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October 11, 1957

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Discussion at the 339th Meeting
of the National Security Council,
Thursday, October 10, 1957

Present at the 339th NSC meeting were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Acting Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; and the Acting Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Acting Secretary of the Treasury; the Attorney General; the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Special Assistant to the President for Disarmament; Brig. Gen. Alfred D. Starbird for the Special Assistant to the President for Atomic Energy; the Director, International Cooperation Administration; the Director, U. S. Information Agency; the Acting Federal Civil Defense Administrator (Item 1); the Director, National Science Foundation (Item 1); the President, National Academy of Sciences (Item 1); Dr. J. Wallace Joyce, National Science Foundation (Item 1); the Deputy Secretary of Defense; Mr. William M. Holaday, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense; Dr. John P. Hagen, Director, PROJECT VANGUARD; Mr. Mansfield D. Sprague, Assistant Secretary of Defense; Mr. Maurice Stans, Deputy Director, Bureau of the Budget; Mr. Alvin G. Waggoner, Department of Defense; Mr. William Leonhart, Department of State; Dr. Herbert Scoville, Jr., Central Intelligence Agency; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; The Assistant to the President; the Deputy Assistant to the President; Special Assistants to the President Cutler, Randall and Dearborn; the White House Staff Secretary; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the main points taken.

1. IMPLICATIONS OF THE SOVIET EARTH SATELLITE FOR U. S. SECURITY
(NSC 5520; NSC- Actions Nos. 1656 and 1713)

Mr. Cutler explained the order in which the various aspects of this item of the agenda would be presented to the members of the Council. He then called on the

Director of Central Intelligence for a briefing on the Soviet earth satellite.

Mr. Allen Dulles stated that at 1930 hours on October 4 the Soviets had fired their earth satellite from the Tyura Tam range. Its initial path followed the range, crossing approximately over the range's other end at Klyuchi. Two hours after the successful orbiting of the earth satellite and after the second circuit of the earth by the satellite, the Soviets announced their achievement. This delay in the announcement was in line with the previous statements of the Soviet Union that they would not announce an attempt to orbit their satellite until they had been assured that the orbiting had been successful. Moreover, all the indications available to the intelligence community prior to the actual launching of the satellite pointed to the fact that the Soviets were preparing to launch either an earth satellite or an intercontinental ballistic missile.

Mr. Dulles then stated that the actual launching of the earth satellite had not come as a surprise. Indeed as early as last November the intelligence community had estimated that the Soviets would be capable of launching an earth satellite any time after November 1957.

Information on the earth satellite itself remains rather sparse, but it is believed to weigh between 165 and 185 pounds.

The President interrupted to state that the Vice President of the Soviet Scientific Academy had informed Dr. Bronk that someone here had got a decimal point out of place. (There seemed to be no inclination in the Council to question the estimated weight as given by Mr. Dulles.)

Mr. Dulles continued by pointing out that the Soviets had joined together their ICBM and earth satellite programs, which fact helps to explain the speed of the Soviet launching of its earth satellite. We do not as yet know if the satellite is sending out encoded messages. Furthermore, we must expect additional launchings of Soviet earth satellites during the International Geophysical Year. The Soviets have said that they would launch between six and 13 such satellites.

Mr. Dulles then turned to the world reaction to the Soviet achievement. He first pointed out that Khrushchev had moved all his propaganda guns into place. The launching of an earth satellite was one of a trilogy of propaganda moves, the other two being the announcement of the successful testing of an ICBM and the recent test of a large-scale hydrogen bomb at Novaya Zemlya.

Larded in with Krushchev's propaganda statements had been a number of interesting remarks, such as the one in which Khrushchev consigned military aircraft to museums in the future. With respect to this remark, Mr. Dulles pointed out that U. S. intelligence had not observed as many Soviet heavy bombers on airfields as had been expected. This raised the question as to whether the Soviets are in the process of de-emphasizing the role of the heavy bomber. There had been no clear verdict yet by the intelligence community on this question.

Mr. Dulles thought that there was no doubt that in gearing up all this

propaganda of recent days and weeks, the Soviets had had an eye to the situation in the Middle East, and wished to exert the maximum influence they could summon on that situation. Much of the Soviet propaganda comment is following closely the original Soviet boast relating their scientific accomplishments to the effectiveness of the Communist social system. The target for this particular thrust, thought Mr. Dulles, was evidently the underdeveloped nations in the world. He informed members of the Council that he had copies of a FBIS summary of Soviet comment, which were available to any who wished to have them.

The Chinese Communist reaction was to declare quickly that the launching of the earth satellite was proof of Soviet military and scientific supremacy over the United States. Maximum play on this theme was being provided in all the Soviet satellites.

Thereafter, Mr. Dulles touched on the reactions in Western Europe, in Asia, and in Africa. He concluded his remarks by emphasizing that the Soviet Union was making a major propaganda effort which was exerting a very wide and deep impact.

At the conclusion of Mr. Allen Dulles' briefing, Mr. Cutler asked Secretary Quarles to speak. Secretary Quarles began by stating that much of what he was going to say would be familiar to the President and other members of the Council. The President quipped that this was indeed the case, and he was beginning to feel somewhat numb on the subject of the earth satellite. Thereafter, Secretary Quarles outlined briefly the development of satellite programs beginning with the period of World War II. The possibilities of a satellite had been picked up first in this country by the Air Force, because of its interest in the possibilities of a reconnaissance satellite. The birth of the earth satellite program occurred in Rome, at the IGY meeting of 1954. The President had announced in 1955 the nature of the U. S. earth satellite program, in which he had stressed the supremacy of scientific objectives.

Secretary Quarles went on to point out that our American scientists had recommended adoption of the proposal of the Navy. Department which had come to be known since as PROJECT VANGUARD. He also pointed out the qualification that the U. S. earth satellite program was not to interfere with the high priority of ballistic missiles programs of the United States.

Secretary Quarles thought it quite proper to emphasize the paramount scientific aspect of the U. S. earth satellite program. Our Government had never regarded this program as including as a major objective that the United States should launch an earth satellite first, though, of course, we have always been aware of the cold war implications of the launching of the first earth satellite.

Another of our objectives in the earth satellite program was to establish the principle of the freedom of outer space--that is, the international rather than the national character of outer space. In this respect the Soviets have now proved very helpful. Their earth satellite has overflowed practically every nation on earth, and there have thus far been no protests.

Turning to the military implications, Secretary Quarles pointed out that the U. S.

program had used separate rockets from the rockets employed in the program to achieve military ballistic missiles. The evidence was to the contrary in the Soviet Union, where the earth satellite program had always been integrated into the military ballistic programs of the Soviet Union. Moreover, there was clear evidence that the Soviets had embarked on their earth satellite program with a prime objective of being the first nation to orbit an earth satellite. They have now offered to cooperate with the United States and permit us to place our own instrumentation in one of their satellites. Our disposition is to find a good reason to refuse this offer. Since our own instrumentation is better and more elaborate than theirs, we would stand to lose more than we would gain by accepting their offer.

As to the implications of the Soviet achievement, Secretary Quarles said he would not comment on the cold war aspects, since they had been dealt with by the Director of Central Intelligence. Beyond this, it was clear that the Soviets possess a competence in long-range rocketry and in auxiliary fields which is even more advanced than the competence with which we had credited them; although, of course, we had always given them the capability of orbiting an earth satellite. Finally, said Secretary Quarles, the outer space implications of the launching of this satellite were of very great significance, especially in relation to the development of reconnaissance satellites.

At the conclusion of Secretary Quarles' presentation, the President stated that he had one or two questions. Pointing out that Secretary Quarles had said that the U. S. satellite would orbit the earth at a lower height than the Soviet satellite, the President wanted to know whether our satellite would not, as a result, encounter more interference. Secretary Quarles replied that perhaps our satellite for this reason would not last as long as the Soviet satellite. The President then asked whether the result of this would not affect U. S. prestige. Secretary Quarles replied that to counter the fact that our satellite might not last so long, would be the advantage that our satellite would contain more refined equipment, as a result of which we would learn more from our satellites than could be learned from the Soviet satellites.

The President then said that he had one other question. He said that he had read in a newspaper lately that two so-called intelligence people in the United States had claimed that the Soviet satellite was actually taking photographs of the United States for the use of the Soviet Union. People in the Defense Department had said that this was not so and could not be done. Who precisely, therefore, was doing this kind of talking? Where does such talk come from? Secretary Quarles replied that he did not know the two individuals in question, and would probably never find out who they were. Nevertheless, he doubted the truth of any such rumors, though we could not know for certain that the Soviet earth satellite could not take pictures. In any case, he couldn't conceive of anyone in the know making such an allegation as this which, to the best of his belief, was groundless.

The Vice President inquired of Secretary Quarles whether it was still part of our own U. S. plans that, when we orbit our own satellite, the information obtained from it will be made available to all interested people in all countries. Secretary Quarles replied in the affirmative, and the Vice President commented that it would be a great propaganda advantage for the United States to give out such information.

Secretary Quarles then suggested that the Council might like to hear from Dr. Waterman or perhaps from Dr. Hagen (head of PROJECT VANGUARD). Dr. Waterman referred to the President's earlier question as to the range to which we should attempt to send our own earth satellite. We would know better the answer to this question when we have received the full information from the Soviet earth satellite. Dr. Waterman then suggested that Dr. Hagen comment to the Council on the present status of our own and of the Soviet satellite program.

Dr. Hagen read a report to the Council on this subject. Among other things, he noted that the average height of the Soviet satellite above the earth was 370 miles. Its closest point to the earth in its elliptical orbit was about 200 miles; its furthest point from the earth about 500 miles. While it was still unsafe to predict how long the Soviet satellite would remain in orbit, Dr. Hagen thought it might be only for a few weeks.

Thereafter, Dr. Hagen gave a brief outline of the objectives and status of the U. S. earth satellite program. One earth satellite had actually been completed. Three others were in various stages of completion. The first 3-stage test vehicle had been shipped to Florida yesterday for testing in December.

Mr. Cutler then called on Dr. Waterman, who stressed the fact that the United States had two very important assets in our rivalry with the Soviet Union. First, we have been very open and above-board as to what we will do in our program, as the Russians have not been. Secondly, we have had very great experience and possess very great skill in designing the scientific things that these satellites can do. We think we are ahead of the Russians in this area, and that our satellites will provide us with very sophisticated observations. Looking ahead, continued Dr. Waterman, we ought to consider two significant matters. In the first place, we want to produce a satellite which can either return to the earth undamaged or which at least can send undamaged material back to the earth. Secondly, we must consider the possibility of satellites or space platforms which orbit the earth indefinitely and keep sending back information. Finally, said Dr. Waterman, there was a moral to take to heart. This satellite problem was a typical marriage of science with engineering, and the strength of our U. S. technology depends upon this marriage.

Mr. Cutler then called on Dr. Bronk, who stated initially that there was one thing about which he was very greatly concerned --that is, that we avoid getting our whole scientific community into a race to accomplish everything before the Russians do. He therefore thought we should adhere strictly to our stated earth satellite program and not be deflected from our course merely by the fact that the Russians had been the first to launch an earth satellite.

The President pointed out that all those around the table and others could anticipate before very long being obliged to testify before Congressional committees, to talk to the press, and the like. In the circumstances, he could imagine nothing more important than that anybody so involved should stand firmly by the existing earth satellite program which was, after all, adopted by the Council after due deliberation as a reasonable program. In short, we should answer inquiries by stating that we have a plan--

-a good plan--and that we are going to stick to it.

Mr. Cutler then called on Secretary Herter for a appraisal of the foreign policy implications for U. S. security of the successful launching of the Soviet satellite. Secretary Herter initially stated that it was extremely difficult to make such an assessment because there was such a mass of information pouring into the Department of State. While there had been insufficient time to analyze this intake, there were already some indications of the serious effects of the Soviet success which we hope to be able to counteract.

Thereafter, Secretary Herter read selected quotations to illustrate his point, with particular reference to Turkey, Morocco, and the Philippines. He also pointed out the probable repercussions of the Soviet success in the United Nations. The United States may now encounter much greater difficulty in defending its disarmament position.

By and large, continued Secretary Herter, the reaction of our allies had been pretty firm and good, though even the best of them require assurance that we have not been surpassed scientifically and militarily by the USSR. The neutralist countries are chiefly engaged in patting themselves on the back and insisting that the Soviet feat proves the value and the wisdom of the neutralism which these countries have adopted.

Summing up, Secretary Herter described the first foreign policy reactions as "pretty somber". The United States will have to do a great deal to counteract them and, particularly, to confirm the existence of our own real military and scientific strength.

Governor Stassen enlarged somewhat on the repercussions in the United Nations. He believed it was yet too soon to measure these repercussions with any assurance, but already the first surprise was settling down and the diplomats in the UN have begun to realize that the fundamentals of the world situation have not been changed--namely, that the capability for mutual annihilation still exists. Governor Stassen doubted whether there would be any quick shifts among UN members.

Mr. Cutler than called on Mr. Larson, who said that he was hesitant to say what he was going to say because he was not sure that he really believed it. He then went on to say that while we could not permit ourselves to be panicked by the Soviet achievement, he did wonder whether our U. S. plans were now adequate with regard to the next great break-through. If we lose repeatedly to the Russians as we have lost with the earth satellite, the accumulated damage would be tremendous. We should accordingly plan, ourselves, to accomplish some of the next great break-throughs first--for example, the achievement of a manned satellite, or getting to the moon. Do we have any such plans, asked Mr. Larson. If not, our people should begin to think about them.

The President replied to Mr. Larson by stating that while he could hardly quarrel with Mr. Larson's conclusions if the Soviets were to win every time, the fact remained that the United States couldn't possibly set up a whole vast scientific program of basic research in areas about which we don't know anything, and then attempt to outdo the Russians in

each aspect of such a program. We must, above all, still seek a military posture that the Russians will respect.

The Vice President inquired of Mr. Allen Dulles whether it is possible to provide estimates of the amounts of money allocated to basic research by the United States in comparison with the USSR. Dr. Scoville, answering for Mr. Dulles, could not give a clear response, though he could not say that the Russians had put in more resources than we have. Mr. Dulles said that at least the Soviets have concentrated more heavily on the guided missiles field than we have, ever since 1945. The President, agreeing with Mr. Dulles, pointed out that the United States had not made any all-out effort in the field of ballistic missiles until after the Killian Committee had submitted its report to the National Security Council. He added that of course the Soviets were bound to be ahead of the United States in certain fields and in certain discoveries.

The Vice President warned the Council that we must be prepared for the fact that Congress would insist on examining in great detail what we have been doing in the missiles field. In the course of such an examination they are certain to ask the question which he had just put--as to the relative amounts which the United States and the USSR had allocated to their respective missiles programs. Accordingly, we must be prepared to answer such a question.

After Mr. Larson had reiterated his plea for planning for a U. S. win in the next great break-through, Dr. Bronk commented that, in line with Mr. Larson's views, the United States could, if it chose, give much greater emphasis to the spectacular achievements that we have made in the scientific field--for example, we could stress our vast achievements in the field of cancer research. Regrettably, it was hard to get the press to take an interest in these achievements. Mr. Cutler suggested that we might perhaps have announced the successful launching of a U. S. missile with a range of 3500 miles. Secretary Quarles pointed out that the Operations Coordinating Board was presently engaged in examining our public relations policies with respect to our missiles programs. General Twining cautioned that we should not permit ourselves to become hysterical about the Soviet achievement.

The National Security Council:

a. Discussed the subject in the light of:

- (1) An intelligence briefing by the Director of Central Intelligence on the Soviet earth satellite, its relation to the Soviet ballistic missiles program, and world reaction to the Soviet earth satellite.
- (2) A briefing by the Department of Defense on the information regarding the Soviet earth satellite obtained by scientific tracking, and on the status of the U. S. scientific satellite program under NSC 5520.
- (3) Comments by the Director, National Science Foundation, and the President, National Academy of Sciences, on the scientific implications of the Soviet earth satellite.

(4) An appraisal by the Department of Defense of the military implications for U.S. security of the Soviet earth satellite.

(5) An appraisal by the Department of State of the foreign policy implications for U.S. security of the Soviet earth satellite.

b. Noted the statement by the President on the subject issued at his press conference on October 9, 1957; and the President's statement at this meeting of the importance of adhering to the U. S. scientific satellite program under NSC 5520 as being well-reasoned and deliberately planned.

NOTE The action in b above, as approved by the President, subsequently circulated for information and guidance to all holders of NSC 5520.