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28 December 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF WAR;
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY;

Subject: Tests of the Effects of Atomic Explosives.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider an early determination of the effects of atomic explosives against naval vessels essential to evaluate the strategic implications of the application of atomic bombs including the results on naval design and tactics, and have approved in principle the plan set forth in Appendix "C", page 23 of J.C.S. 1552/5, attached.

After consultation with the Officer in Charge of the Atomic Bomb Project and the Military Advisory Board, it appears appropriate to conduct tests against selected naval vessels which provide good representation of modern construction and all types of combatant and merchant vessels. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have approved the attached directive to the Commander of Joint Task Force for Tests of Atomic Explosives.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that Presidential approval be obtained to proceed with the subject tests. When the approval of the President is obtained the directive will be issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the task force commander. A proposed memorandum to the President is attached.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

(SIGNED)

C. W. NIMITZ,
Fleet Admiral, U.S. Navy,
Chief of Naval Operations.

DECLASSIFIED PURSUANT
TO JCS 927/495-1
Date: 15 Sep 1970

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Enclosures (3)
(J.C.S. 1552/5 - Copy No.)

Copy to: Chief, Strategy & Policy Group, OPD
Aide to CNO
(J.C.S. 1552/5 - Approved 28 Dec 45)
Copy No. 30 to Sec. of War
Copy No. 31 to Sec. of Navy

12-2-45

and

1-10-46

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The Joint Chiefs of Staff have informed us that they consider an early determination of the effects of atomic explosives against naval vessels essential to evaluate the strategic implications of the advent of the atomic bomb. These tests are necessary in order to determine, among other things, the consequences of this powerful aerial weapon with respect to the utilization, employment and employment of the armed forces and should, in addition, facilitate an analysis of future naval design and tactics.

They have recommended conducting tests against selected naval vessels which provide good representation of modern construction of combatant and merchant types. The ships selected as targets will be chosen from surplus vessels of the American Navy and possibly some vessels which have been allocated to the United States from the former fleets of Germany and Japan. Types of tests under consideration are an air burst, a surface explosion, and/or an underwater explosion. In each case vessels will be arranged at varying distances from the point of detonation to obtain a gradation of damage from maximum to negligible. Full advantage will be taken of the opportunity to obtain information with regard to other military targets. Detailed plans must await further study.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider and we agree that the tests can best be conducted by a joint task force operating under their direction and with the support of the War and Navy Departments including the Manhattan District. The task force commander will be assisted by a staff composed of Army and Navy personnel and civilian scientists.

There will be organized to evaluate the results of the tests a board or committee composed of representatives from civilian life and from the Army, Navy, and the Manhattan District. This board or committee will be responsible directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The program calls for the expenditure of only two or three bombs but it must be remembered that only three bombs have been used to date and there is a possibility of mechanical or other failure which may require the use of further bombs to accomplish the purposes of the test.

If you approve we will so inform the Joint Chiefs of Staff in order that they may designate a suitable task force commander. Appropriate directives will be issued to proceed with preparations for the test. You will be kept informed of significant developments.

ENCLOSURE "B"DIRECTIVE TO COMMANDER OF JOINT TASK FORCE
FOR TESTS OF ATOMIC EXPLOSIVES

1. By direction of the President, you are designated commander of a task force under the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the purpose of conducting tests for the determination of the effects of atomic explosives against naval vessels in order to appraise the strategic implications of the application of atomic bombs including the results on naval design and tactics. You will organize a joint staff with adequate representation of land, sea and air forces. You will include civilian scientists in your organization.
2. The general requirements of the test will be to determine the effects of atomic explosives against ships selected to give good representation of construction of modern naval and merchant vessels suitably disposed to give a gradation of damage from maximum to minimum. It is desired to include in the tests both air detonation and underwater detonation if the latter is considered feasible. Tests should be so arranged as to take advantage of opportunities to obtain the effects of atomic explosives against ground and air targets and to acquire scientific data of general value if this is practicable.
3. You are authorized to deal directly with agencies of the War and Navy Departments in all matters relating to the preparation for and the conduct of these tests, including direct access to the Manhattan District. Usual service lines will be available for administrative and logistic support of forces assigned to the project.
4. The Joint Chiefs of Staff will appoint as a separate agency, directly responsible to them, an evaluation board (committee) for the express purpose of evaluating the results of the tests. This board will be available to you for advice during the preparation of the tests. Appropriate sections of your organization will collaborate with this board as necessary, and you will provide it with all necessary facilities it may require to fulfill its functions.
5. You will prepare plans for the test including selection of a suitable site which will permit accomplishment of the tests with acceptable risk and minimum hazard. Your plans for the operation and final report will be submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their approval.