

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SECRET

January 23, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: HENRY OWEN

FROM: NLC Review Completed JERRY OPLINGER ² DOE review completed

SUBJECT: South Atlantic Event (U)
USAF review completed

I have talked to John Deutch and Dan Murphy about this matter, and told State to put the press release and Congressional consultations on hold. (C)

Between them, DoE, DoD and technical people within the intelligence community have sufficient doubts about the Press panel report to make it very dangerous to proceed without another look. Specific questions exist on: (S)

1. Reliability of the VELA signal. The panel concluded that they aren't conclusive without corroborating data. The technical people apparently disagree. (S)
2. The ionospheric signals picked up at Arecibo. The panel discounted them, thought ^{inter-}pretation contained mathematical errors. ^{25X1} DoE and DoD say no. (S)
3. I'm told (by Deutch) that there is new hydro data the panel didn't have. (S)
4. The question of fallout, and whether the lack of it discredits the nuclear explanations as much as the panel said. (S)

Deutch and Murphy still feel that we should come out with a bottom line that there is no conclusive case for a nuclear source. But they feel strongly that unless these questions are given a further airing, there will be continued internal dissent and an appearance that policy people (including the White House) did a whitewash for political reasons. (S)

Note that you and I are the only ones who seem to see this as a re-assessment of the evidence; for Deutch, Murphy and Marcum it is a c.y.a. operation. (C)

Marcum thinks it is sufficient that he and I hear Murphy's presentation when it is ready. I disagree; I think a larger group including you, Deutch, Press and Gerry Smith and the CIA should be involved. Deutch would prefer a mini-SCC right away. (C)

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RECOMMENDATION:

- That we continue to hold further action pending a presentation of additional data and views from Murphy and Company next week; (C)
- That you, Press, Deutch, Smith and CIA hear the presentation; (C)
- That following the presentation, a decision be made on whether to proceed as originally planned, or to convene the mini-SCC to reconsider our conclusions. (C)

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