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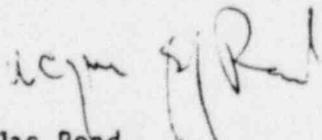
MEMORANDUM FOR: Richard Black, Attorney, OELD
THRU: Hans Schierling, Acting Section Leader, AAB, DSE
FROM: Jac Read, AAB, DSE
SUBJECT: RECENT A6 ACCIDENT

The Seattle Times article of February 12, 1980, is substantially correct, with only minor misleading points. The quote "the accident reports are classified," for example, is not quite true. The loss of a multi-million dollar item is investigated to fix blame, and just as in civilian accidents the detailed reports are not released during this long process. The status of aircraft losses and acquisition are reported in the aviation trade literature, and I was generally aware of the A6 crashes prior to reading the article.

The occurrence of strings of A6 losses is not unusual. From December 1969, through March 1970, for example, six A6's were lost. Carrier launch and recovery is several hundred times more hazardous than land-based operation, and the deployment of aircraft from U. S. training bases to combat readiness at sea greatly affects their loss rate. Both the current, 1979-80, and the 1969-70 series of crashes noted above were dominated by carrier-based losses.

As noted in our recent telephone conversation, the A6 is the only U. S. war plane which has the range to reach Tehran from a deep-water carrier launch. Since November of 1979 the proportion of A6's deployed to the fleet has undoubtedly increased. This is the most obvious explanation of the recent A6 crashes, and does not, in my opinion, increase the risk of aircraft crash at the Skagit site.

The crash of October 10, 1978, on the Olympic Peninsula, which is listed in the Seattle Times article, is not classified as an in-flight accident by the Naval Safety Center, and hence is not a low-level training route accident.


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