

MEMORANDUM

file Jim Churn 33

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

November 9, 1979

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI ONLY

FROM:

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY *Be*

SUBJECT:

Evening Report

Possible Nuclear Explosion

Frank Press' panel met last Thursday and Friday to review the September 22 possible nuclear explosion in the South Atlantic. Although considerable work remains to be done the Panel has already come up with some interesting preliminary results which tend to make us somewhat skeptical that the Vela signal was actually caused by a nuclear explosion. Specifically, it found in [25x1] records of non-nuclear bhangmeter signals some events which were similar in some key aspects to nuclear bhangmeter signals. [25x1] attributes these "other" signals to small meteroids and, if this is true, it is entirely possible that the September 22 signal could have been caused by a meteroid of somewhat different velocity, size and rotational motion. In addition the September 22 signal itself differs in some important ways from previous nuclear signals. (S)

Combined with the absence of any corroborative data, despite extensive aerial sampling, these facts tended to make the panel somewhat skeptical that a nuclear explosion actually occurred. Just yesterday, however, DOE informed us that LASL scientists working at the Areciba ionospheric observatory in Puerto Rico had recorded an unusual acoustic disturbance on September 22. The signal from this disturbance is similar to some recorded during US and Soviet atmospheric tests in the early 1960s. This signal has a very different timescale, however, and the relationship between nuclear explosions and ionospheric disturbances is much less well understood than for optical signals recorded by bhangmeters. Nevertheless, this represents the best lead yet in the search for corroborative data. The OSTP panel will meet again in two or three weeks to review the results of ongoing work and prepare a final report. (S)

Action Plan on High Yield Testing

As you know, Cy Vance indicated he was satisfied with the Plan except that he preferred to have Herb York present

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our NSS proposal and wanted to defer the test readiness steps. Since the Plan was developed, the Soviet CTB delegation Chairman has asked that the US provide two sets of NSS gear -- one for destructive analysis and one for operation in the USSR. Our proposal is responsive to this request (although protective of our interests by emphasizing joint installation and access to data) and we agree that it should be made in Geneva. (S)

Accepting Vance's second point would be a serious mistake however, and you should resolve it with him quickly to avoid a damaging leak. Since there is now agreement on all of the Plan except for the test readiness steps, Marcum plans to proceed with an interagency meeting next Wednesday to begin its implementation. We will attempt to minimize resentment over the delay on the readiness steps by asking DOE to give us a review of their costs and timescale before beginning implementation. (S)

Three Mile Island

Worked with Oplinger in coming up with the attached NSC comments on the undesirability of having the President support a nuclear moratorium. (U)

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