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(165th AEC Meeting, 4-14-48)  
Public Announcement concerning Operation SANDSTONE

Mr. Carpenter read a message he had dispatched to the Task Force Commander, which quoted in full a draft prepared by the Commission of a proposed press release to be issued after the first Proving Ground Test, and requested the Task Force Commander's comments. He then read the reply he had received from the Task Force Commander, in which the latter recommended against a release in view of certain complications which might result, but stated that he was unable to evaluate the need for a release and further that issuance of a release such as suggested would not jeopardize his operation.

The Commission then proceeded to discussions of various aspects of the problem of issuance of a release, in which Mr. Carpenter participated:

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- a. Possibilities of effective observation of the Proving Ground by Russia at time of the Test. Mr. Carpenter stated it as the belief of the Military Liaison Committee that it is only remotely possible that Russian submarines are operating within a radius of 120 miles from the center of operations. He reported that sub-

~~... within a radius would probably~~

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Reviewed by Carl Wilson 3/21/84

Reviewed by H.R. Schmidt 7/1/85

By: W. Trench 4/11/86

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detected, and stated that the shot would probably be delayed should one be known to be within this area prior to the scheduled time for the shot. Mr. Lilienthal remarked upon a message received from the Test Director dated March 25, 1948, commenting upon the effect upon morale of submarine alerts. Commander Ashworth stated that in his opinion a submarine more than 120 miles distant would probably not detect the shot with sound equipment but probably would with seismographic equipment.

b. Interval following the test during which a release might give Russian an opportunity to collect valuable technical data. Mr. Carpenter reported that he had been informed by Mr. Ellis Johnson, special advisor to General Kepner on long range detection, that if Russia should learn of the shot within 72 hours after its occurrence, this might enable it to obtain valuable data on the test by use of airborne filters.

c. Press relations. Mr. Waymack expressed his concern over the importance of the press relations involved in this question, from the standpoint of possible deterioration of the whole public attitude towards efforts to maintain the security of restricted data. The pursuit of a policy on this release which might be made to appear patently absurd to the press and through it to the public, would make all future efforts to maintain security increasingly difficult. Mr. Carpenter expressed his belief in a cooperative stand with the press. He mentioned the possibility of asking key members of the press to refrain voluntarily, at least for a stated

period, from printing anything on the test. Mr. Salis [REDACTED] would of necessity [REDACTED]

large and complex operation, to which there would be many obstacles, especially in time of peace.

- d. Possibility of Leaks. It was agreed that any efforts delay public announcement of the test in the press might be negated by conversations of personnel returning from the tests through Honolulu and elsewhere. Certain operational military flights to the United States would be necessary nevertheless, starting immediately after the test.

It was pointed out that in his message of March 25, 1948, the Test Director had expressed the opinion that the detonation would become publicly known within several days of the event.

After this discussion, the following action was decided upon with the concurrence of Mr. Carpenter, who stated that he was speaking for the Secretary of Defense:

- (1) The Commission will prepare a release for issuance at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, on the Saturday following the first test. This release will be a revision of the draft already seen by Mr. Carpenter but will be submitted to Mr. Carpenter for final approval prior to issuance.
- (2) The Commission's Director of Public and Technical Information will call a meeting in Washington with a selected group of correspondents for press associations and major newspapers late in the afternoon of the Friday following the test. Those attending will be given advance copies of the release, with a general oral explanation, probably by the Chairman and Mr. Carpenter, of the reasons

for issuing the information at this time and in this manner, and the confidence of

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the press men present will hold the release and the subject matter of the release in complete confidence until the release time set.

(3) In the event of a news leak prior to 2:00 p.m. Saturday, of such nature as to indicate strongly the futility of continuing to withhold a release it may be found desirable to advance the time of release. The Commission will confer with Mr. [REDACTED] prior to making any release earlier than 2:00 p.m. Saturday.

(4) Commander Ashworth will arrange to notify the Force Commander of the above decisions, and also to request him to arrange that with the exception of necessary operational flights (personnel participating in which should be given strictest security briefings) flights be avoided if possible which would result in the arrival of test or server personnel at Honolulu or other points where press representatives are present, prior to 2 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, on Saturday following the test.

[REDACTED]