

Mr. Brown: And they may want to consider more homeporting in the Pacific—Subic Bay or Australia—if it's important to keep two carriers full time in the Western Pacific.

Mr. Weiss: In the Philippines, then, you get into a base negotiation. You have to pay a price for it.

Mr. Rush: Yes.

Mr. Ingersoll: We're paying that right now.

Secretary Kissinger: I have a group that is coming.

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to national security.]

36. Memorandum From the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Atomic Energy (Cotter) to Secretary of Defense Schlesinger¹

Washington, March 20, 1974.

SUBJECT

Discussion of Illustrative Nuclear Options With Dr. Kissinger

1. On March 20, 1974, the JCS briefing on illustrative nuclear options for local conflict was presented to Dr. Kissinger (see attached summary). In attendance were Admiral Moorer, Col. Roberge² (JCS briefer), Seymour Weiss, Larry Eagleburger, General Scowcroft, Jan Lodal (NSC staff), Ben Huberman (NSC staff), General Haig (for part), General Welch³ and myself.

2. Dr. Kissinger asked to look at Central Europe and Soviet-PRC scenarios first. [*place not declassified*] was then covered; Kissinger specifically asked General Haig to join for [*place not declassified*]

3. Dr. Kissinger made several points of note:

a. He expressed concern that many of the options appeared to him as too timid. He judged that nuclear use must have a decisive military effect in order to achieve the desired political goal—convince enemy to stop. Too mild a nuclear option is likely to convince the enemy to persevere, or respond tit for tat, or both.

¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, OSD Files: FRC 330-78-0010, A-381, 1974. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action. A note, dated March 23, on the memorandum reads: "Sec Def Has Seen."

² See footnote 2, Document 20.

³ See footnote 3, Document 20.

b. He agreed with our careful attention to avoiding targets near cities and to minimizing civilian casualties through yield selection.

c. He was very interested in limited options using SIOP forces, and thought we had slighted this aspect.

d. He reiterated his requirement for real plans before we talk to the President. He asked to see real plans soon and no later than May.

e. He expressed concern for the time required for U.S. to mount strikes, especially in [place not declassified], where we proposed staging nuclear forces in country. General Haig raised the important point that the [place not declassified] ground forces would have to defend in depth to make some of the nuclear options work—but there is an awkwardness in getting them to do this.

f. [1 paragraph (4 lines) not declassified]

g. His questions on Europe indicated some lack of awareness of the SACEUR versus CINCEUR role of General Goodpaster. He was not at all opposed to U.S. unilateral planning.

4. As I see it, in order to be substantially responsive to Dr. Kissinger's expressed desires, the JCS should do the following:

a. [1 paragraph (3 lines) not declassified]

b. [1 paragraph (3 lines) not declassified]

c. [1 paragraph (2 lines) not declassified]

These are listed in ascending order of difficulty, both for planning and execution.

5. You should recognize that, until you issue the new employment policy,⁴ the JCS are legally bound to work under the existing National Strategic Targeting and Attack Policy. [2 lines not declassified] The JCS have been remarkably forthcoming in preparing themselves for the new policy. For practical and legal reasons we cannot expect much more progress without the issuance of the new employment policy.

6. Recommend that you issue the new employment policy at the soonest. Recommend that you discuss with Admiral Moorer the appropriate level of additional planning prior to our review with Dr. Kissinger and the President.

D. R. Cotter

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⁴ On April 3, Schlesinger issued revised guidance for the employment of nuclear weapons as directed by NSDM 242 (Document 31). The guidance dealt with strategic and planning concepts, major and selected attack options, and limited and regional nuclear options. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 364, Subject Files, NSDMs Nos. 145–264)