

July 24, 1958

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT
July 24, 1958, following NSC

Others present: Secretary Dulles, Assistant Secretary Gerard Smith, Secretary Quarles, Chairman McCone, Admiral Strauss, Mr. George Allen, Mr. Gordon Gray, Mr. Karl Harr, General Goodpaster

Mr. Harr said the meeting had been requested to consider two topics -- the proposed tests of atomic air weapons off Eglin Field, and cancellation of the "open" clean weapon test shot in the Pacific.

Secretary Dulles said that consultations with Cuba and Mexico regarding the proposed Eglin shots lead him to recommend strongly the postponement of the shots there and transfer to the Pacific. The Mexicans would greatly deplore the shot. Also, to open a new area, particularly in the present situation, would have a more adverse impact on world opinion than he thought we should risk. He referred to the chance of alienating our allies at a crucial time, especially Mexico.

Secretary Quarles brought out the costs of a decision to transfer or postpone the shot. These weapons are part of our air defense, and must be tested at some time to establish confidence on the part of our troops and the American public that they will be effective. As to the suggestion for transferring the shot to the Pacific, most of the value would be lost elsewhere because we could not establish the environment needed for a realistic test of the system. The President asked if the operation could be accomplished in two parts, with high explosives to test the environment, and a test of the missile out on the range. Mr. Quarles indicated the bulk of this objective is being accomplished now. After further discussion, in which Mr. Quarles recognized that the weight of argument was against going ahead on the project at this time, the President approved transfer or cancellation, and asked for study of some combination of activities to accomplish the same objectives.



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Mr. Harr then opened the second subject -- cancellation of the "open" test in the Pacific. AEC had asked for reconsideration of this project on grounds of lack of enthusiasm and conflict with the Geneva "peaceful uses" meeting planned for September. With the unsettled state of the world opinion regarding the Middle East, the project seemed questionable. Admiral Strauss recalled that the test had been proposed as a demonstration, and agreed that the agreements for cancelling it have validity. There may, however, be charges of insincerity against the United States. He thought these could be gotten around. Mr. McCone said the AEC had initially wanted to cancel the tests but had now swung around in their thinking, although opinion is divided. Mr. Allen supported cancelling the operation.

The President recalled that when this project was proposed, there was great public interest over testing, but now there seems to be largely indifference.

On Secretary Dulles' suggestion, Mr. Gerard Smith offered a compromise proposal -- which is to allow the foreign scientists to study at the Livermore Laboratories the results of a clean weapons test but not to attend the shot. This seemed to be a suitable solution all around, and the President asked that the group try to work it out.


A. J. Goodpaster
Brigadier General, USA



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