

5 March 1958

Pages 1444 - 1452, incl.

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NOTE BY THE SECRETARIES

to the

JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

on

MANEUVERING AND EXERCISING OF SPECIAL MUNITIONS (U)

Reference: J.C.S. 2012/113

The enclosed memorandum by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, dated 25 February 1958, together with its attachments (Appendices "A" and "B"), is circulated for information.

R. D. WENTWORTH,

H. L. HILLYARD,

Joint Secretariat.

See 7/4 dtd 3-6-58.

See 7/4 dtd 3-18-58.

See Corrig. dtd 3-26-58.

See 7/4 dtd 4-3-58.

FOIA (b) (1) Joint Staff

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JCS 2019/287

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FOIA(b) (1) DTRA

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ENCLOSURE

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

The Honorable
Lewis L. Strauss
Chairman, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission

25 February 1958

Dear Lewis:

FOIA(b) (1) Joint Staff

Reference is made to your letter* of 15 January 1958, wherein you discussed certain aspects of the "Memorandum of Conversation" of the President - Prime Minister Meeting held at the Palais de Chaillot on 19 December 1957.

I concur with you that the advent of weapons in the sealed-pit configuration modifies to some extent the situation as it is outlined in the Memorandum of Conversation. A thorough and detailed analysis of the potential hazards resulting from mishaps with aircraft carrying the [redacted] weapon is being developed presently by the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force. This study will be considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and appropriate additional information will be promulgated when the study has been approved. Department of State Message Number 5324*** dated 31 January 1958, furnished the British with information on hazards related to an aircraft crash involving an atomic weapon for their use in answering questions in Parliament. This information should obviate any statement by the Prime Minister which could prove embarrassing to our respective governments.

Your understanding on the timing for the planned deployment of [redacted] is correct. It is currently planned that small quantities of these weapons will be introduced

* Appendix "A" hereto

** Appendix "B" hereto

*** State Department message to American Embassy London, 5324, dated 31 January 1958; on file in Joint Secretariat

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- 1445 -

Enclosure

into the United Kingdom effective 1 April of this year. However, the only flying of these weapons will be in their transport to appropriate storage sites. As I stated above, the maneuvering and exercising of sealed-pit weapons, such as SAC Maneuvers Dark Night and Iron Bar, is under consideration* by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I should add that this consideration extends to all weapons systems involving sealed-pit weapons. Except for alert exercises, which do not involve actual take-offs, normal tactical training over the United Kingdom and Europe is carried out with training shapes only.

Politically, it appears to be necessary that the British be notified prior to the introduction of [redacted]

[redacted] Specifically, I feel that they should be advised that we intend to introduce weapons which [redacted]

[redacted] In providing this information, we should also inform them of our safety rules. To this end, I have asked the Chairman of the Military Liaison Committee to obtain joint determination that such a statement would not contain important design and fabrication information, and is therefore transmissible.

In connection with providing the above information to the British, I do not feel that we will be provoking additional questions or establishing a requirement for additional safety conferences. We have already provided the British Government information on probabilities, and the extent of the radiation hazard, which should be adequate to satisfy the circumstances. However, I do feel that the utmost discretion must be utilized in providing this additional information to the British Government in order that the question does not become a local political issue.

I have been advised that the President is cognizant of the fact that his approval of such special operations as Dark Night and

* See J.C.S. 2012/113
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Iron Bar is not tantamount to his approval of all training flights carrying atomic weapons. However, I will discuss this matter with him to insure that a misunderstanding does not exist. As you know, his approval for the large-scale SAC maneuvers was sought because these exercises were outside of the DOD - AEC Maneuver Agreement and because of our political relations with the United Kingdom.

I appreciate your thoughtfulness in bringing these matters to my attention.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ NATE

APPENDIX "A"

UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

General N. F. Twining
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

15 January 1958

Dear Nate:

I have very recently received a "Memorandum of Conversation"* of a President-Prime Minister meeting held at 10:45 a.m., 19 December at the Palais de Chaillot. I am attaching a copy. As the next to the last sentence implies, a draft of the memo was shown to me by Fred Reinhardt while in Paris. I pointed out to him at the time that there were one or two technical matters that were not completely correct. If the memo correctly reflects what was said, I believe certain further actions should be taken. The purpose of this letter is to tell you of my suggestions.

The memo reports that the President pointed out "that the bombs were harmless until assembled in an actual emergency." Later the memo records that you stated that "no radioactivity resulted from a crash of a bomber carrying nuclear bombs unless the fire was particularly intense and then it did not extend beyond the limits of the plane itself."

Both of these statements are (I believe) correct at present. This belief, of course, is based on my understanding that there are no gun-assembly type bombs presently in the UK and that capsules are never placed in the IFI of other bombs while those bombs are in flight.

However, with the advent of weapons of the sealed-pit configuration, this situation will change shortly. It is my understanding

* Appendix "B" hereto

that you intend to deploy [redacted] within two or three months. These, of course, are plutonium-bearing, [redacted] weapons. In case of detonation on crash there would be plutonium scattered outside of the HE danger area, and this might necessitate evacuation of personnel and even clean-up operations. Furthermore, Mark 39 bombs, Mod 1, are currently entering the stockpile. This particular version of this bomb is of the [redacted] configuration; however, it contains no plutonium. Nevertheless, in the event of a crash and ensuing detonation of the high explosive, the scattering of U-235 in the surrounding area, while not hazardous, could be detected by radiation instruments. Thus, their deployment to the UK, if you should so plan, might also create a lesser problem in this context.

I believe it would be wise, therefore, prior to deployment of the first [redacted] weapons to the UK that the Prime Minister should be further advised. Otherwise he might make some statement, particularly if an accident occurred, which could embarrass both our Governments. In connection with advising the Prime Minister, the manner in which this is explained would have to be carefully handled so as to avoid violation of the law. Our change of design from that of capsule weapons to [redacted] is, I believe, important nuclear design information.

FOIA(b) (1) Joint Staff

A second point I note from reading the memo is that the President implied that he approved flying of all nuclear weapons on training or maneuvers. You apparently eased this statement by saying that these operations were normally carried out in connection with rotation of units. However, I am troubled lest the President, because he has been asked to approve the specific operations Dark Nite, Iron Bar, Mule Train, Rough Game, and Snow Flurry, assumes he approves all maneuver and training flights carrying

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nuclear weapons. I believe such is not the case. With regard to weapons in AEC custody, the DOD and AEC jointly approve any maneuver use. With regard to those in DOD custody, approval rests, I believe, entirely within the DOD. I suggest that at an early meeting with the President you point out these facts to correct any wrong impression he may have.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ LEWIS L. STRAUSS
Chairman

APPENDIX "B"

UNITED STATES DELEGATION
TO THE
NATO HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING
PARIS, FRANCE, DECEMBER 16-18, 1957

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: December 19, 1957
Time: 10:45 a.m.
Place: Palais de Chaillot

Participants:	<u>UNITED STATES</u> The President The Secretary General Twining Mr. Reinhardt General Goodpaster	<u>UNITED KINGDOM</u> Prime Minister Macmillan Foreign Secretary Lloyd Sir Richard Powell
---------------	--	--

Subject: U.S. Bombers based in Great Britain
Copies to: S/S, G, C, EUR, S/AE, Embassy London, OSD, AEC

The Prime Minister said he wanted to be able to say in Parliament that he had confirmed with the President the existing agreement concerning the question of U.S. bombers in Britain. The British, he said, rested on the arrangements Attlee had worked out with Truman. Personally he liked this kind of agreement but wondered whether we should regularize the arrangement, which consisted merely of an exchange between Ambassador Franks and some official in the State Department. The Prime Minister reiterated that he would like to be able to say that he had confirmed the arrangement. It was not, he thought, the proper subject for a treaty since it rested on the President's authority as Commander in Chief, and he asked if the President agreed. The President agreed.

There was discussion of the circumstances under which American bombers carried nuclear bombs over Britain. The President

pointed out (1) that the bombs were harmless until assembled in an actual emergency; (2) that training operations of this character were undertaken only on his authority, and (3) that such operations were infrequent.

General Twining observed that these operations were normally carried out in connection with the rotation of units, that nuclear components were never in the bombs and that contrary to the statement attributed to General Powers U.S. bombers based in the UK were never used on patrol over Great Britain. Local patrolling was carried out by fighter planes. The bombers however, were always kept ready.

The Prime Minister said he understood then that the bombers carried nuclear bombs only (1) because of relief (rotation) operations or (2) in training exercises out to sea and back which required the special approval of the President. The Prime Minister added that Quarles and Powell had talked about the question of regularizing technical arrangements with the USAF including such matters as fire in case of a crash. In reply to a question of the Secretary of State, General Twining observed that no radio activity resulted from the crash of a bomber carrying nuclear bombs unless the fire was particularly intense and then it did not extend beyond the remnants of the plane itself.

* * * * *

Cleared with General Goodpaster. In reviewing this memorandum Admiral Strauss noted certain technical exceptions. Cleared with Secretary of State.

6 March 1958

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NOTE BY THE SECRETARIES

to the

HOLDERS OF J.C.S. 2019/287

(Maneuvering and Exercising of Special Munitions (U))

In a letter for the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, dated 1 March 1958, on the above subject, a copy of which was furnished the Joint Chiefs of Staff by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense stated:

"General Twining has shown me copies of recent correspondence* with you which deals in part with the transport of sealed-pit weapons.

"I believe that correspondence** between the State Department and the United Kingdom subsequent to the Paris meeting has corrected any misunderstanding that may have existed as to hazards which might occur in future aircraft accidents which could involve sealed-pit weapons. As regards the question of specific authorizations for carrying weapons on maneuvers, I feel there is no misunderstanding on this point; however, I agree with General Twining that the utilization of stockpile weapons for maneuvers as covered by our Agreement*** of February 6, 1956, should be brought to the President's attention at an early date and certainly before sealed-pit weapons become involved in major exercises or maneuvers.

FOIA(b) (1) Joint Staff

- * Enclosure to J.C.S. 2019/257
- ** State Department message to American Embassy London, 5324, dated 31 January 1958; on file in Joint Secretariat
- *** Not on file in Joint Secretariat

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471.6 (8-11-11) memo

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"As regards the general problem of routine transport of [redacted] weapons and their use in local as well as long-range maneuvers such as DARK NIGHT and IRON BAR, there are some remaining policy and procedural matters to be resolved. Broadly stated, it has been the Department's desire and intention, as conveyed* to you by the Military Liaison Committee on May 31 and December 27, 1956, to continue the use of war reserve weapons, including [redacted] types, for maneuvers provided the hazards involved in accidental detonation are found to be acceptable. Intensive analyses of the potential hazards have been made in the meantime and, as General Twining pointed out, the Chief of Staff, USAF, is studying the air transport problem with a view to submitting his recommendations as to regulations to be prescribed for such movements. These recommendations together with those of the other Services will form the basis for the establishment of appropriate regulations for both logistical movements and maneuvers.

"Without attempting to anticipate the exact nature of the controls which need be established, I would assume that in general when logistical movements are the responsibility of the Department of Defense procedures similar to those established for the movement of the MB-1/W-25 will apply.

"As regards the maneuvering of [redacted] weapons, as distinct from their transport to and from storage sites, it is clear that similar regulations will be necessary. Thorough consideration has been given to the feasibility of a special maneuver stockpile which would be similar in all respects to war reserve weapons, with the exception of nuclear material content; however, the cost of such a maneuver stockpile plus the fact that such weapons would be of no value to forces maintained on an alert status precludes the adoption of this concept.

* Not on file in Joint Secretariat

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"Accordingly, I feel it necessary that we proceed on the assumption that through the exercise of proper controls the hazard arising from the use of [redacted] weapons for loading and small tactical exercises, as well as for more extensive maneuvers, can be maintained at an acceptable level. When appropriate regulations to this end have been recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I would propose to give them my personal consideration, coordinate them with the Commission and to bring the matter to the attention of the President for his recognition and approval."

FOIA(b) (1) Joint Staff

R. D. WENTWORTH,
H. L. HILLYARD,
Joint Secretariat.

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18 March 1958

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FOIA(b) (3) - 42 USC 2168(a) (1) (C) - FRD State Dept/Joint Staff

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FOIA(b) (3) - 42 USC 2168(a) (1) (C) - FRD

HOLDERS OF J.C.S. 2019/287

(Maneuvering and Exercising of Special Munitions (U))

In a letter to the Chairman, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, dated 12 March 1958, on the above subject, a copy of which was furnished the Joint Chiefs of Staff by the Office of the Secretary of Defense the Chairman, Military Liaison Committee stated:

"Reference is made to the letter* to you from the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, dated 25 February 1958, concerning the dispersal of [redacted]

"The Military Liaison Committee for the Department of Defense, pursuant to Section 144b of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954,** has determined that the following information about the [redacted] relating to the design or fabrication of atomic weapons will not reveal important information concerning the design or fabrication of the nuclear component of an atomic weapon to the United Kingdom:

[redacted]

However, as with other nuclear weapons, some probability exists that if the weapon were subjected to fragments, uncontrolled fire or impact, the high explosive involved could be detonated resulting in

FOIA(b) (1) Joint Staff/DTRA

* Enclosure to J.C.S. 2019/287

** On file in Joint Secretariat

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an explosion of a magnitude less than that produced by a weight of TNT corresponding to the weight of the weapon. In case of such an accidental detonation, no nuclear explosion would take place although nuclear materials in the weapon would be scattered by the explosion and would constitute a limited radiological hazard.'

* "The Atomic Energy Commission is requested to ^{join} ~~joint~~ the Department of Defense in the foregoing determination.

"A conference between representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States on 'Anticipated Hazards Which May Be Encountered at the Scene of an Accident Involving Atomic Weapons' is now scheduled to begin on March 26, 1958. The Commission's decision in this determination by that date would be most helpful."

R. D. WENTWORTH,
H. L. HILLYARD,
Joint Secretariat.

* *Per Corrig. dtd 3-26-58.*

ENCLOSUREDEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
Military Liaison Committee

25 March 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Subject: Joint Determination of Atomic Information for
Release to the United Kingdom

- References:
- (a) Letter* to Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission from Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, dated 25 February 1958, concerning the above subject
 - (b) Letter** to Chairman, Military Liaison Committee from Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, dated 24 March 1958, concerning the above subject.

1. In reference (a) you discussed joint determination of a statement which could be used to advise the British that we intend to introduce weapons into the United Kingdom [redacted]

[redacted] The Atomic Energy Commission and the Military Liaison Committee, for the Department of Defense, have jointly determined that the following statement may be transmitted to the United Kingdom without revealing important information concerning the design or fabrication of the nuclear components of an atomic weapon:

[redacted] As with other nuclear weapons, some probability exists that if the weapon were subjected to fragments, uncontrolled fire or impact, the high explosive involved could be detonated resulting in an explosion of a magnitude less than that produced by a weight of TNT corresponding to the weight of the weapon. In case of such an accidental detonation, no nuclear explosion would take place although nuclear materials in the

* Enclosure to J.C.S. 2019/287

** Appendix hereto

FOIA (b) (1) DTRA/State Dept

FOIA (b) (3) - 42 USC 2168 (a) (1) (C) - FRD

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N/H of JCS 2019/287

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Enclosure

weapon would be scattered by the explosion and would constitute a limited radiological hazard."

2. A copy of reference (b), which concerns the above determination, is forwarded for your information.

/s/ HERBERT B. LOPER
Chairman

FOIA (b) (1) DTRA
A FOIA (b) (3) - 42 USC 2168 (a) (1) (C) - FRD

UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

24 March 1958

Honorable Herbert B. Loper
Chairman, Military Liaison Committee
to the Atomic Energy Commission

Dear General Loper: FOIA (b) (1) State Dept
FOIA (b) (3) - 42 USC 2168 (a) (1) (C) - FRD

This is in answer to your letter* of March 12, 1958, concerning the transmittal to the United Kingdom of certain safety information on the [redacted] You state that Commission decision prior to March 26, 1958, would be most helpful in view of forthcoming discussions with the British.

The Commission believes that the first sentence of the paragraph you propose for transmittal, namely:

[redacted]

may reveal important nuclear design information to the British.

Such a statement calls attention to [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] We believe

that the following sentence, if substituted for the first sentence in your proposed paragraph, would accomplish the same purpose:

[redacted]

The revised paragraph which would be considered as SECRET, RESTRICTED DATA, will then read as follows:

[redacted]

[redacted] As with other nuclear weapons, some probability exists that if the weapon were subjected to

* Note to Holders of J.C.S. 2019/287, dated 18 March 1958.

fragments, uncontrolled fire or impact, the high explosive involved could be detonated resulting in an explosion of a magnitude less than that produced by a weight of TNT corresponding to the weight of the weapon. In case of such an accidental detonation, no nuclear explosion would take place although nuclear materials in the weapon would be scattered by the explosion and would constitute a limited radiological hazard."

The Commission determines that the revised paragraph, quoted above, may be communicated to the United Kingdom without revealing important information concerning the design or fabrication of the nuclear components of an atomic weapon.

We assume that you will inform the British of the added measures that you have adopted to prevent accidental dropping of a weapon and that the information set forth above will permit the giving of satisfactory assurances that a nuclear detonation will not take place in the event of an accident. However, should there be additional information that must be transmitted and which you believe requires our joint judgment under the Act, I request that we be informed.

The Commission is notifying the Joint Committee of the above determination.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ LEWIS STRAUSS

Chairman.