

THE SECRETARY

May 16, 1958

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~~TOP SECRET~~
Personal and Confidential

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH
ADMIRAL STRAUSS

Admiral Strauss discussed with me the question of suspension of testing. He indicated that if we thought it politically important it might be possible to announce before the end of the HARDTACK series that future testing would only be done under conditions which would assure no fallout. He gave me in this connection the report of his General Advisory Committee, copy attached.

I reported on [redacted] the testing of the smaller, e.g., less than one megaton weapons, and [redacted] that it might be possible to deal first with detection machinery covering the big explosions with a second phase which would be introduced only later dealing with the smaller tests. Admiral Strauss seemed to think this might be possible.

S/S
for
Lambert
chart.

I spoke of the composition of the experts who might function if this was agreed on with the Soviet Union. He suggested that there should be experts designated as jointly agreed between AEC, Defense, CIA and Dr. Killian. I said I thought we should have a meeting on this subject in the near future and I would try to set it up for next week.



[redacted]

Admiral Strauss spoke very highly of General Norstad's testimony before the Joint Congressional Committee and suggested I should thank him. Admiral Strauss thought that the amendments could be put through, particularly if we would accept the formula for disapproving agreements with other governments by a concurrent resolution. I asked how it would be if we accepted it by a two-third's vote. Admiral Strauss said he thought this might squeeze through and he would talk to Pastore about it if we wished.

I recalled my conversation with the President yesterday, in which

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PORTIONS EXEMPTED

E.O. 12958, SEC. 1.3 (2)(5)

State letter 6/28/83

NLE DATE 8/17/83

cc to
U's
shown
by S/S
to Murphy
Henderson
Foley
Smith
JFB
WBH saw

the President indicated that there was doubt whether Admiral Strauss would continue to serve beyond his present term. The Admiral expounded on his reasons for this. I said that if he should not continue to serve, I felt that his services should be kept available to the Government and that he might, for example, be a consultant in the State Department with a mention to be a sort of "ambassador-at-large" for atomic peace matters, having in this respect the personal rank of ambassador, if and as he went abroad. Admiral Strauss indicated that something like this would be agreeable to him.



Attachment

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See saw
note

May 7, 1958

The General Advisory Committee feels that the country is approaching a crisis with regard to the continuation of atomic tests on anything like the present scale. While most of the widely disseminated arguments against further tests are exaggerated and unsound, there is widespread uneasiness in the country over the prospect of constantly increasing radioactive fallout, and even many sincere scientists share this feeling. The statements of the President regarding a possible change of policy after the completion of the present series of tests make it important in our unanimous opinion that a statement should be issued before the end of this series, indicating that hereafter we are willing to restrict tests so that future fallout will be sharply reduced.



In our opinion the least concession which the Commission could offer with prospect of winning over a substantial part of the sincere opposition would be to say that hereafter the great bulk of our tests would be carried out underground, with no fallout production, and that tests in the atmosphere would be limited so that the maximum fission yield from the tests of the free nations in any year would not exceed a megaton providing the Russians agreed to a similar limitation. If they did so, and our allies cooperated, we would reduce the addition to potential fallout to between 10 and 20% of the average annual addition resulting from the tests made during the past

four years. What is more important, in view of the rate of radioactive decay, etc., we would actually not increase the total amount of potential radioactive fallout beyond that prevailing this summer.

Admittedly the policing of this agreement would not be easy, but an international inspection agency could be created which could determine compliance fairly accurately for each side. And, as a matter of fact, such a policy would penalize us so little that we might continue it for some time even if Russia did not cooperate. Actually, the only tests of any size and importance which now appear could not be carried out underground, would be in connection with the development of anti-missile missiles and some "plowshare" tests.

While a majority of the Committee recommends that the first proposal be the one made, it would be possible to go still further if necessary and eliminate all above-ground testing for a period of, say, two years. This would make it much harder to develop anti-missile missiles. It would also prevent tests on some peaceful uses such as "ditch-digger" unless special exceptions were made for them, possibly under international inspection. Such an agreement could not be readily policed, especially on small weapons, and would probably be evaded by the Russians unless there were extensive policing inside Russia, but it would practically eliminate any addition to fallout during the period the agreement was effective.



The Committee is unanimously agreed that to go any farther than this in the restriction of testing would seriously endanger the security of the United States.



