

7 September 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL TAYLOR

SUBJECT: Strategic Air Planning and Berlin

1. Mr. Kayser's memorandum to you has four major parts: a basic memorandum outlining why he believes strategic air planning needs review in conjunction with Berlin planning; an alternative to SIOP-62, an annex which spells out a possible substitute for the initial attack of SIOP-62, this variation emphasizing surprise and a well coordinated, small-scale attack against Soviet intercontinental strategic capabilities; a brief analysis of SIOP-62, outlining its target philosophy, planning factors, and limitations; and an unaddressed draft request for a planning study on an alternative to SIOP-62. Each of these parts is summarized below.

2. Basic Memorandum. SIOP-62 is built around two concepts that may not be appropriate in a Berlin crisis: (a) it is essentially a strike second plan, and (b) it calls for attacks against a single set of "optimum-mix" targets. Two sets of possible circumstances suggest the need for supplementary and alternate plans, namely, we might be lured out of position by a false alarm or strategic feint by the Soviets, and we might desire to strike first.

a. A false alarm, if it resulted in the launching and recall of the Alert Force, would degrade our capabilities significantly for about 8 hours, at least. Further, the forces held back might not be prepared to attack appropriate targets, the highest priority ones having been assigned the Alert Force, now recalled.

b. The first-strike alternative might occur from escalation of military action around Berlin, which could force US to move from the local to the general war level.

This does not appear an appropriate response to repulse a 3 division attack, especially since SIOP-62 will almost inevitably alert the Soviets and, in response to our attacks on Soviet cities, they will respond in kind. Rather than this "massive retaliation" plan, small US forces should be used against military targets, and the bulk of our strategic forces should be held in reserve to deter Soviets from using their surviving forces against US cities.

c. Two recommendations follow:

(1) CINCSAC should look at the false alarm problem and make any necessary changes in his plans to minimize degradation of his force under such a development.

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(2) The JCS, Director SDF, and CINCSAC should consider an alternative to SIOP-62 for use in context of Berlin contingency planning, with emphasis on a first strike against the Soviets' long-range striking power.

3. An Alternative to SIOP-62. Its objectives would be to destroy the long-range nuclear offensive capabilities of the Soviet Union; to limit or avoid damage to the United States and its Allies; to limit damage to the Soviet Union compatible with the achievement of the military objective; to have capabilities in reserve available to press home the attack, if necessary, to dissuade the Soviets from using any residual forces against the US and Allied cities."

a. Reliability of present missiles is low, their accuracy uncertain, and problems of achieving simultaneity on target formidable. Therefore, ICBMs, theoretically ideal for this kind of minimum-warning attack, are ruled out at present time.

b. Bombers normally have been rejected as minimum-warning vehicles, primarily because they have operated in mass. But, if 88 DGZ's 2 fair bases, staging bases, and ICBM sites -- are assumed to constitute the essential targets, the destruction of which would paralyze nuclear threat to US, bomber use becomes more attractive. Further, if 26 of essential targets are staging bases that do not need to be hit in first wave, if 42 targets, close together, can be hit by 21 bombers (each bomber striking two targets within 20 minutes of one another), then to carry out this plan the US must only get 41 bombers into Soviet airspace and over their initial targets within a 15 minute period. (88 DGZ's - 26 staging bases - 21 colocated targets = 41.) Allowing a 25% attrition rate would mean that 55 aircraft, instead of 41, would have to penetrate Soviet airspace. It is further assumed that these aircraft could fan out and penetrate undetected at low altitudes, bomb, and withdraw at a low altitudes. In sum, success of this first strike would depend upon small numbers, dispersal, and low altitude penetration. This kind of attack, employing air burst 1 MT weapons, might result in Soviet casualties of less than 1 million and probably not much more than 500,000.

c. Two questions arise: How valid are the assumptions, and do we possess the skill and capability for such a raid. There are reasons to believe assumptions are reasonable. (These are amplified in some detail, based on statements in NIE's, with emphasis on deficiencies in Soviet low-level detection capabilities.)

d. There are risks as well as opportunities in this approach. With the initiative, the US could reduce the consequences of partial success and exercise some control over Soviet behavior. Once bombs had fallen on USSR, US non-committed forces could be alerted, civil defense measures instituted, air defenses alerted. Compared with SIOP-62, the small-scale,

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minimum-warning attack -- coupled with follow-on raids -- has distinct advantages with respect to recall, achievement of surprise, reduction in Soviet long-range capabilities before launch, and control over the number and character of initial and subsequent attacks.



e. Appendix. Damage assessment to the US from such a minimum-warning attack must deal with uncertainties, but rough calculations can be made.

(1) Damage to US will be affected by the number of Soviet long range forces surviving the initial attack; the numbers and types of targets the US attacked, and the influence of this on USSR war plans; the numbers and yields of USSR weapons per US target, especially in urban areas; the height of burst (which determines fall-out); civil defenses available to US, and uses made of them.


(2) US can attempt to influence Soviet behavior in peace by declaring use of nuclear weapons only against military targets unless enemy initiates a counter-city campaign. This may influence Soviet retaliatory choices by offering Soviets a powerful incentive to use whatever residual forces they command in a sensible manner.

4. An Appreciation of SIOP-62. The SIOP-62 target list is constant, with 1077 DGZ's, of which the Alert Force hits 480.

a. President Eisenhower established requirement that US forces should have the capability to achieve 

 To achieve specified assurance major tactics include: (1) low level attacks (65% of SIOP weapons are so scheduled); (2) high level penetrations that depend on mass; (3) principle of opening corridors through enemy air defenses. Cross-targeting (using different types of vehicles launched from different areas) is employed. Degradation factors are also calculated and allowed for. Allowing for these, the average assurance that one weapon will detonate on target is .

b. Flexibility of SIOP-62 only comes from ability to withhold preplanned strikes. Once the Alert Force is launched, however, selective withholding of its forces is not presently possible.

c. 

d. SIOP-62 is a rigid, all-purpose plan, designed for execution in existing form, regardless of circumstances. Rigidity stems from:

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(1) Military belief that USSR will strike cities, or urban-military targets; hence there is no need for selective US targeting.

(2) Military belief that, regardless of circumstances, USSR will be able to launch some weapons against US. However is real consideration given to possibility of interaction between ours and their targeting philosophy.

(3) Belief that winning general war means coming out relatively better than USSR, regardless of magnitude of losses.

(4) A fear that retaliation against cities after a surprise attack may be all we can do; with US command-control knocked out, alternative plans might leave residual US forces uncertain as to what to attack; US flexibility would become known, and decrease deterrence.

e. SIOP-62 is a blunt instrument, and its tactics almost make certain fulfillment of prophecy that enemy will be able to launch some weapons.

5. Draft Request for Planning Study. Alternative plans should be developed which concentrate on military targets required to eliminate Soviet intercontinental threat, and that minimize damage to Soviet population, industry and governmental authority. Unless justified, attack should be restricted to USSR. Emphasis should be given to minimum-warning attack with minimum sized force. Evaluation of plans should include Soviet force survival, damage to USSR, warning given USSR, damage to US, damage elsewhere, and US follow-on force capabilities. A progress report is requested by 25 September.

/s/

W.Y.S.