

UNCLASSIFIED

2373

21 JULY 1948

MEETING AT THE WHITE HOUSE  
ATOM BOMB CUSTODY

Meeting at the White House today with the President, members of the Atomic Energy Commission, Secretary Royall, Secretary Symington and Mr. Carpenter, the latter the Chairman of the Military Liaison Committee of the National Military Establishment (liaison with the Atomic Energy Commission) David Lilienthal, Chairman of the AEC, and his four other associates.

Subject of the meeting was the presentation of a formal request of the National Military Establishment for an Executive Order from the President turning over custody of the atomic bomb to the military establishment, the chief reasons being (1) that the user of the bomb, who would ultimately be responsible for its delivery, should have custody of it with the accompanying advantages and familiarity, etc., which this would bring, and (2) concentration of authority -- unified command.

Lilienthal based his objection to the transfer of the bomb on the broad general theory that the atomic bomb was not simply another weapon but an instrument of destruction which carried the widest kind of international and diplomatic implications; that the law which created the AEC dealt with certain constitutional relationships of the President; that actually greater efficiency in terms of surveillance, further developments, etc., could be had by leaving custody with the AEC.

The President made the observation that the responsibility for the use of the bomb was his and that was the responsibility he proposed to keep. He said he would reserve decision.

JF:JEC  
7-22-48

UNCLASSIFIED



National Security Archive,  
Suite 701, Gelman Library, The George Washington University,  
2130 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20037,  
Phone: 202/994-7000, Fax: 202/994-7005, [nsarchiv@gwu.edu](mailto:nsarchiv@gwu.edu)