DOE review

21 DEC 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Meeting of Committee of Principals, 22 December 1965, 1600 hours, State Conference Room, on "SNAPTRAN-2 Reactor Destruction Experiment"

1. "SNAPTRAN-2" is the last of a series of three major experiments by the AEC to determine the behavior of SNAP reactors for space application when subjected to various abnormal conditions such as might occur upon launch or re-entry. SNAPTRAN-1, completed this year, consisted of 120 non-destructive tests in the air. SNAPTRAN-3, conducted last year, consisted of a single, destructive underwater test. SNAPTRAN-2, scheduled for this month at the National Reactor Testing Station in Idaho, is to be a destructive test in the air. From a technical viewpoint, data from SNAPTRAN-2 are necessary in order to make possible accurate predictions of what might happen under any selected set of environmental conditions to a space-launched SNAP reactor.

2. The Committee of Principals meeting is called to decide if SNAPTRAN-2 should take place, and if so, under what conditions the test should be carried out. Concern regarding the test springs from the undesirable publicity associated with a previous reactor excursion, the KIWI-Transient Nuclear test last January. Although the US has consistently taken the position that the Test Ban Treaty has nothing to do with reactors, if you recall, the KIWI test on TV looked like an atmospheric nuclear explosion going off.

3. According to the AEC, the following are the facts in the case:

a. The test should take place between 10 December 1965 and 18 January 1966, a political "window" between the ending of the United Nation General Assembly's considerations of its First Committee resolutions on disarmament and the convening of the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee in Geneva.

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b. The energy release of KIWI was 10,000 megawatt-seconds, that of SNAPTRAN-2 is predicted to be only 75.

c. It would cost $7 million more and delay the test 45 months to conduct it underground, and the transport of fission products could not be determined.

d. It is highly unlikely that the radiological release from SNAPTRAN-2 will be detectable beyond the continental limits of the US.

4. In view of these AEC conclusions, [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

25X1 [redacted] I see no intelligence problem here, and recommend that you vote in favor of the experiment. 25X1

[redacted]

DONALD F. CHAMBERLAIN
Director of Scientific Intelligence

cc: DDCI
Executive Registry
DD/S&T
DD/I
25X1 [redacted] DDI

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