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INFORMATION

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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Friday, February 9, 1968
5:20 p. m.

Mr. President:

File

Herewith Andy Goodpaster's
latest briefing of Gen. Eisenhower.

Key passages are marked.

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 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
 THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE
 OFFICE OF THE COMMANDANT
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20315

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9 February 1968

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with General Eisenhower, 8 February 1968

1. I met with General Eisenhower for two hours at his office and home at Palm Desert on 8 February. The meeting covered 3 subjects: The Soviet missile and nuclear program; the Communist TET offensive in SVN; and the Pueblo incident.

2. I first covered the Soviet missile, nuclear and related programs at length, stressing that I would try to give a balanced picture, although many of the figures are subject to uncertainty and interpretation. To begin, I pointed out that we are at a significant point in the evolution of Soviet strategic nuclear forces in relation to our own. Major increases in Soviet missile forces are now underway and are anticipated in the next several years, the effect of which is to bring them generally to parity with us, and probably to surpass us in certain indices such as "megatonnage". Their expansion poses the issue of whether it makes better sense for us to accept that this is happening, or to initiate a further expansion ourselves in order to seek to "stay ahead".

3. General Eisenhower made two comments on this point. First, when we get to a point at which we think we have plenty in number on our side, it makes no sense simply to add more. Instead, we should concentrate on how to go forward in efficiency--i. e., advancement in performance--so that we will never be outmatched in performance. Second, he asked whether the numbers of weapons that would be produced by straight extrapolation would have any military meaning. I said that the number needed to give an assured capability of destroying the enemy nation, no matter what the circumstances--probably in the range of 500 to a 1000--seem to me to have special significance. Above this, some numbers are needed to attack his forces, to reduce the weight of his attack on our cities, and the like, but there is a point where the value of further weapons becomes small. A great deal of the analysis and debate that goes on in the Pentagon goes into finding sound levels

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for each of these.

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7. General Eisenhower emphasized the futility of simple increases in missile numbers or in megatons, stressing the need for efficiency and other advances. During discussion, he made the following three suggestions for consideration:

a. The desirability of having a limited number of large-yield missiles--perhaps 20 or more--having a yield of 20 to 30 MT. (I had mentioned that the Soviet SS9 war head yield is estimated in the range of 12-25 MT, and also that some of our airborne weapons are in the 20 megaton category). He would have such weapons largely for psychological and deterrent effect, and to make clear that the Soviets do not "outmatch" us.

b. A modest Polaris submarine replacement and re-inforcement program--perhaps 3 to 5 boats a year, to keep up technological progress and construction capability.

c. Avoidance of rigidity in total numbers of missiles projected for the United States in the future. A figure of 1500 or 1700 should never be regarded as holy; it cannot be that exact.

8. Having made these points, General Eisenhower indicated that he did not feel concerned about the trends and changes in the figures I had presented.