reelection campaign. When Truman defeated Thomas E. Dewey in the political upset of the century, the finance chairman was clearly in line for a political payoff of some sort. On 2 March 1949, the President announced that Johnson would replace Forrestal as Secretary of Defense.

That Johnson's appointment was in part politically motivated cannot be denied; however, to draw the conclusion that he was chosen only to pay a political debt ignores the fact that the well-to-do lawyer had a number of qualifications and characteristics which made him in many ways a logical choice for the position. First, Johnson was experienced in defense matters. During World War I he had seen action in France as an infantry captain, and in the Twenties and Thirties he had kept up on defense issues by his activities in the American Legion, eventually becoming its National Commander. Further, from 1937 to mid-1940 he had done an outstanding job as Franklin Roosevelt's Assistant Secretary of War. According to Robert Patterson, Secretary of War from 1945 to 1947, Johnson's efforts in preparing American industry for war were responsible for shortening World War II by 18 months. Johnson's stay at the War Department was clouded by his running feud with Secretary of War Harry H. Woodring. Indeed, their personal and ideological dispute became so disruptive that Roosevelt had to let both men go. But while Johnson was often accused of being overly aggressive and too politically oriented, even his severest critics acknowledged that he was an excellent administrator and planner who had done a commendable job in his War Department post.[10]

Truman also turned to Johnson because he was a dynamic, hard-charging man who was not afraid to knock heads when necessary. Johnson's physical size—six feet two, 220 pounds—combined with his flamboyant personality and skills as a debater to make his presence felt in any group.[11] Considering Truman's belief that Forrestal had been too accommodating of his service secretaries and military leaders, Johnson's strength seemed quite attractive. Then, too, there was Johnson's propensity for personal loyalty. One key characteristic that the West Virginian had shown during his stay in the War Department and in the years after was a fierce loyalty to the chief executive, and if there was anything Truman tended toward in his cabinet appointments it was a person who would be loyal.[12] In late 1948 the President needed a Secretary of Defense who could achieve two items of high priority: implementation of a major austerity program and true unification of the services. Truman wanted an experienced defense man who could be hard-nosed with subordinates and loyal to him. And Louis Johnson seemed to fit that bill.

Although Johnson's appointment was generally well accepted in Army and Air Force circles, such was not the case among high-ranking Navy personnel. Losing a Secretary of Defense who had formerly headed the Navy Department and had been supportive of it was alarming enough, but now that man was being replaced by an ambitious politico who was well known for his pro-Air Force views. In the late 1930s Johnson had been one of the first high-ranking national officials to openly advocate a 10,000-plane Air Corps and a strongly upgraded national aircraft productive capacity. Johnson had continued to champion the cause of the Air Corps and in early 1940 remarked to President Roosevelt that "this country must accept the fact that

airpower is not simply an auxiliary to land and sea forces. It has become a paramount factor in national defense."[13] World War II gave support to his position. In 1949, Navy officials had no reason to believe that time had changed Johnson's views.[14] When Johnson assumed his new position, Navy leaders were looking for the worst, and they did not take long to find it.

By the time Johnson was sworn in on 28 March 1949, he was publicly committed to bring real unification and economy to the defense establishment, but just how soon he would act or how far he would go was still uncertain. The answer, however, was soon forthcoming. On 7 April, the day after Army Day, Johnson announced that henceforth all such observances by the individual services would be eliminated. The purpose was to get the services to think of themselves as one defense establishment rather than separate entities. A week later he took a much bolder step in issuing "Consolidation Directive No. 1," which set forth new public information policies, including a provision that all security reviews of statements by active duty and retired personnel would henceforth be handled in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Outspoken naval officials interpreted this as an attempt on Johnson's part to gag them, to keep them from speaking their minds.[15] At about the same time, Johnson recommended and the President approved an earlier Air Force request to cut back procurement of certain fighters and medium bombers in order to purchase three dozen B-36s instead. That the proposal had originated months before Johnson arrived on the scene and that Forrestal had approved the transaction before his departure were beside the point; the Navy saw only what it wanted to see—Johnson as a villain.[16]

As alarming as the new Secretary's actions were during his first three weeks on the job, they were just firecrackers compared to the blast he was about to set off. On 23 April, less than a month after taking office, Johnson took the step that set off the Revolt of the Admirals: he cancelled construction of the new Navy super aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. *United States*. Probably nothing else that he could have done would have been more demoralizing to the Navy, for that craft was the symbol and hope of its future.

Navy planning for a large, flush-deck carrier capable of launching planes that could deliver atomic bombs had started shortly after World War II began. The effort continued, and in early 1948 Navy Secretary John L. Sullivan announced plans to build a 1090-foot, 65,000-ton super carrier. At that time the question of whether the Navy would have a strategic bombing role was still unresolved, and the Navy believed that the prototype vessel would assure its place in that regard and, with that, a greater share of the shrinking defense pie. With the responsibilities of the service secretaries and Joint Chiefs of Staff still not clarified under the National Security Act, the Navy believed it could unilaterally make the decision to proceed with the carrier. Consequently, in March 1948 Secretary Forrestal announced to the Joint Chiefs that he and the President had approved construction. In the year that followed, plans were completed, contracts let, and on 18 April 1949 the keel was laid in Newport News, Virginia.[17]

Planning for the carrier had proceeded amid great controversy between the Navy and Air Force, the latter seeing it as an attempt to move in on its strategic bombing role. Because of the discord, and since the keel had not yet been laid when Johnson came to office, he wanted to study the issue and decide whether to proceed with the project. The matter was discussed at his first meeting with the Joint Chiefs, but only briefly, and no recommendations were made. Four days later, on 15 April, Johnson asked the Chiefs to present their individual views on the advisability of continuing construction of the carrier. In the week that followed, the Secretary conferred daily on the issue with the Army Chief of Staff, General Omar N. Bradley; the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg; and the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Louis E. Denfeld. The Chiefs quickly made their positions and the reasons behind them known to Johnson. Both Bradley and Vandenberg

opposed construction, while Denfeld supported it.[18] Johnson briefed the President on the matter on at least a half dozen occasions, primarily to report what was taking place rather than to ask advice, for Truman saw this as Johnson's decision to make.[19] While seeking counsel from the uniformed military chiefs, Johnson chose not to discuss the matter with any of the service secretaries, even though Secretary Sullivan had requested an opportunity to do so.

By the evening of 22 April, Johnson, after reading the final drafts of the papers to be presented by the Joint Chiefs, had made up his mind to cancel. Before informing the President, he sounded out the chairmen of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, Representative Carl Vinson and Senator Millard E. Tydings, both of whom supported the decision. The following morning, Johnson called the President and told him of the decision. Truman fully concurred. Johnson then issued the order to Secretary Sullivan directing that construction of the carrier be halted immediately. The order was simultaneously released to the press.

Secretary Sullivan, who had not been consulted on the matter, was in Texas for a speaking engagement when he learned of the decision. He immediately returned to Washington, where he prepared a scathing letter of resignation to President Truman. At the direction of Truman's secretary, Charles G. Ross, Sullivan sent the letter to Secretary of Defense Johnson instead, thus preserving the Navy Secretary's friendship with the President. Sullivan's resignation was immediately accepted, and the letter, castigating Johnson for failure to consult with the Navy on such an important matter, soon appeared in newspapers around the country.[20]

Neither such criticism as Sullivan's nor making the cancellation decision bothered Secretary Johnson; for various reasons, he actually relished the occasion. To him the carrier decision provided an opportunity to move in the direction of his two major goals—unification and economy—with one swoop. Progress toward unification would result from moving to halt an earlier unilateral decision on a weapon and getting all the services, through the Joint Chiefs, to evaluate it and make a recommendation. Economy would be effected through saving nearly $200 million by not building the craft. There was even more to be gained by Johnson in making the decision that he did: he could demonstrate to representatives of all services that he was in control and was not afraid to make hard decisions.[21]

Sullivan's resignation immediately became a *cause célèbre* for Navy brass, who hailed Sullivan as a man of principle who was willing to sacrifice his career for a just and noble purpose. But the hoopla over the Secretary's departure could not mask the setback suffered by the Navy and the victory gained by the Air Force in the continuing battle between the two services over the issue of strategic bombing responsibilities. Johnson's cancellation order seemed to confirm that the new Secretary of Defense was indeed the adversary that the Navy fully expected him to be.

In the aftermath of the cancellation, naval frustrations were at an extremely high level as many top officials, most notably aviators, concluded that the existence of their branch was at stake. In this charged atmosphere they began preparing for a battle they perceived as essential to save their service from a severe crippling at best and extinction at worst. By this time the Navy had pinpointed its three major adversaries: President Truman, whose insistence on a total military budget of under $15 billion for fiscal years 1949 and 1950 was making all the squeezing necessary; Secretary of Defense Johnson, who seemed determined to build up the Air Force at the expense of the Navy and who was taking the economy drive even further than Truman was calling for; and the Air Force, which was misrepresenting what airpower could do and what the Navy could not do in providing for the nation's defense. With the "enemies" identified, the questions remaining were which to attack, and how. The first of these was easily answered: the

President was ruled out for political and patriotic reasons, leaving Johnson and the Air Force. And the method of attack would be propaganda, both positive, which would build up the Navy, and negative, to attack the Defense chief and the Air Force. These attacks were designed to create such an outcry that Congress and the American public would look into the question of defense strategy and then right the wrongs being committed against the Navy.

Early in 1949, Cedrick R. Worth, a former Navy commander serving as a special assistant to Under Secretary of the Navy Dan A. Kimball, prepared an anonymous document which cited 55 allegations of wrongdoing against Secretary Johnson, Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington, and the Air Force's B-36 program. In assembling the document, Worth used rumors and innuendoes as well as an artful sprinkling of accurate information. The essence of the document was that the controversial B-36 bomber was an ineffective and vulnerable weapon that could not live up to the claims of the Air Force, and that knowing this, Johnson and Symington had still permitted its procurement. The document alleged that the two officials had approved purchase, even after they knew the truth, because they were friends of Floyd B. Odlum, head of the corporation that controlled Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft, the supplier of the plane; because Johnson had been a director of Consolidated-Vultee until he resigned to take his Defense post; and because Odlum had pumped, at Johnson's insistence, nearly $6 million into the President's 1948 campaign.[22]

Worth's document found its way into the hands of Representative James E. Van Zandt, a Naval Reserve officer and a member of the House Armed Services Committee. In an impassioned speech on the floor of the House, Van Zandt revealed the charges and called for a congressional investigation. The allegations were so sensational and received so much publicity that the House Armed Services Committee voted, on 9 June, to investigate the charges, learn where they came from, determine the capabilities of the B-36, examine the roles and missions of the services, and determine whether the decision to cancel the super carrier had been sound. The hearings thus called for were to be held in two phases, the first in August and the second in October.

The Revolt of the Admirals, which had first been characterized by behind-the-scenes grumbling in the aftermath of the carrier cancellation, came out into the open for the first time in the August hearings before the House committee. That phase of the investigation, formally called the "Investigation of the B-36 Bomber Program," began on 9 August and concluded on 25 August. During that period both the Air Force and the Navy made elaborate presentations, during which 35 witnesses representing all branches of the service, the Congress, and private corporations testified. The Air Force went first, and it presented most thoroughly the procurement and evaluation history of the B-36. The detail and precision with which the Air Force presented its case discredited most of the anonymous charges.[23]

In the latter part of this phase of the inquiry, the committee examined the charges of political and personal favoritism in the giving of contracts. Secretary Johnson set forth to the satisfaction of the committee members the nature of his past relationship with Consolidated-Vultee and destroyed the claim that Floyd Odlum had given more than $6 million to the President's campaign. Further, Johnson explained that his recommendation in April to approve the purchase of 36 additional B-36s merely reaffirmed a decision that Forrestal had made shortly before his departure, and then was made only after he received a recommendation that had gone through normal review procedures.

On 24 August, the day after the Secretary's appearance, the validity of Johnson's testimony was verified by a surprise witness—Cedrick Worth. In two days of testimony, Worth proceeded to explain that the document containing the charges was a spurious piece of work he had concocted for narrowly partisan reasons. With the author of Van Zandt's charges now identified and the allegations of irregularities

in procurement now discredited, phase one of the hearings came to a close. When Worth finished testimony on 25 August, the committee recessed until 5 October, at which time it was to begin examining the capabilities of the B-36, the questions of service functions and responsibilities, and the soundness of the carrier decision.

The Navy had been caught and embarrassed. But even after having attempted a cheap shot and failed, it was not ready to give up the cause. The Air Force had come out well, showing the thoroughness of its bomber evaluation and the integrity of its procurement procedure. As for Johnson and Symington, Chairman Vinson stated that they had come through the inquiry "without the slightest blemish."[24]

By the end of August, Secretary Johnson was in a stronger position than he had been since entering his new position. This was primarily due to congressional passage in mid-August of the 1949 amendments to the National Security Act, which greatly strengthened the position of the Secretary of Defense; however, Johnson's newly conferred powers did not worry the Navy nearly as much as several of his decisions in the summer of 1949. For example, some uneasiness stemmed from Johnson's revocation and then reinstatement of Consolidation Directive No. 1, which caused some Navy officers to believe that he was playing games with their right to speak their minds on procurement and unification issues. When Johnson attempted, although unsuccessfully, to keep a pro-Navy article from appearing in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and then when he began publicly criticizing Navy partisans for undertaking "a campaign of terror against unification," they were sure that he was biased.[25]

Nothing bothered the Navy more, however, than Johnson's continuing efforts at economy. In July the Secretary informed the service chiefs that the budget for fiscal 1951 would be even more austere—$13 billion—and would not be divided evenly; the Navy would receive less than the Air Force and Army. A few weeks later he indicated that he would advocate cuts of all Navy components, but especially of carriers, carrier groups, and Marine aviation, the latter being targeted for a 50-percent cut.[26] Johnson believed that by eliminating waste, duplication, and unessential forces a billion dollars could be saved each year, and on 10 August he appointed a special interservice management committee, headed by Air Force General Joseph T. McNarney, to show where the cuts would be made. In early September, McNarney informed the services that in the coming fiscal year the Secretary would cut funds substantially from current levels. Cuts announced totaled $929 million, with the Air Force losing $196 million, the Army $357 million, and the Navy $376 million.[27] This time the Navy felt Johnson was going too far. Naval leaders believed that they had no choice but to fight; if they did not, Johnson would sink the Navy and knock its air arm out of the sky more effectively than any enemy force could. The B-36 charges of the previous May and the August hearings had been kid stuff; now they were really ready to rebel.

On 10 September the revolt entered a new phase when Captain John G. Crommelin, a prominent naval aviator serving on the staff of the Joint Chiefs, called in the press and issued a public statement claiming that the Navy was being systematically and intentionally destroyed by Secretary of Defense Johnson and the Joint Chiefs. Active and retired Navy men immediately came to Crommelin's defense, and Chief of Naval Operations Denfeld and Under Secretary Kimball not only moved to protect him but attempted to reward him with a favorable reassignment. Navy Secretary Francis Matthews intervened and ordered him to a less desirable post.[28] Matthews, too, was opposed to the proposed budget cuts, but he thought that he and his subordinates should take up the matter with Johnson personally, not air their grievances publicly.

During the first week of October, Johnson assured Matthews that the Navy could present its budget concerns to him. Hoping he could persuade the Defense chief to restore some of the cuts, Matthews

consequently wanted to postpone the House committee hearings until January. Then, if the Navy was still dissatisfied, it could take its case to the House committee. Postponement, he argued, would provide an opportunity to solve the problems in house. The Navy Secretary convinced Denfeld of the merits of delay and appeared to have won over Chairman Vinson when a forceful and dynamic air advocate, Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet, returned to Washington to lead the admirals in revolt. Citing a letter from Vice Admiral Gerald P. Bogan (with endorsements by himself and Denfeld) that claimed morale in the Navy was at an all-time low, Radford persuaded Vinson to proceed with the inquiry. After that meeting Captain Crommelin again gained notoriety by releasing the secret Bogan, Radford, and Denfeld correspondence to the press.[29]

On 5 October, the House Armed Services Committee reconvened and proceeded with the second phase of its probe—an inquiry into "The National Defense Program—Unification and Strategy." As this portion of the hearings began, the Navy set out to show that unification, especially as being implemented by Johnson and the Joint Chiefs, was not working and, indeed, was tearing the Navy apart. The first eight days of the probe belonged to the Navy, which paraded before the committee such prominent figures as Admirals Radford, William F. Halsey, Thomas C. Kinkaid, Chester W. Nimitz, William H. P. Blandy, Bogan, and Denfeld; Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King; and Captain Arleigh A. Burke (the primary planner of the Navy presentation) to set forth its case. The essence of their testimony was that the Air Force had sold the nation a bill of goods in the form of the atomic blitz theory of warfare and that the instrument of that policy, the B-36, was an ineffective weapon and "a billion-dollar blunder" on the part of the Air Force. Furthermore, they claimed that unification was not working because Secretary Johnson and the Joint Chiefs were making decisions that were properly the Navy's, the unsound carrier cancellation being a good example. Secretary Johnson was also taken to task for in effect changing congressional appropriations by implementing an economy program that prevented hundreds of millions of dollars appropriated for the military services from being spent on them. Fear was also expressed that under the present Administration the amphibious mission of the Marines might be lost to the Army.[30]

Following the Navy presentations, the Air Force had its opportunity for rebuttal. With Secretary Symington leading the way, it was quite successful; however, the real case against the Navy was not set forth by anyone associated with the Air Force, but by Army General Omar N. Bradley, recently appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a position provided for in the 1949 amendments to the National Security Act. The usually mild-mannered Bradley shocked everyone as he proceeded to blast the Navy in what was the most forceful presentation of the hearings. He criticized the Navy for being too preoccupied with the past and for failing to see that new times created a need for new military strategies. Bradley noted how the Navy had opposed unification from the beginning and had never stopped opposing it. Beyond that, he claimed, on numerous occasions naval leaders deliberately made false accusations against Johnson and the Joint Chiefs because they did not get their way. Bradley deplored the Navy's "open rebellion against the civilian control" and accused the "over-zealous enthusiasts" of being "fancy dans who won't hit the line with all they have on every play, unless they can call the signals."[31] The next day newspapers from coast to coast carried stories on the "Fancy Dans" in the Navy.

Additional Army generals followed Bradley with the same message, and on 21 October, the last day of the hearings, Secretary Johnson was called to tell his side of the story. Johnson accused the Navy witnesses of presenting an inaccurate picture of what was taking place. He then told his side of the carrier cancellation decision, making clear that he had received considerable input from all the Chiefs,

including the Navy's, before making his decision. He also went to great length to explain and justify his economy moves and to emphasize that all services, not just the Navy, were being forced to take cuts. The Secretary ended his presentation with a call for increased understanding by each of the services so that they could bring about true unification.[32] The following day the hearings ended.

That the Revolt of the Admirals had failed became apparent in a series of events which began shortly after the hearings ended. The first naval casualty was Admiral Denfeld, who was removed as Chief of Naval Operations on 28 October, just one week after the hearings. This move was initiated by Secretary Matthews and approved by Johnson and President Truman.[33] His position was filled by Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, who had chosen not to involve himself in the revolt. According to Truman these changes were necessary "to restore discipline in the Navy."[34] In the months that followed, Captain John Crommelin was "purged" and two of the testifying admirals, Blandy and Bogan, were forced into retirement by being given assignments that they found completely unacceptable. An attempt by Matthews and Johnson to punish one of the wayward officers went awry, however. In December they tried to block the promotion of Captain Arleigh Burke, the primary architect of the Navy's presentations at the hearings; their effort was thwarted by President Truman's personal intervention, and Burke was promoted and eventually went on to distinguish himself as Chief of Naval Operations from 1955 to 1961.[35]

Two months after the hearings, the House Armed Services Committee issued the first of two reports on its inquiry. The first report dealt with the first phase of the hearings—the B-36 procurement charges. In it the committee lauded the Air Force and its handling of the B-36 program. The report cleared Secretary Johnson and Secretary Symington of any wrongdoing and expressed complete confidence in them. Two months later, on 1 March 1950, the committee issued its report on "Unification and Strategy." In it were 33 findings and conclusions which primarily pointed out the problems and complexities of unification and called for more cooperation, consultation, and education to make true unification a reality. Secretary Johnson was criticized for the manner in which the super carrier was cancelled, but the cancellation itself was upheld. He was also mildly criticized for going against the will of Congress by refusing to spend duly appropriated funds.[36] The reports gave little solace to the Navy, offering it sympathy but nothing else. The reports provided a sort of finality to what by that time was quite clear: The Revolt of the Admirals had failed.

The committee reports and removal of Admiral Denfeld were indications that the revolt had not succeeded, but there is more evidence of its failure when one asks what the admirals achieved. The answer is very little. There were no discernible changes in the military budget for fiscal 1950 or 1951, either in terms of total amount or distribution. The atomic blitz theory continued to hold sway throughout the nation. The B-36 procurement continued unabated. Strategic bombing remained the primary responsibility of the Air Force. And construction of the super carrier was not resumed. Those things that the Navy had set out to change remained virtually unaffected.[37]

For Secretary of Defense Johnson, the impact of the revolt is not clear-cut, for he emerged both a winner and a loser. On the positive side were several considerations: he established himself among the armed services, Congress, and public as a bold, forceful individual who fully intended to be master in his own house and to make unification work, regardless of the opposition to it; he emerged with his personal integrity not only intact but greatly enhanced; and he gained from Congress and the public an understanding of the difficult nature of his job and the need for unification and eliminating waste. But the revolt also extracted a price from Johnson, for it alienated some members of Congress, the

press, and the public who believed that his handling of affairs and his personal manner before the committee revealed a man who was too brusque and insensitive to make unification work. Moreover, it made final his alienation from the Navy. The latter would loom large in his dismissal in September 1950, because with the coming of war in Korea the Secretary of Defense needed the complete confidence and support of all the military services.

Who, then, benefited from the revolt, if not the Navy or Secretary Johnson? The Department of Defense did not, for in airing its problems in public it revealed the turmoil that existed there. Perhaps only the Air Force emerged better off than before, because the hearings seemed to convince the public that its earlier confidence in the value of airpower as a defensive tool and offensive weapon was well warranted. About the only other positive statement that can be made about the revolt is that it might have helped clear the air among the feuding services so they could proceed with unification.

By the spring of 1950, morale of naval leaders was, not surprisingly, near rock bottom. With the failure of the admirals' revolt, the continuing economy drive of the seemingly anti-Navy Secretary of Defense, and the nation's intensifying love affair with the Air Force, the outlook for the Navy was not bright; however, events abroad were soon to change that situation. Following the outbreak of war in Korea in June 1950, it became increasingly apparent that the United States still needed conventional land and sea forces.

The Korean War did what the admirals in revolt had been unable to do, showing the nation that there was a place for the Navy and Marines in mid-20th-century warfare. By providing gunfire support of land forces, launching air strikes from aircraft carriers, blockading the Korean coast, and transporting men and supplies, the Navy again proved its worth in combat. The Marines likewise gained new respect in Korea, with the highly successful amphibious landing at Inchon showing the need for such capability.

As the war led to increased reliance on, and respect for, the Navy, appropriations grew. A new building program was initiated in 1952. That year witnessed the laying of the keels of the first postwar aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. *Forrestal*, and the first nuclear-powered warship, the submarine U.S.S. *Nautilus*, plus authorization of the first guided-missile cruisers. In time, the nuclear-powered submarines were armed with nuclear weapons—the Polaris, Poseidon, and later Trident ballistic missiles—and for nearly two decades this naval nuclear capability has been an integral part of the nation's strategic nuclear Triad. The Navy also achieved the strategic bombing role it desired, acquiring AJ Savages, A3D Skywarriors, and A3J Vigilantes, all carrier-based aircraft capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

The Marines also prospered in the post-Korean War period; operations in Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, and Vietnam all showed a need for and the effectiveness of that fighting force. In the 1980s the Marines have taken on a new position of importance, playing a prominent role in the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force.

As one looks back over the past 30 years, it is apparent that all the speculation about the demise of the Navy and Marines that accompanied the Revolt of the Admirals was never realized. For that the nation can be thankful.

NOTES

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17. Coletta, pp. 7-9; Walter H. Waggoner, "Keel is Laid for Super-Carrier," *The New York Times*, 19 April 1949, pp. 1, 48.

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21. Johnson later claimed that the carrier vs. B-36 controversy was "the issue that gave me a chance to run the Department. The secretary didn't have control before. This was the thing that gave me control" (Carl W. Borkland, *Men of the Pentagon: From Forrestal to McNamara* [New York: Praeger, 1966], p. 75).

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34. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, p. 53.

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36. US Congress, House, *Investigation of the B-36 Bomber Program*, Report of the House Armed Services Committee on H.R. 234, 81st Cong., 2d Sess., Report 1470, pp. 20-22, 32-33; US Congress, House, *Unification and Strategy*, Report of the House Armed Services Committee, 81st Cong., 2d Sess., House Document 600, pp. 53-56.

37. Although it cannot be proven, it is possible that while the Navy lost the battle it may have actually won the war because, by rebelling as it did, it caused Secretary Johnson, Congress, and President Truman to soften their anti-Navy tendencies.