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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
 NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
 WASHINGTON

COPY NO. 1

January 29, 1957

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT: The Human Effects of Nuclear Weapons Development

REFERENCES: A. NSC Action Nos. 1430-p, 1448, and 1502  
 B. NIE 100-5-55, "Implications of Growing Nuclear Capabilities for the Communist Bloc and the Free World"

1. The enclosed report on the subject was prepared by a special panel and submitted by Mr. Val Peterson pursuant to the reference NSC Actions. At the request of the President, the Planning Board has studied this report and submits herewith the following comments and recommendations for consideration by the National Security Council at its meeting on Thursday, February 7, 1957.

2. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Panel prepared estimates of the pre-attack effects on human attitudes and behavior of greater public awareness of the consequences of an attack, and the post-attack effects of nuclear warfare upon organized society. The central conclusion of the Panel's estimate is: "A massive nuclear attack on the United States resulting in casualties of the order of 50,000,000 without drastically improved preparation of the people, would jeopardize support of the National Government and of the war effort, and might well result in National disintegration." (p. 9)

3. The Planning Board found the Panel's estimates to be useful appraisals of factors of importance to national security. In addition to presenting its estimate, the Panel went beyond its terms of reference to propose "a nationwide program of continuing discussions in small groups, designed to achieve maximum citizen participation and involvement in the crucial issues raised by the development of nuclear weapons." (p. 12) While the Panel indicates that it is offering a proposal for a "program of psychological defense" rather than a detailed program, it does suggest the following as important characteristics of any such program if and when developed:

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 E.O. 12356, SEC. 3.4 (b)

MR 85-174#3

BY SLB

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12/13/88

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 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION, HAS  
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a. Any increased public knowledge and understanding of nuclear weapons effects must be accompanied by fuller understanding of both the goals of our national security programs and of specific countermeasures to reduce nuclear weapons effects. (p. 17)

b. Group discussions must be encouraged in an atmosphere of calm deliberation in order to avoid the extreme reactions of apathy and hysteria. (p. 13)

c. Group discussions should be sponsored and supported by the President, his Administration and citizen leaders, and should have the cooperation of the many voluntary associations that characterize our national life. (p. 12)

4. The Planning Board recognizes that the precise scope and nature of the proposal for a program made by the Panel have not been clearly defined, and believes that its content and limits need to be defined more specifically before the Council can make a decision with respect to it. The Panel itself suggests that further planning is required.

5. The Planning Board, however, does recognize that the Panel's proposal for a "program of psychological defense" is addressed to important problems and has considered the following arguments for it:

a. By making expectations more realistic, such a program would decrease apathy, disorganizing anxiety, hostility toward authority and anti-social behavior of all kinds should an attack ever occur. (pp. 14-15)

b. Such a program would increase appreciation by the American people of the Government's efforts to resolve differences without resort to general war. It would increase public understanding of and support for national security policy.

c. Such a program might be a valuable means of overcoming widespread public notions that war is inevitable.

d. The probable destruction resulting from nuclear war is an all-pervasive factor in determining national security policy and is the most awesome problem shared by our Government and people. The Panel Report states that "We have satisfied ourselves that sufficient information has been made available" to the American people-- "but it has not been successfully conveyed to them and incorporated in their feelings and actions." Whether or not the Government is able now to recommend to the people feasible means for significantly reducing destruction, the people should

share full knowledge of the factors involved in our present struggle so that they can influence policies and accept the full extent of the risks associated with those policies.

6. Certain aspects of the Panel's proposal for a "program of psychological defense" have caused the Planning Board very considerable concern:

a. The Panel acknowledges that such a program may produce certain negative reactions by the American public as temporary or minority phenomena (pp. 13, 17, 19). It is quite possible, however, that such negative results as apathy or hysteria, growth of preventive-war or peace-at-any-price sentiment, and other difficulties for the Government, may be much more significant than estimated.

b. Such a program, in itself, without extensive supplementary programs, is estimated to have little effect upon the physical destructiveness of an attack (p. 14). The limited nature of the civil defense program so far, and the changing bases on which it has operated, have not been conducive to providing reassurance. The Panel points out that the strengthening of the civil defense program is an essential supplement to its proposal (p. 13). If such strengthening is to occur, it should probably be firmly committed before initiation of the "program of psychological defense" contemplated by the Panel. Even with an adequate civil defense program, there is a limit to what individuals can do, and therefore, to the "involvement" and reassurance provided.

c. Such a program would entail emphasizing to the American public more or less suddenly that the situation is far worse than they have hitherto realized. It is not clear what justification the President would give for the initiation of the "monumental effort in the field of public enlightenment." If such an effort were conducted in a low key, it might not yield the desired results. Moreover, there is no assurance that it could be kept in a low key.



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d. Such a program might be interpreted as a "gimmick solution". A program of public education should be a normal aspect of governmental leadership.\*

e. The Panel did not estimate foreign reaction to such a program, which might, for example, imply to the rest of the world that we have suddenly become frightened of an attack by the USSR, or might lead the USSR and others to believe that we are preparing to attack the Soviet Union, and accordingly are preparing our own people against counter-attack.

7. In the light of the above, the Planning Board recommends that the Council take the following action:

a. Note the report on the subject by the Panel on the Human Effects of Nuclear Weapons Development.

b. Request the Federal Civil Defense Administrator,\*\* with the assistance of other Government departments and agencies, to study the matter further and make recommendations to the Council within three months (1) as to whether a program of public education and action should be undertaken in this field, and (2) if such a program is to be undertaken, what should be its specific content and proposed limits. In making the study and recommendations, the Federal Civil Defense Administrator should take account of the possible difficulties involved in such a program, including those which are set forth in paragraph 6 of this memorandum.

c. Agree that in the conduct of this study, individuals and organizations outside the Government as necessary may be approached, but that every precaution should be taken to avoid publicity until the Council has had an opportunity to consider the recommendations that are developed.

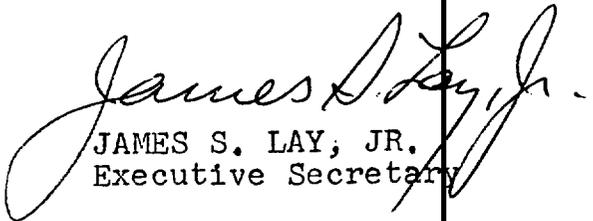
\* FCDA proposes deletion.

\*\* FCDA originally proposed to the President and still recommends that a Special Assistant to the President be appointed to carry out this study. In its view, the effort to enlist the essential cooperation of private organizations in a sustained program is likelier to succeed with the Presidential support implied by such assignment. (See the budget proposal, prepared by FCDA, attached as an Annex.)

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d. Request the Intelligence Advisory Committee to prepare within three months a national intelligence estimate on (1) the effects over time on human attitudes and behavior in foreign countries of a growing awareness of growing capabilities for mutual annihilation in the event of nuclear war, (2) the probable attitudes of people in foreign nations toward the initiation of general war by the constituted leaders of nations, or members of power blocs, possessing mutually destructive technological capability, and (3) steps being taken in Communist and non-Communist countries to acquaint the people with the implications of nuclear warfare.

  
JAMES S. LAY, JR.  
Executive Secretary

cc: The Secretary of the Treasury  
The Attorney General  
The Special Assistant to the  
    President for Disarmament  
The Director, Bureau of the Budget  
The Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission  
The Federal Civil Defense Administrator  
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
The Director of Central Intelligence



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ANNEX

FCDA BUDGET PROPOSAL



(This is written in response to the President's request to prepare a budget proposal for the first step in the initiation of the program suggested in the Report of the Panel on the Human Effects of Nuclear Weapons Development. It is a staff effort, but has been worked out in conjunction with the Panel Chairman who concurs that it is consistent with the spirit of the Panel's discussion of the program.)

The Panel in its report (page 14) offered an idea for a program of widespread group discussions to involve our people in the broad issues of national security and lasting peace, but stated that it did not attempt to develop details. The first implementing step, therefore, should be to work out the basic details of the program.

It is recommended that this responsibility be assigned within the Executive Office of the President, for the following reasons:

- (1) The effort, to be effective, should have on it the stamp of Presidential leadership.
- (2) It will be necessary to bring about an effective partnership of top-level governmental and non-governmental leadership. Solicitation of such non-governmental leadership will be more likely to succeed if it emanates from the Executive Office.
- (3) Governmental participation will need to come from a great many departments and agencies and will therefore require coordination from the Executive Office.

The budget requirements for the first steps are modest. The following is recommended for the first six months (minimal provision of twice this budget should be made for fiscal year 1958):

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<u>Personal Services</u>		\$20,000
Special Assistant to the President (or other appropriate designation) at \$20,000 per annum	\$10,000	
Staff Assistant at \$11,600	5,300	
Secretary at \$5,400	2,700	
Secretary at \$4,000	2,000	
<u>Staff Travel</u>		5,000
<u>Consultants' Travel and per diem</u>		5,000
Total		\$30,000



The initial effort would be directed at enlisting the participation and support of non-governmental leaders. It is considered vital to the success of the program that it represent a true partnership of governmental and non-governmental agencies. The program itself must not be vulnerable to attack on the grounds that it represents either a partisan undertaking or a "thought-control" or "propaganda" effort.

It would be very desirable to have an important part of the program supported by private foundation funds, and the Special Assistant would explore possibilities of such support. He would probably want to be in touch with leaders of the American Assembly, with leaders of adult education efforts, with members of the Panel that initiated the suggestion, and with others in order to develop the structure of a program.

Among the devices to be explored in searching for a form of cooperative sponsorship would certainly be a Presidential Commission. This would have the advantage of being a familiar institution. Another element might be an interdepartmental committee to stimulate and channel participation by government departments and agencies. Both groups might be tied together in their functioning through the office of the Special Assistant. These are, of course, suggestions. The important point is that responsibility be assigned within the Executive Office to develop a recommended structure as a first step toward putting the program into effect. It will then be possible to prepare a budget for launching the program.