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PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D. C.

14 December 1951

STAFF STUDY ON PUBLICITY WITH RESPECT TO NOVEL WEAPONS

PROBLEM

1. To establish a procedure for the development and promulgation of policy guidance for the content of governmental statements with respect to the existence, development and contemplated uses of novel weapons.

DEFINITION

2. For the purpose of this study, novel weapons are considered to include all weapons using atomic power for propulsion or explosion, guided missiles, and biological, radiological and chemical weapons.

FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

3. Adequate machinery does not now exist for guidance of senior officials of the government in formulating and issuing statements on the subject of novel weapons. The need for such guidance has recently been demonstrated by the conflicts in approaches to this subject taken by officials including those of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Department of Defense. In addition, opportunities are presently being lost for profitable exploitation abroad of the psychological possibilities inherent in novel weapons themes.

DISCUSSION

4. Public statements covering novel weapons must be based on considered appraisal of the following fundamental principles:

a. Domestic information responsibilities

The Government has an obligation to provide the American

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people with authoritative information concerning the nature and scope of novel weapons. When practicable, such statements should be so designed as to avoid intensifying anxiety unduly. They must also be designed to obtain wide public support of national policy in the use of novel weapons in the national interest.

5. Mechanisms now existing do not provide for representation of all agencies having an interest in the problem. They are particularly inadequate with respect to representation of the foreign information aspects.

6. In the course of drafting this study, the Psychological Strategy Board Staff received informal comments from the departments indicating that it is objectionable to create a guidance mechanism which takes into consideration only the foreign effects of domestic public statements with respect to novel weapons. The Office of Public Information of the Department of Defense claims responsibility for the formulation of domestic public information policy on biological warfare, radiological warfare and chemical warfare. Other means exist for the maintenance of security with respect to these weapons. The creation of an additional mechanism to provide foreign information policy guidance would result in competing mechanisms dealing respectively with the security, the domestic information and the foreign information aspects of the problem. Adequate guidance can be provided only through a single mechanism which has the authority and available knowledge to deal with all three aspects of the problem.

Domestic information policy is a matter not within the competence of PSB. The necessary mechanism should be constituted by an agency having competence to deal with foreign information policy, domestic information policy and security.

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7. Since the primary purpose of the development of novel weapons is their utilization in war, and since the Department of Defense has the major responsibility for the maintenance of security with respect to such weapons, it appears that a mechanism to achieve the purpose described in paragraph 6 above should be organized under the chairmanship of a member of the Department of Defense. This committee should be composed of one or more members from each of the following agencies: The White House Staff, the Psychological Strategy Board, the Department of State, Central Intelligence Agency and the Atomic Energy Commission. A representative of the Federal Civil Defense Administration should sit as appropriate with the committee for information of interest to that agency. Members must be so selected as to take cognizance of the three major aspects of the problem: foreign information, domestic information, and security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. a. That the Department of Defense member of the Psychological Strategy Board be requested in his capacity as Deputy Secretary of Defense to take steps to organize a Novel Weapons Information Guidance Committee composed as indicated in paragraph 7.

b. That this committee be instructed to prepare as a matter of urgency a national information policy guidance for statements with respect to novel weapons, taking into consideration the foreign information, domestic information and security aspects of the problem.

c. That the Department of Defense member inform the board when this action has been completed.

Gordon Gray
Director

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