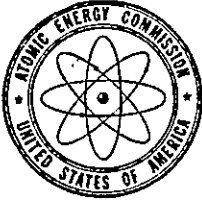


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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

14 December 1959



RECORD OF CABINET MEETING, 11 DECEMBER 1959
CONSIDERATION OF TEST MORATORIUM NEGOTIATIONS

1. Those in attendance included: the Vice President; Secretary Herter; Mr. Gordon Gray; Mr. Dulles; Mr. Allen; Attorney General Rogers; Mr. McCone; General Persons; Mr. Farley; Dr. English; General Loper; General Fox; and General Starbird.

2. Mr. Gordon Gray and Secretary Harter introduced the meeting. They stated that consideration of the subject at this meeting was informational in nature and not intended to make decision. The primary reason for the consideration at this time was the fact that the announced moratorium expires on 31 December; a decision must be taken by the President immediately after his return as to what would be the U.S. announced policy to apply thereafter.

3. Secretary Herter then gave a summary account of the negotiations to date. Somewhat to our surprise the Soviets agreed in August 1958 in the Conference of Experts to a system for the monitoring of testing. With regard to monitoring underground tests, the system's capabilities had to be evaluated largely on the basis of only one underground nuclear shot. Later in HARDTACK II (in October 1958) several underground shots were fired. These revealed that the capability of the Geneva Conference of Experts' system was less than had been earlier thought. The President proposed an "atmospheric only" ban but this the Soviets refused. Our officially announced period of moratorium for negotiation was for one year - through October 31, 1959, but was extended later to December 31. When we realized from the HARDTACK II data that the system had a lesser capability than originally thought we insisted that there must be joint technical discussions of this new data. If satisfactory technical discussions could not be carried through, we might have reverted to a limited treaty. The Soviets resisted this strongly. However, finally they "caved in" and there is now underway at Geneva a technical discussion of the underground problem. We are receiving detailed reports on the Technical Conference. They are of such complex nature that it is hard for a layman to understand them. It does appear that we have presented all of our new data and that the detailed elements are now being discussed. There is some pessimism as to what may emerge from these discussions. Secretary Herter then asked Chairman McCone if he desired to add any comments to this summary.

4. Mr. McCone stated that he thought it was too early to tell whether or not any agreements would come from the present technical discussions. The Soviets had obviously been caught off balance by our presentation on

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decoupling. Our people are apparently doing a good job of presenting their data. In the earlier high altitude conference, the Soviets had held back from any agreement initially but had finally reached agreement on many elements of the high altitude detection report. Mr. McCone then explained that there were three serious questions with regard to underground testing.

a. What could the Geneva Conference of Experts' system (even with improvements) actually detect and identify and what would be the number and procedures of inspection for those events detected but not identified?

b. Could decoupling by a major factor be accomplished? If this could be done, quite large shots could be made to look so small that they would not be noticed.

c. Third and finally, how effective could be a system of on-site inspection in actually proving that a nuclear event had occurred? There was a great deal of difference of opinion in this regard.

5. Thereafter a rather general discussion occurred on various aspects of the problem. The more significant items that were brought out are as follows:

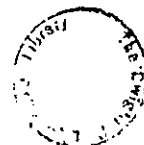
a. As to necessity for the U.S. testing, Secretary Gates spoke at length: both on the necessity for conducting certain safety experiments right away; and on the long-range benefit to our military position from devices we could develop but would have to test. With regard to the former, he brought out that certain restrictions apply to certain of our weapons. The experiment to answer certain questions in this regard had been approved by the President but we did not know how to handle the public relations aspects without serious propaganda danger during the presently announced moratorium period. He felt these experiments should go forward as quickly as possible after 1 January. With regard to the later and broader aspect, he pointed out the dependence of our military posture on nuclear warheads. He illustrated gains by explaining that the so-called systems that might be developed.

b. The Vice President stated that he knew there were differences of opinion among the scientists as to what we could gain from testing. He asked Dr. Kistiakowsky's opinion. Dr. Kistiakowsky stated that a Panel covering only possible U.S. gains from testing had concluded: the greatest and most urgent problem was that of answering the safety questions; that there was no necessity for immediate testing to meet the requirements of systems currently in development.*

*Note: This was only a part of the Panel's finding, of course. The total finding went on to the general effect that warheads for systems in development could be improved significantly through testing and that other systems of great promise should be possible if testing were permitted.

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c. Mr. Dulles commented in answer to a question that we had no indication that the Soviets were currently testing.

d. Secretary Herter explained that one thing that handicapped us in knowing what to do was the general lack of clear and consistent scientific indication as to exactly what were the capabilities of the monitoring system, -- that opinions differed. Dr. Kistiakowsky stated that the scientists could advise that shots above a few kilotons should be detectable and identifiable (if decoupling were not considered). He stated further that below a few kilotons they would advise that the system would not be fully reliable; also that if decoupling worked much greater shots could be concealed but decoupling was expensive. He mentioned that there had been already certain improvements in the instrumentation which would improve the system. When Secretary Gates indicated that a very extensive program (Vela) was necessary to prove out the detection system, Dr. Kistiakowsky indicated that this was not the purpose of the project. The main purpose was that of improvement of system instrumentation already existent to permit a system of improved capabilities. Beyond describing the capabilities in the manner shown the scientist could not go. It was up to those concerned with policy to decide what should be the nature of the agreement considering the capabilities and limitations of the system.

e. Mr. Allen commented to the effect that perhaps we should take a system of the 20 control posts only, and without on-site inspection. After all, if the control posts detected questionable events and these were revealed publicly perhaps this would deter violations. All Principals commented that they believed that this would not be adequate deterrence but without discussing in full. Mr. Herter believed this would give up an advantage for which we were bargaining (presumably some real inspection in Russia). 2

f. Mr. McCone explained that perhaps a logical answer to our situation was to propose a threshold system. In explanation, if the detection scheme were capable with its on-site inspection of effectively monitoring, for example, blasts of 10 KT and above, then we would agree to forego such blasts but not forego those that were of yield less than 10 KT ~~in a detectable region~~. Decoupling introduced somewhat of a problem but this might not be insurmountable. He brought out that it was the original intent of the U.S. at the time the negotiations began in October of last year to introduce at the appropriate time the threshold concept. Such introduction had not yet occurred. Mr. McCone also read what he believed should be the announcement made by the President just before 31 December. A copy of this is enclosed. 2

g. Later Mr. McCone said he wished that there was a way that the U.S. could take the initiative. He suggested that we announce we would forego all atmospheric tests but would consider ourselves free to revert

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at any time to underground testing should it be required. Secretary Herter doubted the Soviets would accept this. In answer to query, he mentioned the British continually indicated they would be prepared to accept a more limited system than the U.S. desired. In answer to a specific query of the Vice President as to whether Mr. McCone believed that we could work out with the Soviets an agreement permitting underground testing, Mr. McCone replied in the negative.

6. The Vice President commented to the following effect during the general discussion. It appeared to him that there were three possible courses and that there were strong supporters of the three. Those courses were: to revert in the near future to underground testing; to forego for an extended period (whether it be stated as on a "week-to-week" basis or otherwise) all testing and without any inspection system; or to take whatever inspection system could be negotiated in return for a comprehensive system. He believed this would be the way the President would look at the matter when he returns. As to the first of these approaches (revert in the near future to underground testing) he felt that the President would be in a most difficult position to announce this, at least in the early future immediately after his present good-will trip. He and others mentioned successive events of the future which might dictate again and again against an announcement at that time that we were reverting to testing, - the Summit Conference, the President's trip to Russia, and the U.S. election. We might in actuality then find ourselves in a position where we had only one of the other two choices.

7. The Vice President pointed out that the President on his return would have many things that would have to be done in a short time. He asked Mr. Gordon Gray to complete a memorandum for record which could be given to the President, or used in connection with informing the President of these discussions.

Alfred D. Starbird
Brigadier General, USA
Director of Military Application

Enclosure:
Announcement