



ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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STATEMENT OF GENERAL JACK N. MERRITT, USA RET., PRESIDENT

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of this committee:

The Association of the United States Army (AUSA) is pleased to have the opportunity to submit a written statement on behalf of its 115,000 members giving voice to concerns about the Air and Space Museum's handling of the special Enola Gay exhibit.

AUSA has been associated with the Air Force Association and the American Legion's effort to get the Air and Space Museum to put forth an exhibit which demonstrated balance, put the Enola Gay in the proper context of the period, and included fairness when dealing with the decision of the political and military leaders of the time. We applaud the cancellation of the original exhibition and we are encouraged that the museum will now show a forward fuselage of the Enola Gay in a simpler, straightforward display. We hope the new exhibit will have the balance, context, and fairness that the brave Americans who participated in the events that the Enola Gay stands for truly deserve.

I want to applaud the Senate for its unanimous passage, on 23 September 1994, of the Senate Resolution which described the Enola Gay script as being "revisionist, unbalanced, and offensive". The American people who think of the Smithsonian Institution as its repository of America's history have a right to expect that displays and information provided will be balanced in context and accurate in content.

AUSA is in complete and unqualified support for the decisions of President Harry Truman and the direction and execution of the resulting missions by our military leaders. We offer no apology, no contrived justification for the two concluding acts that brought an end to the conflict. We believe that lives were saved, that greater and more populous areas of Japan were spared wartime carnage, and that the treasure of many nations was conserved by ending the drain of resources caused by combat operations.

We at AUSA, reflecting the convictions and sentiments of its World War II veterans, believe that only the shock promulgated among the Japanese people by the nuclear holocaust, could have caused their leaders to surrender precipitately. Conventional weapons, firestorms, and obscene casualty figures had not changed Japanese policy. We can speculate that a last-ditch sacrifice of the Japanese nation in a pattern with the Germany of Adolf Hitler was the promised alternative.

For these reasons, AUSA believes that the employment of atomic weapons at the termination of World War II was momentous and deserves special historical note by the Smithsonian. We believe that a factual presentation of what was done and the results achieved need not be qualified or embellished by what might have been or, in some views, should have been. We believe that President Truman, based upon what he knew at the moment, demonstrated the willingness to decide that is the mark of the great leaders of history.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy associated with the events that have surfaced with this exhibit is the perception given to the American people that another public institution cannot be trusted. We cannot stand by and allow anyone who would distort history to their own political agenda go unchallenged. The American people have a right to expect that any institution which receives tax payer dollars for support must be responsible enough to show accuracy and balance when writing about or demonstrating history.

On behalf of the Association of the United States Army, I thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on this important issue.

## APPENDIX III

## ENOLA GAY CHRONOLOGY 1993-1995

- AUGUST 20, 1993 The Air Force Association Executive Director discusses the planned exhibit with the Director of the Air & Space Museum. The Director of the Air & Space Museum sends the Air Force Association a copy of the first planning document for our review and suggestions.
- SEPTEMBER 10, 1993 The Air Force Association Executive Director expresses concerns over lack of balance to the Director of the Air & Space Museum.
- NOVEMBER 23, 1993 Air Force Association and Air & Space Museum officials meet to discuss the lack of balance in the exhibit. Museum officials counter that the exhibit is balanced.
- JANUARY 31, 1994 The Director of the Air & Space Museum forwards a copy of the first script to Air Force Association.
- FEBRUARY 8, 1994 The Editor of AIR FORCE Magazine interviews the Director of the Air & Space Museum for an article on the exhibit.
- MARCH 15, 1994 The Air Force Association releases the first special report on Script 1.
- MARCH 16, 1994 Air Force Association Press Release "Politically Correct Curating at the Air & Space Museum."
- MARCH 22, 1994 The Director of the Air & Space Museum submits a letter to the editor of AIR FORCE Magazine, which was accepted.
- APRIL 1, 1994 AIR FORCE Magazine feature article on the Enola Gay exhibit. "War Stories at the Air & Space," by John T. Correll, editor in chief.
- APRIL 1, 1994 AIR FORCE Magazine historical companion piece. "The Decision That Launched the Enola Gay," by John T. Correll, editor in chief.
- APRIL 15, 1994 Air Force Association directors meet with Congressional Committee.
- APRIL 16, 1994 The Director of the Air & Space Museum in an internal memo agrees with critics that the exhibit does lack balance.
- MAY 4, 1994 The American Legion adopts a resolution condemning the exhibit.