

January 16, 2001

The Honorable Lincoln Chafee  
United States Senator  
10 Dorrance Street #221  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Senator Chafee,

Ten years ago today Navy pilot Scott Speicher was shot down over Iraq, the very first American casualty of the Gulf War. LCDR Speicher, lost in the first airstrike against Baghdad, flew off the USS Saratoga. We are working with the USS Saratoga Association to ensure that all possible avenues are pursued to determine this Saratoga veteran's fate, and we now ask for your help.

As you may be aware, Senator Bob Smith of New Hampshire and Senator Rod Grams of Minnesota wrote to the Secretary of the Navy in March of 1999 requesting LCDR Speicher's 1991 "finding of death" determination be set aside in view of additional evidence that suggested he had successfully ejected and landed in Iraq alive.

The Senators also wrote to President Clinton, requesting the administration to pressure Iraq to provide a full accounting of the circumstances surrounding Speicher's disappearance.

Copies of both these letters are attached.

We are encouraged by last week's decision by the Secretary of the Navy to change Speicher's status from "Killed in Action" to "Missing in Action". (I am also enclosing the complete AP and Reuters dispatches concerning this change in status.)

According to the Associated Press, Pentagon officials said Secretary Danzig acted because of substantial evidence that Speicher may not have died in the crash. "It's substantial in nature, in the totality," one official reportedly said.

In a letter dated Dec. 18, 2000 National Security Adviser Sandy Berger told Senator Smith that a recent intelligence assessment "has stimulated a high-level review of this case - several new actions are under way and additional steps are under intense review."

We also understand the State Department sent a new diplomatic note to Baghdad demanding that the Iraqi government tell all it knows about Speicher's fate.

We ask your help to ensure this review is vigorously pursued under the new administration, and is not caught up in any unnecessary bureaucratic delays.

Sincerely,

Frank Lennon  
President