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August 16, 1960

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Discussion at the 455th Meeting  
of the National Security Council,  
Friday, August 12, 1960

Present at the 455th NSC Meeting were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; and the Director, Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization. Also present at the Meeting and participating in the Council Actions below were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Director, Bureau of the Budget; and the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (Item 1). Also attending the Meeting were the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Director, U.S. Information Agency; the U.S. Ambassador to NATO (Burgess); the Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Agency\*, the Deputy Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Agency\*; the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Merchant); The Assistant to the President; Special Assistants to the President for National Security Affairs and for Security Operations Coordination; Dr. Leonard Jaffe, Chief Communications Satellite Program, NASA\*; Mr. Haydn Williams, Department of Defense; Mr. Robert Packard, Department of State; Mr. Huntington Sheldon, CIA (Item 4); Mr. Spurgeon Keeney, Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology (Item 1); the White House Staff Secretary; the Assistant White House Staff Secretary; the Acting Executive Secretary, NSC (Boggs); and Mr. Charles Haskins, NSC Special Staff.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the Meeting and the main points taken.

1. GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS ON NUCLEAR TESTING  
(NSC Action 2238-b-(5))

Mr. Gray began by explaining that the first item on the Council agenda had to do with the nuclear testing negotiations at Geneva and called upon the Secretary of State to present the item.

Secretary Herter referred to the Eisenhower-Macmillan proposal of last March which provided for a moratorium on underground tests, subject to two conditions: (1) that a coordinated research program to perfect seismic instrumentation be agreed upon and (2) that satisfactory agreement be arrived at on the banning of nuclear tests in the atmosphere. The scientists at Geneva had reached agreement in principle in May, and then the Soviets had rejected the

\* Item 5 only

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proposal for political considerations. The Soviets had laid down two conditions: (1) that the Soviets have complete access to the detonator and (2) that they have the right to fix the number of tests and their strength. Subsequently, after Mr. McCone had consulted with the Joint Congressional Committee, the U.S. made a proposal that the Soviets, the British, and the U.S. put up devices which would be subject to manual and visual inspection by all. The Soviets rejected this proposal. The President, continued Mr. Herter, had written Prime Minister Macmillan setting forth a fall-back position. With respect to declassification, Mr. Herter pointed out that the AEC has the right to declassify but that then the information would be available to the whole world. It might be possible to obtain limited declassification authority from the Congress.

Mr. Herter explained that there were two alternatives in the three-page paper which had been distributed at the Council table that morning. The first was to offer the fall-back position. However, this was subject to certain disadvantages: (a) it would be unfavorably received by the Joint Committee; (b) it is doubtful that authority could be obtained at this brief session of the Congress; and (c) there would be a hazard that, if the Soviets accepted the proposal, we might not be able to go through with it. A second alternative would be to stick to the reciprocal offer. If the Soviets refused it, then the U.S. could go ahead with the underground test series on its own. As for the date for beginning the underground test series, Mr. Herter said that to set a definite date might have the appearance of an ultimatum and that perhaps we could say "shortly". He said that a political decision had to be taken, and that meanwhile the Geneva negotiations were dragging along. Mr. Herter referred to the statement made by the President at a press conference that there would be no shots in the atmosphere while he was President. Mr. Herter concluded by saying that there was talk in Geneva about a recess, and that Wadsworth was on the way home to replace Ambassador Lodge in the UN.

The President observed that advance Congressional authority was not needed if the fall-back position was put forward "subject to Congressional authorization", and inquired whether Secretary Herter had talked to the British. The Secretary said that he had not yet done so. The President said it would alarm the British if we went ahead alone and Mr. Herter said that of course we would consult with the British.

The President suggested that the fall-back position would not hurt us badly and inquired whether we would really be giving anything up if the Soviets accepted. Mr. Herter said we would not.

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Mr. McCone said we would not as far as these particular devices are concerned, but expressed concern over setting a precedent which might have great effect in the future, particularly as regards "PLOWSHARE". He said that we could not throw additional tests open to inspection.

The Vice President took up the question of timing. He said that the moment the offer was made, a debate would be on which would become a political issue. He said that Senator Anderson would put the offer into the campaign, as would Senator Lyndon Johnson, probably taking the line that we were being naive with the Soviets. He said that Congressional opposition would indicate that the President did not have support in Congress and that the Joint Committee would never agree in a campaign year. If the issue were debated before November 8, it would be distorted and could not be argued on its merits.

The President observed that if we do not have something to keep the negotiations going along, then we are saying in effect that we give up.

The Vice President voiced support for the President's announced stand on no tests in the atmosphere, adding that we know we can learn all we need from underground tests. He said that another disadvantage of setting a specific date was the ultimatum aspect. The President wondered if a date could not be set subsequent to the election. The Vice President said that it would be desirable to leave the date in a more indefinite status. The more definite the date, he said, the more susceptible the matter would be to political discussion.

Secretary Herter said that if a mid-November date were selected, the scientists would have to occupy the test site a month ahead and by their presence would reveal the timing. Mr. McCone agreed, and said that extensive preparations for the shot would be necessary, including the moving in of scientists, who would be identified by the press. The President suggested that we would not have to fix an exact date but that we might say "on or after".

Secretary Gates suggested that we might re-affirm our position after talking to Prime Minister Macmillan. We could tell the Soviets that we want them to answer again.

Secretary Herter raised the question of how far off the decision could be put from the point of view of planning. At some time we have got to establish a cut-off date. The President suggested that we might say to the Soviets, "If you do not agree,

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then we will go ahead by ourselves", but we must have coordination with the British. Mr. Herter said he was seeing Ambassador Caccia at noon and the President suggested that the Secretary ask Caccia to inform Macmillan. Our line could be that before the Geneva negotiations adjourned, we would say that we are going to begin to make our underground nuclear tests - small ones and for the purpose of improving seismic instrumentation. We feel that it has to be done. Every decent proposal we have made, the Soviets have flatly turned down. We should get Macmillan's reaction; he has come a long way on POLARIS.

Mr. McCone stated that there had been a considerable deterioration in the negotiations since July 7. Tsarapkin had proposed three site inspections and it was reported that that proposal was not negotiable. It is also reported that Tsarapkin is calling for 15 instead of 21 stations. Tsarapkin has not agreed to a single thing since November except the 4.75 threshold. He is an old-time negotiator, continued Mr. McCone; he negotiated the 38th Parallel in Korea, after exhausting the opposition. The President asked if that was in 1945 and Mr. McCone said that it was.

Secretary Herter gave the evaluation that the Soviets will not agree to any tests until after conclusion of a treaty.

The President suggested that perhaps we ought to send someone to London to talk to the British - either Mr. McCone or someone from the State Department. Then we could get away from the fall-back proposal. The President said he agreed with the Vice President with respect to what the political opposition would do and that they would interpret our action as being soft on communism. Congress so loves to keep secrets which the enemy has had for so long, mused the President.

Secretary Herter inquired whether he had the President's approval for taking the matter up with Ambassador Caccia. The President said that Mr. Herter could start with the Ambassador.

The Vice President counselled that it was of the utmost importance, in our conversations with the British, that no mention be made of any domestic political considerations which might be involved. The President replied that he himself could "tell Harold".

General Persons commented that the Majority leaders in Congress had made it very clear to him that this was going to be a light session and that Congress would only deal with a limited number of

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things. Secretary Herter said that the House would only be in session for two weeks. The Vice President stated that there was no chance that anything could be done at this session of Congress.

Mr. Gray observed that whereas the tests as planned were not weapons tests, nevertheless they do have collateral defense aspects. Secretary Gates mentioned base hardening, and Mr. Gray pointed out that it could not be said that there are no defense implications. Mr. Gates said that the implications were defensive.

Mr. McCone spoke of his recent trip to the underground test site. He said there was a 950 foot shaft and that the device would be placed at the bottom. One thousand feet away was a 750 foot shaft. There was a tunnel leading to within 200 feet of the first shaft, and additionally there were three sets of other tunnels, radiating from the second shaft. The structures are of various kinds, including concrete and steel and number eight or ten. Information to be derived from the tests would be valuable for civil defense, base hardening, the mining industry, and for tunnel construction techniques. All the information would be made public. The site had been started by Defense and AEC three or four years ago and had cost \$5 million. Mr. McCone emphasized that no information on weapons of any kind was involved and that it was, in his opinion, a very worthwhile experiment.

Mr. Stans expressed concern about world opinion and wondered whether the underground tests might be regarded as a resumption of nuclear testing. He said we should make it very clear that no new weapons are involved. Secretary Herter said that if the negotiations are broken off, then the AEC would test some devices having weapons implications. Mr. McCone said that the AEC had a list of defense requirements which could only be met by further testing. The President emphasized that no weapons are involved in this specific action and that it was important that we did not get weapons into this. Secretary Herter commented that our public posture would be much better if we could say that the tests were seismic only.

The Vice President expressed concern for the security of the matters which had just been discussed and said he hoped that there would not be debriefings to hundreds of people throughout the departments. The President agreed, and said it was most important to protect the subject from falling into unauthorized hands. Mr. Gray said that, in the light of the sensitivity of the discussion, there would be no debriefing of the Planning Board on this item.

The National Security Council:

Discussed the subject on the basis of an oral presentation by the Secretary of State.

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LIST OF MATERIALS TO BE PHOTOCOPIED

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Name of Researcher M. J. [unclear] Card No. \_\_\_\_\_ Page Number 1

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NSA - Operations and Records Board (COR) (1941-1945)	1	...	...	7/1/55	1 ✓
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NBC - Operations Working Board (CB) (extra file)	9	CB 0009 (Emergency) [unclear]	Memo to [unclear] re: [unclear]	3/14/56	1
"	"	"	[unclear]	5/2/56	1
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"	"	"	[unclear]	3/2/56	1
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"	"	[unclear]	[unclear]	3/3/56	3
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