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FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#134a notes	Notes from 11/28/67 - 12:10 p.m. Project Cabriolet meeting [Exempted NLJ 82-60] Secret 4 pp. <i>Open 5-26-56 NLJ 54-32</i>	11/28/67	A
#134b report	Atlantic-Pacific Interoceanic Canal Study Commission Confidential 2 pp.	undated	A
#134c notes	Notes for Discussion of Nuclear Excavation Experiments Confidential 8 pp.	undated	A

FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 1

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NOVEMBER 28, 1967 - 12:10 p.m.

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Project Cabriolet

Sec. McNamara

Under Sec. Katzenbach

General Wheeler

Director Helms

Director Schultze

Dr. Hornig

Director Seaborg

Spurgeon Keeney

Robert Anderson

Commissioner Tape

Adrian Fisher

William C. Foster

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

December 4, 1967

4:40 p. m.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT

Tom

FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your meeting on Project Cabriolet on November 28, 1967 in the Cabinet Room.

Those attending the meeting were:

Secretary McNamara
Undersecretary Katzenbach
General Wheeler (JCS)
Director Helms - CIA
Director Schultze - Budget Bureau
Dr. Hornig
Director Seabor - AEC
Spurgeon Keeney
Robert Anderson
Commissioner Tape - AEC
Adrian Fisher
William C. Foster - Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

The meeting began at 12:10 p. m. The meeting ended at 1:20 p. m.

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)

White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983

12-6 11 AARA, Date 2/1/91

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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
ON PROJECT CABRIOLET

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134a

In the Cabinet Room
November 28
1967

THE PRESIDENT: We are confronted with a difficult decision here on "Cabriolet."

SECRETARY RUSK: These are the issues: You are being asked to approve a "cratering" shot important to the future of "Plowshare" program.

This is directly related to the Interoceanic Canal and peaceful application of the atom. We first thought that the test ban treaty would not conflict with "Plowshare" program. Now we do not know.

We must ask if this shot is sensible only if it is to be followed by other shots which infringe on the test ban treaty. We must ask to what extent do we support Plowshare? There is a problem of possible violation of the test ban treaty. The President should know the parameters of the problem.

If there is a 50-50 chance of leakage, we could be in violation of the test ban treaty. We face a 50-50 chance of leakage on these tests. We are at a time when this could get in the way of NPT.

It is therefore a decision between "Plowshare" vs. the test ban treaty. The treaty requires you to keep the debris from these tests at home.

THE PRESIDENT: The question is would Cabriolet violate the treaty?

SECRETARY RUSK: There is a 50-50 chance and a danger of a small degree of leakage on this test.

CHAIRMAN SEABORG: I gave assurance to the Senate that "Plowshare" experiments could be carried out. That was important to getting the treaty passed.

Probably, there would not be "more hazardous" tests to follow. There would be a need for an amendment to the treaty at a later date for the test ban treaty.

On the matter of leakage, the first assumption is that we would have a 20 percent chance of leakage. At 50 hours after the test there might be

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NLI 94-32

By CB PARA Date 7-31-96

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ten picocuriers at the border with Canada. In the air normally were about 100 picocuriers. Of this would only be a very small amount which is way below any health hazard and below any sensible level to cause a problem.

This would be below the amounts which have resulted from the Soviet test.

Chairman Seaborg said at the time of the treaty Secretary Rusk wrote the Congressional Committee that the U. S. would feel free to interpret the treaty more liberally if the Soviets were to. To drop Cabriolet would be to drop "Plowshare". Brazil and India want a nuclear explosion system of their own. In order to prevent this, we have offered them the Plowshare program.

THE PRESIDENT: Could you conduct Cabriolet without violation of the test ban treaty?

CHAIRMAN SEABORG: Yes, under a liberal interpretation of the treaty. If debris crosses the U.S. border, it would be detected by our own public health service.

THE PRESIDENT: Is it your position that in order to keep faith with Secretary Rusk's letter to the Senate we should conduct these tests?

MR. ROBERT ANDERSON: The Congress will not give us any more money until this question is resolved. There is no agreed position on the level of radiation that will constitute a violation of the test ban treaty.

Mr. Anderson said if we postpone Cabriolet indefinitely then we postpone indefinitely the development of nuclear excavation.

He said if we start tomorrow it would take the next fifteen years before we could put the first ship through the proposed oceanic canal. "I do not want to debate what is in violation of the treaty. But it is unfortunate if we have gotten ourselves into the position where we cannot use this type of energy to do this work."

"It will only be after all of these tests are completed that we will actually know if we can go through with a canal by nuclear excavation."

"It is not reasonable for us to impose that fine distinction which will permit the Soviets to do what they have done and not permit us to conduct our test."

"I propose that we announce these tests publically and give the world time to prepare for it. We should be forthright and honest."

(Inserted as an appendix to these notes is a summary of the recommendation by Mr. Anderson and the Atlantic-Pacific Interoceanic Canal Study Commission.

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Dr. Hornig said he was opposed to the proposal. Dr. Hornig said that this test would require only 2,500 tons of explosive while about 10 million tons of explosive was needed for the canal.

Many think that a one million ton test and a 10 million ton test will be necessary before we can actually decide to go ahead with the canal.

CHAIRMAN SEABORG: But these tests would not be for more than three years.

DR. HORNIG: In any case you cannot go further with these tests without modifying the test ban treaty.

SECRETARY RUSK: Why don't we go to the Soviets now or to the Security Council and work this thing out for the first test? Why not get international participation including asking the Soviets to come over here and deal with us in this program.

MR. ROBERT ANDERSON: The Corps of Engineers say we must conduct these tests before we can determine whether to build a canal. We need this first test so we can learn from it what will be necessary to avoid another delay.

DIRECTOR SCHULTZE: These tests escalate as you go along. I question whether we should invest money in the research and development test that you recommend when you ultimately know you are going to have to ask for changes in the treaty. It does not make sense economically to spend this money on tests when you are uncertain whether or not you will be able to make meaningful use of this when larger shots are required.

The most responsible estimates show that it would not hurt to have a two to three year delay on this. I believe, Mr. President, that we should get the diplomatic problem out of the way first.

CHAIRMAN SEABORG: We've tried to talk to the Soviets for two years and we haven't gotten anywhere.

MR. ADRIEN FISHER: Ambassador Kohler has been in touch with the Soviets on this and has gotten nowhere.

DIRECTOR HELMS: The Soviets have conducted 14 tests between March 1964 and February 1967. We are talking about only kilotons in this test. The Soviets have conducted tests ranging as follows:

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450 kilotons, 200 kilotons, 85 kilotons, and 220 kilotons.

DR. HORNIG: But the Soviet tests were well below the surface. Their seepage was highly fractional. These U.S. tests will be near the surface with a better than 50 percent chance of seepage.

UNDERSECRETARY KATZENBACH: There will be a radioactive cloud. We would be violating the treaty. The fact this cloud would go over Canada would make it extremely difficult politically.

The Soviets have never taken another interpretation. They have never admitted their actions.

DR. HORNIG: There will be two types of reaction. Here in this country I know the reaction will be that we have violated the treaty. If the test is detected by other countries, the reaction by them also will be that we have violated the treaty.

Chairman Seaborg then read a statement which the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy had submitted. In this statement, the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy expressed its deep concern over the fact that the Plowshare program had not been carried out as planned. The Committee said it did not like a strict interpretation being placed on the treaty. It pointed out that the Soviets have proceeded with testing very vigorously.

The meeting adjourned with no decision being reached.

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THE WASHINGTON POST

October 26, 1967

SECRET PROTEST ON A-BLAST TOLD

by Chalmers M. Roberts
Washington Post Staff Writer

The United States asked the Soviet Union last January about a Russian underground test that had released radioactive material over Western Europe, but it never disclosed either the facts or the protest.

This came to light yesterday after the British science magazine Nature printed an article by three Finnish experts demonstrating beyond doubt that a Soviet test had raised radioactivity in the air over Finland last December. The Finns concluded that this was the result of a Soviet test on December 18 that had vented -- that is, allowed some of the nuclear material to escape from the underground chamber.

Under the nuclear test ban treaty, nations are barred from tests that send radioactive material beyond their borders. Technically, then, the Soviet test violated the treaty.

American officials said yesterday, in conceding that a secret protest had in fact been made, that each nation now has raised three cases of venting against the other. Apparently none has involved danger to human life, however.

Last October 27 a soviet test, then said to be the world's largest underground nuclear explosion, vented. On November 11 the United States said it had asked the Soviets for an explanation.

An American official said yesterday that in both that case and the unpublicized one following the December 18 Soviet test the Russians had not given a very satisfactory response. However, the issue was not pressed in either case and no charge of violating the test ban treaty was made.

The Finns' report in Nature magazine said that "in the morning of December 21, 1966, the radioactivity in the air unexpectedly rose in the eastern part of Finland." After analysis the Finnish experts concluded that the radioactivity was the result of a Soviet test monitored December 18 in the Semipalatinsk area of Soviet Central Asia.

The State Department said yesterday that it took some time to trace the venting and hence the case was not taken up with the Soviets in Washington until January 14 of this year.

The Finns' account also referred to a Japanese report of venting from a Soviet test at the same test site during January, 1965. At that time the Soviets acknowledged some accidental leakage but said it was "so insignificant" that it did not violate the treaty.

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