

Electrostatic reproduction made for preservation purposes by the Eisenhower Library for replacement of a deteriorating manuscript item.

*This document consists of 2 p
Copy No 1 of 1 Serial "B"*

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

*Date of letter
March 23, 1956*

*Copied 19 January 1957
by Edward R. Beach*

D.O. Tele. R

R/S # 64-57

Re 4/5/57

1 B

Dear Mr. President:

The procedures established for the transfer of atomic weapons from the Atomic Energy Commission to Department of Defense custody in an emergency have been a matter of concern to the Department of Defense for some time. As demonstrated in the June, 1955, practice alert, there exists the possibility of serious delays in the authorization and notification procedures even under conditions where the normal functions of the responsible officials have not been disturbed by actual or impending hostile attack. Bearing in mind that weapons transfer is an essential preparatory operation and does not in any way imply authority to use the weapons, the Department considers it essential that steps be taken to eliminate all sources of possible delay or confusion in the transfer procedures which might compromise our readiness to react to an attack or threat of attack.



The Joint Chiefs of Staff on consideration of the problem have suggested that the transfer of weapons between the Atomic Energy Commission and the Department of Defense be made under the following conditions:

- a. Normal peacetime,
- b. Urgent peacetime, and
- c. Defense emergency.

In the event of urgent peacetime conditions wherein releases are required earlier than would be possible under normal peacetime procedures (by memorandum), verbal or telephonic requests for transfer authorization will be used by the Secretary of Defense to you, which would be followed by your telephonic approval to the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, and the Secretary of Defense. Memoranda would follow each step.

In the case of the Defense Emergency, three conditions are suggested:

- a. A major attack by a member of the Sino-Soviet Bloc is made upon United States forces overseas or on Allied forces in any theater, and is confirmed by the commander of a United States unified or specified command or higher authority.

3-6-56 11:00

Incl. to:
SecDef. Cont. No. TS-0222

DECLASSIFIED
Authority MR 89-381²³
MS 5/13/92

TOP SECRET

b. An overt attack of any type is made upon the United States, and is confirmed by the commander of a unified or specified command or higher authority.

c. A condition of "Air Defense Readiness" or "Air Defense Emergency" is declared by CINCONAD or higher authority, or "Air Defense Warning YELLOW" or "Warning RED" is issued or confirmed by CINCONAD or higher authority.

Under any of these three conditions, transfer is to be automatic.

We approve of the transfer of custody under the conditions outlined. By appropriate administrative procedures we can insure that the declaration of Defense Emergency will result in authoritative notification so that the automatic transfer of all finished weapons in Atomic Energy Commission custody to Department of Defense custody will be assured. These weapons, at the end of the emergency, would be returned to Atomic Energy Commission custody.

We have attached for your consideration a draft of a mutually satisfactory directive for the automatic transfer of weapons.



With great respect, we are

Faithfully yours,

Levitt, Francis

Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission

Robert B. Roberts

Deputy Secretary of Defense

The President
The White House

REPRODUCTION OF THIS DOCUMENT
IS UNLESS OTHERWISE RESTRICTED
EXCEPT WITH PERMISSION OF THE
EISENHOWER LIBRARY