

October 7, 1955

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Discussion at the 260th Meeting
of the National Security Council,
Thursday, October 6, 1955

Present at the 260th Council meeting were the Vice President of the United States, presiding; the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Attorney General; the Acting Director, Bureau of the Budget; Mr. Harold E. Stassen, Special Assistant to the President; the Federal Civil Defense Administrator; the Director, U.S. Information Agency; the Deputy Secretary of Defense; Mr. Robert Bowie, Assistant Secretary of State; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; Mr. Dillon Anderson, Special Assistant to the President; Brig. General Theodore W. Parker for Mr. Nelson Rockefeller, Special Assistant to the President; the Assistant to the President; the Deputy Assistant to the President; the White House Staff Secretary; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

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

The Vice President explained that before the Council considered the items of business scheduled on the agenda, Governor Adams, who had just returned from Denver, would make a brief report on the state of the President's health and on plans for future interviews by Government officials with the President.

Governor Adams moved up to the council table and said that the President had had two exceptionally restful nights and when he had awakened this morning he seemed to Governor Adams to be as bright and as cheerful as he had ever been. Indeed, the President actually looked better now than he had during most of the trying months since he had assumed office. It had been an inspiration to Governor Adams to talk with the President.

Looking ahead, continued Governor Adams, we can foresee a reasonable expectancy, with some limitations, that the President will be completely well. The President himself thinks he will be and had expressed the hope that Governor Adams would

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E.O. 12356, SEC. 3.4(b)	
Agency Case	NSC F99-389
NLE Case	87-72*2
By	716 NLE Date 2/7/90

The National Security Council:

- a. Noted and concurred in actions which the Secretary of State proposed to take in the existing situation with reference to the current U.S. attitude toward provision of military assistance to Saudi Arabia; Iran's adherence to the Baghdad Pact; and relations between Iraq and Syria.
- b. Discussed the current situation in the Middle East in the light of a report by the Secretary of State, in which he observed that recent developments in the area may have made portions of existing U.S. policy invalid and subject to urgent review.
- c. Directed the NSC Planning Board to undertake an urgent review of the policy on the Near East contained in NSC 5428, with particular reference to U.S. courses of action in the contingency of hostilities between Israel and the Arab States.

3. STUDY OF THE HUMAN EFFECTS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT
(NSC Action No. 1430-p; Memo for NSC from Executive Secretary, same subject, dated September 26, 1955)

Mr. Dillon Anderson briefed the National Security Council on the proposed directive setting up the reference study. In the course of this briefing, he read paragraph 1 of the directive, which he pointed out, the President has explicitly stated contained the elements of the study which he desired.

At the conclusion of Mr. Anderson's briefing, Admiral Radford stated that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had not commented in writing on this proposed study but that they had nevertheless discussed the matter and wished him to express their great concern, not with the idea of the study itself, but with the methods proposed to accomplish the study. Admiral Radford said that two areas were of particular concern to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. First, the security aspects. Admiral Radford pointed out that while information was to be provided to those who made the study on the familiar "need to know" basis, it was always very difficult to apply the "need to know" principle to groups of individuals from outside the Government. He feared, therefore, that certain areas of our war plans and certain details of our weapons technology would inevitably leak out and become public information. He pointed out that important aspects of the Killian Committee's Report to the National Security Council have already been the subject of a newspaper column despite the fact that the contents of the Killian Committee Report had been very closely held. The proposed new study could, if it got similar publicity, become a matter of great public controversy.

The second point which had concerned the Joint Chiefs of Staff, continued Admiral Radford, was the fact that an increasing number of outside groups were studying various aspects of our defense programs. A number of these outside groups was already proving a very heavy burden on the senior people in the staffs of the Department of Defense and of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Furthermore, the work of these outside groups often duplicated work being done within the Department of Defense itself. The present case was a possible example. One of the agencies of the Department of Defense, namely, the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group (W.S.E.G.) is not only capable itself of making just such a study as the President has called for, it is actually engaged at the present time in a study which covers part of the area called for by the proposed directive; that is, it was engaged in a study of the political, psychological, and economic defense of the fall-out from nuclear weapons. Finally, the W.S.E.G. study was in part being done by a group of outside civilian consultants. After reading a memorandum on this subject sent to him by General Anderson, head of the W.S.E.G., Admiral Radford expressed the opinion that the present project being carried on under the auspices of the W.S.E.G. could easily be expanded from its present terms of reference to cover the larger aspects of the human effects of nuclear weapons development which the President wished to have studied.

The Vice President commented that Admiral Radford's statement seemed to be raising a basic question. Secretary Humphrey wondered, in view of the fact that this study was the President's own idea, if Council action on it could not wait until we had an opportunity to talk with the President about it. He pointed out that this would not interfere with continued progress on the study being carried out in the Defense Department under the auspices of the W.S.E.G.

The Vice President then called for Mr. Anderson's opinion respecting this problem. Mr. Anderson replied that while he was not in a position to offer an opinion, he could provide a report. On several occasions the President had reiterated to Mr. Anderson that the contemplated study of the human effects of nuclear weapons development should be done and done by a group completely outside of the Government. After such a study and estimate came in, it was the President's idea that Government officials and the National Security Council Planning Board should review the conclusions of the civilian study and prepare appropriate recommendations.

The Vice President again commented that this presented a very difficult problem. The original idea was the President's own. The President obviously wanted to get going on the study; yet, the National Security Council was in a way unique in that virtually all its decisions are unanimous and that it did not appear that a unanimous decision was likely on this particular problem.

Admiral Radford observed that he had not actually been present at the earlier Council meeting at which the President had made known his desire for a study such as the one being discussed. Admiral Radford said that had he been present, he would certainly have taken up the issue directly with the President when he saw him last in Denver on September 9.

Secretary Wilson asked why the Council could not postpone a decision on this matter. The points made by Admiral Radford were disturbing him a little. The conclusions of the study might prove to be very pessimistic with respect to public attitudes toward nuclear war. This would worry everyone, more particularly since we might not be in a position to explain clearly how we propose to deal with the situation foreseen by the study group. With respect to the point of the President's desire that this study be made by outsiders, Admiral Radford predicted that the W.S.E.G. would probably use very much the same group of consultants, headed by Max Millikan, which would be selected to do the job if the present directive were adopted. In other words, a large part of the W.S.E.G. study would be done by people outside the Department of Defense.

Governor Peterson stated his emphatic belief that the study called for by the President should be made, although he said he agreed with Secretary Wilson's proposal for postponing Council action. He pointed out how many non-military implications such a study was bound to have and how much broader it was than the military field. Nevertheless, the study could be held up for 30 or for 60 days if the President agreed. Civil Defense had a very strong stake in this matter and he desired to have an opportunity to be heard again when this problem was once more up for consideration.

Governor Stassen agreed with Governor Peterson on the variety of interests and aspects involved in the study and therefore said that he did not see how the study could be conducted within the Department of Defense alone. The State Department had a great stake in the study and Governor Stassen believed that the study was useful and desirable even if it should cause certain problems. He was willing to agree, however, on the need for more time and he also wished to stress the security aspects and to emphasize that clearances for the people who worked on this study should be strictly maintained in the Government's own hands. He therefore urged a revision of the language of Paragraph 3.

Governor Peterson pointed out that whether or not the study proposed by the President was undertaken, there was certain

to be much discussion outside the Government on the general problem of the effects on human beings of nuclear weapons development in the coming years.

Mr. Anderson stated his belief that the President feels that he has directed that such a study should be made, that he has explicitly approved the terms of reference and that only the mechanics remain to be decided. He said that the Planning Board could redraft on the matter of mechanics but he otherwise supposed that the Council would approve the proposed directive as revised.

Secretary Humphrey said that if the directive contemplates that the study should be done by an outside group, the study could not be gotten underway until the members of the outside group are selected and nominated. Was it in the province of the President to do this? The Vice President asked if we could hear from the Secretary of State.

Secretary Dulles stated that he was inclined to defer action on the proposed directive at the present meeting although the Council might agree to create a mechanism to select a list of individuals to be recommended to the President for carrying out the study. This would avoid postponing everything until the President came back. Secretary Dulles also expressed doubt as to the need to give those who undertook the study detailed inside knowledge either of war plans or of weapons developments. After all, as the directive now specified, those who made the study were supposed to make it on the basis of knowledge of nuclear weapons development generally in the hands of the public. Such general knowledge would be all that the study group would require.

The remainder of the discussion consisted in agreement on the form of Council action and on the agencies who were to participate in selecting a panel of students to undertake the proposed study.

The National Security Council:

- a. Discussed the proposed directive on the subject, prepared by the NSC Planning Board pursuant to the President's request in NSC Action No. 1430-p.
- b. Requested the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, the Federal Civil Defense Administrator, and the Director of Central Intelligence to prepare a list of individuals deemed qualified to prepare the study described in paragraph 1

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of the enclosure to the reference memorandum for
submission to the President at an appropriate time.

NOTE: The action in b above subsequently transmitted
to the officials designated for implementation.

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