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212. Memorandum of Discussion at the 318th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, April 4, 1957¹

Washington, April 4, 1957

[Here follow a paragraph listing the participants at the meeting and agenda items 1–3.]

4. *U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea* (NSC 5514; Progress Report, dated March 6, 1957, by OCB on NSC 5514²)

Mr. Cutler briefly summarized the highlights of the Progress Report on the subject, and suggested that the Council consider them in connection with the next item on the agenda.

*The National Security Council:*³

Noted the reference Progress Report on the subject by the Operations Coordinating Board.

5. *U.S. Policy Toward Korea* (NSC 5514; NSC 5610; Memos for NSC from Executive Secretary, subject: “U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea”, dated October 12 and November 6, 1956; NSC Actions Nos. 1624 and 1660; NSC 5702; Memo for NSC from Executive Secretary, subject: “Evaluation of Alternative Military Programs for Korea”, dated January 30, 1957;⁴ Progress Report, dated March 6, 1957, by OCB on NSC 5514; NSC 5702/ 1; Memo for NSC from Executive Secretary, subject: “U.S. Policy Toward Korea”, dated April 2, 1957⁵.)

Mr. Cutler briefed the Council at some length on the contents of NSC 5702/1, emphasizing the differing views of the Departments of State and Defense with respect to the introduction of certain dual conventional–nuclear weapons in connection with the modernization of U.S. forces in Korea. He pointed out that the difference in view was most apparent in paragraph 19–b of NSC 5702/1, reading as follows:

“[b. The timing of the introduction of dual conventional nuclear weapons under paragraph 9–a shall be decided upon by the Secretaries of State and Defense, in consultation with the Director of Central Intelligence, only after they shall have determined that publishable evidence establishes Communist violations sufficient to warrant such action by the United States.]*⁶”

“*State proposal.”

(A copy of Mr. Cutler’s briefing note is filed in the minutes of the meeting.)

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At the conclusion of his briefing, Mr. Cutler called on Secretary Dulles. Secretary Dulles stated that he had long been quite sympathetic to the point of view of the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff with respect to modernizing the U.S. forces in Korea by the introduction of new weapons, including some which had dual conventional–nuclear capabilities. Indeed, he said, he had already gone a long way toward meeting these views. Reluctantly, however, he had been forced to conclude that he could not go all the way desired by the military, because he believed that if we introduced the two disputed items (280 mm guns and 762 mm rockets), the political disadvantages of such a course of action would be greater, in his mind, than the

military advantages. (At this point Mr. Cutler distributed to the members of the Council a “List of New Weapons for U.S. Forces in Korea”,⁷-copy of which is filed in the minutes of the meeting.) Secretary Dulles went on to state that there was no doubt that the Communists had substantially violated the terms of the Armistice in introducing new weapons into North Korea. Secretary Dulles said he had gone over all of the available evidence, both the classified evidence which, of course, could not be publicly revealed, and the unclassified evidence, which could be. The sum total of all this evidence did not, however, in Secretary Dulles’ view, actually prove and demonstrate violations of the Armistice by the Communists of the magnitude which we in this country believe has actually occurred. He repeated that he did not doubt that these violations had been on a very large scale, even if the United States was not in a position to demonstrate this fact to the world. On the other hand, continued Secretary Dulles, there was no evidence of the Communist introduction of weapons with atomic capabilities into North Korea, and he personally doubted that this had happened, because he thought it very unlikely that the Soviets would entrust atomic weapons to the Communist Chinese or to the North Korean armed forces.

Secretary Dulles thought it was also germane that most of the evidence that we have of Communist violations of the Armistice had been obtained prior to August 1956, when the activities of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission had been curtailed. At the time that we succeeded in curtailing these NNSC activities, we had informed the United Nations that this was the only alteration in the Armistice Agreement that the United States was seeking, and that we proposed to adhere to all the [Page 422] remaining portions of that Agreement. In sum, not only was the publishable evidence of Communist violations rather meager, but also, in a sense, the United States was estopped from making use of the evidence, since we had informed the UN last August that we sought no other changes in the Armistice terms beyond the change relative to the NNSC teams.

Secretary Dulles then pointed out the feeling of the State Department that the introduction of the 280 mm guns and the Honest John 762 mm rockets, [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] would cause serious repercussions around the world. Most of our friends and allies would feel that the United States had violated its own solemn agreement to observe the Armistice terms. Likewise, we should become a focal point for a tremendous Soviet propaganda campaign. The effect on our friends and allies would be considerable. In support of this thesis, Secretary Dulles revealed that he had last December mentioned to Macmillan that the United States was proposing to modernize its forces in South Korea. The Prime Minister, whom Secretary Dulles described as a pretty hard-headed man, expressed himself as strongly in favor of the modernization of U.S. forces, [2 lines of source text not declassified].

Secretary Dulles also pointed out the serious effect of such a course of action on the announced willingness of the sixteen nations to join with us again to resist aggression in Korea in case the Communists resumed hostilities. Secretary Dulles thought that this was an important commitment on the part of the sixteen allied nations in Korea, and that we should do everything we could to keep the commitment alive. The proposed course of action also was certain to stir up serious repercussions in Japan. Secretary Dulles therefore asked the question whether it was really worthwhile to be regarded by our friends and allies as violators of a solemn international agreement simply in order to get these two particular weapons in the hands of our forces in Korea. After all, there was a considerable list of other new weapons which would go far to modernize U.S. forces in Korea despite the absence of the 280 mm gun and the Honest John rocket. To add these last two items, Secretary Dulles repeated, would bring us to the point where the situation was positively disadvantageous, [4 lines of source text not declassified]. In this contingency, Rhee might well use the violation of the Armistice Agreement as a pretext for launching his much-desired march into North Korea. All these were the reasons which explained the State Department position.

At the conclusion of Secretary Dulles’ remarks, Mr. Cutler called on the Acting Secretary of Defense, but Secretary Robertson⁸ requested that Admiral Radford be invited to speak first.

Admiral Radford said that he first wished to say that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been very concerned about the [Page 423] violations of the Armistice terms by the Communists and the need for U.S. counter-measures, and had been pressing ever since 1954 for some sort of solution. Indeed, the matter had been discussed several times with the representatives of the sixteen nations, and Admiral Radford said that he personally had made two presentations to these representatives. He had come away on both occasions with a strong belief that the representatives of the sixteen nations were absolutely content with the status

quo in Korea, and were in no way moved by his presentation of the actualities. Admiral Radford explained this attitude of satisfaction as a result of the fact that there was no pressure on the military forces of these allied nations because there were practically no forces left in Korea except those of the ROK and of the United States. In any event, Admiral Radford doubted very much that the sixteen-nation agreement mentioned earlier by Secretary Dulles was of any great military significance, though perhaps it had political value. He reasoned here that if fighting were resumed by the Communists in Korea, the United States would have to bear most of the brunt.

With particular respect to paragraph 13(d) of the Armistice Agreement, Admiral Radford pointed out that it was so strictly worded that the United States would get into just as much hot water if it introduced the other new weapons proposed for the U.S. forces in Korea as it would if the 280 mm guns and the Honest John rockets were also included. That is, if we were going to meet difficulty in introducing any new equipment into Korea for our forces, we might just as well go the whole hog and introduce the entire list, including the two disputed items.

Admiral Radford said that the Joint Chiefs also felt that as far as the military people around the world were concerned, there was general agreement that the Communists had not observed the Armistice. Indeed, their violations had been of an extreme type, even though Admiral Radford agreed with Secretary Dulles in doubting that the Communists had introduced atomic weapons into North Korea. There was no particular reason why they should at this time, because Soviet planes capable of carrying atomic bombs could be got very quickly to the Yalu River in the event that they were needed. In summary, Admiral Radford stated that the Joint Chiefs believed that from the military point of view anything short of the total proposal submitted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the package deal in South Korea, would be inadequate to meet a surprise attack by the Communists on South Korea.

Secretary Robertson observed that in addition to the strong views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as stated by Admiral Radford, he would like to add another consideration—namely, one from the domestic political point of view. First, however, he [Page 424.] pointed out that the Defense Department did not share the apparent view of the Department of State that once we had secured the removal of the NNSC teams the United States would seek no further change in the Armistice Agreement and in particular with respect to paragraph 13(d) of these terms. Returning to his initial point. Secretary Robertson indicated that a number of prominent members of Congress, as well as distinguished citizens like Dr. John Hannah,⁹ had recently been to Korea and had come back with very strong views about the inadequacy of our defenses. Secretary Robertson warned that as a result the Administration would be exposed to very difficult questions as to why it was not affording our troops in Korea the maximum possible protection.

Mr. Cutler observed that the discussion up to this point had made very clear the breadth of the disagreement between State and Defense. It appeared to him that the Joint Chiefs' attitude on the modernization of U.S. forces was, so to speak, an all-or-nothing attitude. Admiral Radford confirmed Mr. Cutler's impression.

Secretary Dulles replied to the views earlier expressed by Admiral Radford and Secretary Robertson by repeating his belief that if we proceeded to modernize our forces with all the weapons suggested except the 280 mm gun and the Honest John rocket, such a course of action would not constitute a breach of the Armistice Agreement, but could be regarded rather as an interpretation of paragraph 13(d). With respect to the problem of Congressional criticism, Secretary Dulles believed that we could point out to our critics that we were using a whole lot of new weapons to modernize our forces apart from the two types which we were presently withholding.

At this point the President inquired whether at any time in the history of the United States this country had deliberately broken the terms of an international agreement. Turning to Admiral Radford, the President observed that the Admiral appeared to be carrying matters to extremes when he stated that paragraph 13(d) of the Armistice Agreement made it possible for the United States to send in a new type of weapon, such as a jet aircraft with nuclear capabilities, as a replacement for a weapon that was no longer in production in the United States. Such a course of action did not appear to the President as a violation of the Armistice Agreement.

Admiral Radford replied that weapons like the 280 mm guns, which were primarily defensive in character, were really more important to our forces in Korea than was the stationing of squadrons of atomic capable jet aircraft in South Korea. [Page 425] In point of fact, the Defense Department was not contemplating the permanent stationing of squadrons of jet-atomic aircraft in Korea, but instead wished to rotate squadrons to South Korea from Japan and elsewhere in order to provide familiarity with the terrain. In any event, he repeated that weapons like the 280 mm guns would be vital to the defense of cities like Seoul which were close to the North Korean border.

Thereafter, Mr. Cutler directed the Council's attention to paragraph 19, as quoted above, and said that this seemed to put the question to the President in clear terms. Mr. Cutler pointed out that the arrangements for the new military program in Korea constituted essentially a package deal. The active divisions of the ROK Army were to be reduced in phase with the modernization of U.S. forces in Korea. It seemed to Mr. Cutler to be the view of the Defense Department that it would be undesirable to go forward with a portion of the U.S. modernization program unless the program was complete and included the 280 mm guns and the Honest John rockets. Also, Defense presumably doubted the willingness of the ROK to reduce the number of active divisions unless these two important items were included in the U.S. modernization program.

Admiral Radford commented that the two disputed items seemed more important to the Department of Defense than all the rest put together, and he doubted very much whether the South Koreans could be brought to agree to reduce their active divisions unless the U.S. modernization program included these two items.

The President stated that of course it was the responsibility of the Department of State to gauge the political effects of a military course of action. He tended to agree, he said, with Secretary Dulles that this particular moment, [3-1/2 lines of source text not declassified]. However, the President did speculate as to whether, if the 280 mm guns and the Honest John rockets were introduced along with other weapons, the fact of their introduction would ever be observed by the Communists or the Armistice Commission. Admiral Radford pointed out at once that it was necessary to report each item of replacement, which was why he had felt that some of the military items which the State Department had felt it would be appropriate to introduce would leave the impression of being as great a violation as the two items questioned by the State Department.

Secretary Dulles observed that public reactions are not always based on the pure logic of the situation. Whatever the logic, the fact was that we would get a hell of a repercussion around the world if we gave our forces the 280 mm gun and the Honest John rocket. He again repeated that he had made every effort to accommodate himself to the position of the Department of Defense. In fact, in the course of his briefings in the State Department in preparation for this meeting, he had argued [Page 426] vigorously in favor of the Defense Department position, but in the last analysis he had failed to convince himself that these two items should be included.

Secretary Robertson inquired of Secretary Dulles what further evidence the latter thought would be required in order to convince our friends and allies of the large-scale Communist violation of the Armistice terms. Secretary Dulles doubted if any further evidence would so convince them, and repeated that the State Department was still firmly of the opinion that the changes in the weapons for our forces in Korea should be made as an interpretation of the terms of the Armistice rather than being based on a breach of the Armistice terms. Perhaps it was true that we could not induce Rhee to approve our package military programs and reduce his active divisions unless these two disputed weapons were included. This, however, was no reason to go along with Rhee, because essentially Rhee wanted to see the Armistice Agreement completely destroyed. Secretary Dulles added that the position he was taking today on this dispute was not to be interpreted to indicate that we could not, perhaps in a year or two, find it possible to add the 280 mm guns and the Honest John rockets to our modernization program for the U.S. forces in Korea.

Mr. Cutler turned to the President and said that the President seemed to agree with the Secretary of State. The President replied in the affirmative, [5 lines of source text not declassified]. There was a job of education to be done, and he accordingly doubted the wisdom of agreeing with the proposed action of the Department of Defense. He therefore suggested that Council action on this paper be held in abeyance until we could talk this issue over with some of our reliable allies, particularly our NATO allies.

Admiral Radford pointed out to the President [2 lines of source text not declassified]. The President replied that even so, we still needed our alliances, and we must therefore move cautiously. It would be better if Secretary Dulles and Mr. Allen Dulles and Admiral Radford discussed this matter with the Standing Group of NATO.¹⁰

Admiral Radford repeated his view that the publicly available facts on Communist violations of paragraph 13(d) of the Armistice Agreement were just as effective [1-1/2 lines of source text not declassified]. He said, however, that there was a meeting of the Military Committee of NATO next Saturday,¹¹ and an approach to the problem might be made at that time. Secretary Dulles added that he would feel much more secure if even one solid ally like Great Britain could be brought to see [Page 427] this matter as we saw it and agree on the wisdom of introducing the 280 mm gun and the Honest John rocket.

*The National Security Council:*¹²

- a. Noted and discussed the draft statement on policy on the subject contained in NSC 5702/1, prepared by the NSC Planning Board pursuant to NSC Action No. 1660-b; in the light of the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff transmitted by the reference memorandum of April 2, 1957.
- b. Deferred action on NSC 5702/1 pending consultation with selected allies (particularly NATO allies) by the Departments of State and Defense.

Note: The action in b above, as approved by the President, subsequently transmitted to the Secretaries of State and Defense for appropriate action.

6. Reimbursement for U.S. Logistic Support of Other UN Forces in Korea (NSC Action No. 858¹³.)

*The National Security Council:*¹⁴

Noted and concurred in the view that the request for legislation required to carry out the policy on the subject in the reference NSC Action, should be postponed until the next session of Congress.

S. Everett Gleason

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1. Source: Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, NSC Records. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Drafted by Gleason on April 5.[↵]
 2. See [Document 204](#).[↵]
 3. The following paragraph constitutes NSC Action No. 1694, approved by the President on April 8. (Department of State, S/S-NSC (Miscellaneous) Files: Lot 66 D 95, Records of Action by the National Security Council)[↵]
 4. See [footnote 1](#), [Document 199](#).[↵]
 5. See [footnote 1](#), [Document 210](#).[↵]
 6. Brackets in the source text.[↵]
 7. Presumably the list attached to [Document 209](#).[↵]
 8. Acting Secretary of Defense Reuben B. Robertson.[↵]
 9. John A. Hannah, President of Michigan State University and former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Personnel, 1953-1954.[↵]
 10. The Standing Group of NATO consisted of the United States, United Kingdom, and France. The Standing Group was the executive agency for NATO, responsible for strategic guidance in areas in which NATO forces operated.[↵]
 11. April 6.[↵]
 12. Paragraphs a-b and the Note that follows constitute NSC Action No. 1695, approved by President Eisenhower on April 4. (Department of State, S/S-NSC (Miscellaneous) Files: Lot 66 D 95, Records of Action by the National Security Council)[↵]

13. NSC Action No. 858, which outlined the conclusions relating to “Additional United Nations Forces for Korea” reached by the NSC on July 23, 1953, is printed in Foreign Relations, 1952–1954, vol. XV, Part 2, p. 1425.↵
14. The following paragraph constitutes NSC Action No. 1696, approved by President Eisenhower on April 8. (Department of State, S/S–NSC (Miscellaneous) Files: Lot 66 D 95, Records of Action by the National Security Council)↵

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