

Downgraded from ~~Secret~~
By Authority of NSC
by DJH/Bam DATE 11/8/00

November 2, 1959

Please refer to the following references.
TITLE
FILE 89-341 # 5 (appeal)
(NL-11/29/99)



Dear Mr. Secretary:

I have studied your letter of October 6, 1959, on the subject of instructions for the expenditure of nuclear weapons, and more specifically, the instructions to be issued to Unified and Specified Commanders in connection with my Basic Authorization of May 22, 1957, and the Implementing Instructions of February 17, 1959.

All the provisions covered in your letter of October 6, 1959, are satisfactory to me, and I approve them, including the changes recommended by my staff, with the following exceptions:

(a) The penultimate paragraph, page 2 of Inclosure #1 to your letter needs to be revised. I am concerned that this paragraph as written could easily be misinterpreted by Authorizing Commanders as giving license to ignore the restrictions set forth in these documents if the situation were to appear serious enough as to threaten destruction of their forces. Therefore, it seems best to me to eliminate this paragraph. It has been suggested that this difficulty could be averted by deleting the words "utilizing the criteria and procedures set forth in these instructions" and substituting therefor "observing the criteria, procedures, and restrictions set forth in these instructions." This, however, in eliminating the dangers inherent in this paragraph, also appears to deprive it of any meaning. While I would prefer the deletion of this paragraph altogether from this and related papers, I solicit your views as to its value.

(b) With regard to the basic letter of May 22, 1957, I would like to have added to paragraph 2. b the words "subject to limitations in accordance with international agreements."

DECLASSIFIED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL, EXECUTIVE ORDER 12958, SECTION 5.4(b)(3)

DECLASSIFICATION DATE: Apr. 4, 2001 WLB

~~TOP SECRET~~



Two other points also present themselves:

(a) I approve with reluctance the change in wording in paragraph 2. a (3) of the May 22, 1957, letter. I am informed that the reason for this new wording throughout these documents is to give CONAD, in the absence of agreements with Mexico, authority to fire air defense weapons with atomic warheads over Mexican territory. I will go along with this wording as an interim measure; but I am asking the Department of State to begin negotiations immediately with the Mexican Government to attain an agreement which will provide such permission.

(b) Paragraph b (3), on page 2 of your letter of October 6, 1959, refers to supplementary guidance to the Authorizing Commanders with respect to "procedures" for obtaining consent of the Government, if required. I expect this supplementary guidance to be submitted to me when it is prepared.

I cannot overemphasize the need for the utmost discretion and understanding in exercising the authority set forth in these documents. Accordingly, I would like you to find some way to brief the various Authorizing Commanders on this subject to ensure that all are of one mind as to the letter and the spirit of these instructions. Preferably, I would like to see this done in a small symposium, consisting only of the Commanders concerned. Perhaps the annual conference at Quantico could provide an opportunity to do this without the publicity which would attend calling a special meeting.

Sincerely,

Dwight D. Eisenhower

The Honorable Thomas S. Gates
Deputy Secretary of Defense
Washington, D. C.