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204. Memorandum From the Military Assistant to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Odom) to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Aaron)¹

Washington, July 17, 1980

SUBJECT

Meeting with Eizenstat on WH Study of Accidental Nuclear War

You already, I believe, have heard most of the arguments on this issue. Eizenstat believes it might be helpful politically for the White House to appear in charge and on top of a study and investigation of the chances of nuclear war.² Presumably this is in response to the NORAD false alert problem.³

Information

- DOD has already conducted a large study and several reports have gone to the President on the matter.
- Defense has briefed the press and Congress. The Congressional committee chairmen have been kept well informed from the beginning.
- Hugh Carter and Marty Beaman are strongly opposed to Eizenstat's study proposal. Their reasons include the fact that DOD has already done one and that to initiate such a study now would be to invite political trouble for the President. It would open a Pandora's box.
- I am unaware of any ground swell demand for such a study in the press or elsewhere. Senator Tower is being handled by DOD.

Considerations

- Thus far we have kept this matter away from the White House and in the Pentagon where it belongs. Why shift the focus to the President now?
- No study will satisfy even half its audience. It will merely invite all kinds of additional study issues and increase lack of public confidence.
- For the sophisticated Defense analyst, it could lead to debates about C3I vulnerabilities, debates we cannot win.
- The whole business of NORAD, the SIOP, etc. is a great curiosity. Mathematicians, scientists, and quacks will appear in droves to learn more, to provide copious advice, and to turn the system into a circus or analysts' amusement park.
- There may be some good reasons for a study, but they escape me.
- I have already received a press call from *Science 80* about this study. I warned Simmons that this would happen.

1. Source: Carter Library, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 42, Missile Warning Incidents: 11/79–8/80. Secret. Outside the System. Sent for information. Aaron initialed the memorandum next to the heading.↵
2. Not found.↵
3. See Documents 167, 190, and 193.↵