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20 February 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Activation of Belle Chase Ammunition Depot

1. On 15 February, the undersigned became fully aware of actions which had been taken by the Agency in attempting to acquire and activate the Belle Chase Naval Ammunition Depot as a training and holding area for approximately 45 indigenous personnel who were at that time being held at JMRYE. Previous coordination had been affected by WH/4/Support with the Navy real estate office, Lieutenant Commander Van Leer, and with appropriate personnel in Government Services Administration. The appropriate levels of Department of Defense, however, had not been apprised of the Agency's need for this facility, nor of the arrangements which had been made through Mr. Van Leer's office.

2. In an attempt to insure that the Department of Defense and the various offices from within that Department were fully apprised of the Agency requirement, the Office of Special Operations was contacted. At about noon the following day, the requirement for Belle Chase was officially presented to OSO, and Mr. Devine of the Department of State was briefed regarding this requirement. Mr. Devine immediately instituted the necessary action to obtain State Department concurrence in the use of Belle Chase.

3. Captain Spore, OSO, convened a conference in his office at 0930 hours on 17 February, in which representatives from the Army, Navy and the Agency attended. At this conference, the details of utilization of Belle Chase were worked out and agreed upon, with the exception of a cover story, pending concurrence from the State Department for utilization of this site. This cover story was to be prepared by Central Cover Division and coordinated with the Department of the Army, which was done that afternoon. Also, a pending requirement levied by Department of Defense still has not been accomplished. This requirement is the provision of an emergency evacuation plan of the indigenous personnel from Belle Chase if a compromise or other conditions so dictate. This requirement has been levied on C/WH/4/Support.

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4. The concurrence of the Department of State was transmitted to the Agency at noon on 17 February and Department of Defense (Captain Spore) was informed of this approval. A memorandum of this approval was also forwarded to Captain Spore. Appropriate individuals in the Agency were informed that State had concurred and that Department of Defense was taking the necessary actions to support Agency utilization of Belle Chase. No further problems regarding activation of Belle Chase are evident at the present time.

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5. In future requirements such as the above, it is strongly recommended that these requirements be levied on the Department of Defense through established channels in order that the appropriate offices and the military services involved are thoroughly familiar with the requirements before any contact is made with the working level offices. The method of obtaining permission to utilize Belle Chase was successful; however, the failure to notify proper offices on this requirement was a matter of some irritation to personnel involved. Once the Department of Defense was acquainted properly with this requirement, however, the complete cooperation of everyone involved was obtained, and the working out of the necessary details proceeded very smoothly.



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