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National Military Establishment
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Washington 25, D.C.

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27 January 1949



MEMORANDUM FOR MR. RICHARDSON:

Subject: War Council Item on Bikini Report, BW, etc.

1. I fully endorse the suggested procedure in Dr. Bush's letter of December 20th to Secretary Forrestal, with the following additional comments.
2. I would suggest that Secretary Forrestal might wish to discuss this problem informally with Secretary Acheson and if he also concurs, that the two Secretaries present to the President the idea of a small, very high level committee to study this problem from an informed but objective point of view and submit recommendations which, if approved by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State, would then go to the President for final approval.
3. With reference to the Bikini report I would suggest that this high level committee consider in its proposed statement for the public not a publication of the Bikini report (with appropriate deletions), but rather that the statement be prepared to incorporate a restatement of the essential releaseable features of the Bikini report with any corrections of conclusions or additional appropriate information which may result from experience and analysis subsequent to the Bikini study. This would avoid the issue of releasing the Bikini report under pressure, but would accomplish the essential purposes which Mr. Dewey and the other members of the Bikini Evaluation Board have had in mind in recommending that the appropriate aspects of this report be made available to the public.
4. If this high level committee is set up, I believe that its appointment should not be announced publicly, since this could create pressures and might lead to a second embarrassing episode if its recommendations for public release were also vetoed. Any useful public announcement could come with such publication as may result from the new committee's recommendation.
5. In the meantime it should be sufficient to say, if anything has to be said publicly, that this whole broad question is in process of restudy.
6. I personally have a conviction regarding the desirability under present circumstances of publishing two of the recommendations of

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the Bikini report, one having to do with conditions under which a counter-attack could be ordered in advance of an actual military attack on the United States, and the other having to do with a reconstitution of the Atomic Energy Commission. I would be glad to discuss these two points at the Council meeting if this is desirable, but they would properly be considered by the proposed high level committee if this be established.

7. I wholly agree with Dr. Bush's suggestion that our public and the world be informed of our intantion to use atomic weapons against military or war potential objectives in case we are forced into war. It is technological superiority of this type which is our country's greatest possibility of military strength and is our substitute for the far more burdensome and permanently destructive policy of equivalent strength through very large armies and traditional weapons.
8. I also concur with Dr. Bush that methods like chemical, biological, and radiological warfare, which indiscriminately destroy peoples, and can cause suffering indirectly related to quick military objectives, should be advertised only to the extent necessary to assure the people that we are prepared with defensive measures and are prepared to use them, if necessary, in retaliation, but that the initiation of their use in war is not a factor in our war plans.



KARL T. COMPTON
Chairman

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