

Letters

Defending Attack Carriers

Thoughtful people are and should be deeply concerned with the difficult problem of maintaining effective, innovative, and economical armed forces. For these people, however, John Wicklein's article on aircraft carriers ["The Navy Prepares for World War II," February, 1970] is bound to be a disappointment. It is largely an unsupported article with deficiencies in describing the future environment, the requirement for surface naval forces, and in comparing the carrier with possible alternatives. A more reasonable and informative argument could have come from a careful use of available information.

I doubt that many serious students of foreign policy would share Mr. Wicklein's confidence in predicting what President Nixon's Guam Doctrine will look like in practice, and what military instruments will and will not be needed to implement that Doctrine. Furthermore, in my view, the author overestimates the technology and capabilities of present and possible future alternatives to the carrier. It is difficult to take seriously the notion that high-speed, 4,000-ton, captured-air-bubble destroyers could have a significant role in the ocean-going Navy of 1975.

It appears that among the source materials used by Mr. Wicklein was a thesis on aircraft carriers which I wrote five years ago at MIT. I wish to emphasize in this connection that several of the judgments attributed to me in the article, or apparently derived from the thesis, do not represent my views. For example, I am quoted as saying, "The Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean is redundant." This statement is not in my thesis, nor does it reflect my views. The author may have been referring to the

chapter on the role of the attack carrier in general nuclear war. That chapter provides a discussion of the uniqueness of the carrier in the Mediterranean in the early Cold War years and contains the statement: "With the subsequent development of land-based air covering NATO's southern flank, and with the later introduction into the region and coverage of the region by sea and land-based missile systems, the Sixth Fleet may have become increasingly redundant."

The situation in the Mediterranean is continually changing. Some of the changes in recent years include stationing there of significant Soviet naval units, the dangerous turmoil in the eastern Mediterranean centering on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the erosion and loss of U.S. land bases. In my opinion, these events have increased, not diminished the importance of the Sixth Fleet. There are circumstances under which the Sixth Fleet probably would be vulnerable. But other U.S. forces that were within any useful reach of the Mediterranean region would also be vulnerable. On balance, I believe the Sixth Fleet adds a significant dimension to U.S. military capability and to the flexibility of U.S. security policy generally in a region which is a present and ominous threat to world peace.

The "private think tank" is referred to incorrectly. The correct identification is the Center for Naval Analyses, not the "Institute for Naval Analyses." Institute of Naval Studies, which is a division of CNA, would also have been correct.

For either the critic or the advocate to make reasonable judgments on the role of the attack carrier and its future, he must come to grips with many complex issues and devise comparisons which are both relevant and

accurate. In my view, Mr. Wicklein's article failed on both these counts.

DESMOND P. WILSON
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Wilson is with the Center for Naval Analyses.

The author, John Wicklein, replies:

Given the substantiating authorities and the documentation cited in the article, I don't see how an unbiased reader could find it "unsupported." As a matter of fact, two studies that have been made public *since* the article was printed—one by the Systems Analysis Division of the Defense Department, the other by the Brookings Institution—support the central argument: maintaining the attack carrier force wastes millions on a weapon that is not cost-effective for the Seventies.

In assessing Dr. Wilson's letter, it should be kept in mind that the center for which he works holds contracts to make analytical studies for the Navy Department.

The quote "The Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean is redundant" did not come from Dr. Wilson's thesis, but from a long, personal interview, supplemented by a subsequent telephone interview.

Selling Arms to Egypt

It is not true, as alleged by George Thayer ["American Arms Abroad," January] that in fiscal 1969 "the United States managed to sell \$300,000 worth of military equipment to Egypt . . ." His statement is apparently based on newspaper reports of revelations made by Congressman Coughlin of Pennsylvania last October to the effect that the U.S. Government was secretly selling arms to Egypt.

In fact, we have maintained an embargo on the sale or shipment of military equipment to the United Arab Republic and other Arab states which broke relations with us in June 1967. This embargo covers not only lethal and non-lethal military items and spare parts (such as military trucks) on our Munitions Control List (administered by the Office for Munitions Control, Department of State), but also Department of Commerce-licensed, non-lethal items having significant potential military application (such as two-way radios in quantity). We do authorize sales of Commerce-licensed spare parts for non-lethal items previously supplied by the United States, however.

The figure of \$300,000 referred to seems to have been extracted from an all-inclusive listing of exports of apparent military value compiled by the Census Bureau. The exports in this case,

which actually totalled \$200,395 when final figures were received, were communications equipment and generators with spare parts for civilian consignees, not for the UAR military forces, and they were sold commercially by private firms in the United States, not by the U.S. Government.

The items in question did not have significant military application, and we were satisfied that they would be used for civilian purposes.

I spell out the above because I know how interested you are in disciplined fact-finding.

RICHARD B. PARKER
Washington, D. C.

Mr. Parker is Country Director for United Arab Republic Affairs in the State Department.

George Thayer, the author, replies:

First, the fact that our government has been selling military equipment to Egypt does not come from "newspaper reports," as Mr. Parker states, but from the Defense Department's arms sales office itself. The relevant information is contained in an attachment to a letter from Lt. Gen. Robert H. Warren, the government's chief arms salesman, to Congressman R. Lawrence Coughlin, dated August 13, 1969. The attachment specifically notes that military export sales to Egypt for FY 1969 were \$.3 million, or \$300,000. Presumably the Defense Department knows what military equipment is.

Second, to say that this military equipment, whatever kind it happens to be, does not have "significant military application" is too silly a remark to warrant much comment. The State Department can't have it both ways: either the equipment is or is not military in type. Obviously someone deemed the material of significant military value and so classified it as such.

Third, Mr. Parker implies that somehow the transaction is less deceptive because the equipment was sold to Egypt by private firms, not by the U.S. Government. Again, the weakness of this argument is clear: presumably, private American military equipment exporters still need government approval before such a sale is made; if not, then our arms export control procedures have deteriorated far more drastically than I had previously thought possible.

Fourth, Congressman Coughlin has never stated that we were *secretly* selling arms to Egypt; he simply stated the fact. Had Mr. Parker read the *Congressional Record* of October 15, 1969, (pages E8502-4) more carefully, he would not have made such a statement.

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ATOMIC
POWER
ABUSE:

The AEC in Colorado



'WELL . . . PERHAPS WE WERE A LITTLE WRONG—