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ECONOMIC DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE

EDIC Case No. 8
Control No. 2162
3 June 1955

SUBJECT

Soviet Bloc Use of Borax Products (Boric Acid and Borates - I/L 3715)
for Rocket Fuel and Other Jet Plane Application

REQUESTING AGENCY AND DATE

Original request: Commerce/BFC, 13 May 1955;
Follow-up request: Joint Operating Committee, 26 May 1955

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF INFORMATION

As soon as possible

PROPOSED USE

Information to be used by BFC and JOC in determining whether the strategic rating of subject commodities should be raised. Material should be prepared, insofar as possible, for subsequent use in COCOM negotiations.

BACKGROUND AND REFERENCES

Background - The BFC states that borax products, among other uses, are understood to have use in one form of rocket fuel and in jet plane exhaust systems. A Soviet bloc shortage of borax and its products has been well established and the bloc is making strenuous efforts to obtain these products from the Free World. It is imperative, at this particular time, that an attempt be made to learn whether the bloc is using these products in rocket fuel and in other jet plane application. If such use is confirmed, the USDEL will endeavor to obtain a higher COCOM security rating than the present I/L III listing.

On 26 May JOC reviewed JOC Document No. 118 of 23 May 1955 and approved implementation of PD 810 with respect to borax. During the 60-day grace period preceding implementation, bilateral discussions are to be instituted with the UK, Western Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands in order to effect cessation of re-exports to the bloc of US-origin borax. Similar negotiations will also be held with Italy and Turkey as producing countries which have shipped borax to the bloc.

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JOC recommended that COCOM be advised of the proposed bilateral negotiations and requested up-to-date intelligence on strategic uses of borax in support of the COCOM approach and the various bilateral negotiations.

A preliminary survey has been completed, principally in CIA and Defense, of intelligence on strategic uses of borax in the bloc. This survey reveals that: a) available intelligence indicates the bloc to be the equal of the U.S. in research on the military application of this commodity group; b) little is known on actual Soviet military uses of borax; c) the U.S. has moved from research to actual production in this field; and, d) an effort is being made to guarantee sources to satisfy U.S. requirements which are not considered adequate even though 98 percent of known world production occurs in this country. Information on its strategic uses in the U.S. is now being developed by Defense.

References

- a) IWG/ID-15 dated 24 November 1953 on "Indications of Soviet Bloc Vulnerability to Controls of West-East Movement of Boron Compounds".
- b) Memorandum from Director Agricultural and Chemical Products Division, BFC, to Coordinator Technical Task Groups, Department of Commerce of 17 March 1955 on "Boric Acid and Borates".
- c) JOC Document No. 118 dated 23 May 1955 on "Implementation of PD 810 With Respect to Borax, US MESL Item 3715, Code Q(P)-4A"

ASSIGNMENT OF PRODUCTION AND/OR ACTION RESPONSIBILITIES

At the EDIC meeting of 2 June, responsibility for updating and expansion of IWG/ID-15 in time to meet JOC and BFC requirements was assigned to CIA.

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Executive Secretary

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