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Authority NND 932-25

By

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

11/1/68

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SUBJECT: Report on Feasibility of Peacetime Launch from ICBM
Operational Sites (U)

I have a memorandum, same subject, dated 4 October, signed by the Vice Director, Joint Staff, and the enclosed study and proposed operations plans which would apply in peacetime launching of liquid-fueled Inter-continental Ballistic Missiles from their operational sites.

I believe the study on the feasibility of such firings is well done, and the operations plans appended are comprehensive.

With regard to MINUTEMAN firing from MARMSTROM, I concur with your position that political and safety constraints make such action not possible at this time.

Your memorandum refers to the Air Force proposal that a future MINUTEMAN squadron be located in such an isolated location that firings may be made from operational sites. I have considered this proposal, and have informed the Secretary of the Air Force that I am not convinced the information derived from firings from such an isolated squadron is sufficiently better than that obtained from Vandenberg tests as to justify the substantial increased construction, investment, and operational costs involved.

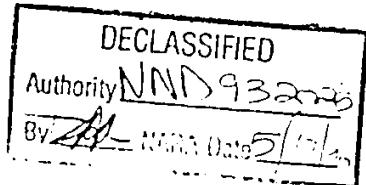
Because MINUTEMAN and POLARIS will comprise a majority of our strategic offensive forces, plans to conduct firings from operational sites with the Improved MINUTEMAN with its 360° target azimuth capability should be continued. Firings from new silos and older silos retrofitted to accept the more capable missile should both be included.

With regard to ATLAS and TITAN, I agree that the limited record of past performance of our liquid-fueled missiles would indicate we do not have high confidence that such tests would be completely successful. Until we have high confidence that such tests will probably be completely successful, it would be premature to approve such a proposal. The political climate and the civilian reaction to proceeding now with such tests would probably not be favorable.

However, I am advised by the Director of Defense Research and Engineering and the Assistant Secretary, Public Affairs, that public acceptance of overflight by test shots in the vicinity of our national ranges has been encouraging and the public is willing to accept some risk if such tests appear necessary in the national interest. Certainly the possibility of

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unfavorable public reaction should not be a bar to further consideration of the feasibility of such tests.

I desire that the plans for firing of ATLAS and TITAN from operational sites be periodically reviewed for up-to-date applicability, and the subject be raised again by 1 November 1964.

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