

February 4, 1955

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Discussion at the 235th Meeting
of the National Security Council,
Thursday, February 3, 1955

Present at this meeting of the Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; Under Secretary Hoover for the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Secretary of Commerce (for Item 2); Mr. Brundage for the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (for Item 3); Mr. Washburn for the Director, U. S. Information Agency; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Messrs. Cutler, Dodge and Rockefeller, Special Assistants to the President; Robert R. Bowie, Department of State; Harold A. Botkin, Office of Defense Mobilization (for Item 1); 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.

1. ELECTRO-MAGNETIC COMMUNICATIONS:

EFFECTIVENESS OF U. S. INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING

(Progress Report, dated January 10, 1955, by the Office of Defense Mobilization; on paragraph 8 of NSC 169; Memo for NSC from Executive Secretary, same subject, dated February 2, 1955)

Mr. Cutler made a brief statement as to the nature of the Progress Report, noted the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and called on Dr. Fleming.

Dr. Fleming indicated the extent to which the OCB committee and his own ad hoc committee on the evaluation of the program effectiveness of U. S. international broadcasting had benefited from the so-called Schramm study. Because of the misgivings which had arisen in the minds of the ad hoc committee with respect to the effectiveness of U. S. international broadcasting in a good many free world areas (specified in detail in paragraph I-A-3-(c), -(d) and -(e) of the report of the ad hoc committee), Dr. Fleming stated his belief that the OCB should reappraise the effectiveness of programs in these areas at an earlier date than December 31, 1955, as was now proposed.

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E.O. 12958, SEC. 3.6(b)

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3. REPORT ON VIETNAM FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
(NSC Action No. 1316)

The National Security Council:

Noted an oral report by the Director, Foreign Operations Administration, (1) that a recommendation for Presidential determination allocating FY 1955 funds to finance the aid programs for South Vietnam referred to in NSC Action No. 1316-e, and parallel action in Cambodia and Laos, had been agreed upon by the Departments of State and Defense, the Foreign Operations Administration, and the Bureau of the Budget, and would be submitted to the President today and (2) that the financing of these programs from FY 1955 and FY 1956 funds would be within the provisions of NSC 5506 and the President's budget message for FY 1956.

4. PROPOSED PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE EFFECTS, PARTICULARLY FALL-OUT, OF THERMONUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS

The President indicated that the OCB had prepared a statement on the reference subject which would be issued presently by the Atomic Energy Commission. Accordingly, he wanted the Council's advice, particularly on the question whether an announcement at this time on the effects of thermonuclear explosions would have an irritating effect on the existing international situation. In other words, was there any good reason for keeping altogether still on this subject or, alternatively, on saying a great deal more than was now included in the draft? There was one possible reason, continued the President, to push ahead. It was generally understood that the British, among others, tend to exaggerate the effects of fall-out from thermonuclear explosions. This he knew from a recent message from Sir Winston Churchill. The British were going to make a statement, to be issued on February 15, which would give the British Government's views on the effect of thermonuclear explosions. It would seem undesirable, thought the President, for the people of the United States to learn of these effects from the British Government rather than from their own Government, the more so since we would probably be obliged to state that the British exposition was substantially true.

Mr. Cutler then called on Admiral Strauss, who said that the President himself had largely covered the ground. He pointed out that the draft U. S. statement had been long in preparation, had been carefully worked over in the OCB, and was, he thought, in pretty good shape. The Civil Defense people have been screaming for months for some such statement as this. Secretary Hoover had pointed out that if it is determined to release such a statement, time should be allowed to place it in the hands of our diplomatic missions overseas

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and for its revelation to the British Government, although there is no necessity of waiting until or after the British issue their own statement on February 15. Admiral Strauss then summarized the contents of the proposed statement, which he described as written in simple and comprehensible language and as answering as many questions as we ourselves could ask. He proposed to release this statement on the 11th or 12th of February.

The President inquired whether, if we showed our statement to the British in advance of issuing it publicly, the British were not likely to ask for simultaneous release of our statement and their statement.

Secretary Hoover said that the arrangement to show our statement to the British in advance of its public release had come about as a result of a conversation at the recent conference in Paris, between Deputy Secretary of Defense Anderson and Harold Macmillan. As a matter of fact, since the British Government was including no appropriation for anti-aircraft defenses in its forthcoming budget, because it felt that there was no adequate defense against thermonuclear and atomic weapons, some facts had to be explained to the British public with respect to this omission. In answer to the President's question, Secretary Hoover expressed the opinion that the United States should release its statement before the British Government released its statement, although we were committed to cross-check our statement with the British prior to releasing it to our own public.

Admiral Strauss said he did not believe that we had made so firm a commitment to the British, while Secretaries Wilson and Humphrey observed that they could see no particular objection to the simultaneous release of the U. S. and British statements.

The President said that he could see none either, except perhaps that the release of two such statements simultaneously might suggest that this had deliberately been concerted, and give too great and alarming emphasis to the contents of the report and thus cause international anxiety as well as heighten the sense of fear at home.

Admiral Strauss commented that we have no particular reason to believe that the British will accept the U. S. findings as to the effects of thermonuclear explosions, which would probably be presented as less serious than the British would present them. Accordingly, it would be awkward if the release dates for the two statements were the same.

Secretary Humphrey inquired whether there was much new information in the proposed U. S. statement. Admiral Strauss replied in the affirmative, and particularly, he said, with respect to the effects of fall-out. The President suggested that this matter be

left to the State Department, with freedom to handle it as they saw fit, except that if the State Department agrees to the issuance of the U. S. statement simultaneously with the British statement, the British must agree to accept the findings in the U. S. statement.

Secretary Wilson thought that such procedure might cause difficulty with our loyal ally, Canada, and said he feared the danger of overemphasis and great public concern if both Britain and the United States issued statements on fall-out at the same time. Agreeing with Secretary Wilson, Mr. Cutler pointed out that Governor Peterson was most anxious to issue a statement urging that the United States press ahead with renewed energy and zeal on its civil defense program. He wanted to issue this immediately after the AEC issued its own statement. All this, in addition to a British statement, would tend to snowball the sense of danger rather than to reassure the population. Furthermore, Mr. Cutler was concerned about the effect the snowballing of so many statements and the inevitable official or unofficial comments on them, would have on the Soviets and the Chinese Communists at this particular juncture in the world situation.

Secretary Wilson said that as far as he could see, the United States proposed statement wasn't going to be very reassuring in any event. Admiral Strauss replied that it would be reassuring in comparison with so much of the "scare stuff" which had recently filled the papers on the subject of fall-out.

Governor Stassen suggested that Governor Peterson be directed to wait ten days after the issuance of the AEC statement before he made any public announcement himself with respect to the Civil Defense program. During this ten-day interval the OCB would study and report to the President on the world reaction and the domestic reaction to the AEC statement.

Mr. Dodge said that, speaking as a former Director of the Bureau of the Budget, he was a good deal concerned lest the issuance of the statement cause a public demand on the budget for increased funds for civil defense. The President said with considerable emphasis that he couldn't help but feel that the Administration had woefully underplayed the civil defense program. The real answer, said the President, to the problem, as he had mentioned before, was an informed and disciplined citizenry.

The National Security Council:

- a. Agreed that a public announcement on the subject, along the lines proposed by the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, revised in the light of the Council discussion, should be released prior to February 15, 1955, after advance notification to U. S. diplomatic missions and to the British Government.

- b. Noted the President's directive that other governmental departments and agencies should defer any public announcements following upon the release of the Atomic Energy Commission announcement, pending Council consideration of a report by the Operations Coordinating Board on the psychological reactions to the AEC announcement within approximately two weeks following its release.

NOTE: The action in a above, as approved by the President, subsequently transmitted to the Chairman, AEC. The action in b above, as approved by the President, subsequently transmitted to interested Government departments and agencies and to the Operations Coordinating Board to prepare the report referred to therein.

5. SIGNIFICANT WORLD DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING U. S. SECURITY

The Director of Central Intelligence indicated that the government of Premier Mendes-France was in very great danger as a result of the statement by Rene Mayer, in an eloquent speech to the Assembly, that he would vote against the government's North African policy. The fall of the Mendes-France government would not necessarily prejudice the passage of the WEU agreements in the French Senate, but passage might be delayed. Moreover, General Ely had expressed the fear that the fall of Mendes-France might force a review of the U. S.-French agreement regarding the training of the armed forces of Free Vietnam.

In Egypt, Colonel Nasser was also in great difficulty over (1) the Sudan situation, (2) the Arab League situation, and (3) the execution of two of the convicted Israeli spies. Our observers in Egypt believed that the spies had received a fair trial, but the execution of two of them had created a sensation in Israel and would make rapprochement between Israel and Egypt even more unlikely. Mr. Dulles predicted that Colonel Nasser would probably survive these difficulties, but that he faced a hard course.

With respect to the Formosa situation, Mr. Dulles said that the pattern of Chinese Communist conduct was now clarifying a little, though he warned that revolutionary regimes like China's were "boisterous" and hard to predict. They need foreign devils, and at this point the United States is playing the part of foreign devil. The emerging tendencies were these: (1) Freeing Formosa has become the main propaganda theme; the offshore islands are cast in a role secondary to this. (2) Formosa is wholly an internal Chinese matter, and one not susceptible of legitimate international interference. (3) U. S. policy is deliberately leading to war and accordingly there can be absolutely no accommodation to it.