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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

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Authority NND 931542

May 24, 1961. *Wm Lee*

By WDD NARA, Date 12/5/97

MEMORANDUM

TO: IO - Mr. Cleveland
FROM: IO - Woodruff Wallner *W.W.*
SUBJECT: Meeting of the Principals on Future United States Policy on Nuclear Test Negotiations

The Secretary opened the meeting by raising four questions: a) is there any real prospect for a nuclear test agreement? b) is there a real and serious requirement by Defense for resumption of nuclear tests? c) can we on political grounds and in view of broader implications accept an indefinite unmonitored moratorium on nuclear testing? d) if we feel we must resume nuclear testing, what are the political implications?

Mr. Dean found the prospects for a test agreement dim but said such agreement could not be completely excluded. The Soviets were dissatisfied with the United Nations and might be proceeding on the theory that they could tolerate no organization which had the power to make decisions affecting Soviet security. Troika, therefore, may be basic to Soviet policy. On the other hand, there was some evidence of Soviet concern with the difficulty of their public position on tripartite administration. The Secretary recalled a conversation with Gromyko in which the latter indicated the Soviets are not going to let their interests rest on decisions made by others. The Secretary felt that general and complete disarmament was also a fundamental Soviet policy and thus the Soviets have the problem of weighing these two policies when they find they cannot adhere to both. In response to the Secretary's question, Mr. Dean said we could not give up the fundamental right of a single administrator although some window dressing for face-saving purposes might be devised to permit the Soviets to get off the tripartite hook in the test negotiations.

On the need for testing, Secretary Mc Namara distinguished between gross and net advantages and found the former overwhelming since testing would permit a very substantial reduction in the cost of nuclear weapons while at the same time making those weapons much more effective. Defense also believed that there was a possibility, although this was not as certain, for development of anti-ICBM systems if nuclear testing could be resumed. They believed atmospheric tests were probably unnecessary, that underground testing could provide the bulk of the necessary information, but that there was some possibility of a need for outer space testing in connection with anti-ICBM weapons. General LeMay also emphasized the importance of testing from the standpoint of proving existing systems. With respect to net advantages accruing from test resumption

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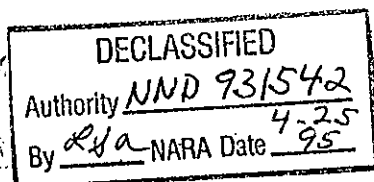
and assuming that the Soviets would also resume testing, Defense was much less clear, believing that in some areas the Soviets would improve their relative position and in other areas we might improve ours. Mc Namara concluded that on balance the existing differential between the United States and the Soviets would continue at at least present magnitudes and strongly urged test resumption. Mr. Wiesner said the effect of failing to test was a long-term problem and if we don't test and assuming the Soviets do, we would end up with a serious economic if not military disadvantage. On the Nth country problem, Defense representatives pointed out that the capital investment required to develop pure fusion weapons was relatively small and within the capabilities of most countries of the world. There was already considerable literature on the subject and it was by no means impossible that some country in pursuit of this objective might develop such a weapon.

In response to the Secretary's question as to why the Soviets were taking a position that might force us to test, two theories were advanced: 1) the Soviets might wish to force us to begin testing so that they can, and 2) they may have a different estimate than we of the feasibility of ultimate use of nuclear weapons and thus be relaxed on testing for themselves. Defense representatives said there was strong evidence, however, that the Soviets were working all-out on an anti-ICBM system in which case they might want to test. In response to the Secretary's question as to whether there was a feeling that we cannot afford not to move forward in the nuclear testing field because we don't know what others will do, Weisner agreed this was the case both from the point of view of the scientists and of the military. General LeMay echoed the military concern.

The Secretary said there was serious political disadvantages in going on with an indefinite moratorium in this field, but pointed out the serious political reaction we would have to expect were we to resume testing. Wiesner felt that the political impact of testing was of such importance that for the present, political considerations might be considered controlling. Mc Namara agreed but only as long as it was clear that we would ultimately test. The Secretary saw little distinction between seismic and weapons tests and thus saw no point in easing into the latter via the former. He asked what the time lag between decision and the first weapons test would be. Mr. Seaborg (AEC) believed proof testing could begin within 10 weeks after the laboratories were given the go-ahead sign and that this lead time could be shortened by several weeks by laying cables -- which might be a tip-off of intention -- in advance of a final decision to test. Mr. Mc Namara pointed out his concern that an announcement of, or detectable preparation for resumption of tests would lead to a build-up of public pressures against carrying out tests. Dean thought if we decided to resume testing, we should decide on the most fruitful test and really get something out of it.

The Secretary pointed

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The Secretary pointed out there would be a difficult problem of strategy if the Committee decided to resume testing. Mr. Murrow said that nothing he had heard in the meeting thus far provided an adequate basis for public explanation of resumption of testing. The only basis which he saw for public explanation would be if we could say that such testing was absolutely essential to the security and indeed the survival of the United States and the free world. The Secretary remarked that our public position would also be that we would stop testing as soon as the Soviets abandoned their impossible position in the test negotiations. Mr. McCloy agreed public reaction would be bad and was of the opinion that we didn't need to resume testing for the sake of the negotiations.

Mr. McCloy went on to say that we could not let the test Conference continue to drift. He saw a dilemma in the situation: while there were strong political considerations for not testing, there was also the possibility that continuation of a voluntary moratorium on testing might undercut our position on other disarmament matters. He wondered what the meeting thought of an idea he had had. Briefly, his thought was to talk to the Soviets along the following lines:

1. We reserve our freedom to resume testing;
2. We believe effective inspection and control to be an essential element in disarmament programs;
3. The Soviet position on this element as evidenced in the test talks was untenable;
4. We would not discuss disarmament with the Soviets on July 31 or table any plan for disarmament until the Troika question was settled.
5. If the Soviets wanted to raise the question in the United Nations it was fine with us.

In the United Nations we would then take the position that the Soviet proposal for general and complete disarmament was phoney. They had said they would accept any controls but in fact are proposing a tripartite administration which would make controls meaningless. Mr. McCloy thought it was possible to take this line with or without a resumption of nuclear tests.

Ambassador Dean then emphasized the need for a decision on the testing problem now since he found this important from the standpoint of strategy and tactics in the nuclear test talks. McCloy saw some need for a stimulus of some kind and it was for this reason he had suggested the above course of action for consideration.

Comment

The meeting ended without decision (The Secretary left early.) In my judgment, Defense failed to make an adequate case for resumption of nuclear testing at this time on national security grounds. I believe that the only way in which we could gain acceptance by free world opinion of a resumption

of nuclear testing

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of nuclear testing would be to convince the free world that this was not only in United States but also in their own vital security interests. At the present time, I do not believe that this can be done. I also believe it is important, and we have now requested, USUN comments on the implications for the United States in the United Nations of a resumption of nuclear testing.

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