

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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October 20, 1964

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: President's meeting with Congressional Leadership, Oct. 19

The President met with the bipartisan Congressional Leadership on Monday, October 19, at 1:30 p. m. The President worked from the attached briefing memorandum (Tab A), and the discussion at the meeting generally followed the attached agenda.

The President opened the meeting by giving his welcome to the Leadership and his thanks for their return from their homes and whatever else they were doing. He then asked Director McCone to explain what we know of the Chinese nuclear effort.

Director McCone gave a general explanation of the capabilities of the United States in satellite reconnaissance, and then described our current understanding of their capabilities. A copy of the notes from which he worked is attached (Tab B). The Director was followed by Chairman Seaborg who gave a general discussion of the problems of the technology of nuclear weapons.

34(b)(1)

[REDACTED]

He indicated his belief that the Chinese would begin with a device and that it would take sometime to "weaponize" such a device. Chairman Seaborg indicated that the speed of the Chinese development would depend on how much the Chinese knew about the technical details -- quality of material and design details -- in weapon-making. He thought that if they had been fully cut off from what the Soviets knew for several years, it might be a matter of about 4 or 5 years before they would have a thermonuclear device. On the other hand, if they wished to make a thermonuclear explosion simply for its political and psychological impact, they could use the bulk of their production for this specific purpose and produce such an explosion considerably sooner.

The President asked Secretary McNamara to give an account of the military position of the United States vis-a-vis the Chinese bomb. Secretary McNamara began by discussing the dangers in the spread of nuclear weapons. He pointed out that there are half a dozen countries which could move rapidly in this direction if they made the political decision to do so, and that the cost of developing a nuclear device

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was now on the order of \$120 million -- not a prohibitive figure. He underlined the importance of finding ways and means to limit nuclear spread.

Secretary McNamara then turned to the strategic position of the U. S. and pointed out that Chinese targets as well as Soviet targets were included in our strategic planning.

3.4(b)(1)

[REDACTED]

The additional weapons were important for their damage-limiting capability.

Ambassador Thompson discussed the developments in the Soviet Union, along the lines of the attached memo of his talking notes (Tab C).

Senator Hickenlooper asked if the immediate meaning of the Chinese bomb was not more important in its psychological impact than in its military meaning. Secretary Rusk replied that we were taking every possible measure in consultation with interested nations to limit this psychological impact. We had given important assurances in the President's statements. The Secretary reported that a number of Ambassadors had told him that his warning of September 29 had been very useful in limiting the impact of this event.

Secretary Rusk explained that Foreign Secretary Gordon Walker would be coming to the U. S. soon for important discussions. The Secretary explained that one important item in these discussions would be the multilateral force. He explained the basic purpose of this force -- namely, to prevent the strains and stresses that would arise if major nations like Germany and Italy would remain permanently in a second-class status in the nuclear age. The Secretary said that he and his advisors were agreed that the one option that was not open to the alliance was an indefinite continuation of the status quo.

The President said that the Leadership of both parties was entitled to thanks for its achievements in the last session of Congress. He reported also on the case of Walter Jenkins. He first made clear his own sorrow over the personal tragedy of this case, and then pointed out that he himself had acted immediately when he learned about it. He read to the Leadership the attached letter (Tab D) from Secretary Dillon to the Acting Attorney General, and he said that he had an interim report from Director Hoover that there was no evidence of any breach of security. The President then read to the Leadership

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the attached statement (Tab E) which he planned to make to the press about the meeting, and asked if there were any objection. Senator Fulbright suggested one amendment, which the President accepted, and otherwise there was no objection.

Inf. B.

McG. B.