

COPY

January 11, 1957



407141

MEMORANDUM

TO : Members of OGB Nuclear Energy Working Group

FROM : Joseph Hanson, USIA Representative

SUBJECT: USIA draft material for inclusion in background statement on air defense weapons

Pursuant to the decision of the Board of January 9, herewith is material suggested by USIA for inclusion in the narrative background statement being prepared for issuance along with the press release on air defense weapons.

It is this Agency's belief that basic material of this sort, emphasizing the continuity and gradualness of the United States research and development weapons program, will tend to reassure the public both at home and abroad, and to aid in understanding of the factors involved. This should tend to minimize extreme public reactions of apprehension or expectation of early use of such weapons, and thus minimize overseas agitation on the subject, which might arise either spontaneously or as a reflection of domestic tensions.

It is suggested that the suggested paragraphs which appear on the attachment, be inserted at or near the beginning of the background statement, since their general character would seem to make them suitable as an introduction to the more specific material.

DCB 000.9 (1-11-57)

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Attachment:

as indicated

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FOLDER DCB 000.9 [Atomic Energy]
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Gradual incorporation of small atomic weapons in U.S. defense is a long-planned policy development, having no relation to current events. Installation of air defense weapons does not mean that the government has any specific expectation of air attacks. It is well known that, pending international agreement on safeguarded disarmament, the U.S., like other responsible governments, must take prudent steps to guard against possible attack in the future. It can be expected that other small atomic weapons will become a part of the U.S. defense posture as they become perfected through research.

The perfecting of nuclear warheads for air defense rockets is an example of the development of small nuclear weapons through research and testing. Development of defensive weapons has been an important objective of United States nuclear tests for some time. The Atomic Energy Commission stated, in its 19th semi-annual report in July, 1955, that the Nevada nuclear test series of that year included "high altitude atomic detonations required in connection with development of nuclear warheads to be used against attacking enemy aircraft". AEC Chairman Strauss stated in July 23, 1956 that the 1956 Pacific nuclear test series resulted in "further development of methods of defense against attack".

The air defense rockets, like small nuclear weapons generally, are designed to inflict maximum damage on an enemy, but offer little or no risk to civilian populations. The important point about a small nuclear weapon or warhead is simply that it supplies far greater firepower than conventional explosives. But fallout is very much less than for the large weapons, those usually identified as "atomic bombs". This is because the amount of fallout, or residual radiation, varies greatly with the size of the weapon. It also varies greatly as between explosions at or near the ground and those high in the air. In the case of the air defense rockets, where explosions would take place at a considerable altitude, the fallout would be negligible.