

MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON

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TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
November 17, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

FROM: John ^{gm} Matheny (Denis Clift)

SUBJECT: 2:00 p.m. Meeting with the President and Secretary of Defense

As you know, the President, Zbig and Harold Brown are meeting today at 2:00 p.m. to talk about wartime emergency procedures. Bill Odom of Zbig's staff was kind enough to give us a copy of Brown's memo which includes the topics for discussion (Tab A).

Briefly, the President indicated during a recent exercise (in which you participated) that his "decision handbook" was much too cumbersome and that he wished Defense to design a more succinct checklist to use. The initial Defense response is attached to Brown's memo.

The President also indicated that he was concerned about how to factor in the destruction of Soviet and Warsaw Pact conventional forces during a strategic exchange with the Soviet Union. He indicated that perhaps some sort of a decision matrix with respect to his current options would be an appropriate way to approach the problem. The bar graphs provided by Defense (at clip) attempt to address these two concerns by depicting the considerations involved in each case.

The discussion could become quite technical, but the main points to keep in mind are as follows:

- If submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) are inbound, then the President has roughly 5+ minutes to shape our response.
- If only ICBMs are involved, he could have as much as 17 minutes to do so. However, included in a response to Soviet ICBM launches would be a decision as to whether or not to risk destruction of a large portion of our own ICBMs. If the President considers such a risk unwarranted, then his decision time shrinks to that comensurate with the amount of our missiles he wishes to save.
- The two scenarios (SLBMs vs ICBMs) are interrelated and would most likely occur simultaneously. Therefore, the President probably has only a few minutes to decide 1) whether or not to strike Warsaw Pact conventional forces, 2) whether or not to launch our ICBMs before they come under attack, and 3) the resultant nature of our overall response.

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