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Intel. Activities

ER 9-1412

11 March 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

SUBJECT: Approaches to Congress on Estimates of Soviet Strength

1. This memorandum contains a recommendation for action in paragraph 5.
2. Recent information, including magazine and newspaper articles, indicates that there is a great deal of confusion on the subject of estimates of Soviet air strength. Various public statements, and possibly leaks, are being used to their own respective ends by proponents and opponents of increased expenditures for the Air Force program. We are informed (and I am trying to get more information on this) that Mr. Whitten and other members of the Appropriations Committee assume that estimates of Soviet BISON strength were inflated last year for the purpose of getting additional appropriations for our own military forces. On the other hand, Stewart Alsop has taken the line that the downward revisions of the BISON estimates have been made more or less at the direction of the policy makers who are seeking to hold down government expenditures. The fact that neither of these assumptions is true seems somehow to be lost in the shuffle.
3. In these circumstances it seems clear that responsible committees should be given a thorough briefing on these, and possibly other estimates, in the near future. The Director will recall that Senator Saltonstall recently advised him to send a written memorandum on the subject of the BISON estimates to Senator Russell, with copies to Senators Saltonstall and Symington. We have not yet had any specific requests from House Appropriations, but we are likely to have our budget hearings in the near future and the question of the validity of and basis for our estimates will almost certainly come up at that time.
4. The Director has now received two recent memoranda on this subject. One is an amplification, dated 7 March 1957, of the material previously given to General Goodpaster on 1 March 1957. Another is a chronology of events, dated 9 March 1957, which covers pertinent dates

SECRET

and events going back to 1953. The Director will note from this memorandum that the supplemental Air Force appropriation, which was the subject of a recent article in U.S. News and World Report, was passed on 29 June 1956. Congress adjourned on 27 July 1956, and the revised NIE was approved on 2 August 1956.

5. On the basis of a quick reading of the material thus far prepared, it is recommended that the Director abandon the idea of distributing written memoranda on the subject of the BISON estimates. The story is somewhat complicated, and if it had to be simplified to make it completely understandable reading, without the opportunity for clarifying questions and answers, we feel that it might create unfavorable impressions as to the quality of the information on which national estimates are based. It is therefore recommended that the Director plan to present an oral briefing in the near future to Senator Russell and such members of the full Armed Services Committee as he deems appropriate. The range of such a briefing will have to be determined by the Director, although I think it is safe to assume that he will get questions on missiles as well as manned aircraft strength.

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Norman S. Paul
Legislative Counsel

cc: DDCI

CONCUR:

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Acting Director/DDI

W. M. ...
Date