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NUMBER 11-9-55

CLANDESTINE INTRODUCTION OF
NUCLEAR WEAPONS UNDER
DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, The Joint Staff, the Atomic Energy Commission and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Concurred in by the
INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

on 28 June 1955. Concurring were the Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Department of the Army; the Director of Intelligence, USAF; the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff; and the Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the IAC. The Assistant to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, dissents from the conclusion of this estimate, and has been joined in part by the Director of Naval Intelligence. (See FBI and ONI footnotes to paragraph 7.)

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CLANDESTINE INTRODUCTION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS UNDER DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the likelihood of a Soviet attempt to introduce nuclear weapons or their components into the US clandestinely under diplomatic immunity before an all-out attack on the US.¹

ASSUMPTION

That the USSR decides to launch an all-out attack on the US.

THE ESTIMATE

1. The USSR is capable of producing nuclear weapons which could be introduced into the US either as complete assemblies or as component parts or subassemblies. Such weapons could range from one kiloton to one megaton in yield, and in the present state of the art could be designed to break down into components weighing from a few pounds up to approximately 25 pounds in the case of small-yield weapons and up to approximately 200 pounds in the case of large-yield weapons.

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2. If the USSR intended to launch an all-out attack on the US, the major Soviet objectives would be (a) to destroy or neutralize as quickly as possible US capabilities for nuclear attack, and (b) to inflict such physical and psychological damage on the US as would prevent, or at least hinder, the mobilization of US war potential. Accordingly, the initial Soviet attack would have to be planned not only to achieve surprise but also to be of sufficient weight to accomplish those objectives. Insofar as the USSR considered the clandestine introduction of nuclear weapons into the US, it would plan to use these weapons either (a) as the *principal* means of inflicting maximum damage on the US or (b) as an *auxiliary* means of inflicting damage, the main effort of its all-out attack being made by other methods of delivery (aircraft, guided missiles, etc.).

¹ This estimate is in response to a specific request which confines itself to the narrow limits of clandestine introduction of nuclear weapons under diplomatic immunity. For a more extensive discussion of Soviet capabilities for clandestine introduction by any means, see NIE 11-7-55, "Soviet Gross Capabilities for Attacks on the US and Key Overseas Installations and Forces through 1 July 1958."

² "Diplomatic immunity" as used herein refers to an accompanied shipment not limited in size or weight, which is covered by a diplomatic seal.

CLANDESTINE ATTACK AS THE PRINCIPAL MEANS OF INFLECTING DAMAGE

3. Soviet military planners are unlikely to consider that nuclear weapons could be clan-

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destinely introduced and put into position on a scale large enough to obviate the need for an all-out attack by other means. The success of a clandestine nuclear attack on such a scale would depend not only upon the initial introduction of substantial numbers of nuclear weapons, but also upon subsequent operations which would be much more difficult to organize and keep secret. To achieve its objectives, the USSR would have to organize a complex clandestine operation involving the storage of weapons components, transportation of assembled weapons or component parts over considerable distances, emplacement of weapons, and accurate timing and coordination of attacks at the target sites. A clandestine operation of this magnitude would involve grave risks of premature disclosure because of: (a) the large numbers of targets to be attacked; (b) the distances of such targets from Soviet installations having diplomatic immunity; (c) the amount of time the devices would have to be held secretly prior to use; and (d) the numbers of persons involved in the operation.

4. We believe, therefore, that in order to obtain the optimum combination of weight and surprise, the USSR would probably place chief reliance on nuclear attack by aircraft, at least until the aircraft delivery system is replaced by intercontinental missiles. It would probably consider clandestine employment only as an auxiliary method to attack certain selected targets.

CLANDESTINE ATTACK AS AN AUXILIARY MEANS

5. In estimating the advisability of using clandestine delivery as an auxiliary method of attack, the USSR would have to balance the probable results to be obtained against the risks of detection with consequent loss of surprise and possible US counteraction. While the justification for its employment would increase in proportion to the contemplated scale of clandestine attack, the risks of detection would also increase substantially. Consequently, we believe that, in considering such an attack, the USSR would limit its operations to those targets the destruction or damage of

which (a) is sufficiently important to warrant incurring the risks involved, (b) could be accomplished by clandestine means more easily or more certainly than by other means, and (c) could be accomplished with minimum risks of premature disclosure.

6. The USSR could minimize the risk of premature disclosure by limiting the clandestine operation to placement of nuclear weapons at Soviet diplomatic establishments in Washington and New York. In this way it could virtually insure successful attack on two major targets without using a large number of personnel and without incurring the risks involved in transporting nuclear weapons to areas which do not enjoy diplomatic immunities. On the other hand, the USSR could attack New York and Washington by air and therefore would not have to rely on clandestine attack. In addition, even a very limited clandestine effort would still not entirely eliminate the possibility of disclosure as a result of unpredictable events.

7. Although the possibility of limited Soviet use of this method of clandestine attack can by no means be excluded, we believe that, since the adverse consequences of premature disclosure would remain and since the chances of detection could not be entirely eliminated, the chances are now slightly better than even that the USSR would not undertake even this more restricted operation.³

³The Assistant to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, believes that this paragraph should read as follows:

"It is impossible to predict whether the USSR would or would not attempt to utilize the diplomatic pouch to clandestinely introduce nuclear weapons into the US. However, since the USSR is capable of producing nuclear weapons for introduction by this method, a risk will continue to exist

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The Director of Naval Intelligence concurs in general with the views of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and would stress that the danger would rise in direct proportion to the ease with which nuclear weapons could be introduced into the US without risk of detection.

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