

Briefing Paper for President's Press Conference

February 3, 1960

GENEVA TEST BAN NEGOTIATIONS AND DISARMAMENT

QUESTION

Mr. President, there have been reports recently which indicate that the United States will put forward at the Geneva test ban negotiations some new proposal to break the present deadlock. Will we be tabling a new position soon at Geneva?

ANSWER

As you know, last November we entered into joint technical talks in order to determine whether a sound, technical basis could be worked out for detecting underground explosions which would allow us to proceed toward concluding a comprehensive agreement. These talks unfortunately ended in a minimum of agreement, leaving some major technical difficulties in detecting underground explosions unresolved, and leaving unresolved the whole question of the basis for conducting on-site inspection. This means that for the time being at least, no effective system of control and inspection can be agreed in this area. In the light of this, there seems to be no alternative but to turn to some type of a phased or limited treaty as a first step, while we seek to resolve in joint research and experimentation the remaining technical difficulties and disagreements. At present we are considering what testing areas should be included in an approach of this type so that those testing environs that can now be adequately controlled, will be controlled.

QUESTION

Mr. President, the atomic energy commission, in its recent annual report, stated that our nuclear testing areas are being maintained on a standby basis. Could you tell us whether the United States has any plans to resume nuclear tests in the immediate future?

ANSWER

We have no immediate intention of resuming nuclear weapons tests. To a large extent, our future course of action in this regard will depend upon developments at the Geneva test ban conference.

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QUESTION

Mr. President, during the past week, experts from the United States, Canada, France, Italy and the United Kingdom have been meeting in Washington in preparation for the Ten Nation Disarmament Conference. Could you tell us whether the United States has tabled for consideration its disarmament proposals?

ANSWER

We have not tabled any United States disarmament proposals at these meetings, since we are still in process of developing disarmament policy. I might add that these meetings you mentioned--which by the way are continuing in one form or another--have permitted a useful exchange of general views on the objectives and scope of the Western disarmament proposals. Through these meetings, we expect in time to develop a unified Western position on disarmament.

QUESTION

Mr. President, is the recently submitted report by Mr. Coolidge being used as a guide in the formulation of our disarmament proposal?

ANSWER

The study which Mr. Coolidge completed, has been submitted to both the Secretaries of State and Defense and is being used by them as they see fit, to assist them in the development of disarmament policy to be recommended to me.

QUESTION

Mr. President, could you tell us whether the Coolidge study will be made public?

ANSWER

There was never any intention of making the Coolidge study public. It was developed for internal use only by both Secretaries of State and Defense to assist them in the development of our disarmament policy.

QUESTION

Mr. President, the Ten Nation Disarmament talks are only about a month and a half away. Reports indicate that the United States is still formulating its disarmament policy. Are we holding up development of a unified Western disarmament policy?

ANSWER

I believe that most of the other members of the Western negotiating team are about at the same stage in their thinking as we are. As matters now stand, I foresee no difficulty in reaching a sound Western position by the time the Ten Nation talks begin.

