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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON D C 20301

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT
SUBJECT: Consolidated Guidance

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: OCT 07 2015

10 MAR 1978 DOC# 167

During the past four months I have been through the initial stages of producing a Consolidated Guidance for planning in the Defense Department. Heretofore there had been three separate (strategy, program, fiscal) and not always consistent guidance documents.

The process began with extensive discussions during October and November among the Chiefs, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the OSD staff, Charles Duncan and myself, of what sorts of things should be contained in a consolidated guidance. Following that, a first draft was drawn up by my staff. I made changes and sent it to the JCS and Services for comments. This was followed by another series of reviews with the Services, a redrafting, and a further examination and rewrite by Charles and myself last weekend with the benefit of personal comments from the Service Secretaries and each of the Chiefs.

The result is a 300-page document which I am not transmitting to you. Your staff will be provided with that material for their information. But if this is to be only a staff exercise, it will fail to realize most of its potential value.

I believe instead that the next stage is to get your personal views about a few fundamental issues on which you may wish to make personal inputs, and with which you will therefore want to become more familiar. Possible -- and very different -- examples are: (a) strategic forces; and (b) the effects on our defense posture and capabilities ten years from now and, by implication, on our foreign policy of a change up or down in average annual level of defense expenditures by 5% either way.

To find out how you would like now to proceed, I attach a ten-page summary of what seem to me to be the major issues and the major features of the guidance. I also attach for your information the table of contents and two sample sections of the guidance document; the first is on strategic nuclear forces and the second on forces for NATO. I would appreciate it if you could go through the ten-page summary and indicate any issues you would like to have discussed in more depth. I will then prepare more detailed briefing documents for a meeting during which you and I can discuss them thoroughly with Charles Duncan, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and a few of your other staff. We could (and I would recommend it) do this during the week of March 20th, before you leave on your overseas trip. Alternatively, you may wish to wait until May when, according to the OMB staff, you will be in a position to look at the Government-wide guidance for the FY 1980 budget.

15-m-1740

UNCLASSIFIED BY 12747/UCS/1601/5
DATE 01-08-2010
REASON: Declassify On: 01 DEC 2030
Other Agency Copy TBD

(Encl. Apr) 1978

330-81-0202, box 12, 10054

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There is one matter, however, which will not wait beyond the end of March. This is the need to submit to the Congress a five-year ship-building program. It is important that this be a program that we are prepared to stick with over a period of at least a few years, subject of course to changes that we are forced to make to account for Congressional changes while still assuring program balance. I will be ready to go over this subject with you any time after March 13th. Probably Zbig, Jim McIntyre, and I should discuss it first.

Unsurprisingly, there are a number of matters within the Consolidated Guidance that are not unanimously agreed within the Defense Department. There are therefore likely to be additional changes in it as the arguments (and the realities of Congressional action) sway me one way or the other. It begins to look as if the Congress, while making a number of changes up and down (adding a CVN and deferring a Trident submarine, for example) is at least as likely to approve a higher Defense budget for Fiscal 79 than we submitted as a lower one.

This will probably reinforce the view among my subordinates (one of their few unanimous views) that a 5% increase above what is now contained in the five-year fiscal guidance, could easily be passed if the Administration would propose it. They see this course of action as solving their most severe problems and as making the difference between a low-risk defense capability and a high-risk defense capability. They may even be right on both scores. You (and I) may take a different view from that one. But that imposes on us, I believe, an obligation carefully to consider the alternatives proposed by the Military Departments and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and fully to justify the Administration's decisions. I hope that this Consolidated Guidance document and the dialogue leading to the decisions will help us to do so.

Harold Brown

Attachments

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 Authority: EO 13526
 Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
 Date: OCT 07 2015

Office of the Secretary of Defense 5052
 Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS †
 Date: 07 OCT 2015 Authority: EO 13526
 Declassify: X Deny in Full: _____
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 Reason: _____
 MDR: 15 -M- 1740