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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STUDY GROUP ON CONTINENTAL DEFENSE
REPORTS TO SECRETARY WILSON

In December, 1952, as a part of an overall review of U.S. objectives for national security, the then Secretary of Defense, Robert A. Lovett, appointed a special civilian committee "to study certain aspects of the problem of defense of the North American Continent against atomic attack, and to make recommendations to assist the Department of Defense in meeting its responsibilities in this area."

Secretary Lovett asked the committee to concern itself primarily with (1) a review of the possibilities of an improved warning system, (2) a study of the relation of such a system to other major Continental defense measures, and (3) the formulation of recommendations on over-all policies and programs to achieve a more effective defense of North America against atomic or other airborne attacks.

The membership of the committee included:

M.J. Kelly, President, Bell Telephone Laboratories, Chairman
F.L. Hovde, President, Purdue University
S.C. Hollister, Dean of Engineering, Cornell University
C.C. Lauritsen, Professor of Physics, California Institute of Technology
C.E. Wilson, Chairman of the Board, Standard Oil Company of Indiana
A.E. Raymond, Vice President, Douglas Aircraft Company
Walker Cisler, President, Detroit Edison Company

Representatives of the Army, Navy and Air Force, and of the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, participated in the Committee's work as Associate Members. Major General James McCormack, Jr., USAF, acted as Secretary of the Committee.

The Committee submitted its report to the Secretary of Defense in May, 1953. Secretary Wilson, after having given the report preliminary consideration, wrote the following letter to Dr. Kelly, thanking the committee for its efforts on behalf of the Department of Defense and for their valuable contribution to one of the most important aspects of national security:

"Dear Dr. Kelly,

"I have just completed a preliminary review of the Study Group's Report on Continental Defense and I want to express my appreciation to you and to the members of your Committee for your most valuable contribution to this extremely important element of our national security program. I expect to make the Report available to the National Security Council for consideration in connection with their current review of U.S. security policies.

"I also wish to thank you for your excellent summary of the Committee's Report. I am releasing this summary to the press today as I believe it will help keep the people of the country officially informed of certain aspects of the status of our continental defenses and of the measures under consideration to improve their over-all effectiveness.

Sincerely Yours,
(signed)
C.E. Wilson

"Dr. M.J. Kelly
Bell Telephone Laboratories
463 West Street,
New York, N.Y."

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The Committee noted that the Soviet Union is militarily capable today of a surprise attack on the United States which could cause large loss of life and major property damage and possibly temporarily lessen the capability of the U.S. to support a major war effort.

"Emphasizing that all military measures must be assayed not only as to their value in the event of war but also as to their value in deterring war, the Committee pointed up the importance of continued development of a powerful U.S. atomic offensive capability, reasonably invulnerable to initial attack, as a vital, major part of the over-all defense system.

" The Committee urged the creation also of a continental air defense system much better than that which is assured under present programs. In this connection the Committee expressed concern about the recent public [illegible] of a program which would purportedly give nearly perfect protection against air attack. The Committee held that, so far as can now be for seen, any such level of protection is unattainable and in any case completely impractical, economically and technically, in the face of expected advances in potentially hostile offensive capabilities. In the light of stern facts, the Committee emphasized that there can be no safety in the atomic age short of the elimination of war.

"After looking closely at the question whether a goal could now be set for a particular desired level of defense against air attack, in the usual terms of costs or target dates, the Committee concluded that a lasting answer on this point cannot be set down at this time. The Committee stated that the definition of such a goal can emerge only as concerted, organized attention is given to the total problem and advancing technology helps solve it. The Committee therefore framed its recommendations to outline a course of action for bringing purpose, vitality, and continuity to the program.

"The Committee found that the complex operations of continental defense against air attack suffer throughout from lack of clean-cut organization. Indicating some examples, the Committee recommended close attention to this weakness in the review of Department of Defense organization now under way.

" The Committee gave particular attention to a program for improving present means of early warning of the approach of hostile aircraft, as a first essential of an effective active air defense and of a civil defense capable of avoiding a large loss of life. It emphasized also certain necessary improvements in equipment and procedures for intercepting and destroying hostile flights.

"While pointing out the need for constant attention to getting better results from present defensive means, the Committee noted that many of the problems involved in creating an adequate air defense can be answered in the long term only by the application of advancing technology. The Committee [illegible] continuing strong support to a stable and sustained research and development program specifically established for this purpose. The Committee emphasized also the need for streamlining management procedures for research and development, so that there may be necessary flexibility in the face of the ever-changing threat, and maximum advantage may be taken of new scientific knowledge as it evolves.

"The Committee emphasized the mutuality of the defense problem as it affects Canada and the U.S., pointing out the necessity for close integration of the defense measures of the two countries. The Committee also noted the connection between the defense of North America and that of other areas, particularly as the early warning network expands.

"The Committee urged an orderly program, directed from the top of the Department of Defense, for bringing about a widespread public understanding of the military aspects of continental defense."