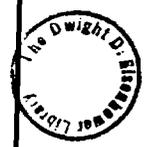


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E.O. 12065, Sec. 3-204

NS Ltr. of 6/5/81
By RF Date 8/10/81

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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407504



January 20, 1959

MEMORANDUM TO: Dr. James R. Killian, Jr.

SUBJECT: Release of Information on ARGUS

THE DIVISION OF CLASSIFICATION, U.S. ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION, HAS DETERMINED THAT THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS NO RESTRICTED DATA OR POTENTIALLY RESTRICTED DATA. ERDA HAS NO OBJECTION TO ITS DECLASSIFICATION.

JK
REVIEWED BY

OCT 9 1975
DATE

Pursuant to my undertaking to suggest alternative programs of information with respect to the ARGUS shots, I am submitting the following suggestions. Because of the sensitive nature of this information, the material herein has been cleared only with representatives of State, Defense, the AEC and your office, who were already apprised of the shots.

There appear to be two contingencies: first, the publishing of information about the shots as a result of leaks and, second, the voluntary release of information by the Government. This memorandum will not deal with the pros and cons of whether or not any material should be released.

If the New York Times, or anyone else, breaks a substantial part of the story, our alternatives appear to be:

1. Neither to confirm nor to deny such leaks;
2. To disclose all that we may safely do from a national security point of view.

In the latter case, the material released will be the same as that which we would release on a voluntary basis, the only difference being that we would have lost control over the manner and timing of such release; therefore, the attached guidelines would be useful in either case.

If the decision is made to make a voluntary release of information as to the shot and subsequent to the appropriate administrative determination of the material to be released, the following would appear to be an optimum procedure:

Step 1. To have appropriate scientists prepare a report on the effects and detectability comparable in scope and nature to the report

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on seismic effects. (I understand that Drs. Van Allen and Christofolis are preparing such a report.)

Step 2. To have the State Department make information of appropriate classification from this report available to the Soviets and other countries concerned (such as the U. K. , the Union of South Africa, appropriate South American countries, Japan) as it deems politically advisable under the circumstances, including the introduction of the report into the Geneva testing suspension talks, if, in the light of the over-all policy considerations bearing on these negotiations, such introduction is deemed advisable.

Step 3. To brief in advance the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, Disarmament Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and other appropriate Congressional groups.

Step 4. To issue a release from the White House comparable in nature and scope to the releases on seismological data once the appropriate foreign governments and key U. S. officials have been informed.

Step 5. To establish a panel of appropriate members of the U. S. Committee for the IGY and the National Academy of Sciences; key government officials in the Department of Defense, State Department, AEC, National Science Foundation, NASA, and the Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology; to reply to anticipated queries from the press as per attached guidelines; thereby establishing better control over the release of information and speculation as to its meaning. If possible, this panel should meet with the press in the Great Hall of the National Academy of Sciences in order to emphasize the scientific aspects of this experiment.

J. G. Coffey for
Karl G. Harr, Jr.
Special Assistant
to the President

Attachment
Guidelines (2 pages)

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GUIDELINES

1. The detonations produced no radioactive fall-out because (give technical explanation).
2. The detonations were one aspect of the HARDTACK series.
3. These detonations were conducted in late August and early September; there were no unannounced detonations after October 31.
4. There was no violation of the U.S. Government's policy of announcing a nuclear test series in advance because there was no policy of announcing every shot. Moreover, this was not the test of a weapon in the usual sense, but a scientific experiment utilizing nuclear detonations to discharge electrons into the earth's magnetic field.
5. Announcement has been withheld until now for purposes of evaluating data acquired. It is being released now because of its relevance to the question of detectability of high altitude detonations currently under discussion at the nuclear test suspension talks.
6. There was no violation of our IGY commitments. Unclassified information acquired by the satellite instruments has been made available to the IGY.
7. All safety precautions consistent with the remoteness of the launching area and the height of the burst were taken by the Task Force elements responsible for the experiment.
8. The nuclear materials were carried by X-17 rockets launched from the USS Norton Sound in the South Atlantic.
9. The sponsoring organization in the Department of Defense was the Advanced Research Projects Agency.
10. The detonations were achieved by already proven warheads of very small yield; specific yield classified.

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11. Much data of importance to basic scientific knowledge resulted from the detonations, including (a) delineation of the shape and characteristics of the earth's magnetic field; (b) clues to the behavior of electronics within this field and effect of such behavior on electromagnetic communications.

12. The derived military implications of the experiment are under review and assessment of such data will remain classified; however, any unclassified data will be published in subsequent additions to the Weapons Effects Handbook.

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