

Monday, September 4, 1961 - Labor Day Holiday

I learned at about 4 p.m. today that Russia has conducted another atmospheric test (1 p.m. this morning, Washington time) of low KT. Bundy called to say that President Kennedy wants me to announce this one, and I prepared a short press release which was issued by Duncan Clark at about 5 p.m. I also talked to Bundy expressing strong arguments for carrying out our planned, reasoned program for testing, if the President decides to resume, rather than a crash program just to prove our strength and capability. I am to prepare a memorandum along these lines to discuss with Bundy and possibly the President tomorrow or soon thereafter.

Tuesday, September 5, 1961 - D.C.

I met with President Kennedy in his White House office from 11 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. Others present were: Mac Bundy, General Taylor, Harold Brown, Ros Gilpatric and General Betts. The discussion centered on the question of the yield of the first test. The President did not want to accept any delay beyond September 15th, but he was concerned that the disparity between the planned test and the first Soviet test at over 100 KT would invite such adverse comment as to be unacceptable. He wanted a much larger test, if possible. I informed him that although we have the device capability to conduct tests, such a large yield test done in the very short time frame of less than two weeks would jeopardize the availability of the rest of the tunnel complex in which such a shot might be carried out. The President accepted my recommendation that such a large yield test not be conducted in the very early time frame indicated.

The President then asked what possibility existed to do a test at a larger yield. General Betts recommended that a warhead be considered for the first experiment. The President was informed that this experiment could be conducted within two weeks, i.e., by Friday, the 15th, if approval was given immediately to go ahead with preparations. He was informed that this would be in the nature of a proof-test of a warhead which would apply to the Terrier fleet air defense guided missile, as well as to other tactical weapons. The President accepted this recommendation and instructed us to take the necessary steps to carry out this test on the 15th of September. The President was informed that this action would result in a general increase of activities at the test site and that, since these steps could not be hidden from the public view, it would become obvious that deliberate steps were being taken at the site to prepare for testing. The President said he was aware of this but that he was prepared to accept whatever press reaction might follow.

It was pointed out to the President that John McCone had been on a television program yesterday, at which he was asked questions about the U.S. position with respect to nuclear weapons testing. McCone's answers coincided with the general position being taken by the present administration. The President then expressed a desire to have McCone discuss this problem with him and a meeting was arranged for tomorrow morning, September 6th.

The President then raised the question as to the relative merits of in-atmosphere as opposed to underground testing. A discussion followed during which Harold Brown and I assured him that most of the development tests now proposed for a test program could be conducted underground. The President was informed that underground tests would prove to be much more expensive than testing in the atmosphere.

At about 1 p.m. we learned that the Soviets tested a third device in the atmosphere early this morning. This was announced by the AEC immediately. This Russian test resulted in President Kennedy's announcing, at 5 p.m., after clearance with the appropriate parties, the immediate resumption of underground nuclear testing by the United States. (Copy of announcement is attached.) I sent a memorandum to Bundy describing the AEC position on the proposed test program (copy attached).

Wednesday, September 6, 1961 - D.C.

The Commissioners met this morning to review the U.S. test position, the plan to appoint Roger Hildebrand the acting director of Argonne while waiting for Al Crewe to get his U.S. citizenship, the testimony for Senate Appropriations hearings on the FY 1962 budget, scheduled for Friday, and the situation of negotiations with the Bureau of the Budget on the FY 1963 budget. We learned that the House Appropriations Committee cut 6.79 million dollars from the FY 1961 budget.

I had lunch with John McCone at the Metropolitan Club. He saw the President this morning and said he will publicly support the President's position of refraining from atmospheric testing.

I told Neil Naiden that I had reached Byron White, Deputy Attorney General, last night regarding Bill 8140 on conflict of interest, particularly as it would apply to scientists employed by and serving as consultants to the AEC. White said he would discuss it with Katzenbach today.

The Soviets exploded another device in the atmosphere early today at a place east of Stalingrad; this test was announced by the AEC. It is possible that the Soviets may have exploded still another device today at Semipalatinsk.

At 4 p.m. I presided at Information Meeting 64 (notes attached) during which we covered many items that had come up during the last three weeks when many people have been on vacation. Among the items we discussed were a letter from Gilpatric (copy attached) concerning the proposed Defense Agreement with the Belgian Government, and a letter from Sir Roger Makins (copy attached) regarding purchase by the U.S. of plutonium from Great Britain.

At 5 p.m. I was visited by Mikhail N. Smirnovsky (Minister Counselor of the Russian Embassy, acting for Ambassador Menshikov, who is out of the city) and Sergei N. Stubar (Counselor of the Russian Embassy), who brought me three letters (copies attached) from Emelyanov. One was in reply to my letter to him of March 3rd and said the Soviets were willing to proceed with reactor and waste disposal exchanges on a basis close to his initial position which was unacceptable to AEC. Another letter said he will be glad to meet me at the IAEA meeting in Vienna in September. The third letter advised John Hall that Emelyanov would be unable to receive me in Moscow in September, at the time suggested by Hall, since he plans to attend the Pugwash Conference and Board meeting in Vienna. (Emelyanov did not attend the Pugwash Conference.)

I had dinner at the Blue Room in the Pentagon with Harold Brown, John Rubel, Gerald Johnson, Jack Ruina, Eugene Fubini, John Jackson and Admiral Charles Martell.