

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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19 DEC 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: IVORY ITEM and Surprise Attack Response Procedures

Our meeting of 28 November on scenarios for and responses to a surprise missile attack was very fruitful from the Department of Defense's point of view; I hope you also found it so. Several questions and issues arose for which I can now provide answers or further background; others will require additional research.

Communications. Procedures currently exist for conducting communications checks with the White House Communications Agency (WHCA). These checks could easily be extended to you and conducted on a no-notice and non-interference basis. We have developed procedures and are ready to check communications both ways -- from you to me via the NMCC, or from me to you. I will work out final details with your military office.

Regarding more responsive communications to the Vice President and better White House evacuation procedure, Charles Duncan has met with the Vice President's staff on this matter. I believe that, as a result, action is well underway within the White House Communications Agency.

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Hardening. As you are aware, our fixed command centers and communications facilities are relatively soft to nuclear attack. We therefore now employ redundancy of communications and airborne command posts to accommodate this problem. We have investigated several alternatives for hardening facilities at the command center at Ft. Ritchie (ANMCC) ranging in depth from access level to several thousand feet deep. Costs for the deeper levels are high. An [redacted] depth capsule costing about 167 million dollars is currently under examination. To date we have not found an appealing solution.

With respect to hardening silos (a different matter), a hardening program has been completed for all 550 MINUTEMAN III silos and 180 of the 450 MINUTEMAN II silos. The entire program will be complete in September

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E.O.12958, Sec.3.6

PER 4/22/92 DOD/RE NLC-96-157

BY [signature] NARS. DATE 7/1/98

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1979; the hardness level is estimated to be [REDACTED]; at that level, uncertainties about hardness levels are substantial.

IVORY ITEM. Your request to observe an IVORY ITEM exercise from the NMCC is most welcome. I believe it will provide a useful insight into the procedures and processes that support SIOP decisionmaking and execution of our nuclear forces. We are working to develop the necessary computer-driven scenarios. I will make arrangements for the exercise as soon as the scenarios are ready, based on your schedule.

Bomber Recall. Bombers can be recalled after a positive control launch and before execution. After a SIOP Emergency Response has been executed,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There are [REDACTED] bomber weapons (B-52 and FB-111) on alert day-to-day. In the case of a [REDACTED] response, if these weapons were terminated before release on target, estimated Soviet fatalities would be reduced by about [REDACTED] reduction [REDACTED]. For a [REDACTED] response ("Alternative 2"), termination of these weapons would have a more significant impact, reducing Soviet fatalities by [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]

I would like to emphasize that the alternatives listed are designed to respond to a worst-case, massive surprise attack. They are limited in number, corresponding to the limited time and information that would be available.

A broad range of lesser responses would, of course, be available to you in a mounting crisis situation during which we would have placed more strategic forces on alert.

I believe we all have learned a great deal from the recent exercises about our Surprise Attack Response Procedures. In future discussions, we may want to focus more on crisis oriented, generated force scenarios.

cc: Vice President
Dr. Brzezinski

Harold Brown

Memorandum from Secretary of Defense Harold Brown to President Carter regarding the IVORY ITEM and surprise attack response procedures. Topics include: communications checks; hardening facilities to sustain nuclear attack; IVORY ITEM exercise; bomber recall. Department Of Defense, 19 Dec. 1977. U.S. Declassified Documents Online,
link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349128196/USDD?u=wash74137&sid=bookmark-U
Accessed 29 Mar. 2024.