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Exhibit 2-b

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UNITED STATES POLICIES GOVERNING THE USE OF CERTAIN
NEW WEAPONS AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION REGARDING THE
USE, CAPABILITIES OF, AND DEFENSE AGAINST THESE WEAPONS

I. Outline of Issues Raised by Dr. Bush's Letter of 20 December 1948

A. Use of Weapons

Under what circumstances and against what objectives will the United States use each of the following weapons - atomic bomb, biological warfare, chemical warfare and radiological warfare?

B. Use of Decisions on Use of Weapons

In addition to their incorporation into military planning, what other uses should be made of these decisions?

1. Will they be released in whole or in part to the public, and if so, for what purpose?

C. Implementing Action

What implementing action will be required under the decisions in "A"?

1. Legislation.
2. Existing policies and programs.



D. Release of Information as to Capabilities and Defense

Should information relative to the capabilities of, and known defenses against, any or all of these weapons be released to the public - if so, for what purpose?

1. To dispel unwarranted fear based on ignorance.
2. As a weapon in present psychological warfare.

E. Which of the questions outlined above should be decided by the President? In what manner should recommendations to him be developed?

1. Should the committee suggested by Drs. Bush and Compton be established for this purpose? If so, how should it be formed, what should its membership be and what questions should be referred to it? Should it report directly to the President or through the National Security Council?

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Exhibit 2-b
page 2

2. Should the executive branch develop these recommendations without outside assistance? If so, how?
 3. Under either (1) or (2) and with the President's permission should Congress be consulted in any form or manner in the preparation of these recommendations?
- F. Should questions which do not require Presidential decision be handled in the same manner? If not, what arrangements should be made to dispose of these questions?



~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Exhibit 2-b
page 3



II. Action Previously Taken with respect to these Issues

Questions concerning the use of the atomic bomb and the release of information with regard to its capabilities first arose in the War Council in connection with the proposed release of the "Extracted Version" of the Final Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Evaluation Board for Operation Crossroads ("Bikini Report"). This report, in evaluating the results of the Bikini tests, emphasized the capabilities of the bomb and suggested a revision of this country's traditional policy of not attacking an aggressor nation prior to its attack on the United States. The report also suggested that the Congress review, in the light of new considerations, the statement of policy upon which the Atomic Energy Act is based. (These recommendations had been noted for possible deletion by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.) The War Council, on 2 March 1948, tentatively agreed that the report should be released, subject to the agreement of the State Department. That Department, however, strongly recommended against its release, and after reconsideration in the War Council it was decided to forward the report to the President with the recommendation that it not be made public at that time.

The subject was reconsidered in the War Council at its meeting of 7 December 1948, as a result of (1) an article by Mr. Bradley Dewey, a member of the Evaluation Board which had prepared the report, which seriously criticized the withholding of its publication; (2) advice that the State Department would approve the publication of the report provided that the portions noted by the Joint Chiefs for possible deletion were in fact deleted and, further, that the report be transmitted to the President through the National Security Council; and (3) changes in the international situation. Discussion in the War Council was inconclusive and the matter was deferred. Shortly thereafter the President decided against the release of the report.

In May 1948 the Secretary of the Army requested the National Security Council to develop the "position of the United States with respect to the initiation of atomic warfare in the event of war". To this end, the NSC staff submitted a report (NSC 30) which argued that the risks of public controversy and resulting foreign speculation which would follow the announcement of a decision as to the use of the atomic bomb in the event of war outweighed the advantages of a present decision. The paper concluded:

1. "It is recognized that, in the event of hostilities, the National Military Establishment must be ready to utilize promptly and effectively all appropriate means available, including atomic weapons, in the interest of national security and must therefore plan accordingly.
2. "The decision as to the employment of atomic weapons in the event of war is to be made by the Chief Executive when he considers such decision to be required.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Exhibit 2-b
page 4

3. "In the light of the foregoing, no action should be taken at the present time:

- a. To obtain a decision either to use or not to use atomic weapons in any possible future conflict;
- b. To obtain a decision as to the time and circumstances under which atomic weapons might or might not be employed."



The National Security Council, on September 16, adopted the first two conclusions. However, the third conclusion was not approved for the reason that this would improperly absolve the National Security Council of the responsibility of planning for the use of atomic weapons.

Consideration in the National Security Council of a national policy regarding the use of biological weapons and a public statement of their potentialities was recommended to the President by the Secretary of Defense on March 16, 1948 (copy attached as Exhibit 2-b-1). Although the suggested action was not initiated in the National Security Council (pending military evaluation of biological weapons), the Research and Development Board had previously prepared a proposed public statement of their potentialities and of the defenses against them. This paper received final clearance by the Joint Chiefs on 10 November 1948 and was forwarded to the Secretary of Defense by the Research and Development Board with a strong recommendation for release subject to clearance with the White House and the State Department. The Board felt that early issuance of a clarifying statement was important because of the probable widespread public discussion and speculation which would result from the references to biological warfare in the Eberstadt report, the declassification by the Joint Chiefs of certain biological warfare materials, and the biological warfare defense training soon to be initiated in the three services. On 6 January 1949, the Secretary of Defense requested the State Department's approval of the proposed release, and in so doing drew that Department's attention to the implication of the last sentence of the release that the National Military Establishment is working toward the offensive use of this type of warfare. (Copy of the Secretary's letter is attached as Exhibit 2-b-2.)

Recently the question of the character of the information which should be released regarding the capabilities of atomic weapons was again raised in connection with an article written by Admiral Parsons for a January issue of the Saturday Evening Post. The effect of the article was to de-emphasize the importance of the atomic bomb from a military point of view. After consultations between the White House and the State Department, the President decided on 31 December 1948 that Admiral Parson's article should not be published.

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