

September 15, 1964

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

We discussed the question of Chinese nuclear weapons today, first in a lunch at the State Department given by Secretary Rusk for McNamara, McCone, and myself, and later at a meeting with the President in which Rusk, McNamara and I were with him in the Cabinet Room (McCone having left at a time when we thought the President would not be able to join us).

At the luncheon we developed the following position:

(1) We are not in favor of unprovoked unilateral U. S. military action against Chinese nuclear installations at this time. We would prefer to have a Chinese test take place than to initiate such action now. If for other reasons we should find ourselves in military hostilities at any level with the Chinese Communists, we would expect to give very close attention to the possibility of an appropriate military action against Chinese nuclear facilities.

(2) We believe that there are many possibilities for joint action with the Soviet Government if that Government is interested. Such possibilities include a warning to the Chinese against tests, a possible undertaking to give up underground testing and to hold the Chinese accountable if they test in any way, and even a possible agreement to cooperate in preventive military action. We therefore agreed that it would be most desirable for the Secretary of State to explore this matter very privately with Ambassador Dobrynin as soon as possible.

(3) We agreed that it would be much preferable to conduct any overflight of Chinese nuclear test facilities in a plane with Chinat markings and a Chinat pilot. In the course of the afternoon, Director McCone produced a proposal that such a flight be staged [REDACTED]

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These preliminary decisions were reported to the President in the Cabinet Room, and he indicated his approval. The Secretary of State now intends to consult promptly with the Soviet Ambassador.

*m/s*  
McG. B.

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