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NEWS BRIEFING

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Public Affairs)

DoD News Briefing
Tuesday, December 1, 1992 - Noon
Mr. Pete Williams, ASD (Public Affairs)

Mr. Williams: Good afternoon to everybody.

I've got several announcements here for you. Let me run through them.

First of all, and there's a Memorandum for Correspondents to this effect, on December 3rd, Cambodian date, technical representatives of Cambodia and the United States will begin joint investigations and remains recovery operations pertaining to unaccounted for Americans in Cambodia. This will be the 6th joint field activity that will be conducted between the U.S. and the government of Cambodia since these started in October of '91. This activity will be conducted in the Cambodian provinces of Kracheh, Kampong Cham, Kandal and Kampot, and Tang Island. The operation will last 16 days. The joint team plans to investigate 12 priority cases; hopes to investigate as many as seven other cases; and will be prepared to conduct excavations as is appropriate.

The 15 U.S. team members supported by a 23 member Army aviation detachment, will be under the operational control of Joint Task Force Full Accounting, and will be joined by Cambodian officials. The team consists of POW/MIA specialists with experience in investigations and recovery operations, and will be led by Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Charles P. Clayton, who is commander of the Joint Task Force, Detachment 4 in Phnom Penh. The Army aviation detachment from the 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, will fly UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, and will provide Phnom Penh-based air transportation support for the operation.

As I say, there's a Memorandum for Correspondents available for you on this. Any questions about this? (No response)

Any of you who follow the budget process closely will know that one of the things the Department has been doing, and it's been, to some extent, tied in with the base closing process, is soliciting from communities their nominations to be locations for the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Accounting Centers. We are closing, as you know, Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana, and there's a big finance center there. That's being closed down. One of the things the Department is looking at is having several regional finance and accounting centers around the country. These communities have been nominating themselves for consideration, and now the Department has chosen the top 20 contenders in the competition to select new locations for future consolidated finance and accounting centers of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

Let me give you the communities in alphabetical order. There's a Blue Top for you -- we're working on it now, I guess. But in alphabetical order, the communities that are the top 20

#459

Q: What's the procedure for investigating a crash in terms of the appropriate authorities? Is this in combination with NTSB, or is it purely military?

A: They always cooperate with civilian authorities, but when no civilian aircraft are involved, as would be the case in these two domestic accidents, the Air Force pretty much handles it on its own, and they have a standard investigative procedure that they go through.

Q: Is the U.S. going to pay Turkey compensation for the Saratoga accident?

A: There's been a request from individuals in Turkey and some discussions with the Turkish government about paying claims, and we've had a total of 271 claims filed from individuals. This is not from the government of Turkey, these are claims from individuals. As you recall, five people were killed in that accident; five were serious injured. So there are some claims arising out of those incidents. Then there are some additional sailors involved who are filing claims, and then some of the family members, some of the survivors of those who were killed, and family members of those who were injured have filed claims. So there are 271 claims submitted. There's a Navy team that's been visiting Turkey and working with the Turks to try to resolve these claims.

We have said that we will pay claims in this case, so we continue to discuss that with the Turks and with the people involved. But there haven't been any claims paid yet, as far as I know. It's still something we're discussing with the individual folks involved.

Q: What about the Turkish demand for courts martial of the U.S. sailors, any U.S. response to that?

A: No, I think there isn't. The Navy's made its investigation public. The Navy's made it clear that they will proceed with actions against those involved. They'll have what they call an Admiral's Mast, which is a proceeding where the folks involved are brought before an admiral and punishment is decided by the admiral. It's the next step up from a Captain's Mast. Those of you who know how the Navy works know that if personnel are at sea, that they can come before the captain, it's called a Captain's Mast because I guess in the old days they did it on the deck of the ship in front of the mast. Now it's done, I guess, in the captain's office on board the ship, the captain's quarters or whatever they call where the captain lives on a ship. That's where the punishment is decided. This is the next level up. This is before the admiral. In this case it would be Admiral Joe Lopez who's the commander of the SIXTH Fleet.

The Captain's Mast has a range of punishments that it can give out, some of which could be the same as a court martial. So it's a different proceeding, but I think the Navy's decision was that the court martial isn't indicated here because there's no evidence of willful intent to endanger the lives of the Turkish crew members or the American crew members. There's no evidence of an intentional wrongdoing. There's no evidence of intentionally putting the ship in danger or having sloppy procedures intentionally. It's all very regrettable. The Navy notes in its accident, that there was a lack of adequate communication among the personnel, and they go through what caused it, but there's no evidence of an intention on the part of any of these folks that led to this accident. I think that's the Navy's decision.

Q: Does the Secretary of Defense accept the Navy's investigation and its report as the final, last word on all of this? Or is there any additional investigation or review process, given the Navy's record on some of the other investigations, going to take place?

A: As a technical matter, the Secretary of Defense is outside of this. There was a Court of Inquiry that reported to the commander of SIXTH Fleet, and to Admiral Boorda, and finally, to, where it stopped at the review is at the Atlantic Command with Admiral Mauz at the Atlantic Fleet. That's, administratively, as high as it goes. That's the way the Navy does its business. The individual services have their own administrative procedures for investigating accidents and for deciding punishment. So the Secretary of Defense is not in the review process -- the Secretary, nor the Deputy, nor even the Secretary of the Navy. So technically, he has no review over it. And no one has called for any additional investigations.

Q: Will there be any changes in training? Does this call into question any of the training procedures?

A: It does, indeed, and the Navy has said that they want to look not only at the training procedures, but also at the way the Navy operates the Sea Sparrow System. So both those questions are under discussion.

Press: Thank you.
Mr. Williams: Thank you.

(END)

DoD News Briefing
Tuesday, October 6, 1992 - Noon
Mr. Pete Williams, ASD (Public Affairs)

Mr. Williams: Good afternoon. I have a whole bunch of announcements, and then I will be pleased to take your questions.

First, a couple of scheduling things. As we announced last week, the 24th annual U.S./Republic of Korea Security Consultative meeting will be this week here at the Pentagon. It starts on October 7th and continues on the 8th. Secretary Cheney will head the U.S. delegation, and the Minister of National Defense of Korea, Choi Jae Chang, will lead the Korean side. Officials from the Department of State and the Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs will also take part.

On October 7th, General Powell and the Chairman of the Republic of Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Lee Pil Sup, will cochair a meeting of the military committees.

Let me just review with you coverage opportunities for this. On the 7th, there will be an honors ceremony conducted by General Powell for his counterpart. That will begin at 9:00 in the morning at the River Entrance, followed by a picture opportunity in the conference area. If you'd like to take part in that, you should contact Carolyn Piper in General Powell's public affairs office here in the Pentagon at (703) 697-4272.

That afternoon, General Lee will lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington Cemetery. If you'd like to cover that event, the contact is Patty Heard at the Military District of Washington, (202) 475-0856.

Then on October 8th, Secretary Cheney will host the honors arrival ceremony for Minister Choi, and that will be 9:40 in the morning at the River Entrance, followed by a picture opportunity in the Secretary's office. Then at 11:25 there will be another picture opportunity in connection with the report of the Security Consultative Meeting and the Military Committees and the Communique Committee. If you're interested in covering those, the contact is Bettie Sprigg in our office at (703) 695-0168.

After the morning session there will be a lunch hosted by the Secretary. Then both the Secretary and Minister Choi will come down here to give brief statements on the outcome of their sessions. That will be at 1:10 here in the Pentagon Briefing Room on Thursday, the 8th. The Minister and the Secretary will each read brief statements. Both of them, unfortunately, have other scheduling commitments and immediately have to leave after making those statements. I'll say where Secretary Cheney is going in just a moment. But we will have people here to answer your questions about the meetings. For the U.S. side, it will be William Pendley -- Bill Pendley -- who is the Deputy

Q: Does the Pentagon quake at the prospect of introducing U.S. war planes over Bosnia/Herzegovina? The prospect of it?

A: It's not clear yet exactly what the enforcement mechanism would be, so I wouldn't draw the inevitable conclusion that a no-fly zone means U.S. war planes over Bosnia/Herzegovina. The decision on how to enforce it is precisely what we are discussing with the allies, and there's been no decision on it yet.

Q: On the Saratoga, can you give us a sense of how this investigation, a court of inquiry is supposed to proceed? Is it supposed to all take place while the Saratoga is still afloat? Is there some prospect of the ship being brought back to the United States and the crew questioned there? And secondly, has there been any disciplinary action whatsoever up to this point regarding that incident?

A: Let me do the second one first. The answer is no, because there's been no conclusion yet on how it happened. As for the process, there is a court of inquiry or a board of inquiry I believe it's called, which consists of three U.S. Navy rear admirals. For the sake of the record, they are Rear Admiral Roland Guilbaut, Rear Admiral John Mazach, and Rear Admiral Henry Griffin, and one Turkish flag officer, Admiral Luftar Sancar, and the convening authority for the investigation is the Commander of the 6th Fleet, Vice Admiral Joe Lopez. They are out on the Saratoga. I think they have visited the Turkish ship as well.

The Saratoga is in the Aegean, it is still taking part in Exercise Display Determination which is scheduled to conclude on October 8th. Larry, I think what they want to do is get out to the ship while the evidence is still fresh. They can look at the crew spaces that were involved with the firing mechanism for the sea sparrow, they can talk to the crew members that are right there, and they can gather the evidence right on the spot rather than waiting for the Saratoga to go back into port.

Yesterday, Admiral Boorda who is the Commander of Allied Forces, Southern Europe, and the Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe, attended a memorial service for the deceased in Turkey. I think that pretty much brings you up to date on the development. They're still out there doing their investigation. I think what I've heard is it's going to take through the rest of the month for them to reach their determination. As you know, at the same time, Admiral Kelso has ordered the Naval Sea Systems Command here in the United States to conduct a review of the entire system which would include all the hardware, all the software, the maintenance and operational procedures, and the operator training independent of the Admiral's board of inquiry that's at the Saratoga.

Q: So there's no thought of taking the Saratoga out of the exercise for the time being?

A: Apparently not.

Q: Is the State Department handling the compensation part of this?

A: They'll probably get involved in it. What's happened is that on October 2nd, Deputy Secretary Atwood sent a letter to the conferees working on the Defense Appropriations Bill and asked them to give us authority to use Navy operation and maintenance funds to compensate the families of the dead and injured as a result of the accident. So at the request of the Defense Department, Congress did in fact make that adjustment to the Appropriations Bill. They've provided authority in the legislation to make what are called ex gratia, the Latin term, ex gratia payments as a result of the accidental striking of the Turkish warship by a missile fired from the Saratoga. So the Department of Navy will set aside from FY93 operation and maintenance funds an amount, no amount determined at this time, related to those claims. They'll be made available to the Navy's

Judge Advocate General's Office, and they'll work together with the State Department and Turkish authorities to make the decision.

What this means is, ex gratia, is that it's sort of a separate proceeding. It's not the typical claims proceeding. It's a way for us to proceed with the government of Turkey and with the folks involved to make the right decisions on compensation. I don't believe there have been any requests or claims yet.

Q: There's no amount stipulated in the bill?
A: That's right. We have the authority to draw from Navy operation and maintenance funds as is deemed appropriate.

Q: Does the authority also include money for the repair or the replacement of the vessel?
A: I don't believe so, Mark. My understanding is, and I will double check this, we'll take the question and make sure, but my understanding is that under NATO agreement, all NATO countries that are part of the integrated military command have an agreement among themselves that, in exercises of this kind, there is no compensation for damage to equipment that happens during an exercise. So NATO countries agree not to seek compensation from each other.

Q: Normally after an exercise, Display Determination, the ships pull into Turkish port. Is the carrier still scheduled to pull into a Turkish port or anchorage, or has that schedule been now altered?
A: I don't know that. I'll have to check that. Let me take that question. I just don't know.

Q: The last question on the same subject, is there a dispute between the Department of Defense General Counsel's Office and the Department of the Navy on reparation?
A: No. I've talked to the General Counsel myself this morning. I think he's very happy with the system that they've worked out.

Q: Who will make the decision about the amount of money coming from the Navy fund? Will that be up to the Secretary of the Navy, or will the Secretary of Defense or Mr. Atwood, since he wrote the letter, direct the Navy to spend so much money once it comes due?
A: The guidance that I have here says the funds will be made available to the Navy's Judge Advocate General's Office. The Judge Advocate General will disperse the funds. So it may ultimately involve the Secretary of the Navy. That's a possibility. Here's the language that's in the legislation. The reason that Mr. Atwood made the request is that he was the Acting Secretary of Defense that day when we needed to get a quick action on the part of the Congress, and they did quickly agree.

This is Section 9154 of the Defense Appropriations Bill, and I'll quote from it: "Funds appropriated in this Act under the heading Operation and Maintenance, Navy, shall be available for payments arising out of the deaths and injuries that resulted from the accidental striking of the Turkish ship Muavenet by a missile fired from the aircraft carrier Saratoga on October 1, 1992." That's the full extent of the language.

Q: But it doesn't say... Will a bill just come from Turkey, or will the State Department...
A: What I'm trying to say is that through the ex gratia system, you can be a little less formal than you would be through a government formally filing a claim, as was the case, for example, in the shoot-down of the Iranian airbus. That was a very formal procedure. This will be less formal. The

Navy will work with the State Department, with the embassy, with the NATO folks to make the right decision. But there's no preset amount.

Q: You say no claims have been received yet.
A: Not that I'm aware of.

Q: Are there negotiations going on?
A: I don't know that there will be negotiations. I think that, again, makes it too formal.

Q: Are there discussions going on...
A: I don't know where...I suspect the initial point of contact would be the U.S. Embassy in Ankara. That would be my guess. Again, I'm not sure about that. But I don't know that we've heard from any of the families yet.

Your question about the amount of contributions to U.S. forces in Korea. In 1991, the Republic of Korea contributed $150 million. That's a 115 percent increase over the 1990 level of $70 million. In '92, the Republic of Korea contribution is $180 million, which in turn is a 20 percent increase over 1991. In addition to those figures, the Republic of Korea provides land at no cost for U.S. bases and training areas. It provides 5,800 personnel to augment the U.S. forces on the peninsula, an increasing portion of the cost of maintaining the Joint U.S. Military Affairs Group in Korea, and the maintenance and storage costs of allied war reserve munitions.

Q: When the Secretary goes to Arizona, he will, as I understand it, be right near a plant that makes Apache helicopters, and they're about to run out of contracts for that. Does he plan to visit that Apache plant, or make an announcement about the Apache while he's out there?
A: Not that I know of. I don't believe so.

Press: Thank you.

(END)