

Briefing Paper for the President's Press Conference

September 7, 1960

TEST BAN NEGOTIATIONSQUESTION

Mr. President, Thomas E. Murray, a former member of the Atomic Energy Commission, wrote a letter to the two Presidential nominees in which he called upon the President-elect to resume nuclear weapons tests. Would you comment on this?

ANSWER

I can only reiterate my own position on this matter. We are not prepared to permit the Geneva Conference to go on indefinitely without achieving positive results.

I have pointed out before that this country is free to resume nuclear tests at any time, but we shall act only at such time as it is clear that every possible avenue which could lead to the conclusion of a successful test ban agreement has been appropriately explored.

QUESTION

Mr. President, there has been some confusion about the United States position concerning various phases of the VELA project. Could you tell us whether the United States intends to go ahead with this project regardless of whether the Soviet Union agrees to a coordinated research program?

ANSWER

Project VELA of course was initiated back in 1959 and consequently certain aspects of the program are already well under way, as the Soviet Union is aware. We certainly will want to carry out the research necessary in this area. However, during the current recess in the negotiations, consideration is being given to ways and means of doing this, bearing in mind the Soviet Union's position on the matter.



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9/7/60