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LETTER DATED 19 AUGUST 1981 FROM THE ACTING REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, I wish, on behalf of my Government, to report that United States aircraft participating in a routine peaceful naval exercise in international waters in the Mediterranean sea were subject to an unprovoked attack by Libyan aircraft. The attack took place at 0520 GMT on 19 August 1981. Acting in self-defence, American aircraft returned fire, and two Libyan aircraft were shot down.

The United States Government today transmitted the following protest to the Government of Libya:

"The United States Government protests to the Government of Libya the unprovoked attack against American naval aircraft operating in international airspace approximately 60 miles from the coast of Libya. The attack occurred at 0520 GMT on 19 August 1981. The American aircraft were participating in a routine naval exercise by United States Navy Forces in international waters. In accordance with standard international practice, this exercise had been announced on August 12 and 14 through notices to airmen and to mariners. Prior notification of air operations within the Tripoli FIR had also been given. In accordance with these notifications, the exercise which began on 18 August will conclude at 1700 GMT 19 August.

"The Government of the United States views this unprovoked attack with grave concern. Any further attacks against United States Forces operating in international water and airspace will also be resisted with force if necessary."

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In view of the gravity of Libya's action, and the threat it poses to the maintenance of international peace and security, I ask that you circulate the text of this letter as a document of the Security Council.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Charles M. LICHENSTEIN
Acting Representative
to the United Nations
