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PSB D-17d

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD

26 December 1951

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NSC review completed

STAFF STUDY ON PUBLICITY WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN WEAPONS

This Staff Study was Accepted

by Action of the

Psychological Strategy Board

on December 20, 1951

The Board Amended the RECOMMENDATIONS

as indicated on Page 5

(THIS IS AN APPROVED STAFF STUDY)

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PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD  
Washington, D. C.

26 December 1951

STAFF STUDY ON PUBLICITY WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN WEAPONS

PROBLEM

1. To establish a procedure for the development and promulgation of policy guidance for the content of governmental statements with respect to the existence, development and contemplated uses of weapons using atomic power for propulsion or explosion, guided missiles, and biological, radiological and chemical weapons.

FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

2. Adequate machinery does not now exist for guidance of senior officials of the government in formulating and issuing statements on the subject of the above mentioned weapons. The need for such guidance has recently been demonstrated by the conflicts in approaches to this subject taken by officials including those of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Department of Defense. In addition, opportunities are presently being lost for profitable exploitation abroad of the psychological possibilities inherent in weapons themes relating to these weapons.

DISCUSSION

3. Public statements covering these weapons must be based on considered appraisal of the following fundamental principles:

a. Domestic information responsibilities

The Government has an obligation to provide the American people with authoritative information concerning the nature and scope of recently developed weapons. When practicable, such statements should be

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so designed as to avoid intensifying anxiety unduly. They must also be designed to obtain wide public support of national policy in the use of such weapons in the national interest.

b. Security

Security considerations require that certain weapons information must be kept secret, despite public information considerations.

c. International repercussions

The present international situation requires that the effect upon foreign groups should be taken into account with regard to the timing, place of release, and source of any public statements regarding weapons.

4. Mechanisms now existing do not provide for representation of all agencies having an interest in the problem. They are particularly inadequate with respect to representation of the foreign information aspects.

5. In the course of drafting this study, the Psychological Strategy Board Staff received informal comments from the departments indicating that it is objectionable to create a guidance mechanism which takes into consideration only the foreign effects of domestic public statements with respect to the weapons with which this paper deals.

Domestic information policy is a matter not within the competence of PSB. The Office of Public Information of the Department of Defense is primarily responsible for the formulation of domestic public information policy on biological warfare, radiological warfare and chemical warfare. Other means exist for the maintenance of security with respect to these weapons.

The creation of an additional agency to provide foreign information policy guidance would result in competing agencies dealing respectively with the security, the domestic information and the foreign information aspects of the problem. Adequate guidance however can be provided

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only through a single mechanism which has the competence to deal with all three aspects of the problem.

6. Since the primary purpose of the development of such weapons is their utilization in war, and since the Department of Defense has the major responsibility for the maintenance of security with respect to such weapons, it appears that a mechanism to achieve the purpose described in paragraph 5 above should be organized under the chairmanship of a member of the Department of Defense. This committee should be composed of one or more members from each of the following agencies: The White House Staff, the Psychological Strategy Board, the Department of State, Central Intelligence Agency and the Atomic Energy Commission. A representative of the Federal Civil Defense Administration should sit as appropriate with the committee for information of interest to that agency. Members must be so selected as to take cognizance of the three major aspects of the problem: foreign information, domestic information and security.

(RECOMMENDATIONS

7. a. That the Secretary of Defense be requested to organize a Weapons Information Guidance Committee composed as indicated in paragraph 6.
- b. That he be requested to instruct this committee to prepare as a matter of urgency a national information policy guidance for statements with respect to the weapons referred to in paragraph 1, taking into consideration the foreign information, domestic information and security aspects of the problem.
- c. That the Department of Defense member inform the Board when this action has been completed.

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The Board accepted the Staff Study at the Seventh Meeting but amended the RECOMMENDATIONS to provide that the Committee would be organized by the Board and chaired by a representative of the Department of Defense.

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Director

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