

February 13, 1952

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Security Information

*ASB-117d/2*

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director  
Psychological Strategy Board

THRU : Assistant Director, Office of Plans and Policy

1. The Weapons Information Guidance Committee has completed its work, as prescribed in the Terms of Reference, 31 January 1952, subject, "Terms of Reference for PSB Weapons Information Guidance Committee. (Panel 'D')."

2. Forwarded herewith are the following papers, which were prepared by the committee:

- a. Draft Memorandum for: Executive Secretary, National Security Council (Tab "A")
- b. Draft prototype covering Presidential Letter (Tab "B")
- c. Draft enclosure to Presidential Letter, "Memorandum on Public Statements With Respect to Certain American Weapons." (Tab "C").

3. In addition to preparing the above papers, the committee also inquired into the desirability of creating new clearance machinery for the subject statements. The committee concluded that existing procedures are adequate, and that the establishment of new machinery at the NSC or PSB level would be improper, inasmuch as neither agency is designed to deal with day-to-day matters of operational detail.

However, the committee recommended that it remain subject to call of the chairman for periodic revision of its guidances for public statements with respect to these certain American weapons.

4. The committee examined a list of specific "do's" and "don'ts", as a possible enclosure to the memorandum at Tab C. The committee concluded that such a list would not be suitable, inasmuch as conditions vary too much to justify establishing a set of general principles.

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5. The committee recommends that when PSB has approved Tab "C" and noted Tab "B", the memorandum attached at Tab "A" be transmitted to the Executive Secretary, NSC for action. Informal advice from the NSC secretariat indicates that if the memorandum has already received the approval of PSB, plus that of the other interested departments (in this instance the Atomic Energy Commission and the Federal Civil Defense Administration), the memorandum can be put before a meeting of the NSC without requiring reference to the Senior NSC staff or other NSC staff machinery.

*Clayton Fritchey*

Clayton Fritchey  
Director, OPI  
Office, Secretary of Defense  
Chairman

PSB D-172/2

C O N F I D E N T I A L  
Security InformationD R A F T  
7 February 1952

TAB "A"

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD  
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Secretary  
National Security Council

SUBJECT: PSB Action on Publicity With Respect to Certain American Weapons

1. A series of conflicting statements made last Fall by high officials of the Executive Branch of the government produced considerable public confusion as to the facts concerning our atomic and related developments. They raised doubts as to the degree of unity and confidence within the government on the purposes of these weapons. Particularly, they gave rise to considerable fears abroad, as to U.S. intensions with respect to the use of these weapons.

2. For these reasons, the Psychological Strategy Board at its 4th meeting, October 25, 1951, directed the preparation of a staff study on the problem. At its seventh meeting, December 20, 1951, acting on the recommendations contained in the staff study, PSB created a committee chaired by the Director, Office of Public Information, Department of Defense, to prepare a "national information policy" on the subject.

3. It was agreed at the Senior NSC Staff Meeting of November 19, 1951 to refer to PSB for appropriate action, in connection with this project, a draft report by the NSC on "Release of Information Regarding New Weapons," dated July 5, 1950, action on which had not been completed.

4. The attached memorandum, Subject, "Memorandum on Public Statements With Respect to Certain American Weapons" has been prepared in response to the above board action.

a. At its meeting, 1952 the Psychological Strategy Board approved the memorandum, recommended that it be transmitted to appropriate departments and agencies as an enclosure to a Presidential directive (draft attached), and directed that its views be communicated to

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the Executive Secretary, NSC. The Atomic Energy Commission and the Federal Civil Defense Administrator joined in this approval and these recommendations.

b. The committee also examined the question of the adequacy of speech clearance machinery as it relates to statements covering these weapons. It concluded that the machinery created within departments and agencies in response to the Presidential directive of 5 December 1950, "Public Discussion of Foreign and Military Policy," should be used for the enforcement of the attached memorandum rather than that a new clearance procedure should be established.

FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD:

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R. B. ALLEN  
Director

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Washington

Prototype for all  
Departments

The Honorable  
Dean G. Acheson  
Secretary of State  
Department of State

Dear Mr. Acheson:

I am forwarding to you a memorandum, subject "Public Statements With Respect to Certain American Weapons," which is designed to assist you and members of your department in addressing the American public on matters concerning our recent developments with respect to certain American weapons.

I desire that you bring the contents of this memorandum to the attention of key officials of your department, and elicit their full cooperation in carrying out its intent.

Sincerely,

Harry S. Truman

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D R A F T

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TAB "C"

7 February 1952

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MEMORANDUM ON

PUBLIC STATEMENTS WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN AMERICAN WEAPONS

The fact of American atomic superiority undoubtedly has a deterrent effect on Soviet leaders. Whether unconsidered statements about atomic and other new weapons produce any significant deterrent effect on the Kremlin may be doubted.

While well-considered statements on atomic and other new weapons can develop confidence in the determination and strength of the U.S. and the rest of the free world, ill-considered statements on these subjects can be used by the Soviet-led Communists to encourage a belief that the U.S. might use these weapons in a reckless, irresponsible way.

Within the U.S. itself, ill-considered statements about these weapons may create a false sense of security, lead to expectation of miracles in war and possibly jeopardize the maintenance of a balanced defense program both military and civil.

It follows that we must be extremely careful in our public statements about atomic weapons. The same applies to guided missiles, and biological, radiological and chemical weapons.

Before statements and releases on atomic and other new weapons are made, these questions should be answered:

1. Will this information strengthen the morale of the free world?
2. Will this statement at this time help the American public to understand and accurately appraise the capabilities of these weapons?
3. Will this statement create the fear that the U.S. may act recklessly in the use of these weapons?

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In the months ahead, as new developments in these weapons transpire, we must so present that information to the world as to buttress the confidence of the free world in America's sense of responsibility for the maintenance of the peace as well as of the fundamental values of the West.

NOTE: Statements prepared in pursuance to this memorandum shall be cleared in conformity to the President's Directive of 5 December 1950, "Public Discussion of Foreign and Military Policy." It is understood also that statements dealing with atomic weapons developments should be cleared with the Atomic Energy Commission.

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