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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON ATOMIC ENERGY

February 15, 1961

Dear Mr. President:

I present herewith the summary portion of an Ad Hoc Subcommittee report of a study of U.S. policies in regard to the assignment of nuclear weapons to NATO. This subcommittee consisted of Senator Bennett and Congressmen Aspinall, Hosmer, Westland and myself.

Because of the review which you have ordered in the Department of Defense, and the related appointment of an Advisory Committee headed by the Honorable Dean Acheson to further explore this subject, we wish to place our report in your hands, without delay.

Due to the fact that the formal organization of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy will not occur for several days, I am presenting this study informally with the unanimous endorsement of the five members of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee. I have no reason to believe that it will not receive the overwhelming support of the full membership of the Joint Committee.

As you know, this report is the result of an inspection trip we took to more than fifteen nuclear weapon installations in eight countries, from the U.K. to Turkey. It is part of an over-all study of Civilian-Military relations in atomic development and control. The members of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee, together with senior staff members and consultants from Los Alamos and Livermore Laboratories, have participated in the preparation and review of this report on a word-for-word basis. This report has also been reviewed by AEC Acting Chairman Graham, who accompanied our group on the NATO inspection trip.

I would like to call your particular attention to the following sections of the report:

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The White House

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- (1) The introduction at pages 1 - 3 points out the possible consequences of an accidental or unauthorized detonation of a nuclear weapon in the NATO system.
- (2) Various operating problems observed by the Ad Hoc group are discussed at pages 28 - 38, all of which are of a serious nature. In particular the problems with Jupiter missile bases in Italy and Turkey (discussed at pages 30 and 31) and the problems of unauthorized use and accidental detonations under the fictional weapons custody system now in use (see pages 32 and 37) should be considered.
- (3) Problems of a more general nature are discussed beginning at page 39, including the trend toward reliance on nuclear weapons. This section also discusses the lack of coordination between NATO and U.S. and U.K. in regard to targeting, particularly in relation to fallout effects. Considerable attention is given to the lack of planning of NATO weapons requirements based on our most modern weapons technology. The failure of the Defense Department to furnish the Joint Committee with adequate information on the NATO arrangements as required by law is also covered. We further questioned the use of non-statutory cooperative arrangements contrary to the procedures established under the Atomic Energy Act.
- (4) We have attempted to make constructive suggestions and recommendations in regard to both the particular and general problems discussed. For example, we have initiated some suggestions which could make our NATO nuclear weapons much safer against accidents or unauthorized use (see pages 37 and 45 - 47).

I would especially call your attention to our discussion concerning our concluding recommendation beginning at page 60. Based on our review of the nuclear weapon situation, and its crucial importance in the NATO picture as a whole, we believe the over-all role of NATO should be re-evaluated. In so doing, I would stress the following language of the report:

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" . . . we are not recommending re-evaluation of NATO with any thought that it be abandoned, or that its conventional capability remain weak and ineffective, or its use of tactical nuclear weapons be proscribed. Rather this re-evaluation should seek to find ways in which NATO can be strengthened for its role in the over-all military posture of the free world. . . . " (page 62)

Since any consideration of the NATO nuclear weapons system may involve changes in the Atomic Energy Act, I would like to suggest that you arrange for the collaboration of the staffs of the Executive Branch with the Joint Committee and its staff in this regard.

We are making copies of this report available to the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Acting Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and the heads of your Disarmament Group and NATO Advisory Panel.

We would be glad to discuss this report with you and any member of your Administration and Advisory Groups.

Respectfully yours,

Chet Holifield  
Chairman for Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Enclosure



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1954-1962, Part II**

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