



CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HONORABLE STROM THURMOND; CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE  
ON ARMED SERVICES  
HONORABLE TRENT LOTT; SENATE MAJORITY LEADER  
HONORABLE JESSE HELMS; CHAIRMAN, FOREIGN  
RELATIONS

Subj: LAW OF THE SEA

On February 5, 1998, Secretary of the Navy John Dalton testified before the Senate Armed Services that one of the Navy's top three legislative priorities for this year is Senate Ratification of the Law of the Sea (LOS) Convention. As former Chiefs of Naval Operations, we want to underscore Secretary Dalton's request that the Senate act promptly to ratify the Law of the Sea Treaty.

For over three decades the Navy has advocated that the United States push for a multilateral legal and management system which codifies and respects the myriad of commercial, resource, and national security interests which we have in the oceans. When President Reagan decided in 1982 that the United States would not sign the 1982 LOS Convention because of deep seabed mining flaws, he reiterated that United States was committed to a multilateral ocean's regime and the rest of the Convention protected our commercial and national security interests. The Convention was subsequently modified to satisfy our concerns. The modified 1982 Law of the Sea Convention has entered into force and virtually all of our allies and trading partners are now Party. The time is now right for the U.S. to join.

There are no downsides to this treaty -- it contains expansive terms, which we use to maintain forward presence and preserve U.S. maritime superiority. It also has vitally important provisions, which guard against the dilution of our navigational freedoms and prevent the growth of new forms of excessive maritime claims. We can ill afford to conduct our foreign policy in the ocean's arena through proxies. It is therefore important that we act now to ratify the Convention to solidify our position of leadership in oceans matters and ensure that our interests are well represented in the organs which will implement the LOS Treaty.

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Ratification is a win for the Navy and the nation as a whole.

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