

October 27, 1954

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Discussion at the 219th Meeting
of the National Security Council,
Tuesday, October 26, 1954

Present at the 219th Meeting of the National Security Council were the following: The President of the United States, presiding; Herbert Hoover, Jr., for the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Acting Director, Foreign Operations Administration; and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; William F. Tompkins for the Attorney General (Item 3); the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (Items 1 and 3); the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Council of Economic Advisers; the Director, U. S. Information Agency; the Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; Assistant Secretary of Defense Pike; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Chief of Staff, U. S. Army; the Chief of Naval Operations; the Chief of Staff, U. S. Air Force; General Pate for the Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps; the Director of Central Intelligence; Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; the White House Staff Secretary; Bryce Harlow, Administrative Assistant to the President; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

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

1. CURRENT SERIES OF SOVIET NUCLEAR TESTS

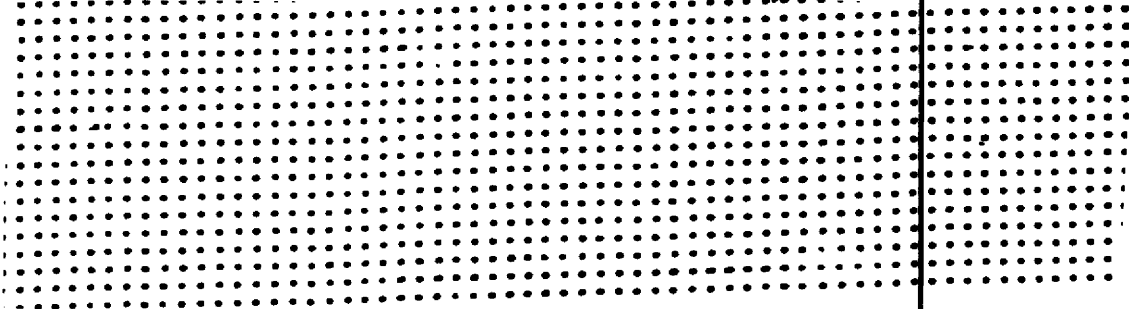
Mr. Cutler recalled the Council's earlier negative decision with respect to a U. S. announcement of the current series of nuclear tests in the Soviet Union, and then indicated the possibility that the occurrence of a further test since the prior action might produce a change of opinion. He then called on Admiral Strauss for an expression of his views.

Admiral Strauss suggested that the most recent explosion
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He also pointed out that in the 1949, 1951 and 1953 series of Soviet tests the U. S. had announced or commented upon each one. Admiral Strauss also indicated his belief in the probability that the Soviet Union would make an announcement of the current series when it was complete. He added the opinion that it would be unfortunate if the

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E.O. 12356, SEC. 3.4(b)
Agency Case NSC 687-1357
NLE Case MR 87-372 #1
By WJH NLE Date 7/26/91

Russians knew that we knew they had been conducting the current series of tests and we did not actually announce this fact. He accordingly recommended a brief two-sentence announcement, the text of which he read to the Council (copy filed in the Minutes of the meeting).

The President then asked Mr. Allen Dulles to comment. Mr.



The President indicated that by and large he thought it best for the United States to make an announcement.

Secretary Hoover indicated that Secretary Dulles was opposed to any dramatic United States announcement, on grounds that such an announcement would not only increase neutralist sentiment in the free world, but might also convey an impression that the Soviet Union was catching up with us in the field of atomic weapons. Neither of such implications was desirable. On the other hand, Secretary Dulles thought it would plainly be advantageous if some of the resentment felt in the free world against U. S. nuclear tests could be shifted to the Soviet Union. In sum, the Secretary of State did not feel strongly opposed to an announcement if the other departments and agencies concluded that it was desirable.

The President commented that perhaps the most persuasive argument in favor of an announcement was the fact that the test could not be kept secret anyway, and that we should therefore make a virtue out of necessity.

Mr. Streibert expressed the opinion that it was highly desirable to make an announcement, but queried whether the last sentence of Admiral Strauss' text was not too defensively phrased.

Admiral Radford favored a U. S. announcement as likely to be helpful to the United States when it conducts its next test series.

The National Security Council:

- a. Discussed the subject in the light of oral statements by the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Under Secretary of State, the Director, U. S. Information Agency, and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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- b. Agreed that the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, should make a brief public announcement on the subject as read and amended at the meeting.

NOTE: The action in b above, as approved by the President, subsequently transmitted to the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission.

2. INDOCHINA
(NSC Action No. 1250-d)

Mr. Cutler reminded the Council of its agreement at its last meeting to inaugurate a crash military program in South Vietnam (NSC Action No. 1250) as set forth in a draft message which was to be prepared for transmission to the Ambassador and to the Chief of the MAAG, Saigon. He then asked Under Secretary Hoover to report on the follow-up of this Council decision.

Secretary Hoover said that the message in question had been sent that evening to Saigon, as had a message to the Secretary of State in Paris. The Secretary had discussed with Premier Mendes-France the proposed crash program, and had got a delayed but very violent adverse reaction. The French contended that we had violated not only our recent agreements with the French themselves in the Washington conversations on Indochina, but that our proposals also violated the terms of the Geneva Armistice Agreement with the Communists. From this reaction, Secretary Dulles felt that the French were probably being put on the spot because they had made some sort of secret agreement with the Vietminh in the course of the Geneva Conference. There was no proof of any such agreement, said Secretary Hoover, but we have certainly not violated the terms of the Geneva Armistice Agreement as we know those terms. In any event, we are going ahead with our plans vis-a-vis Diem and Hinh, and Secretary Hoover believed the situation in South Vietnam now looked a good deal better.

The President inquired whether the French irritation was simply the result of the fact that we were cutting down on our cash handouts to them. Secretary Hoover replied that there seemed to be more to it than that, and again suggested the possibility of a secret agreement between the French and the Communists at Geneva, in which the British also may have been implicated.

The President reacted strongly to this latter suggestion, and said that if there were any question about British participation, Secretary Dulles should confront Eden and get the "lowdown", or, if the Secretary preferred, he himself would take the matter up with Sir Winston Churchill and would do so in his own fashion.

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