

Mr. Tolson
19 Jan 60
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22 Jan 60 January 15, 1960

Executive Record
100-670

PERSONAL

President Dwight D. Eisenhower
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

In your statement December 3, 1959 on the eve of your departure for Europe and Asia, you asked that each of us think and act in such a way as to hasten progress toward our American objectives - one of which, as you have often said, is a sound disarmament agreement. It is in this spirit that I follow up my letter to you of October 19th - on which you acted with a good result. Now the same subject is at the stage where it needs further action.

The brief background is this. The suggestion on October 19th was that you consider setting up within the Government at the earliest possible moment an adequately supported, permanent unit dealing with the subject of disarmament. As the result of General Goodpaster's call to Mr. Coolidge, I was asked by Mr. Coolidge to define more precisely the general ideas contained in the October 19th letter. This I did both in conversation with Mr. Coolidge on October 30th, and in a follow-up memo, which he requested, dated November 2nd. The gist of these communications was to recommend that a permanent unit be set-up in the Executive Office of the President under a Director who would have responsibility for the continuing study and formulation of policy recommendations on disarmament - a subject in which many agencies besides State have a direct interest. The negotiation, public relations, and Congressional relations functions of disarmament would be left with the State Department. The reasons for this recommendation and a description of the organization envisaged were given in the November 2nd memo (attached).

Mr. Coolidge's response to me - a memo dated November 6th was favorable. He said he was sending it to State. He later sent Secretary Herter a letter making a similar recommendation. Dr. Kistiaowski and the Millian disarmament panel likewise made a similar proposal. The people in State dealing with

(Circular stamp)
100-670
100-670

disarmament agreed informally with the logic of the proposal but laid great stress on selecting the right man to direct such an office. The kind of a person mentioned for such a position was William Foster. There are other people, however, in the State Department - who are not directly concerned with disarmament - who favor having it in State.

In general, then, the great preponderance of opinion of those who have given the problem study and who have been directly concerned with the subject favor a permanent unit in the Executive Office. Such a set-up would have advantages not realized under the present set-up. It would be a legacy this Administration could leave in a field in which you have shown great interest and which is one of the greatest long-term importance to the United States.

Studies by such a unit are required as soon as possible as a basis for later recommendations which go beyond the Coolidge report, and which, in this period of deterrence, would seek a step to the arms race and a stabilizing of the deterrence, and then, later, would look toward reducing these weapons below the level of annihilation. Mr. Coolidge has made a start but was handicapped by lack of such studies and by lack of time. His recommendations are excellent as far as they go - but they don't go nearly far enough.

What I have said, I say in the spirit of trying to be helpful and in line with your injunction of December 3rd that "each of us think and act" in such a way as to hasten our progress towards the goals which we all seek. In this regard, may I congratulate you on the attitude you have been taking toward Khrushchev and the USSR; on your Asia trip; and, most of all, on the sound attitude you have recently expressed toward the so-called missile gap and the US military posture with reference to negotiations. Too often people out of fear seem to emphasize the dangers in Khrushchev's relaxation of tension policy to the exclusion of the opportunities it affords us if we have the confidence we ought to have in the ability of our own system to compete with the Communists.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

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