Honorable Albert Thomas
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Dear Congressman Thomas:

During the last war the Port of Houston was not designated as a Port of Embarkation for the Gulf Coast, all of this being concentrated at the Port of New Orleans. The result was a severe blow to this community.

In view of the Korean situation, it is believed that steps should be taken now to see that the Port of Houston is designated as a Port of Embarkation in case of a major war.

Last March the Department of Army sent a survey group of transportation officers, who inspected the waterfront facilities and freight handling equipment available at both the public and private terminals of the Port of Houston. This group was furnished a copy of the enclosed mimeographed study dated March 17, 1950, which outlines our valuable port facilities and equipment. Indirectly we have heard that the Department of the Army is again considering only the Port of New Orleans as the Port of Embarkation for the Gulf Coast.

There are many reasons why the Port of Houston should also be designated a Port of Embarkation. Some of these are as follows:

(1) For all the territory west of the Mississippi River there will usually be a definite economy to the Government shipping through the Port of Houston rather than the Port of New Orleans due to the shorter rail haul involved. With expected congestion on our railroads, this is an important factor.

(2) Cargo handling facilities, wharves, and labor are at least as good at Houston as at the Port of New Orleans.

(3) Due to the danger of atomic attack, it is definitely to the advantage of the Government to have at least two Ports of Embarkation on the Gulf Coast so that at least one would be available should the other be knocked out by an atomic attack.
(4) During World War II one reason given for not using the Port of Houston was lack of defense on the Gulf from submarine attack. This reason can certainly not apply in case of a new major war because the industrial growth on the Houston Ship Channel is so important that no enemy submarines can be allowed close enough to the Houston Ship Channel to fire guided missiles on this vital oil and chemical area. In other words, the Houston Ship Channel will have to be protected in case of a major war and can be protected just as easily as the Port of New Orleans.

At a joint meeting with the Chamber of Commerce today, it was emphasized that designating the Port of Houston as a second Port of Embarkation for the Gulf Coast was not merely to keep up the port revenues of the Port of Houston, but primarily was a matter of national defense to have two Ports of Embarkation on the Gulf Coast. The slight increase in cost to the Federal Government in maintaining two headquarters for Ports of Embarkation will be far outweighed by the advantages of shorter rail haul and lack of congestion which would occur if only one port were utilized, aside from the all-important factor of having an alternate port in case one of the ports was neutralized by an atomic attack.

The Port Commission would very much like to have your views as to the best method of presenting this problem to the Department of Defense. It is doubtful that any direct contact with the Department of Army's Transportation Chief would obtain any definite results, as it is well known that that office is "sold" on only one Port of Embarkation for the Gulf, namely at New Orleans.

Please let us have your views on this important matter.

With kind personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours

Chairman
Harris County Houston Ship Channel Navigation District