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16 August 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

**SUBJECT: Near East South Asia IRG Meeting
Wednesday, 16 August 1967
Discussion of the Holmes Study**

1. There was really no discussion of the Holmes Study as such; several central related issues were raised and debated for almost two hours.

2. Stuart Rockwell, the action officer on the IRG/NEA effort which parallels the Holmes Study, reported that a group centered in EUR and INR (Tom Hughes) thought the Soviet threat was overdrawn and the need for action less urgent than described in the Study.

3. Harold Saunders (White House) observed that the policy initiatives are the same tired old programs with which Congress is disenchanted. Additionally, he posed the following questions:

a. Is the Middle East-North Africa an area of real significance to the United States?

b. Even if the Soviet threat to the Middle East-North Africa is as described, would Soviet domination of this area really threaten our interests in Europe?

c. Is it useful to consider policy initiatives that obviously are unsupported by Congress and are outside of our available resources and capabilities?

4. Assistant Secretary Battle held firmly to the view that the Holmes Study Group properly did not include the U.S. domestic political climate and the availability of resources in their consideration. At the same time, he said, it would be unrealistic to proceed very far with the Holmes proposals without obtaining broad policy guidance from the President on the proposed strategy. The alternative to the Holmes proposal, he thought, was a policy of disengagement and isolationism.

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State Dept., NSC reviews completed

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5. I briefly traced the history of the debate over the past decade on Soviet intentions and capabilities in the Middle East and noted the relevance of NIE 10-2/65 and more recent estimates on the Mediterranean, the Horn of Africa and the Near East.

6. Saunders' persistent effort to dismiss the Holmes policy initiatives as "old, tired and ineffectual measures" was vigorously met by State and Defense with the assertion that a thorough and responsible review had simply reaffirmed the efficacy of some of the old and tested instruments. Saunders was supported by Battle on the point that our existing arms sales and military aid policies were in serious trouble; that here a new approach was needed. Battle proposed that the IRG/NEA place this problem on its agenda for an early meeting.

7. Finally, there was much discussion of Western European interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Saunders argued that if the Soviet activities in the area were, as alleged, a threat to Europe, the Europeans had demonstrated remarkably little interest; thus, either the Europeans or the Study Group members were wrong. The dominant view expressed was that the U.S. relationship with most Western European nations in Africa and the Middle East had been partly competitive and that the role of the UK and U.S. as police of the Middle East and defenders of Western interests against Soviet aggression had long been taken for granted by Western Europe. I argued that the U.S. had hardly paid lip service to any policy of encouraging the Western Europeans to play a greater role in the area; in isolated instances when the United States Government had gotten into trouble, it had shown an interest, ad hoc, in increasing the consultation and cooperation with specific European countries on the problem at hand. There was full agreement that, regardless of the cause, Europe appears reluctant to play a military-political role in the Middle East.

21 August 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting Senior Policy Group
Monday, 21 August 1967

PRINCIPALS PRESENT:

Deputy Under Secretary of State Kohler
Deputy Secretary of Defense Nitze
General Wheeler, JCS
Director CIA Helms

LATIN AMERICAN STUDY

Approved. Study will be initiated 1 October 1967 and, if possible, completed by the end of December. Ambassador Ed Martin will be brought back for several months temporary duty as Director.

OVERSEAS BASE REQUIREMENTS STRATEGIC STUDY

Approved. Study will be initiated later, probably 1 January 1968. Defense will provide Director. It agreed this is complex and high priority; no effort made to establish target date for completion.

NEAR EAST, NORTH AFRICA AND THE HORN OF AFRICA STUDY

It was agreed that (a) an effort should be made to get the strategy set forth approved; (b) specific policy initiatives would, in most instances, require further study -- some at the IRG level; (c) Senior Policy Group would give general approval to the Study as written and send to the SIG for consideration of both substance and procedure to be followed in getting Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara approval and policy clearance of the strategy from the President; and (d) specific policy initiatives and other measures which might be developed in the IRG's or the SIG would probably not go to the President.

COMMENT:

a. Deputy Under Secretary Kohler reported on a view in some parts of the State Department

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that the Soviet threat was overdrawn in the Study. Discussion revealed that none of the principals, including Kohler, of the Policy Group shared this view.

b. There appeared to be a consensus that relating both American and Soviet strategic goals in the area to a five-year period would eliminate some of the disagreements.

c. Ambassador Holmes reported that the sanitized version for release to foreign governments (initially the NATO countries) would be ready by the weekend of 26 August 1967.

d. Deputy Under Secretary Kohler commended Ambassador Holmes and the Study Group; he noted the extremely high level of interest in the Study that was evident throughout the Department.

ACTION:

The Study and related papers would be submitted to the Senior Interdepartmental Group for consideration at an early date.

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