

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 4, 1983

Dear Senator Byrd:

This will respond further to your letter to the President of December 20, 1982, co-signed by Senators Biden and Huddleston concerning a classified briefing presented by the Department of Defense to senior Pentagon correspondents.

Following my earlier reply to you acknowledging receipt of your letter, the questions you raised were reviewed with appropriate officials of the Department of Defense. The Department advises that this briefing presented a description of Soviet military growth over the last decade. It also advises, however, that the briefing did not include sensitive all-source information provided to the Senate in closed session, and in response to specific questions.

The Department states that Secretary Weinberger authorized the briefing after careful deliberation and consultation with other officials, and that the briefing cannot be characterized as an attempt to utilize information on a selective basis to support a particular policy decision. Rather, it was a general briefing on Soviet military growth to educate the press. The Department indicates that the members of the press who attended were cleared and specifically agreed not to disclose the information. Also, Defense advises that the briefing was at the Secret noncompartmented level; there were no net assessments presented or discussion of U.S. military strength or weapons systems.

I hope this information is helpful, and will dispel the concerns you expressed about this matter.

Sincerely,



Kenneth M. Duberstein  
Assistant to the President

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

bcc: William H. Taft, IV  
Fred F. Fielding  
Robert M. Kimmitt