Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent communication giving me the benefit of your reactions to the sonic booms created by the B-58 supersonic training flights presently being conducted by the Air Force over Lake Michigan and a part of Illinois.

I was advised of these flights at the time they were scheduled and am therefore more than somewhat familiar with the whole purpose as it relates to our overall defense structure. Actually, these flights are essential to the proficiency training of crews operating over a billion dollars worth of supersonic equipment in practice sessions against targets in the United States which present a radar picture similar to those in certain overseas areas of potential enemies. The identification of specific targets within a large urban complex is a most difficult matter of judgment and Chicago is one of those cities which is protected by Army Nike missile sites equipped to provide an adequate scoring record of the mission objectives.

In this particular instance, in order to reduce the effect of the flights as much as possible, the Air Force (1) has increased the altitude in order to reduce the effect of the sonic booms, (2) is permitting the maximum scheduling of only two flights a day between Monday and Friday, and (3) is attempting to provide all possible advance information concerning the flights to radio and other broadcasting media in the Chicago area insofar as the exact timing of the booms is concerned.

The primary interest of the Air Force is in fulfilling its vital role in our overall defense capability, but authorities nevertheless assure me that all such flights are scheduled on as geographically equitable a basis as possible -- taking into consideration, of course, the particular program and equipment involved, the availability of locations in relation to established facilities, and the desire to closely simulate actual potential target areas.

I do hope this serves to more fully explain the whole purpose and extremely essential nature of the flights.

Sincerely,

Everett McKinley Dirksen
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