



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

18 Mar 04

Dear Senator Jeffords,

I write to express my strong support for United States accession to the Law of the Sea Convention. It has been the consistent, longstanding position of the Navy that accession to the Convention will benefit the United States by advancing our national security interests and ensuring continued U.S. leadership in the development and interpretation of the law of the sea.

The Law of the Sea Convention helps assure access to the largest maneuver space on the planet - the sea - under authority of widely recognized and accepted law and not the threat of force. The Convention protects military mobility by codifying favorable transit rights that support our ability to operate around the globe, anytime, anywhere, allowing the Navy to project power where and when needed. The Convention also provides important safeguards for protecting the marine environment while preserving operational freedoms.

Although the Convention was drafted over 20 years ago, the Convention supports U.S. efforts in the war on terrorism by providing important stability and codifying navigational and overflight freedoms, while leaving unaffected intelligence collection activities. Future threats will likely emerge in places and in ways that are not yet known. For these and other as yet unknown operational challenges, we must be able to take maximum advantage of the established navigational rights codified in the Law of the Sea Convention to get us to the fight rapidly. The diversity of challenges to our national security combined with a more dynamic force structure makes strategic mobility more important than ever. The oceans are fundamental to that maneuverability and, by joining the Convention, we further ensure the freedom to get to the fight, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, without a permission slip.

I appreciate your continued strong support of the Law of the Sea Convention and the Navy.

Sincerely,

VERN CLARK

Admiral, U.S. Navy

The Honorable James M. Jeffords
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510