

As you return to the private practice of law, you can look back with well earned pride and satisfaction on the service you have rendered, not simply to me, and to our Nation, but to the very institution of the Presidency.

I know that I will be able to seek your counsel and call upon you in the future. But for now, you leave the White House with the abiding affection and respect of Nancy and me, and with our very best wishes for you, Maria, and your children Adam and Alexandra.

With warm friendship and personal regards, and again my sincerest thanks.

Sincerely,

/S/RONALD REAGAN

Dear Mr. President:

As I told you, one of the most difficult decisions I ever made was to tender you my resignation as Counsel to the President.

It was difficult because you have entrusted me with challenges of great dimension

and variety, and provided to me the confidences and had the confidence in me to do the tasks.

It was difficult because you permitted me to share in the exciting adventure of your Administration, which I believe will be regarded as a period of true fulfillment of the American spirit.

It was difficult because of the high regard and deep affection I have for you and the First Lady and the appreciation I have for the friendship and support you both have extended to me.

Mr. President, thank you for the honor you bestowed upon me and for providing me for the past five years with one of the most professionally and personally rewarding experiences of my life.

With deepest respect and very best personal wishes, I am,

Sincerely,

/S/FRED

Note: The originals were not available for verification of the content of these letters.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate on the Gulf of Sidra Incident March 26, 1986

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On March 23, United States forces in the Eastern Mediterranean began a peaceful exercise as part of a global Freedom of Navigation program by which the United States preserves its rights to use international waters and air space. This exercise is being conducted entirely in and over areas of the high seas, in accordance with international law and following aviation safety notification procedures.

On March 24, our forces were attacked by Libya. In response, U.S. forces took limited measures of self-defense necessary to protect themselves from continued attack. In accordance with my desire that the Congress be informed on this matter, I am providing this report on the actions taken by United States Armed Forces during this in-

cident.

Shortly before 8:00 a.m. (EST) on March 24, two SA-5 surface-to-air missiles were fired at U.S. aircraft flying over the high seas in the Gulf of Sidra from a Libyan missile installation in the vicinity of Sirte on the northern Libyan coast. During the course of the next few hours, several surface-to-air missiles were fired at U.S. aircraft operating over the high seas. At approximately 3:00 p.m. (EST) these missile installations again activated their target-acquisition radars with the evident objective of firing upon U.S. aircraft. Two HARM air-to-surface missiles were thereupon fired by a U.S. Navy A-7 aircraft, apparently resulting in the destruction of the radars controlling the missile battery. After a short outage, the radar returned to active status and still

posed a threat to U.S. forces. At 6:47 p.m., A-7 aircraft again fired two HARM missiles at the SA-5 radar at Sirte. After another short outage, the radar has returned to active status.

Meanwhile, a Libyan missile patrol boat equipped with surface-to-surface missiles came within missile range of U.S. ships on the high seas well away from the Libyan coast. The U.S. commander determined, in light of the Libyan attacks on U.S. aircraft, that this vessel was hostile and therefore ordered U.S. aircraft to engage it. At approximately 2:00 p.m. (EST), U.S. Navy A-6 aircraft fired two Harpoon missiles, which struck and heavily damaged the Libyan vessel. At approximately 4:30 p.m. (EST), a second Libyan patrol boat approached U.S. forces, and was driven off by U.S. Navy aircraft. Shortly after 6:00 p.m. (EST), a third Libyan patrol craft approached the USS YORKTOWN at a high rate of speed; the YORKTOWN fired two Harpoon missiles, which hit the Libyan craft.

Shortly after 12:20 a.m. (EST) on March 25, U.S. Navy A-6 aircraft armed with Harpoon missiles attacked another Libyan craft, apparently resulting in the sinking of that vessel.

Remarks by Telephone to Vice Admiral Frank B. Kelso II, Commander of the United States 6th Fleet

March 27, 1986

I would like to read to you the following message which I am having sent to the ships and sailors of the 6th Fleet:

During the past 5 days, the 6th Fleet has once again served as the spear and shield of American policy in a troubled and volatile region. The fundamental principle of freedom of the seas—so important to the economy and security of the free world—has been upheld in the face of a reckless and illegal Libyan attack. Your quick response and the bravery and professionalism displayed throughout this operation were an inspiration for all of us. I am particularly pleased that you did not suffer any losses. You have sent a message to the whole world that the United States has the will

All U.S. aircraft returned safely to their carriers, and no casualties or damage were suffered by U.S. forces. The extent of Libyan casualties is not known.

U.S. forces will continue with their current exercises. We will not be deterred by Libyan attacks or threats from exercising our rights on and over the high seas under international law. If Libyan attacks do not cease, we will continue to take the measures necessary in the exercise of our right of self-defense to protect our forces.

The deployment of these United States Armed Forces and the measures taken by them in self-defense during this incident were undertaken pursuant to my authority under the Constitution, including my authority as Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Armed Forces.

Sincerely,

RONALD REAGAN

Note: Identical letters were sent to Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate. They were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 27.

and, through you, the ability to defend the free world's interests. Your determination and tireless response to Libyan threats make this world a safer place.

I am extremely proud to be the Commander in Chief of such professionals. Your courage, sacrifice, and dedication on the frontlines of freedom are recognized and appreciated by all your countrymen. On behalf of all Americans, I say: Well done. Thank you, and we're proud of you. Good luck and Godspeed.

Note: The President spoke with Vice Admiral Kelso on the task force flagship, the U.S.S. "Coronado," which was on duty in the Mediterranean.