

Trabing

Santa Cruz Sentinel - aug 1981

MY FIRST REACTION to the Libyan - U.S. dogfight Wednesday, was: Why in God's name is the U.S. Navy playing war in the highly sensitive Gulf of Sidra, when it had the whole Mediterranean Sea in which to practice?

Why go halfway around the world to provoke a dangerous fight?

Our government has been telling us that it is spending our billions in tax money to promote peace.

We did challenge Libya.

Two admissions to back this: Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger "told cheering VFW delegates that if we had accepted the totally unfounded and illegal Libyan claims over the vast stretches of the Mediterranean, we would have tolerated the undermining of the freedom of the seas."

We have the United Nations and other international law bodies working out such problems.

Sen. J. Bennett Johnston, D-La., was quoted thusly: "Frankly, I think we sent a fleet in there to provoke an incident and provoke an incident we did. And, we, in effect, won. I think this is very proper."

We should be thankful that Louisiana and not California has such a boob in the U.S. Senate.

* * *

This strategic blunder will be argued in barber chairs for some time to come.

However, the more serious aspect of this affair is the question: Why awaken the president?

The president of the United States was not awakened until six hours after the conflict.

In fact, we now learn that he hadn't retired for the night when the fight was occurring.

Larry Speaks, deputy White House press man, said top Reagan aides decided not to disturb him because "there was no need for any presidential decisions."

This is a frightening statement. A mini war took place for a couple of minutes. In a matter of a few more minutes it could have escalated.

Wally Trabing's Mostly about People



Why Awaken The President?

Minutes are involved in the missile age wars.

A conflict can be stopped in minutes. A war killing millions can be over in a matter of hours.

A response from a president, groggy from sleep, when a situation is suddenly out of control, is not in the best interest of we the people.

The president is the commander-in-chief of the armed services.

He is the man around whom a democratic nation will rally in time of crisis.

As a voter, I do not want an Alexander Haig or a Weinberger notified before the president.

* * *

I doubt if there was an evil, premeditated plan to keep this incident quiet for six hours, but it has raised an issue of concern.

We are constantly reading of nations where powerful inner-government groups take power behind backs of leaders, and governments fall.

I have been uneasy since Haig proclaimed that he was in charge after the president was shot.

The long stability of this nation is based on constitutional rules which keep the armed forces under the president's thumb.

He may have competent people under him who can handle "minute decisions" such as an air war, but I voted for a commander-in-chief to quarterback such games. While I sleep, I want him awake.

MGR

ASST. MGR.

YIELD CWT:

/LB:

LB

LET

AC