

Congressman Sam Johnson

News Release



1030 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 10, 1994

CONTACT: Mindy Tucker
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PURPOSE OF ENOLA GAY EXHIBIT DISPUTED

Washington, D.C. -- Congressman Sam Johnson today was expressed outrage with the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum for what he called "its blatant betrayal of American history" in its exhibit of the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Museum officials were called to Capitol Hill today to answer charges that the museum has slanted the exhibit in favor of the Japanese by showing graphic pictures of the after effects of the atomic bomb.

Criticism from veterans and members of the armed services prompted Johnson and other Congressmen to send a letter to Smithsonian Secretary Robert Adams last week calling for a balanced view in the exhibit. In a meeting called by Johnson on Wednesday with Dr. Martin Harwit, the Director of the Air and Space Museum and several of the Congressmen that signed the letter, the representatives of the Smithsonian still indicated there would be no changes forthcoming.

One major argument the Congressmen have voiced is that this type of exhibit falls outside and in direct contradiction with the charter of the Air and Space Museum. The charter reads, "The valor and sacrificial service of the men and women of the Armed Forces shall be portrayed as an inspiration to the present and future generations of America."

"Rather than observe their own charter, the exhibit, according to the 295-page script, gives hardly any background on the numerous Americans who were tortured and killed prior to the dropping of the atomic bomb. In fact, Dr. Harwit has been very public about his personal feelings on atomic weapons. I have to wonder if his personal feelings and motives, instead of those of America, are being served through this exhibit," said Congressman Johnson.

"The National Air and Space Museum should be a place where Americans can come to see the development of aviation and space flight, not editorialized opinions or revisionist history which disagrees war strategy from five decades ago," said Congressman Johnson.



Congressman

Peter Blute

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 10, 1994

CONTACT: ROB GRAY
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CONGRESSMEN SEND LETTER BLASTING PLANNED SMITHSONIAN EXHIBIT OF ENOLA GAY

Air and Space Museum Portrays Japan as Innocent Victim and United States as Ruthless Aggressor in WWII

WASHINGTON, D.C.--During a week marking the 49th anniversary of the end of the war with Japan, a bipartisan group of 24 Members of Congress have sent a letter to the Smithsonian Institution condemning a proposed exhibit of the *Enola Gay* as "anti-American" and "biased."

In the letter to Smithsonian Secretary Robert McC. Adams, written by U.S. Representative Peter Blute (R-MA), the lawmakers stated their concern that the planned May 1995 exhibit is lacking in balance and that officials of the Air and Space Museum have not acted to correct the problem.

The exhibit, "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II," has been embroiled in controversy since it was first announced. Meant to focus on the first-ever public showing of the *Enola Gay*, the exhibit has been transformed by the Air and Space museum into a retrospective on the horror of nuclear weapons which questions why the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the letter, the congressmen ask that Secretary Adams personally look into the situation and communicate the Smithsonian Institution's position on the exhibit directly to them. Said Blute, "There is still time to correct the outrageous bias of this exhibit over the next nine months and we hope that the Smithsonian will take our criticisms in mind and force the Air and Space Museum to do just that."

Veterans groups, military historians, and officials of the Armed Forces have expressed their vehement opposition to the lack of context in the exhibit over the past six months. The exhibit script deals only with the time immediately before and after the bombings, neglecting to chronicle the savage Japanese aggression and quest for world dominance between 1930 and 1945 that led the United States to drop the atomic bombs. This, combined with the fact that the lion's share of tragic photographs in the exhibit are of Japanese casualties, will leave viewers with an impression that the United States was a ruthless aggressor while shielding them from the actual military reality that the bombings saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers.

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Blute cited a few of the many examples of bias in the exhibit. "There are 32 photographs of Japanese casualties but only 7 of American casualties, and 97 photographs relating to Japanese suffering but only 8 photographs relating to the massive human suffering caused by the Japanese aggression from 1930 to 1945," said Blute. "I can't imagine what the Air and Space Museum was thinking when they put this exhibit together," he continued.

Blute said he decided to write to Secretary Adams after consulting with frustrated veterans and historians who have been involved in attempts to get Air and Space Museum to significantly change the exhibit and make it more historically accurate but have been stonewalled by the museum officials. "It seems to me that the Air and Space museum has publicly pretended that they are striving to present a fair and unbiased exhibit but have then worked behind the scenes to preserve the current exhibit which puts forth their opinion on the end of the war with Japan," said Blute. "We owe it to young Americans, many of whom will be learning about the *Enola Gay* for the first time during their visit to Air and Space, to provide an accurate portrayal of why we ended the war the way we did," he continued.

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**NOTE: A copy of the letter is attached, so there are no quotes from the letter in this release. More information and analysis of the exhibit is available on request.



news release

Congressman **TOM LEWIS**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 10, 1994

LEWIS DISAPPOINTED WITH SMITHSONIAN DIRECTOR'S EXPLANATION OF JAPANESE BIAS IN UPCOMING EXHIBIT ON ATOMIC BOMB

Director Admits He Is Opposed To Using Nuclear Weapons In Wartime

Washington - Congressman Tom Lewis and five other Members of Congress met today with the Director of the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum, Dr. Martin Harwit, to express deep concern over the Museum's upcoming exhibit entitled "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of The War."

"In my opinion, this exhibit goes beyond being 'politically correct', and is outright offensive to veterans such as myself," said Lewis. "Not only does it go out of its way to treat Japanese as victims, but it actually glorifies Kamikaze pilots. I never thought I would see the day when American servicemen would take a backseat to Kamikaze pilots in the Smithsonian Institution."

The controversial exhibit spends nearly twenty percent of the script showing pictures and testimonials of Japanese at "ground zero" at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many of these centered around children. The Smithsonian has borrowed them from Japanese foundations, and has admitted they are designed for "shock value." In addition, during the meeting, Dr. Harwit admitted that, if a decision was left to him, he would not use atomic or nuclear weapons in wartime.

"The Smithsonian has drastically varied from their chartered obligation to portray service men and women as inspirational, and turned this exhibit into what amounts to an apology to Japan," Lewis said. "Using the Smithsonian as a platform for a radical anti-nuclear demonstration is just plain wrong. Their job is to tell history, not rewrite it."

In the next week, Lewis will be meeting with other Members of Congress to explore remedies, including Congressional action. Concluded Lewis: "Taxpayers fund this museum, and I will not allow their money to be spent revising history."



Congressman

Peter Blute

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 17, 1994

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SMITHSONIAN RESPONDS TO CONGRESSMEN'S CRITICISM ON EXHIBIT OF ENOLA GAY

**Air and Space Museum Portrays Japan as Innocent Victim
and United States as Ruthless Aggressor in WWII**

**Blute: We're Not Satisfied, A Small First Step
But There's A Long Way To Go**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Smithsonian Institution today responded to a letter by a bipartisan group of 24 Members of Congress who last week wrote to condemn a proposed exhibit of the *Enola Gay* as "anti-American" and "biased."

In an August 10 letter to Smithsonian Secretary Robert McC. Adams, written by U.S. Representative Peter Blute (R-MA), the lawmakers stated their concern that the planned May 1995 exhibit is lacking in balance and that officials of the Air and Space Museum have not acted to correct the problem.

Adams, in an August 16 letter to Blute, admitted on behalf of the museum that "we need to work further on achieving the proper balance." However, he also defended the process that has led to the controversy over the exhibit.

The exhibit, "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II," has been embroiled in controversy since it was first announced. Meant to focus on the first-ever public showing of the *Enola Gay*, the exhibit has been transformed by the Air and Space museum into a retrospective on the horror of nuclear weapons which questions why the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In their letter, the congressmen asked that Adams personally look into the situation and state the Smithsonian Institution's position on the exhibit.

Adams wrote that the exhibit is, "a work in progress," and said that Air and Space officials have done excellent work on it thus far. But he also stated that, "A Smithsonian exhibition...needs to look both backward to the circumstances of the war and forward to what ensued after the bomb left the bomb-bay." Blute reacted that, "Unfortunately the exhibit does not adequately take into account the Japanese aggression and destruction in the fifteen years prior to the bombings that Secretary Adams says it should. That has to be changed and changed quickly."

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Adams also wrote that, "it would never fall within the province of the Smithsonian to sit in judgement on what was a great political as well as military turning point for our entire nation." But Blute said that the museum was doing just that. "Clearly, the exhibit script puts forth the opinion that the bombings may not have been necessary. This is wrong, and the bias should be removed from the *Enola Gay* exhibit."

Veterans groups, military historians, and officials of the Armed Forces have expressed their vehement opposition to the lack of context in the exhibit over the past six months. The exhibit script deals only with the time immediately before and after the bombings, neglecting to chronicle the savage Japanese aggression and quest for world dominance between 1930 and 1945 that led the United States to drop the atomic bombs. This, combined with the fact that the lion's share of tragic photographs in the exhibit are of Japanese casualties, will leave viewers with an impression that the United States was a ruthless aggressor while shielding them from the actual military reality that the bombings saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers. For instance, in the letter to Adams, Blute and the other lawmakers wrote that, "There are 32 photographs of Japanese casualties during the war for the Pacific, but only 7 photographs of American casualties."

Blute said that he hoped that the correspondence would help lead to a balanced exhibit but that, "I'll believe it when I see it." Blute said that in the past veterans and historians who have been involved in attempts to get Air and Space Museum to significantly change the exhibit and make it more historically accurate but have been stonewalled by the museum officials. "I take this as a sign of good faith from the Smithsonian but we're going to remain vigilant on this until there is no question that the exhibit is fair and balanced," Blute stated. He continued, "The other concerned Members of Congress and I will be meeting with museum officials to get concrete commitments on changes. Until that happens, we won't be satisfied."

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**NOTE: Please call above contact to obtain a copy of the letter.

PÉTER BLUTE

20 DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND
TRANSPORTATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE
AND TECHNOLOGY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 29, 1994

CONTACT: ROBERT GRAY
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STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN PETER BLUTE (R-MA 03)
ON CHANGES TO ENOLA GAY EXHIBIT ANNOUNCED BY
NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

I am pleased that the Air and Space Museum has finally admitted publicly that this exhibit is unbalanced and biased. The fact that they have acted to change it somewhat is a step in the right direction. But even with the addition of a section on the Pacific War, the exhibition still needs to undergo a massive revision or rewrite.

Tidying up the front hallway doesn't erase the fact that the rest of the house is a mess. Along with the dozens of other interested Members of Congress, I plan to continue to keep up the pressure for a major overhaul of the exhibit.

The Smithsonian has promised us a revised exhibit script with significant changes on September 1, and I would strongly suggest to the museum that it include more than window dressing if they want to get Congress, veterans, and historians interested in a fair exhibit off their back.



CAPITOL COMMENT

U.S. SENATOR
KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON



Smithsonian Plans an Unworthy Exhibit

Texans would be taken aback to visit the Alamo and find an exhibit making its defenders out to be villains, their motives unworthy, their deeds vile.

Likewise, visitors to the Smithsonian Institution's Air and Space Museum would certainly be unpleasantly surprised to encounter an exhibit painting the United States and its allies as the aggressors in the Pacific Theater of World War II.

Yet that is precisely the kind of exhibit the museum is preparing. This exhibit, scheduled to open next May, is built around the "Enola Gay," the B-29 bomber that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Trouble is, Air and Space Museum curators have depicted the United States' participation in the war in a way few would recognize.

According to the interpretive material being prepared for this exhibit, "For most Americans, this was ... a war of vengeance. For most Japanese, it was a war to defend their unique culture against Western imperialism." No mention of Pearl Harbor, the Bataan Death March or Japan's devastation of Manchuria.

You are probably wondering why in the world the Smithsonian, repository of our nation's history and achievements, would choose to put on an exhibit which falsely portrays this nation as the aggressor in World War II, and our former enemies as innocent victims. The answer can be summed up in three words: Ban the Bomb.

Those who are organizing the exhibit are not concerned with the U.S. role in bringing an end to the war in the Pacific Theater. Instead, they want to persuade anyone who walks through the exhibit that the U.S. decision to use an atomic weapon to end the war was an act of barbarism. According to museum director Martin Harwit, "We just can't afford to make war a heroic event..." Nor, apparently, can we bring ourselves to acknowledge our heroes.

The truth behind the decision to use atomic weapons was this: The United States knew Japan was building up its homeland defenses and was preparing to fight to the last soldier. President Truman's decision to drop the bomb in the long run saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of American servicemen and millions of Japanese who would have perished in that battle to the death. Although the terrible destruction of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki demonstrated to the world the unimaginable catastrophe of nuclear war, no one has seriously questioned the wisdom of Truman's decision. Most Americans take for granted this nation's right to act in what it believes to be its own best interest.

The Air and Space Museum's plans have come under unfriendly fire, and museum officials are considering exhibit revisions. I think Congress, on behalf of the American people, and particularly those who served and sacrificed in the Second World War, should send the museum a clear signal. When Congress returns from Labor Day recess, I will offer a Sense of the Senate Resolution that expresses our intention that when the Enola Gay exhibit is unveiled next spring, it accurately depict both the difficulty and the necessity of the mission which its crew carried out. We owe those who fought and died to preserve freedom no less.