

19 March 1958

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Assistant Director/Research and Reports

**SUBJECT:** Comments on, "The Role of CIA in Nuclear War," undated.

1. As requested in your note of 5 March, we have reviewed the subject paper. In general, the paper is well organized; its authors have given the problem a good deal of thought. We can only applaud the effort to base planning on the most realistic assumptions which can be made.

2. To ERA, the most disturbing impression left by this document is its scope. It consciously places primary emphasis on CIA's overseas role in wartime. (p.1) It does not consider CIA's role as a producer of national intelligence nor as a coordinator of intelligence activities within the community. Because of the conscious limitation of scope, it raises a basic question: Is it now considered that there will be no need to produce national intelligence for policy planning purposes in the event of nuclear war, except for indications of attack and for postwar planning? If so, the present wartime planning of ERA will require drastic reorientation. If not, we suggest that the paper's scope be broadened to include the headquarters component of this Agency.

3. Specific comments follow:

a. The paper emphasizes the paramount problems of survival, reorganization and re-deployment during the initial phases of a nuclear war (except in the strategic and tactical islands) and criticizes some of the assumptions made in current planning (p. 12). It also suggests that CIA's role during this initial period would be a very limited one (p. 3). It appears to us that this approach is the correct one and that planning should reflect it.


b. The paper recommends (p. 7) that CIA "undertake a study to determine where strategic and tactical islands would be likely to exist ..." Since the fallout problem may make these so-called islands far fewer than the paper seems to expect, even if its "limitations" (p. 3) on this unlimited war are correct, we can only concur in the value of such a study.

c. The paper skirts around what may be a key problem in this business. It suggests (p. 16) that CIA field personnel will need to be responsive to headquarters requirements, and further states (p. 17) that in active military theaters, the primary requirement of the military commanders will be for tactical intelligence for which CIA has a limited capability. Is not the basic question whether CIA assets in zones of military operation should in fact be under the control of military commanders, as is now provided in one of the NSCIDS?

d. The paper suggests (p. 29) that there is at present no real planning on the question of surrender terms in the event of a nuclear war. It suggests (p. 30) that "governmental considerations of this question would probably point to a role for CIA to assume." Does this mean that CIA should assist in planning surrender terms, or does it mean something else? If it means the former, then CIA is given a peculiar role. If it means something else, it is not clear what that something else is.

e. It cannot be denied that, "CIA should begin now to develop concepts of its potential role in a post-nuclear war environment." (p. 31) But we would suggest that such planning should await the completion of realistic plans, first, to survive the initial nuclear exchange, and second, to contribute to the winning of the war during subsequent phases.

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