



APPENDIX D

STATEMENT BY THE ACTING SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
ON  
TRANSFER OF CUSTODY OF ATOMIC WEAPONS

TOP SECRET  
AUTHORIZATION  
Name                       
Date 4/28/53

The Department of Defense considers the transfer of custody of all completed atomic weapons from the Atomic Energy Commission to the Department of Defense to be necessary for the assurance of operational readiness flexibility of the Armed Forces so essential to its capability to discharge its responsibility for national security. The present arrangement whereby responsibility for storage, maintenance, and security of the atomic weapons stockpile and for the operation of storage sites is divided between the Atomic Energy Commission and the Department of Defense is not fully responsive to this requirement for the following pertinent reasons:

a. Atomic weapons are not basically different from other weapons in that they constitute one element of a weapons system. Creation of a capability for their effective application in war requires their fullest integration with the other elements of the weapons system for which the Department of Defense is responsible.

b. The availability of atomic weapons for use by specified types at designated locations in numbers and in operational condition prescribed by the emergency plans of the combat Services is one of the essential prerequisites of the capability of the Armed Forces to implement emergency war plans. These factors change with variations in forces, deployments, plans, and operational capabilities of the Services.

c. Divided responsibility for storage, maintenance, and security of the stockpile of atomic weapons and for operation of the storage sites results in unnecessary duplication of functions and facilities and makes detailed coordination and agreement necessary at all levels along two parallel lines of authority.

d. With increase in numbers of weapons in stockpile, and with attainment of greater flexibility in their application (as bombs, missiles, rockets, shells, etc.,) physical arrangement and distribution in stockpile to meet the Armed Forces' requirements for flexibility and readiness will become increasingly complicated and difficult. The problems of coordination with other agencies under the present system would be vastly accentuated.

e. The necessity for extensive and detailed coordination in the matter of stockpile arrangement to fulfill readiness and flexibility requirements provides access to sensitive information on war plans and counter-offensive preparations to a number of persons who do not require this information and who have no responsibility for such action.

f. Elimination of divided responsibility will permit the Department of Defense to plan, organize, train, and budget for its operations in a more intelligent and progressive manner.

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