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January 24, 1958

MEMORANDUM TO THE OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD

I would like to discuss the attached memorandum at
tomorrow's meeting.

F. M. Dearborn, Jr.
Special Assistant
to the President

NSC review(s) completed.

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MEMORANDUM TO THE OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD

In 1953 the Jackson Committee recommended that the Psychological Strategy Board be abolished and the Operations Coordinating Board formed, because the "psychological" aspect of policy is not separable from policy but inherent in every diplomatic, economic or military action. My experience with the OCB confirms the soundness of the fundamental philosophy of the Committee's recommendation. However, I think it is evident that in 1953 Communist strategy was based on military and subversive aggression which has since been shelved, perhaps temporarily, for a strategy directed to achievement of Communist aims through political warfare, exploiting the democratic electoral process, and economic warfare, both waged under the guise of peaceful and competitive coexistence. If so, we are now at a stage in history where the term "cold war" provides for the first time a reasonably accurate description of the nature of the struggle and where the operating agencies of the U.S. Government have a responsibility to reexamine the adequacy of our machinery to meet the challenge of this new Communist strategy.

Since its beginnings, the OCB has had the duty of advising with the agencies concerned as to: their operational planning responsibilities with respect to national policies; the coordination of operational plans; the timely and coordinated execution of such policies and plans; and the execution of each security action or project so that it shall make its full contribution to the attainment of national security objectives and to the particular climate of opinion the U.S. is seeking to achieve. It has also had the duty of initiating new proposals for action within the framework of national security policies in response to opportunity and changes in the situation. The Board is not limited to advising with the agencies concerned when it comes to new proposals for action but is, rather, directed to initiate them.

I think the OCB is in general performing its advisory duties as to operational planning and execution in a satisfactory and increasingly useful manner; but I think that we have tended to consider the contribution of actions or projects to foreign climate of opinion in a rather haphazard way, and I do not believe that we have taken nearly enough advantage of our authority and duty to initiate new proposals directed to what one might call targets of opportunity.

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It is a temptation to separate the psychological aspects of fighting the cold war from what seems to be the purely operational concept of initiating new proposals for action, but to do so would result in further diversification of effort. The Jackson Committee report, the 1955 Rockefeller Panel report on Psychological Aspects of United States Strategy and the current Rockefeller Brothers Fund report on the Military Aspects of International Security all emphasize the essential "wholeness" of psychological impact and foreign policies, programs and actions.

The problem then is not, to my mind, one which can be solved by creating separate organizations for psychological strategy and for overseas actions, although I am afraid that some who have been concerned by our seeming lack of attention to foreign climate of opinion effects or to counteracting Communist moves may advance this solution, but, rather, is one of making the OCB a better mechanism for marrying action and opinion.

This mechanism ultimately should be such as can, in addition to its other duties: anticipate and counteract foreseeable Communist actions; anticipate the effect and take psychological advantage of proposed U.S. actions; decide quickly the need for, and ways to, react to unanticipated Communist moves; initiate, and encourage the initiation by others, of ideas for waging the cold war; consider the timing of planned U.S. actions and projects in order to achieve maximum impact; suggest information themes to complement U.S. actions or projects, and themes to complement actions; and, above all, provide means by which U.S. cold war moves or reactions to Communist moves can be speeded up when necessary.

1. As a beginning and on a trial basis, I recommend that the OCB form a kind of watch committee to meet with me once a week to bring forward suggestions for anticipation of forthcoming events or for reaction to events forecast or known through intelligence and other sources, and, in general, to discuss matters within the broad outlines of the preceding paragraph and propose appropriate action thereon. The committee members should be charged with finding out if responsible agencies are in fact considering the points raised, or, if not, if consideration has been given to them, and action taken or decided against. Between meetings the members would serve as agency points of contact for interim matters.

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The suggested committee should not have strict terms of reference or any fancy-sounding name. Until it is tried out, it is impossible to define its duties or functions accurately, but it should not become a staffing committee or engage in operational planning. Summaries of matters taken up by the committee should be reported in the Weekly Activity Report and Board action requested when needed. Members of the committee should have sufficient rank to attend their agency daily high-level staff conferences and security clearance to receive the daily State and CIA intelligence reports.

2. Although my concept of the tasks which might be undertaken by the suggested committee is broad, it will not be able to undertake the important duty of evaluating programs. Assuming, as we must, limited resources and a growing demand for competition with the Communists in the economic field, I believe that the Board should give early consideration to providing an evaluation system which would meet the current need for allocating priorities in overseas programs. The balance of military as against economic assistance; the emphasis to be put on regional programs; and the kind of programs best suited to a particular country or region's state of development are areas which also need evaluation.

3. Agencies which do not participate regularly in the NSC process do not appear to be sufficiently aware of the effects of their programs and official utterances on foreign opinion. This problem is not within OCB's jurisdiction, but I believe we should assist USIA in its efforts to persuade these agencies to seek advice on achieving favorable impact or minimizing unfavorable reactions overseas from statements or actions originating with them. Essentially, this is a matter of improving existing liaison procedures to make sure that USIA has advance knowledge of forthcoming statements and actions and is given the opportunity to make suggestions concerning them.

4. I have not listed in this memorandum suggestions for regaining the cold war initiative because I believe that the primary need is to provide means to ensure their prompt consideration.

F. M. Dearborn, Jr.

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