May 28, 1954

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Discussion at the 199th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, May 27, 1954

Present at the 199th meeting of the Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; the Acting Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Attorney General (for Items 1 through 6); the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (for Items 5 and 8); Assistants Attorney General Barnes and Rankin; Mr. Herbert Hoover, Jr., Department of State (for Item 2); the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; Mr. Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; the Deputy Assistant to the President; Mr. Robert Amory, Jr., Central Intelligence Agency; the White House Staff Secretary; Mr. Bryce Harlow, Administrative Assistant to the President; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the chief points taken.

1. SAUDI ARABIAN-BRITISH TERRITORIAL DISPUTE OVER BURAIMI OASIS

Mr. Allen Dulles pointed out how far back the dispute over the boundaries between the sheikdoms and Saudi Arabia went. The dispute had now become acute because of the discovery of oil in the area in sufficient quantities to be commercially profitable. The sheikdoms remained under British influence, and the Saudi Arabians have now turned to Aramco and insisted that it send in teams to prospect and drill in the disputed area, where British teams have already begun their operations. Anxious to avoid a squeeze, the American oil companies have appealed to the State Department to forbid their teams from going into the disputed area. This was substantially the way things now stood.

Secretary Dulles inquired whether it was not a fact that the pending arbitration proceedings for settling the territorial dispute would proceed to a conclusion if the British would agree to suspend well drilling in the disputed area. It is because the British will not stop their own drilling that the Saudis insist that Aramco

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8. PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL MORATORIUM ON FUTURE TESTS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS
(Memos for NSC from Executive Secretary, same subject, dated May 17, 25 and 26, 1954; NSC Action No. 1106-h; NSC 112)

Mr. Cutler reminded the Council that the Secretary of State, as chairman of a committee, would report on the question of United States agreement to a moratorium on further tests of nuclear weapons. He pointed out that the Council had before it three reports on the subject; one from the Department of Defense opposing U. S. agreement to the moratorium, one from CIA, and one from the Federal Civil Defense Administration. No written report had come from the Department of State, but Secretary Dulles had some remarks to make on the subject.

Secretary Dulles said that he and his committee had been studying this problem intensively over the last two weeks. He had talked as recently as yesterday with Admiral Strauss, and as a result of these conversations, three or four significant questions had been posed. The subject needed further study before the committee could present its recommendations to the National Security Council. One of the problems which had particularly concerned him, said Secretary Dulles, is how the United States could secure the propaganda advantage it sought from accepting a moratorium without at the same time setting the lower limit to the moratorium at weapons of 100 KT yield. He said that hitherto we had assumed that we would continue to be free to test weapons of this or lower yield, but if we propose the 100 KT as the lower limit, the Soviets might well come back with a proposal to ban tests of all weapons yielding more than 50 KT. In the process of bargaining they might even try to get an absolute ban, since there was no clear criterion which we could invoke. Accordingly, the more he studied the problem the more clearly he perceived that the propaganda ball might well be stolen from the U. S. by the USSR.

The second important question stemmed from the fact that we do not have very accurate methods of measuring the size of nuclear explosions in the Soviet Union. This would make it extremely difficult to police a moratorium and to assure ourselves that the Soviets were not evading their commitments. Nevertheless, the proposal for a moratorium was now before the UN, and while we have asked that the subject be deferred, we will presently have to decide whether to reject this proposal flatly or to offer some sort of counter-proposal. Secretary Dulles concluded his statement with a promise to put the varying opinions together and to present a comprehensive report at next week's Council meeting.

Turning to Admiral Strauss, the President inquired as to the degree of accuracy on the size of Soviet explosions which the AEC obtained after it had put together all the results of its investigations. Admiral Strauss replied that there was always a considerable difference of opinion and of debate after the Russians had tested one

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of their nuclear weapons. It sometimes took as long as a year to achieve final agreement as to the yield of the weapon.

Secretary Dulles inquired whether it wasn't a fact that the estimate of the yield of a weapon consisted of a composite of a number of estimates which varied greatly among themselves. Admiral Strauss replied that the divergence was not quite as wide as Secretary Dulles suggested, but there were certainly differences as great as 10% in the initial stages of an appraisal of the magnitude of any given explosion.

Mr. Allen Dulles pointed out in this connection that Lord Cherwell had stated that the British initially estimated the yield of the first Soviet thermonuclear explosion at approximately 50% more than the United States had estimated the yield. He understood that since then the British estimate had been revised downward.

The President expressed the desirability of thorough study by the United States of the British calculations as to the character of each Soviet weapon test. Admiral Strauss said he thought that the British were very much less thorough than we were in efforts to appraise these tests. He was not inclined to place high value on the British calculations.

The President then inquired what would be the largest size weapon the Soviets could set off without our knowing about it. Admiral Strauss replied that we would know of any explosion which yielded more than 10 KT equivalent, unless the Soviets took the most extraordinary precautions to prevent us from learning about a test. He pointed out, however, that the Soviets were due for a new series of weapons tests this summer. Accordingly, it behooved us to reach a decision soon if we proposed to gain any advantage from agreeing to a moratorium on further tests.

The President reiterated the view he had expressed at previous meetings of the Council, that he could perceive no final answer to the problem of nuclear warfare if both sides simply went ahead making bigger and better nuclear weapons. While, of course, he did not want the Soviets to gain a lead on us in this field, it was nevertheless a matter of despair to look ahead to a future which contained nothing but more and more bombs. He therefore believed it wrong for the United States merely to take a negative view of this terrible problem. We must try to find some positive answer, and to do so would require more imaginative thinking than was going on at present in this Government. Soon, said the President, even little countries will have a stockpile of these bombs, and then we <u>will</u> be in a mess.

Admiral Strauss observed that it would be quite a long time before the little countries were in a position to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Secretary Humphrey stated that he simply couldn't see how this country could jeopardize the one great advantage that it now possesses over the Soviet Union. To him it was unthinkable that we should take any measures to retard our progress in this field. We must keep all the edge we now have.

The President said he could understand Secretary Humphrey's view, but what was the long-run answer to this problem? Secretary Humphrey then asked the President whether he really believed that the Soviets would honor a promise to stop conducting weapons tests. The President replied that the minute we learned that the Soviets had not stopped testing these weapons, we would ourselves start our own tests again.

Admiral Radford pointed out that, unhappily, we were in the awkward position of being unable to explain to our friends and allies why we felt it necessary to go on testing these weapons.

Admiral Strauss then turned to the President and expressed the hope that he would let him show the President charts indicating the results of prior tests of nuclear weapons, before the President made a decision to accept a moratorium.

The President said that of course he had no intention of making any impulsive decision on so grave a matter, but he did insist that we were now pursuing a course which had no future for us. All we are doing now is to make more certain our capability to destroy.

The Attorney General expressed serious concern as to the effect on our own people of accepting a cessation of nuclear tests. This country had taken the development of atomic weapons more calmly than the peoples of other nations, and Americans would react adversely, he believed, to any decision to discontinue tests of nuclear weapons.

Dr. Flemming said he felt, with the President, that somehow or other we must develop something that would give hope to our people. Otherwise, we would produce an atmosphere of despair, and people would feel that there was no use in trying to defend themselves against atomic warfare. Such despair would have very bad effects on the whole mobilization program and on the program for civil defense.

Governor Stassen suggested that the answer to this problem might lie in an approach consisting of alternatives which the United States could offer to the Soviet Union. Force was obviously one of these alternatives. But if the Soviets could be induced to move toward peaceful courses of action, we had other alternatives--for example, increased trade--with which to respond. If, however, the

Soviets get to feel that the United States was weakening in its determination to maintain the alternative of force, Governor Stassen warned that they would surely take advantage of this evidence of weakness.

The National Security Council:

a. Discussed the subject on the basis of oral remarks of the Secretary of State and the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission.

b. Deferred action on the subject until the next meeting of the Council, at which time the report called for by NSC Action No. 1106-b will be presented and will be considered together with the reference memoranda.

9. MOBILIZATION PLANNING
(NSC Actions Nos. 1004-d and 1086-a; NSC 5414/1)

Mr. Cutler pointed out the three alternative concepts of mobilization planning which had been discussed in the NSC Planning Board. Since these discussions had concluded, Dr. Flemming had prepared a new paper, which he had talked over earlier this morning with Acting Secretary Anderson, Admiral Radford and Mr. Cutler. This paper had been shown to the President just prior to the meeting, and he had thought well of it. Mr. Cutler then asked Dr. Flemming to describe this paper.

Dr. Flemming read his paper to the Council, and pointed out in conclusion that he believed it met the situation. (Copy of this paper is attached.)

Secretary Anderson said that he had nothing to add to Dr. Flemming's statement except to point out that he shared Dr. Flemming's feeling that if we got into one of the situations described, we would want the power and authority to move ahead in mobilizing just as rapidly as the circumstances dictated.

The President said that of course what we wanted was to be absolutely ready with our mobilization measures. On the other hand, we did not want to do anything that would scare people in advance. Accordingly, Dr Flemming's solution seemed to provide the most satisfactory answer.

The President said that plans must be made in advance so that the economy would not go wild at the first signs of an international crisis. Secretary Humphrey expressed his emphatic agreement, and pointed out that even such newspaper talk as was now current, regarding the possibility of U. S. intervention in the Indochina war, was producing strong demands that the United States