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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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SENSITIVE #1

[15 May 81]

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Enhanced Radiation Weapons (U)

~~(S)~~ We have reached the point where we need your decision regarding enhanced radiation (ER) weapons. Making this decision now is important for two reasons: (1) it will affect our force structure capabilities and determine the flexibility of our future deployment options; and (2) we believe it is necessary to have made this decision before the visit of Chancellor Schmidt. This memorandum summarizes our production and deployment options with respect to these new weapons and provides our recommendation.

~~(S)~~ It is important that any decision be handled delicately so as to avoid the debacle created by the Carter Administration on this sensitive issue. First, President Carter chose to get Allied approval for deployment and then he pulled the rug out from under key Allies by unilaterally deciding to defer the whole question. As a result, we now face not only a decision on controversial new weapons systems, but also a test of American leadership in the NATO Alliance.

~~(S)~~ The Department of Energy has begun assembling the new nuclear warhead for the short-range LANCE missile and shortly will begin producing the new nuclear eight-inch artillery shell.

~~(S)~~ From a military point of view, ER weapons are clearly preferable (See Tab A). The ER versions of these new weapons offer significant military advantages when compared both with older artillery and LANCE warheads currently deployed and with the non-ER versions of the new rounds being produced. From a foreign policy and Alliance management standpoint, however, we recognize that ER weapons remain an emotional subject in Europe. We can anticipate that the Soviets will manipulate that sentiment to produce widespread political protests and demonstrations against any deployment(s) of ER weapons to Europe. If our decision is not managed carefully, these protests could undermine not only our ER weapon plans but, even more important, the implementation of the crucial December 1979 NATO decision on long-range TNF modernization as well.

DOE Section 6.2(a)
OSD Section 6.2(a)

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: AUG 01 2019

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(SFR) We have looked at several different approaches to this issue and have developed three options for your consideration:

Option 1: Continue the Carter approach, which means producing non-ER warheads and the ER components, but delaying for the foreseeable future a decision on whether to install the ER components in the warheads. This approach has the advantage of reducing to some degree the controversy surrounding this issue, but at the cost of reduced military effectiveness. Since we must deploy the new warheads regardless of whether they are non-ER or ER, we can expect some controversy in any case, as the general public would have difficulty perceiving the difference between the two. (We need to retire the existing 8" warheads to recover the special nuclear material for other programs.) While this would maintain the theoretical option of converting the warheads to ER at a later date, it could take 6-10 months to convert all the non-ER weapons to ER, would be very difficult to do in a time of crisis, and politically will always be a contentious issue. Finally, such a decision would establish the unfortunate precedent of foregoing production of a militarily necessary program because of concern over Allied sensitivities.

Option 2: Commence ERW production now but restrict deployment to U.S. Forces on our territory. We would initiate production of ER weapons now for deployment with U.S. forces in the U.S. and Guam. This is reasonable because the first year's production of ER weapons can be used to modernize the U.S. non-European stockpile. To ease Allied concerns, we would make the following public statement: "As part of our overall force modernization and the need to maintain flexibility and capability in the U.S. force structure, the decision has been made to begin production of enhanced radiation (ER) weapons. These weapons will be deployed with our forces on U.S. territory. We have no plans at this time to deploy ER weapons to Europe and deployment to U.S. forces in Europe would occur only after close consultations with any country on whose territory such weapons would be based." We would tell Chancellor Schmidt of this decision during his visit, and -- because of his sensitivities -- hold off the public announcement of our decision for several weeks after his departure.

This approach faces squarely the issue of needed improvements in U.S. forces with ER weapons, and has the advantage of meeting our non-European military requirements, while making it somewhat easier to manage the likely foreign policy fallout. It would also make it clear that production decisions are our business, while the NATO Allies will of course have a say in deployment questions involving their forces and territory. Finally, it is structured to recognize our priority effort toward implementation of our long-range TNF modernization program in Europe.

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It would be essential under this option that there be absolutely no private or public references (beyond the public statement described above) to the possibility of deployment of ER weapons to Europe prior to Ministerial-level consultations with that nation of the Alliance on whose territory such weapons would be based. Otherwise, we could create a controversy over "real intentions" of the US to deploy in Europe, resulting in an explicitly negative stance by the Allies and a gaping division within the Alliance.

Option 3: Produce and deploy ER weapons with US forces worldwide. We could initiate production of ERW now for prompt deployment with U.S. forces around the world, including those in Europe. We would begin consultations now with key NATO Allies to try to achieve their understanding of the need for deployment. This would have the advantage of upgrading our battlefield nuclear capability in NATO as well as outside of Europe as quickly as possible. But to push for everything now would cause severe political difficulties for Schmidt and other key Allied leaders, sour the Schmidt visit, set back US/FRG relations, and adversely affect the prospects for implementing NATO's 1979 deployment decision on LRTNF. It could also undermine the fine start you have made in restoring Allied confidence in the US.

We both support Option 2.

We believe our ultimate goal should be to deploy ER weapons with US forces on a worldwide basis, including Europe and with the forces of our Allies (under existing NATO control procedures). Given the political realities and the desirability of not jeopardizing the LRTNF modernization plan while it is still in its early stages of implementation, however, we believe that we must move towards our goal in stages rather than in a single step. Our first step should be to begin production of the ER weapon with deployment to our forces on US territory. This would allow us to start our modernization and provide time to de-sensitize the Europeans on this issue. No matter which option you select, however, the decision must be handled with the greatest care, particularly with regard to the Schmidt visit. Given his recent political setback in the Berlin elections and the defeat of Giscard, the last thing Schmidt wants is further controversy.

We want to stress to you that even Option 2 is likely to produce controversy, with the Soviets alleging that the US has decided to build "neutron bombs" with the intent of "forcing" them on Europe. We will face considerable criticism from the left in Europe, as will any Allied leader who chooses to stand with us. This said, we nonetheless believe it would be a mistake to ignore a military requirement for fear of a hostile political reaction abroad.

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Recommendation

We recommend that you approve Option 2, i.e., that we commence ERW production now but restrict deployment to U.S. forces on our territory. Subsequent deployment of these weapons on the soil of any other nation will be done only after obtaining your approval. (Talker for use with Schmidt at Tab B; contingency press guidance at Tab C).

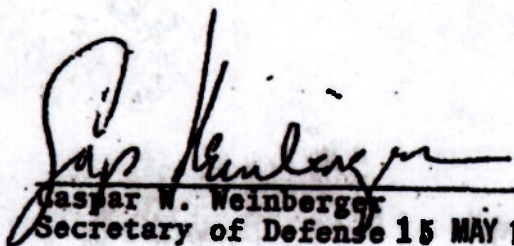
Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Alternatively, that you approve Option 1, which is simply to continue the Carter Administration program of producing non-ER warheads and the ER components necessary for their conversion.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Or, that you approve Option 3, to begin ER production for deployment with US forces worldwide and press the Europeans now for prompt deployment.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____


Caspar W. Weinberger
Secretary of Defense 15 MAY 1981

Alexander M. Haig, Jr.
Secretary of State

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS
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