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Security Information

1954

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Secretary
National Security Council

SUBJECT : CIA Comments on NSC 140/1

1. The subject paper has been reviewed by this Agency and found to be in consonance with the intelligence now available to us except for one minor point mentioned below in paragraph 2 a. In my opinion, the Subcommittee is to be highly commended for the quality of its report and the unique contribution it makes to our understanding of the nation's defense problem. It amply justifies efforts that have gone into it and to my mind suggests the advisability of similar attacks on other difficult questions requiring the blending of operational and intelligence information into "net" estimates.

2. I have only two comments as to the substance of the report:

a. On page 8, in paragraph 5 of the Discussion, it is stated that:

" . . . In mid-1953, the USSR will probably possess about 1,000 medium bombers of the TU-4 type (comparable to U.S. B-29). By mid-1955, this number may be increased to about 1,100. . . ."

Since this portion of the paper was prepared, further evidence has come to light which has caused us now to estimate that the Soviet Union has over 1,600 of these planes at the present time and is producing them at the rate of about 35 per month. Since the number of TU-4's assumed to take part in attack is well below 1,000, in the period mid-1953 to mid-1955, the conclusions of NSC 140/1 are in no way affected by this revision; but it might be pointed out that any doubts as to whether the Soviet medium bomber fleet is sufficient to enable the Soviet Long-Range Air Force to expend planes relatively plentifully in one-way missions, are pretty well dissipated.

b. In order to keep the problem within manageable limits, General Edwards' Subcommittee based its calculations on the "best estimate" figure as to Soviet atomic bomb stockpile. As pointed out in SE-36, NSII-1, and elsewhere, this median figure is never

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 AUTH: HR 13-2
 DATE: 30 MAR 80
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given except in conjunction with upper and lower limits -- plus 100 per cent or minus 33 1/3 per cent respectively. Thus it should be borne in mind that by 30 June 1955, the Soviets might have a stockpile up to twice as large as that taken as a basis for the calculations in NSC 140/1. Again this does not affect, in my judgment, the validity of the general conclusions of the report. It merely means that the magnitude of the Soviet capability envisaged therein for mid-1955 might be increased or reduced, or advanced or delayed by a year or more.

3. This Agency strongly recommends NSC 140/1 to the Council as a sound intelligence estimate and as an appropriate basis for developing national policy.

/S/
WALTER D. DAVIS
Director

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