

November 20, 1958

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By LW NLE Date 8/14/96

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Discussion at the 387th Meeting
of the National Security Council,
Thursday, November 20, 1958

Present at the 387th Meeting of the National Security Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Acting Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; and the Director, Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization. Also present and participating in the Council actions below were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Attorney General; the Director, Bureau of the Budget; and the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission. Also attending the meeting were the U.S. Ambassador to NATO; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Deputy Secretary of Defense; the Secretary of the Army; the Secretary of the Navy; the Secretary of the Air Force; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Acting Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; the Chief of Naval Operations; the Acting Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force; the Director, U.S. Information Agency; the Acting Director, International Cooperation Administration; the Chairman, Interdepartmental Intelligence Conference; the Chairman, Interdepartmental Committee on Internal Security. The following members of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee Staff also attended the meeting: General Gerald C. Thomas, Director; Brig. General Willard W. Smith, Deputy Director; Lt. General Thomas F. Hickey, Director Designate; Colonel Charles L. Granger, USMC, Colonel James O. Beckwith, USAF, Colonel William R. Calhoun, USA, Colonel Lloyd D. Chapman, USAF, Captain Edward L. Dashiell, USN, Colonel Kenneth R. Dyer, USA, Captain David L. Whelchel, USN, DR. R. J. Smith, CIA, and Colonel S. J. West, USAF. Also attending the meeting were the Special Assistants to the President for National Security Affairs and for Science and Technology; Major John Eisenhower for the White House Staff Secretary; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the main points taken.

1. REPORT BY THE NET EVALUATION SUBCOMMITTEE
(NSC Actions Nos. 1260, 1330, 1430, 1463, 1532, 1641 and 1815; NSC 5816)

Mr. Gordon Gray introduced General Thomas, the Director of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee Staff, and explained the general purpose

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of the meeting. (A copy of Mr. Gray's remarks are included in the Minutes of the Meeting and another is attached to this Memorandum).

General Thomas summarized the methodology of the report that was about to be given. He pointed out the change which had been made last year by the President in the directive to the Subcommittee and also referred to the use made by the Subcommittee of the current National Intelligence Estimate of Soviet intentions and capabilities. General Thomas also pointed out the assumptions under which this year's evaluation had been developed and noted the participation in the evaluation of representatives from all four of the military services as well as representatives of each of the other responsible Government agencies.

General Thomas then introduced Brig. General Willard W. Smith, Deputy Director of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee Staff, who discussed the basic assumptions concerning the assumed Soviet attack on the U.S. which was mounted by the Soviets in mid-1961 with strategic surprise. This was followed by General Smith's discussion of the detailed assumptions made by the U.S.S.R. with respect to the nature of the attack which it made on the continental U.S. General Smith followed with a discussion of the detailed assumptions underlying the U.S. retaliatory attack on the Soviet Union.

Upon the conclusion of General Smith's portion of the report, Colonel William R. Calhoun, USA, described the Soviet attack on the continental U.S. Captain Edward L. Dashiell, USN, subsequently described the U.S. retaliatory attack on the Soviet Union as well as the U.S. military posture after the attack on the U.S. by the Soviet Union.

Colonel Calhoun next expounded the estimate of the damage inflicted on the U.S. by the Soviet attack and Captain Dashiell described the damage inflicted on the Soviet Union by the U.S. retaliatory attack. Dr. R. J. Smith of the Central Intelligence Agency, also a member of the Subcommittee Staff, discussed the potentialities of the Soviet clandestine attack on the U.S. which concluded the formal presentation.

In his concluding statement General Thomas emphasized the difficulties involved in attempting to achieve realistic assumptions with regard to the evaluation as a whole. There were obviously many uncertainties with respect to the military capabilities of the U.S. at a period as distant as mid-1961 and of course even more uncertainty as to the military capabilities of the Soviet Union at the same time. Despite these uncertainties, General Thomas believed the assumptions were sufficiently realistic to bear out the essential validity of the evaluation.

General Thomas also invited the Council to take a backward look at the previous reports of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee in relation to the findings of the report just rendered. There was, he pointed out, an essential similarity in the findings of all the reports since the first one was delivered in 1954. These findings were listed in a chart described as "Recurrent Conclusions".

Mr. Gray reminded the President and the Council that this was General Thomas' last appearance as Director of the Subcommittee Staff, and that his successor, ^{by} General Thomas F. Hickey, was present this morning. Thereafter, Mr. Gray presented a recommendation in substantially the following language:

"You will recall that the 1957 report involved a retaliatory attack confining itself to a primarily military target system. For 1958, the President directed that the exercise concern itself with the retaliatory objective of immediately ~~paralyzing~~ the Russian nation, rather than concentrating on targets of a military character although not entirely ruling out particular military targets which the Subcommittee believed would significantly contribute to paralysis of the Russian nation.

"The presentation you have just heard has concluded that a substantial reduction of the capability of the USSR to recover would be accomplished by the concentration of a U. S. retaliatory effort against a combined military-urban industrial target system as opposed to a strictly military target system. The conclusion also was that such an effort would destroy the Soviet nuclear offensive capability."

"A central aim of our policy is to deter the Communists from use of their military power, remaining prepared to fight general war should one be forced upon the U.S. There has been no suggestion from any quarter as to a change in this basic policy. However, as you know, NSC 5410/1, the so-called 'war objectives' paper is in the process of review. These matters are inextricably interwoven.

"In the light of these facts, it seems to me that it is important for you, Mr. President, to have before you, for your consideration, an appraisal of the relative merits, from the point of view of effective deterrence, of retaliatory efforts directed toward:

- "1. Primarily a military target system; or
- "2. What might be felt to be the optimum mix of a combined military-urban industrial target system."

"Such appraisal should also take into account the requirements of a counter-force capacity which might conceivably be called upon in the case of unequivocal strategic warning of impending Soviet attack on the U.S. The question here might be whether the character and composition of such a force would be adequate to the purposes of 1 or 2 above, and vice versa.

"These matters have been under intensive study in the Department of Defense. If it is agreeable to you I shall be glad to work with Mr. McElroy and General Twining to determine the best way to accomplish such an appraisal, relating it as necessary to the review of the so-called War Objectives paper, bearing in mind that the knowledge and views of the State Department and other Federal agencies would be importantly involved."

When Mr. Gray had concluded his suggested Council action, the President said he was convinced that what Mr. Gray proposed to have done was essential for the obvious reason that in today's presentation of the U.S. retaliatory attack on the Soviet Union, the U.S. had as targets every city in the U.S.S.R. with a population of over 25,000 people. In view of this very large number of urban targets, the President believed that we must get back to the formulation of the series of targets in the Soviet Union destruction of which would most economically paralyze the Russian nation. Turning to General Twining and addressing him and other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the President said that he could remember well when the military used to have no more than 70 targets in the Soviet Union and believed that destruction of these 70 targets would be sufficient. Now, however, a great many more targets had been added. He accordingly expressed his approval of the suggested action by Mr. Gray.

Secretary McElroy expressed his view that the dispersal of the hardened Soviet ICBM bases introduced a new element in the picture because even if we succeeded in destroying the cities and urban centers of the Soviet Union, these missile sites would still enable the Soviet Union to retain an add-on capability with their long-range missiles.

In response to Secretary McElroy's point, the President commented that in this morning's presentation the Soviets delivered all of their ICBM's in the first two hours of their attack on the U.S. Secretary McElroy agreed that this was the case but said that there was some doubt as to whether this was a sound assumption as to the Soviet use of their ICBM's. The President replied that the presentation assumed that we are trying to destroy the will of the Soviet Union to fight. If in the first thirty hours of the nuclear exchange

Eisenhower: Papers, 1953-61
(Ann Whitman file)

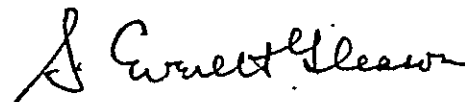
the U.S. succeeded in accomplishing the degree of devastation in the Soviet Union that had been outlined in this morning's presentation, we would already have accomplished our purpose of destroying the will of the Soviet Union to fight. One could not go on to argue that we must require a 100 per cent pulverization of the Soviet Union. There was obviously a limit - a human limit - to the devastation which human beings could endure.

Secretary McElroy expressed his agreement to the action recommended by Mr. Gray and the President brought the meeting to a conclusion with an expression of warm congratulations to General Thomas and his associates and also a welcome to General Hickey who would be taking over henceforth from General Thomas.

The National Security Council:

- a. Noted and discussed the Annual Report for 1958 of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee, pursuant to NSC 5816, as presented orally by the Director and other members of the Subcommittee Staff.
- b. Noted the President's request for an appraisal of the relative merits, from the point of view of effective deterrence, of alternative retaliatory efforts directed toward: (1) Primarily a military target system, or (2) an optimum mix of a combined military-urban industrial target system. Such an appraisal is to take into account the requirements of a counter-force capacity and whether such a counter-force capacity would be adequate for (1) or (2) above and vice versa. The Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs are to determine the best means of defining and accomplishing such an appraisal, relating it as necessary to the current review of NSC 5410/1 and the interests of the Department of State and other Executive agencies.

NOTE: The action in b above, as approved by the President, subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs for appropriate implementation.



S. EVERETT GLEASON

