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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

9 May 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Certain Interagency Matters

Bromley Smith gave me today his views, as follows, on certain pending matters of interagency concern:

1. State Department "Operations Center," under Ted Achilles

According to Smith, this will be a modest setup, with simple graphics and close communications with the State Secretariat. It is intended to provide a home for task forces on certain critical areas. Smith was vague on the task forces to be included, or what the criteria for inclusion would be. So far Cuba has been designated, and Vietnam appears to be a probability.

In Smith's view this is an attempt, originally sparked by the Secretariat, to reassert State's position in interagency planning and operations, and "to speed up processing." It is intended that all pertinent information on a particular area will be available, and a "substantive officer" will be on duty at all times. It is not proposed that such personnel will undertake evaluations.

2. White House Situation Room

Smith has been assigned responsibility, by Mac Bundy, for setting up this Situation Room. As part of the exercise Bundy has already moved physically to the White House and Smith will move probably this week. It is hoped the Situation Room can be started within a few days.

According to Smith, the Situation Room is primarily a secretariat sort of problem, involving the flow of paper and an attempt to "work toward an orderly assignment of responsibility" among departments and agencies. The problem stems in part from the reluctance of the

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President to sit still for formal briefings. Therefore some other way has to be found to give to the President the information he needs, with particular bearing on the assignment by him of action responsibility.


Smith said that he anticipated a period of relative confusion and thrashing around. He said that Bundy proposes to "reassure" various interested people about "what he is doing and how their organizations will fit in." (I understood this to have a broader significance than just the Situation Room.)

Smith then said that he recognized that CIA has liaison with General Clifton. He went on to say, "We will have to look at what CIA is giving to Clifton and adjust that. This will be funneled through Bundy." I made no response to this.

3. NSC

It appears evident that Smith sees himself ending up with some at least of the functions which used to be performed by the Executive Secretary of the NSC, but without that title. He avers that "they" are trying to "get the NSC back on the track," but that care will be taken to avoid identifying any such activity with the infra-structure which existed in the former administration. He sees this as a job which has to be approached slowly and cautiously, but feels that there is a real need for a somewhat more orderly system than now exists.

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THOMAS A. PARROTT

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