

# DefenseNews

November 3, 2003

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## Commentary

CROSSROADS OF THE DEFENSE DEBATE

### EDITORIAL

#### JOURNALISTIC INTEGRITY

## Full Disclosure

In March, *Defense News* published a commentary by Adm. Archie Clemens, former commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. In it, he advocated a U.S. Air Force plan to lease 100 planes from Boeing Co., which would modify the 767s for the Air Force's aerial refueling mission. That a Navy man would back an Air Force program is what made it intriguing.

What we didn't know at the time was that Clemens did not write the piece. Nor did he think on his own to write it. Nor, for that matter, did he even think to send it to *Navy Times*, a sister publication, without prompting.

In truth, a Boeing representative came up with the idea, asked Clemens to write it, and provided a writer to help him get the job done. Boeing also suggested where he ought to send it and provided him the e-mail address.

Clemens says he was not paid for the article and stands by what it says. We believe that.

But he acknowledges that prior to writing the article, he had done some paid consulting work for Boeing, and that he has since

developed a more formal consulting arrangement with the company. He said he made no effort to "pull the wool over anyone's eyes."

In publishing the piece, regardless of who actually wrote it, we provided a forum for the free flow of ideas. That is the purpose of our Commentary pages.

But we failed to do some things we should have done. We should have asked Clemens if he had a financial relationship with the program or the contractor. We should have asked if he had, in fact, written the article himself. And we should have weighed his answers in our thinking, because that information is essential to the context of his article.

Had we known those things, we might still have published his opinion. But we would have included the other writer's name and noted Clemens' relationship with Boeing among his credentials at the end of the article. As it was, we merely noted that he was the former commander of the Pacific Fleet — true, but not the whole story.

Full disclosure is what we're after. Here, we fell short. We will work hard to ensure this doesn't happen again.