

Briefing Paper for the President's Press Conference

August 24, 1960

GENEVA TEST BAN NEGOTIATIONSQUESTION

Mr. President, the Geneva test ban negotiations recessed last Monday at the request of the U.S. and U.K. for a five week period. Did the U.S. seek a recess in order to develop a major move which we would present when the conference reconvenes?

ANSWER

We requested a recess simply in the belief that various proposals and counter-proposals regarding such key issues as on-site inspection quotas, the phasing of the control system, safeguards for a seismic research program and the composition of the Control Commission would require detailed study by the governments concerned. Moreover, a recess seemed in order at this time to give the people involved in the negotiations at Geneva a respite from their demanding task.

I might add, that no consideration is being given to a major shift in our present position in the Geneva negotiations.

QUESTION

Mr. President, does the United States intend to go ahead with Project VELA regardless of whether or not the Soviet Union agrees to a coordinated research program?

ANSWER

Project VELA, of course, was initiated back in 1959 and consequently certain aspects of the program are already well under way, as the Soviet Union is aware. We certainly will want to carry out the research necessary in this area. However, during the current recess in the negotiations, consideration will be given to ways and means of doing this, bearing in mind the Soviet Union's positions on the matter.

QUESTION

Mr. President, reports indicated that Mr. McCone's and Mr. Merchant's trip to London last week was undertaken to overcome certain differences between the U.S. and U.K. on matters pertaining to the Geneva test ban negotiations. Were these differences ironed out?

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ANSWER

There were no significant differences between the British and ourselves on any of the outstanding issues in the test ban negotiations.

Mr. McCone and Mr. Merchant undertook what I would describe as a routine trip, the object of which was to exchange views and ideas with the British on the approach that might be taken to resolve some of the conference's outstanding issues. Their report to me on returning indicated that the meeting was a profitable one.

QUESTION

Mr. President, has the United States decided what action it will take with respect to a moratorium on testing?

ANSWER

As you know, on December 29, 1959, I stated that the United States considers itself free to resume tests at any time but will give prior notification of its intention to do so. That is how the matter still stands.

