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JCS 2458/48

5 December 1965

Pages 1 - 9, incl.

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DISTRIBUTION: B

MEMORANDUM BY THE J-3

for the

JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

on

SAC AIRBORNE ALERT INDOCTRINATION PROGRAM (U)

DECISION

1. At their meeting on 3 December 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after making amendments, approved the recommendations contained in paragraph 4 of the enclosed memorandum.

2. This Decision replaces page 1. Holders are requested to substitute the additional attached revised pages 4, 5, and 6, incorporating the amendments, and to destroy the superseded pages in accordance with security regulations.

3. The memorandum in the Appendix was forwarded as JCSM-872-65, dated 9 December 1965, to the Secretary of Defense. Copies of this paper are being forwarded to CINCSAC.

4. In that the Commandant had expressed direct concern of the Marine Corps in this matter, the provisions of Title 10, US Code 141 (c), applied and were followed.



DECLASSIFIED BY AUTHORITY OF
JOINT STAFF

940500 (93-F-2014)

DATE

CASE #

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ENCLOSURE A

MEMORANDUM BY THE J-3

for the

JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

on

SAC AIRBORNE ALERT INDOCTRINATION PROGRAM (U)

1. Problem. To consider a decision* by the Secretary of Defense to discontinue the SAC Airborne Alert Program effective 1 July 1966. 1 2 3
2. Information. Since 1961 SAC has conducted a continuous Airborne Alert Indoctrination Program at the rate of 12 sorties per day. The indoctrination program possesses an inherent capability to increase to a maximum level of 1/8th of the combat ready B-52 force (currently 80 sorties per day) within 28 1/2 hours of a directive to do so. Since April 1961 the Air Force has provided an "on the shelf" provisioning capability to sustain continuous airborne alert operations at the 1/8th level, for a period of 12 months. 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
3. Discussion. The decision by the Secretary of Defense is based on three considerations, namely: (1) missiles have now replaced bombers as the major strategic retaliatory weapons; (2) improved strategic warning systems provide a capability to launch 50 per cent of the B-52 force within available warning time, and; (3) the unlikely eventuality of a crisis which would require a 1/8th level continuous airborne alert operations to be sustained for 12 months. 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
With respect to the three conditions set forth, other factors should be considered in order to place the proposed cessation of airborne alert operations in proper context. 21 22 23

GROUP 3
DOWNGRADED AT 12 YEAR INTERVALS
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* Enclosure B hereto

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Enclosure

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4. Recommended Action. It is recommended that: 1
- a. The proposed memorandum in the Appendix be forwarded 2
 - to the Secretary of Defense. 3
 - b. Copies of this paper be forwarded to CINCSAC. 4
 - c. This paper NOT be forwarded to US officers assigned 5
 - to NATO activities. 6
 - d. This paper NOT be forwarded to the Chairman, US 7
 - Delegation, United Nations Military Staff Committee. 8
5. Coordination. Time limitations precluded formal 9
- coordination with the Services. 10

Action Officer: Col C. A. Tate, USAF
Strategic Operations Division, J-3
Ext 78508/78522

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Enclosure A

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON D C 20301

JCSM-872-65

9 December 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Strategic Air Command Airborne Alert Program (U)

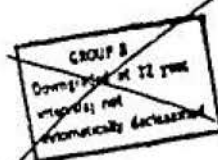
1. (S) Reference is made to the decision to discontinue SAC airborne alert operations on 1 July 1966, which is reflected in Subject/Issue Consideration paper, No. 402, FY 1967 Budget.

2. (S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered the implications of this action and are agreed that the SAC Airborne Alert Indoctrination Program should not be discontinued in the absence of a careful military evaluation of the program. It is the present judgment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the SAC Airborne Alert Program, with certain modifications, should be continued beyond 1 July 1966. This view is based upon the following considerations.

3. (TS) Our warning capability has improved since the airborne alert concept was initially introduced; however, it is not capable of precluding the possibility of surprise attack. The USSR is credited with the capability to attack a considerable area of the United States with submarine-launched ballistic missiles. If the Soviets choose to initiate an attack with submarine-launched ballistic missiles, a portion of our strategic missile and aircraft forces could be destroyed. Under these circumstances, the B-52 programmed weapons on airborne alert could provide additional secure strategic retaliatory weapons with which to respond.

4. (TS) Although our missile force capabilities have improved, reliance on ballistic missiles alone as the major strategic retaliatory weapon has undesirable shortcomings. Such reliance would simplify

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100-100000
JCSM-872-65

Approved: 1
Final Review: A

100-100000 9 December 1965

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the Soviet defensive problem and, in the absence of an airborne alert, would tend to provide him with greater assurance of success in an offensive effort against our over-all strategic capability. Despite the fact that the number of missiles in our strategic retaliatory force has grown, the preponderance of megatonnage is still scheduled to be delivered by the B-52 aircraft.

5. (S) To be an effective force in times of crisis, airborne alert must be capable of full expansion in minimum time. To retain such a capability, it is necessary to maintain the framework for expansion on a day-to-day sustained basis. The continual exercise of facilities, procedures, equipment, and personnel is essential in order to provide the desired reaction to crisis on-call when most needed. If the day-to-day exercise of airborne alert were to be discontinued, it could not be reinstituted on a timely basis in response to a crisis. The government-to-government agreements, for example, with respect to flight clearance, overflight, etc., could not be reestablished in the time frame now possible to attain a full 1/8th airborne alert, unless continuously exercised as in current operations. Moreover, an important benefit of the current indoctrination phase of airborne alert operations is the monitoring of the DMEW facilities at Thule, Greenland. Visual/electronic surveillance of these facilities is maintained on a continual basis at all times; thus, the airborne alert indoctrination itself becomes a positive link in our improved warning capability.

6. (S) While the present indoctrination level of operations (12 sorties daily) provides valuable over-all training benefits, some reduction is possible. The minimum level which would retain the essential elements of the airborne alert program, and the capabilities inherent in it, is six daily sorties. Concurrently, the capability to mount and sustain airborne alert at the 1/8th level of operations for a minimum period of 90 days is essential. With regard to replacement of replenishment spares, 90 days would provide sufficient time only to put into effect emergency legislative actions and to initiate special procurement procedures for these spares. An additional nine months' delay would occur before receipt of long lead time items (approximately 960).

7. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff are further agreed that the capability to sustain a 1/8th level of airborne alert operations for a minimum period of 90 days in times of crisis, in combination with our ballistic missiles, is an essential element of our over-all national strategic defense posture through FY 1967. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that:

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APPENDIX TO
SECRET

(S) (TS) (C) (U) (F) (G) (H) (I) (J) (K) (L) (M) (N) (O) (P) (Q) (R) (S) (T) (U) (V) (W) (X) (Y) (Z)

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a. The SAC Airborne Alert Indoctrination Program be continued at the reduced level of six sorties per day.

b. Funding be provided to permit a 1/8th level of airborne alert operations to be sustained for a minimum period of 90 days, along with maintenance of one-year levels of approximately 960 long lead time replenishment items.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Signed

EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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JCS 2150/13

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Appendix to
Enclosure A

(Revised by Decision - 9 December 1965)

Subject/Issue: B-52 Airborne Alert (Air Force)

Obligational Authority
(in millions)FY 1966

<u>Av.</u>	<u>Supp.</u>	<u>FY 1967</u>
93.7	-	103.9
96.7	-	40.3
96.7	-	66.6

Service estimate, Oct. 1
Alternative estimate No. 1
Alternative estimate No. 2

Description: In order to decrease the vulnerability and reaction time of strategic bombers, provision was made in 1961 to enable 1/8 (12 aircraft) of the SAC B-52 force to go on continuous airborne alert (A/A) for 12 months if required in a national emergency. A full A/A was flown for 26 days during the Cuban crisis. Currently, twelve B-52's are maintained on continuous A/A (A/A indoctrination) which comprises 25% of the regular B-52 flying program or approximately 100,000 hours. Each squadron has 2 aircraft on A/A on the average of once every 10 months. A portion of these hours (about 37%) also provide normal training. The remainder of the A/A force is part of the ground alert until the decision to fly the full A/A is made.

Evaluation: Conditions in 1961 which made A/A necessary were primarily the lack of adequate strategic warning and the heavy reliance on the B-52 as the major strategic retaliatory system. Conditions are now different. Missiles have replaced the bombers as the major strategic retaliatory weapons. Improved strategic warning systems have resulted in a demonstrated capability to get 50% of the B-52 force airborne within available warning time.

A crisis requiring a full 12 month A/A appears increasingly unlikely, and a more reasonable period would be one or two months. There is, of course, legislative authority to perform and fund whatever A/A is required in a crisis situation. Further, the impact of prolonged A/A on the wear out of the aging B-52 fleet would appear to detract from rather than enhance our deterrent posture.

The changed conditions permit consideration of eliminating the requirement for 12 aircraft on continuous A/A and using the special inventory of spares set aside for the A/A contingency; or alternatively, substituting a reasonable level of periodic exercises for a continuous A/A and reducing the special A/A inventory.

Elimination of the requirement for 12 aircraft on continuous A/A would involve increasing the flying hours provided for normal training requirements to replace those now accomplished during A/A indoctrination

APPENDIX
JUL 1967

Subject/Issue: B-52 Airborne Alert (Air Force)

Evaluation: (continued)

flights and would assume performance of certain training activities during normal training rather than A/A indoctrination (e.g. weapon loading). Such action would reduce, though not eliminate, the capability to fly limited A/A in a national crisis situation. If A/A were discontinued 1 July 1966, the following reductions could be made in the FY 1967 estimates:

	(millions)
Military Personnel (1800 spaces)	\$10.0
Operation and Maintenance	26.1
Procurement	27.3
	<u>\$63.4</u>

Military personnel savings derive from base maintenance support personnel directly associated with the level of flying hours. Operation and Maintenance savings are in POL (\$14.8 million), depot maintenance (\$8.8 million) and base maintenance (\$2.5 million). Procurement savings result from using a part of the stockpile of aircraft and missile (HQM2000) spares and reduction in consumption and J-57 engine overhaul spares.

Substitution of periodic exercises of shorter duration in addition to normal training would involve increasing flying hours for normal training requirements and providing flying hours for such exercises. A reasonable level of flying hours for exercises could be set at approximately 54,000 hours which would provide each squadron (2 A/A aircraft) with 1 exercise of four weeks duration or 2 exercises of two weeks duration each year. It would, of course, be possible to restructure normal training flying hours to more closely approximate A/A indoctrination or to select some lesser number of hours for A/A exercises with a proportional impact on dollar savings. Some level of training exercises would maintain a better capability to fly short duration A/A in a national crisis situation. If the 54,000 hour level of periodic exercises were substituted for A/A 1 July 1966, the following reductions could be made in the FY 1967 estimates:

	(millions)
Military Personnel (900 spaces)	\$ 4.9
Operation and Maintenance	12.6
Procurement	19.8
	<u>\$37.3</u>

It is of interest to note that the airborne alert spares stockpile for aircraft spares totals about \$107 million and missile spares \$16 million. Not all of these would be applicable to FY 1967 requirements. Thus, procurement savings could be expected to accrue in FY 1968 and later years until the stockpile was exhausted.

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Subject/Ref: 3-52 Airborne Alert (Air Force)

Evaluation: (continued)

The savings in either case do not include any amounts which may derive from reducing to DOB status two Spanish bases where KC-135's that support the airborne alert are based. Should a decision be made to reduce those bases to DOB status, such savings would be reflected as a part of the budget adjustments relating to base closures and reductions.

Alternatives:

1. Discontinue airborne alert effective July 1, 1966, but provide for those flying hours of normal SAC training which are now accomplished during airborne alert flights.

2. Discontinue airborne alert effective July 1, 1966, but provide for (1) those flying hours of normal SAC training which are now accomplished during airborne alert flights and (2) periodic exercises (54,000 hours) in order to maintain a better capability to fly short duration airborne alert in a national crisis situation.

Secretary of Defense Decision:

Date: November 29, 1965

The Deputy Secretary approved alternative #1.

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