TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

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MEMORANDUM

November 8, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Laurence E. Lynn, Jr.

SUBJECT: The SIOP

To follow through on our discussions of the SIOP, I have summarized below the salient features of the current SIOP to include:

-- The current National Strategic Targeting Policy, drawing from Mel Laird's paper (attached at Tab A);

-- The JCS rationale for this Policy and some argumentation pro and con;

-- Specific issues that should be pursued in refining or revising the SIOP.

I believe the next step is for you to meet with General Wheeler and raise a number of issues, answers to which will enable you to furnish the President with a clear picture of the SIOP, present sub-SIOP options and rationale, and possibilities for SIOP revisions. Accordingly, I have also identified specific questions you might pursue (talking points at Tab B).

The Current SIOP

The present SIOP is designed primarily for a general nuclear war with the USSR. For lesser conflicts, reliance would be placed on theater contingency plans, such as those SACEUR has developed. For substantial efforts against the CPR, some strategic forces would be needed (primarily from SAC); but, we do not know how the planning and targeting would be done.
The present SIOP target list has been sub-divided into three tasks:

-- **ALPHA:** To destroy Sino-Soviet strategic nuclear delivery capabilities located outside urban areas. As part of this task, the highest Soviet and Chinese political and military control centers would be attacked -- the Moscow-Peking Missile Packages (MPMP).

-- **BRAVO:** To destroy other elements of the Sino-Soviet military forces and military resources not included in ALPHA which are located outside the major urban centers.

-- **CHARLIE:** To destroy Sino-Soviet military forces and military resources which were excluded from ALPHA and BRAVO because of their location within urban centers and at least 70% of the urban industrial bases of the USSR and Communist China.

These tasks have been further combined into five attack options. The smallest attack, a pre-emptive strike on the ALPHA targets, would involve 58% of our SIOP committed forces. Roughly 1,750 weapons would be expected to arrive on or near their targets in the USSR. More forces would be needed for this option if the Soviets had been forewarned of the attack.

The basic attack options are:

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<tr>
<th>Attack Options</th>
<th>Tasks Normally Included</th>
<th>Tasks Withholdable</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Pre-emptive</td>
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<td>Retaliatory</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>A, B, C</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>—</td>
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Two points might be underscored:

-- Under present plans we always attack the Soviet nuclear threat, in its entirety, before engaging "value" targets. This is
what makes even the smallest strike so large.

--- We initially can withhold an element of a task (MPMP in ALPHA), a task of an attack option (CHARLIE in option 2), or both.

I understand that there are other "withhold elements," as well as the MPMP, which would permit as many as 90 sub-variations on these attack options. How these work -- and what degree of real alternatives they afford -- we do not know.

--- I think we should ask General Wheeler for information about the withhold packages.

--- I strongly recommend also asking him about the possibility of designing additional withhold packages as a way of obtaining sub-SIOP attack options. This could be your way of obtaining other attack options in ways that would involve the least friction with the strategic planners.

Discussion Points: Task ALPHA Rationale

I believe you should focus discussion about the substance of the SIOP strictly to the ALPHA task. That task is always included in the SIOP options and it requires the largest part of our forces.

I also believe it would be useful to consider only pre-emptive strikes, at least initially. The issue of retaliation involves debatable assumptions about the enemy attack which must be agreed to before a discussion can be manageable.

You could proceed by asking General Wheeler for the JCS rationale on the ALPHA task. I expect he will give the reasons indicated below. (I have also indicated some counterpoints you may wish to raise.)

The JCS believe there are strong arguments for beginning a nuclear exchange on Russia with something like the complete ALPHA list. They give five different reasons:
1. "Soviet knowledge that the U.S. would contemplate a small-scale nuclear attack could downgrade the deterrent value of our strategic posture."

One could equally assert, of course, that willingness to cross the nuclear "firebreak" with a small-scale attack will clearly indicate that the U.S. might "go all the way," thus increasing our deterrent.

2. "That such an attack might warn the Soviets of U.S. intentions (real or imaginary) and induce them into a state of readiness less advantageous to us in the event larger attacks are necessary later."

This argument actually applies only to the special case where the Soviets are completely surprised. This is unlikely during a period of tension. It does not apply to U.S. attacks against the soft Soviet targets, where one U.S. weapon would destroy a number of Soviet non-alert or soft but mobile weapons. Our attack could be designed to destroy those forces that could be moved to a higher state of readiness.

In fact, I think this counterargument is sufficient without further evidence, but it could be supported by analysis if the following information were available:

-- a list of the soft force targets in the USSR;

-- U.S. weapon effectiveness against these targets (using various systems and warheads).

Some of the work has been done for NSSM 64. That analysis shows a great pay-off for the initial strikes on soft force targets by either side in strategic counterforce attacks.

One could object to this reasoning. Perhaps the soft targets are co-located with highly populated urban/industrial-complexes. If they were attacked, the USSR might consider itself compelled to respond, perhaps against a similar or somewhat smaller U.S. city. Could a President take that risk?
3. "A small attack might trigger an immediate large-scale Soviet response, particularly of their soft nuclear forces."

This argument is clearly a corollary of the dilemma referred to in the previous paragraphs. If the initial U.S. attack is too small to get all soft Soviet forces, the argument is valid. The Soviets might attack with their remaining soft systems rather than see them destroyed in a subsequent U.S. attack. Perhaps the Soviets cannot distinguish a small from a large attack and would feel compelled to retaliate (this is another issue).

Much of the argument turns on an analysis of soft target vulnerability and collateral effects. This issue can be resolved by analysis, provided we know:

- surrounding urban/industrial complexes near soft USSR nuclear systems targets.

4. "Rapid execution of a small strike could leave a large portion of our own strategic and theater forces at a relatively low level of force generation, making them particularly vulnerable to Soviet retaliations."

This argument is valid in the following case: An attack during which we left non-alert bombers and submarines in tender in a state of non-readiness, and we used only day-to-day ready forces in our initial strikes, perhaps to obtain maximum surprise. Thus, U.S. reliable and accurate systems would be used up, leaving the average or net reliability of the remaining forces somewhat less than it is now.

This condition could be eliminated if our forces were readied in secret or simultaneously with the strike, if advance plans and orders were given so that communications systems were not overloaded after the strike, and if reconnaissance requirements were kept to a minimum. Moreover, the JCS supposedly instituted a faster procedure for selective options last July (1969).

An important issue not directly related to the JCS point is what happens in the USSR and what its likely response to the crisis situation
might be. Once the attack hits, Soviet crisis management capabilities will be severely strained. All sorts of rumors will abound initially. With respect to Soviet forces, if part of the force targeted survives, what will it do if communication with headquarters has been lost? Would the Soviet operators respond against their general war targets?

5. "Any strike against the USSR should include consideration of suppressing or penetrating Soviet air and missile defenses; several hundred weapons are included for this purpose in every SIOP option as an integral and mutually supporting element..."

This conclusion is not obvious. Like SAM suppression over NVN, the desirability of expending sorties on air defenses can be evaluated in terms of the reduced effectiveness of attack sorties when the defenses are left intact. The measures are higher attrition, higher abort rates, and less accurate delivery.

With respect to strategic attacks, attacking radar sites or air defense launchers with a small number of missiles could be more than repaid by the "wide open door" provided for the follow-on attack forces.

However, these attacks could also be destabilizing if they rendered the defended Soviet systems vulnerable.

In attack planning we could minimize this destabilizing risk and the "overhead" cost of removing defenses. For example, we could design attacks so that the defense systems were not attacked, or were attacked only enough to penetrate through to the soft targets they covered. To do the analysis, we would need:

--- Attack corridors into Soviet soft nuclear systems, including defenses only for the soft target and defenses for other targets as well.

--- U.S. system effectiveness in attacks on these Soviet defenses.

6. The last JCS argument is "that there are existing theater forces under CINCPAC and SACEUR command and contingency plans for less than all-out attack."
One might say that this is the JCS "hedge" on the logic of JCS posture on the ALPHA list, including ALPHA targets in all the attack options.

Practical Problems in Changing the SIOP

There are certain practical problems involved in working with the SIOP:

-- Annually, there is a review of the SIOP during which targeting of systems is changed. At present, adjusting the SIOP after these reviews takes about six months.

-- The retargeting time can be improved. When SAC obtains the integrated command and control system for Minuteman, costing up to $700 million, retargeting time could be reduced from 90 to 180 days to 17 days. Now, however, it is about six months.

-- Another constraint on retargeting Minuteman is the time and technical resources needed to change the guidance and control instructions in the missile itself. A specialized team is needed (there are about 100 of these) and the task can require up to eight hours per missile. This latter constraint will keep SIOP retargeting time above 14 days.

-- Changes in submarine targets can be accomplished more quickly. However, during a period of alert there is no way of ascertaining whether the submarine has received the new instructions because the submarine cannot communicate to the NCA without giving its position away.

-- Present weapon laydown criteria optimize target destruction for the full ALPHA list. To do this and protect against failures in launch, penetration, or weapon delivery, extensive cross targeting is done: This means a system with multiple warheads will engage several targets. In order to optimize destruction of a few specific targets, some changes to targeting would be necessary.

I believe that by focusing on withhold options you can obtain an "expanded SIOP" giving the President attack options varying in types and numbers of targets engaged. Since these options would be part of the SIOP, they could be promptly executed on Presidential order, without:
-- Elaborate readjustments of the weapons and delivery systems which would take from several days for a few weapons to a very minimum of three weeks for the entire force (using computer reprogram capabilities not yet available).

-- Degrading the general deterrent by expending crucial parts of it.

Proposed ALPHA Withhold Options

I think it would be useful, in order to start moving ahead on expanding the SIOP, for you to propose one or two ALPHA withhold options. This could be done by asking General Wheeler to have the Joint Targeting people design two options, along the following lines:

**ALPHA SUB-OPTIONS**
(Withhold all ALPHA but these targets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>U.S. Force Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attack soft undefended Soviet nuclear systems in remote areas (not near urban/industrial complexes).</td>
<td>In each case, U.S. forces expended should be less than Soviet forces destroyed. This means the USSR targets must be co-located or that re-loadable U.S. systems would be used, e.g. bombers or SSBNs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attack soft USSR nuclear systems (in remote areas) where only the defenses for the system attacked are eliminated.</td>
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**RECOMMENDATION:**

I recommend that you meet with General Wheeler to discuss the SIOP. At the meeting, you would raise some of the issues mentioned above (talking points are attached at Tab B).

Approve__________  Disapprove__________
In addition, I recommend that you ask General Wheeler to have the Joint Staff targeting analysts examine ALPHA withhold options involving only a few attacks on some soft Soviet targets. I have also prepared a description of the two options discussed above (see Tab C).

Approve ____________  Disapprove ____________

Enclosures
Tab A - Mel Laird's paper
Tab B - Talking points
Tab C - Description of options
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs  
White House - 39  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Henry:

You will recall that we recently discussed with the President options available to U.S. and Allied military forces under contingency situations. The Joint Staff has prepared a list of representative examples which I am forwarding together with General Wheeler's comments on the subject (TAB A).

As General Wheeler notes, the list of options prepared by the Joint Staff does not by any means exhaust all the possibilities. I believe that the subject is of such importance that you and your staff may wish to consider originating a NSSM which would lead to further study of "sub-SIOP" options.

Enclosure

Tab A - General Wheeler's comments
MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Options for Military Action

1. Recently the question of options available for military action by US and Allied forces under contingency situations was raised during discussions with you and the President. Attached is a list of options with representative examples of use which was prepared by the Joint Staff.

2. There are options inherent in the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) and portions of the SIOP can be executed on a selective basis, such as a retaliatory attack on Task Alpha (nuclear threat) targets only. The SIOP, however, is based on mutually supporting tasks and options and execution of a selected element would have to be weighed against the degradation that would result to the overall plan. For example, a US preemptive attack against only the northern tier of USSR missile sites could provoke an immediate and massive nuclear response with resulting destruction of a large part of our retaliatory forces. The list of options therefore also includes the use of nuclear weapons from other sources such as SACEUR in which case the SIOP would remain intact and available for catastrophic situations.

3. You may recall that one of the questions raised during our discussions with the President concerned US-sponsored use of Israeli forces in retaliation for Arab military activity. An attack on the Aswan Dam was mentioned. Such an option was considered in the preparation of the accompanying list; however, it was judged to be extremely escalatory in nature and would, in effect, be an "overkill" response. It was therefore deemed militarily unsound.
4. Although the list of options included herewith obviously does not include all the possibilities, I feel that it provides a useful framework for future discussions and it indicates that there is a wide spectrum of military actions ranging from low-order contingencies through general nuclear war available at the present time.

5. It is suggested that you may wish to forward a copy of the enclosed information to Dr. Kissinger.

Earle G. Wheeler
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff
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**Action:**
- EMPLOY COBA 7.40/37 USN REQUEST
- NEUTRAL 2.40 P3/37

**Reason:**
- NEUTRAL 2.40 P3/37
- Etc.

**Rationale:**
- Etc.
- Etc.

**Object:**
- Etc.
MEETING WITH GENERAL WHEELER 
ON SIOP 

TALKING POINTS 

(You might start off the discussion thanking General Wheeler 
for preparing the SIOP descriptions Mel Laird furnished us 
last spring. Moreover, you also might want to say that, though 
a study of less than all-out nuclear exchanges is being conducted 
NSSM 64 by an interagency task force, you consider a discussion 
of the SIOP too sensitive for the NSSM 64 forum. 

1. ALPHA Tasks 

As I understand the briefings we have received on the current 
SIOP, all our attack options start out with an attack on the Soviet 
nuclear forces -- Task ALPHA. I also recall that this task takes 
the largest part of our forces -- 58-74%. Accordingly: 

-- we might focus on the ALPHA task at least initially; 

-- we might further restrict ourselves to U.S. pre-emptive 
attacks, since a discussion of retaliation presupposes assumptions 
about how the Soviets attack us and how quickly we respond. 

(General Wheeler may want to furnish detail on this subject for 
a future discussion.)
Could you explain the current JCS rationale for the ALPHA task?

(Allow time for discussion -- draw on argumentation in memorandum as necessary.)

2. Withhold Packages

I understand there are a number of withhold elements in the SIOP, besides the Moscow Peking Missile Packages. What I only understand vaguely, however, is the degree of real alternatives they afford:

--- Could you describe these withhold elements in more detail?

--- Could we design additional withhold packages as a way of obtaining additional sub-SIOP attack options?

(Allow time for discussion.)

3. ALPHA Sub-Options

So that we might move ahead on expanding the SIOP, it might be useful if I were to suggest several ALPHA withhold options. (You could furnish General Wheeler the option description attached at Tab C).

--- Could your targeting people develop several ALPHA withhold options along these lines?
4. Discussions of Task CHARLIE - Urban/Industrial Targets

At a future meeting, I would like to continue our discussion, focusing further on Task ALPHA, and also looking at Task CHARLIE, an attack on urban/industrial targets. I understand that only about 11% of our forces are committed to this task and that they are expected to destroy 70% of the Soviet targets in the urban/industrial category:

-- Can you provide us with any further information of the types and numbers of targets and the rationale for selecting them to prepare me for a future session to discuss the CHARLIE task?
**SIOP WITHHOLD OPTIONS**

**ALPHA SUB-OPTIONS**
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