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January 13, 1950

White House Memorandum on Fallout Protection

Statement of Special Assistant  
on Civil Defense of the Government

This meeting today with President Eisenhower and the military and civilian leaders of his Administration was of major importance and significance. We wish all Americans could have participated in it.

The statement of the President at this meeting, and the presence of the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, of the Secretary of State, of the Under Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, of the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Director of OCDM, conclusively established that fallout protection for our citizens, in the event of a nuclear attack, is not a luxury, but is a requirement of national policy.

General Twining assured us that fallout shelter is "essential" to our military defense and to our policy of seeking peace through deterrence of nuclear attack. Secretary Twining also emphasized the direct relationship between a fallout shelter program and the successful conduct of a creep policy as well as our own strength and survival. He expressed his earnest hope that we make prompt and substantial progress toward fallout protection for our people.

We are satisfied that, if our creep policy is followed, our foreign negotiations are more successful inasmuch as our military deterrence is to be effective and our military strength is meaningful, if the American people are to have the strength to resist nuclear blackmail, to our country is to our eyes, and if some aggressor should do the unthinkable and unendurable, strike upon us, then, for each of these reasons, fallout protection for our citizens is imperative.

We believe, based on the present status we have achieved, that fallout protection for our people is essential, that, although in many problems, a very high degree of protection is not yet achieved, that it is achievable, and that it is achievable to the reach of our people and nation. We also believe that the Government should participate actively in providing the financial support and the leadership which is necessary for an effective program of fallout protection for our people to be achieved in the near future.

Regardless, however, of the extent of the fallout protection support and inducements that may be forthcoming, we feel keenly our own responsibility for the following:

- (a) to educate the public to the fallout hazard and the means of protecting against it,
- (b) to help our citizens, and to be fully prepared to enable them to survive fallout in the event of a nuclear attack on our country.

(c) to provide fallout protection in state owned facilities; and

(d) to establish a protected seat of state government to assure government leadership and function both during and after any possible attack.

Our immediate task as Governors is, in cooperation with federal officials, to allocate among federal, state and local governments the various responsibilities for a program which will make fallout protection for all our citizens a prompt reality.

We understand that it is the policy of the United States to encourage on a Federal-State partnership basis:

(a) Training of all citizens in personal survival under presently prevailing conditions;

(b) A survey of existing facilities for utilization as fallout shelters;

(c) Construction of home and community type fallout shelters;

(d) Providing such shelters with adequate food and water plus necessary communication and other facilities; and

(e) Participation by citizens in the development and execution of these plans.

We welcome the designation today by President Eisenhower of Governor Hoogh as his personal representative to work with us in agreeing upon a joint program and allocating the necessary responsibilities for its fulfillment.

We're confident that fallout protection for all our citizens can be achieved with vigorous and constructive leadership by federal and state officials working effectively together.

To this task we shall now turn with a confidence that, by discharging this responsibility successfully we will be making a significant contribution to our nation's quest for a truly meaningful peace -- a peace which will bring liberty and justice, and trust, among men.

Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller, Chairman  
Governor Edmund G. Byrne  
Governor George D. Clyde  
Governor Ernest B. Hollings  
Governor C. Mennen Williams