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FY 1970

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NARRATIVE

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For these reasons, the factors recommended by General Holloway in 1969 (for 1 July 1970) were less pessimistic than those suggested by General Nazzaro in 1968 (for 1 January 1969). The revised PLS values would be used by the JSTPS in the preparation of SIOP-4, Revision H (1 July 1970).[229]

Special JCS Readiness Test

(U) (~~TS~~-Op 1) In October 1969, the Strategic Air Command participated in a special test of United States military readiness. On 10 October 1969, the JCS Chairman, General Earle G. Wheeler, notified General Holloway and the CINCs of seven unified commands that: "We have been directed by higher authority to institute a series of actions during the period 130000Z - 250000Z Oct, to test our military readiness in selected areas world-wide to respond to possible confrontation by the Soviet Union. These actions should be discernible to the Soviets, but not threatening in themselves."[230]

(U) (~~TS~~-Op 3) Subsequent correspondence from the JCS omitted the ominous reference to "possible confrontation" and emphasized that the actions to be taken comprised a "test." The background sentence then read: "Higher authority has requested that as a test, repeat, as a test, we take certain actions which would increase our readiness and which would be discernible but not, repeat, not threatening to the Soviets."[231]

(U) (~~TS~~-Op 1) Headquarters SAC received no further information concerning the origin or purpose of the special readiness test. Speculation focused upon a possible connection with the peace talks in Paris and President Nixon's scheduled address to the nation on the war in Vietnam.[232] (It was announced on 13 October that President Nixon would deliver an address on 3 November on the situation in Vietnam at that time.)[233]

(U) ~~(TS-~~Gp 1) Initial public affairs guidance from the JCS stated that queries from the news media should be answered with the statement that, "we are merely testing current readiness posture."[234] This was shortly superseded by more specific and restrictive guidance from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ASD/PA). Included in this guidance was the statement that: "Maximum security must be maintained to achieve desired results of this exercise."[235] The guidance from the ASD/PA prohibited any public announcement concerning the JCS-directed test scheduled to begin on 13 October 1969, and initially forbade response to queries unless specifically authorized by ASD/PA. The only response which would then be permitted was: "We do not repeat not comment on readiness tests."[236] This policy was later modified to allow release of the authorized response prior to notification of the ASD/PA.[237]

(C) ~~(C)~~ ~~(TS-~~Gp 1) The initial message from General Wheeler listed a number of actions under consideration for a demonstration of increased U. S. military readiness. Possibilities included a stand-down of combat aircraft in certain areas, increased surveillance of Soviet ships en route to North Vietnam, silencing radio and other communications in certain areas, and an increase in the ground alert status of SAC bombers and tankers.[238] Specific instructions to each individual CINC followed immediately. The JCS directed the CINCSAC to cease tactical flying training and to reinstate as many degraded alert sorties as possible.[239]

These actions were to be effective at 0800 local time on 13 October 1969 and were to be maintained until further notice by the JCS. The JCS specifically stated that "These directed actions should in no way affect Southeast Asia operations."[241] Although unmentioned, the SAC ICBM force was also unaffected. This circumstance illustrates two fundamental facts: The SAC missile force was always maintained in a high degree of readiness; and manned aircraft could more appropriately support a "show of force."

(U) ~~(TS~~ Op 1) On 12 October 1969, the CINCSAC disseminated guidance for reinstating degraded aircraft alert sorties in the continental United States and for suspending routine combat aircrew training missions.[242] The only SIOP aircraft alert sorties not reinstated at 0800 local on 13 October were the 20 degraded B-52 alert sorties at Andersen AFB, Guam. The actual aircraft ground alert force then increased to 144 B-52s, 32 B-58s, and 189 KC-135s.[243] In comparison, actual alert figures on 30 September 1969 had been 79 B-52s, 31 B-58s, and 130 KC-135s.[244] There were several exceptions to the policy of suspending combat crew training flights. The principal one was continuation of B-52 and KC-135 crew training at Castle AFB. Rotational movements to and from Goose AB, Eielson AFB, Torrejon AB, and satellite bases continued as scheduled. Also unaffected were certain testing programs, movements related to the conflict in Southeast Asia, and SAC support of TAC deployments.[245] On 16 October, Headquarters SAC notified its units that the readiness test would last for at least two weeks, and accordingly provided additional instructions for managing crew resources and fuel orders during the test. At the same time, SAC authorized Fifteenth Air Force to provide refueling support for lateral commands with Castle tankers.[246]

(U) ~~(TS~~ Op 1) Meanwhile, other tests of U.S. military readiness world-wide were under consideration. In his initial message to the CINCs, General Wheeler had requested them to suggest further actions compatible with his guidance and Project 703.[247] On 13 October, General Holloway replied. Because of the limited information concerning the nature of the test, the CINCSAC prefaced his recommendations with the qualification, "Within the objectives of this exercise as understood here . . . ."[248] His most significant proposal was for a limited exercise of SEAGA with weapons. General Holloway also stated that additional aircraft, above the day-to-day SIOP alert force, could be placed in the "highest state of maintenance readiness to include the loading of weapons." However, it would not be reasonable to place these aircraft on actual alert because of the

serious shortage of aircrews (unless crews excess to the 1400 Arc Light sortie rate were returned from SEA).[249]

(U) ~~(TS~~-Gp 1) On 14 October 1969, General Wheeler notified General Holloway and the other CINCs that the readiness test would last until about 0001Z on 30 October. He also informed the CINCs that their recommendations had been considered in the preparation of further tests, and that individual instructions would follow approval by "higher authority."[250]

(U) ~~(TS~~-Gp 1) An intentional omission from SAC's list of suggested actions was dispersal. In fact, Headquarters SAC strongly recommended against dispersal during the readiness test because it would further restrict crew scheduling and aggravate the problem of crew shortages. On 17 October, General Holloway sent the following analysis of the problem to the JCS:[251]

> A serious shortage of aircrews causes limitations in SAC's ability to fully implement further readiness conditions either for the current test or for an emergency. Our readiness plans are based on the requirement to fully generate and disperse the aircraft force and also fly SEAGA. Because of the crew shortage we do not have that full capability. In fact, if we were to fully generate the aircraft force today, there would be about eighty aircraft for which there would be no aircrew available at the time the aircraft became generated.
>
> If we generate aircraft we should implement dispersal, but if we disperse we reduce our ability to cycle crews through airborne SEAGA, ground alert, and submarine reaction posture. In an actual emergency we would have to evaluate the situation and, in some units, make a choice between flying SEAGA and implementing dispersal.

Almost simultaneously, and at the request of the JCS, Headquarters SAC did forward a list of selected dispersal actions which would least affect the command's readiness in case of an actual emergency.[252] However, the JCS did not pursue the matter further.

(U) ~~(TS NOFORN~~-Gp 1) Also on 17 October, the JCS disseminated additional instructions for the military readiness test. In order to prevent the loss of critical items of combat crew training, the

JCS authorized selective flying training for the week beginning 18 October.[253] Headquarters SAC immediately notified its units that "limited and selective" flying training was authorized in bomber and tanker units until the morning of 25 October.[254] At the same time, the Air Staff requested SAC to support the refueling requirements of TAC's replacement pilot training.[255]

(U) ~~(TS-NOFORN~~-Gp 3) Another stand-down then followed at 0800 local time on 25 October. Specific instructions for additional SAC participation included two of the actions suggested by SAC on 13 October. First, the JCS directed SAC to place additional aircraft in the highest state of maintenance readiness (with weapons) in conjunction with the 25 October stand-down. Second, the JCS directed a "Show of Force" SEAGA operation, with weapons, on the Eielson East orbit only, with an I-Hour of 26/1913Z October 1969.[256]

(U) (C) ~~(TS~~-Gp 1) On 23 October, Headquarters SAC provided its units with instructions for accomplishing maintenance generation. All aircraft units, except those with primary functions of training, reconnaissance, and reconnaissance support, were directed to generate category Charlie and Foxtrot sorties for which aircraft were available. Although aircraft were to be fully EWO configured, aircrews would not be assigned to the aircraft. Headquarters SAC did not establish [ ] specific timing, but it directed completion of generation by 0800 local time on 25 October.[257] Approximately 65 per cent of SAC non-alert SIOP aircraft were generated for the JCS test.[258]

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(U) ~~(C) (TS~~-Gp 1) Headquarters SAC simultaneously furnished planning information for the SEAGA "Show of Force" operation on the Eielson East orbit.[259] The B-52 units assigned to that orbit were the 22d and 92d Wings.[260] The 22d possessed two bombardment squadrons (30 UE total) and the 92d had one, so the operation involved six airborne alert sorties launching daily. For the "Show of Force" option, first launch times for these units were approximately 20 hours after I-hour (26/1913Z October). Therefore, the airborne operation actually began on 27 October.[261] (This was the first time nuclear weapons

were carried on "airborne alert" sorties since the B-52 crash near Thule AB in January 1968.)

(U) ~~(TS-NOFORN~~-Gp 1) The readiness test ended almost as abruptly as it began. On 28 October, the JCS directed termination of the test and a return to normal operating status at 0001Z on 30 October 1969.[262] Headquarters SAC notified its units,[263] and General Holloway informed his commanders that he was "very pleased with the excellent response and performance of the aircrews, support personnel, staffs and commanders throughout the current JCS directed readiness test."[264]

(U) ~~(TS-NOFORN~~-Gp 1) Shortly after termination, the JCS requested the commanders to comment on the readiness test--difficulties, impact, and benefits.[265] In response, Headquarters SAC commented on the lack of information concerning the objectives of the exercise. Problems encountered during execution were minimal. The most significant impact concerned the problem of aircrew shortages. As expressed by SAC, "the shortage of combat crews reduces the flexibility . . . SAC once enjoyed and this at a time when we are searching for additional options."[266] There simply were not enough crews to support force dispersal or a full-scale SEAGA operation. The readiness test also aggravated the problem because of the curtailment of in-unit training for non combat-ready crew replacements.[267]

Training and Evaluation

Unit EWO Evaluations

(U) Throughout FY-70, Headquarters SAC continued to rely upon the operational readiness inspection (ORI) system as an effective means of evaluating a tactical unit's capability to accomplish its primary mission under realistically simulated combat conditions. Conducted by an inspector general (IG) team from Headquarters USAF, Headquarters SAC, or one of the numbered air force headquarters, the ORI was designed to evaluate all operational aspects of a unit's weapon systems as well as certain mission support areas. An operational readiness inspection test (ORIT) was that portion of the ORI