

*Mr. Kissinger*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD

October 24, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Board Meeting with the President, October 24, 1969

I. The President began the meeting with the remark that he would like to have two subject matters covered. First, he desired to have a report from the Board on the progress made thus far in its assessment of the Soviet and Chinese strategic threat. Next, the President said he would like to hear from the Board members regarding their appraisal of our intelligence; how good is our intelligence product; and how can we improve it.

II. Chairman Taylor quoted the language used by the President when he gave the Board its threat assessment task. Chairman Taylor referred to the Board's interpretation of its task as being a charge to maintain a continuing assessment of the threat not only as it relates to the ABM question, but in its relationship to other matters of national security interest. The Chairman pointed out that in carrying out its assessment task, the Board had limited its attention primarily to foreign intelligence aspects.

III. The Chairman introduced each Panel Chairman in turn. Messrs. Anderson, Gray and Lincoln discussed briefly the highlights of the assessments which their Panels have made thus far with respect to the Chinese and Soviet strategic threat.

IV. In the course of the meeting, the President made a number of remarks bearing directly upon the activities of the Board, and in some instances the President made specific assignments to the Board. The highlights of the President's remarks are as follows.

V. The President is looking forward to receiving the November report of the Board on the results of its assessment of the Chinese and Soviet strategic threat. The President considers that November 30 is a particularly good time for him to receive this report, having in mind that it will be useful to

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in connection with budget decisions which will be made in December.

VI. The President wanted to make sure that the Board has access to the highest classified intelligence information available with respect to the Soviet Union, and he was assured that this is the case. The President indicated that he is particularly impressed by the quality and utility of reconnaissance photography which is produced by the intelligence community.

VII. The President asked that the following matters be dealt with in the forthcoming Board report of November 30:

1. Noting that over the past five years the Government's intelligence estimates regarding Soviet capabilities have proved to have been on the low side, the President asked that this fact be brought out in the Board's November report, with examples of the disparity in projections made in previous years as against that which is known with respect to succeeding years.

2. The President asked that the Board bear down hard on the subject of MIRV. (The President noted that pressures are arising in the Congress for an announcement by the Administration that there will be no tests of a U.S. MIRV. The President recognizes that U. S. intelligence people in some instances are reluctant to credit the Soviet Union with seeking a MIRV capability, but the President is impressed by indications that the Soviets have some form of a MIRV in the works, and they at least appear to have a weapon with multiple warheads. This situation prompts the President to reject the "soft thinking" on the part of those in this country who say that we should not proceed with MIRV testing.)

3. The President asked the Board to include in its November report such recommendations as it may have, with a view toward the improvement of national intelligence estimates and reports which are provided to the President by the U.S. intelligence community. The President indicated that he finds the present form and content of the reports to be unsatisfactory and inadequate for his purposes, in the following respects:

(a) The language of estimates is often obtuse.

(b) It is difficult to base policy decisions upon the equivocal nature of some of the intelligence estimates. The President was particularly critical of those estimates he has seen which mix factual information with opinions of the estimators. The President would prefer to receive an intelligence

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estimate which lays out the facts, as distinguished from wishful interpretations of those facts.

(c) The President expressed agreement with the view stated by Dr. Kissinger that it would be helpful if national intelligence estimates were to clearly set forth the assumptions upon which findings and conclusions are predicated.

(d) The President would prefer that national intelligence estimates avoid "playing the numbers game." In other words, when estimates go beyond the factual aspects of near-term appraisals of Soviet strategic strength, it is more useful to project trends in general terms rather than attempting to speculate on Soviet intentions in terms of numbers of weapons.

VIII. In making a general commentary on the U.S. foreign intelligence effort, the President said that he considers the hard intelligence we are getting is very good, but the intelligence estimates which he receives are virtually worthless.

IX. The President asked Board member Franklin D. Murphy to give him in writing the thoughts which Dr. Murphy had expressed to the President concerning the great importance which the U. S. intelligence community should attach to the development of human agent intelligence sources worldwide. Dr. Murphy had expressed the thought that although we have seen remarkable advances in the development of scientific and technical collection systems, and although continued activity along these lines must receive high-level budgetary and other support, the value of human agent collection must be recognized. Dr. Murphy pointed out that through our scientific collection means we can see military hardware, but we need human agent intelligence sources to ascertain intentions with respect to the use of that hardware.

X. The President stated that he sees two grave deficiencies in the U. S. intelligence effort at this time: (1) a lack of sufficient human intelligence collection sources and (2) the absence of political and other covert action operations. (The President mentioned the success and significance of previous operations by the United States in Guatemala, Iran, and other places.)

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XI. Referring to the critical nature of trends and developments in countries [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], the President asked that a Board Panel be established for the purpose of studying U. S. foreign intelligence collection efforts with respect to the countries in this geographical area. He sees an urgent need for achieving improvements in our knowledge of these countries as the basis for formulation of U. S. foreign policies.

XII. Referring again to the Middle East situation, the President said he would like for Ambassador Murphy and one or two other Board members to visit some of these countries and see what is going on. The President specifically mentioned Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. The President emphasized that these visits would not be made in the capacity of Board members.

XIII. The President stated that he wished at this time to change the Board's assignment in one respect: the President will continue to look to the Board as being primarily responsible for review and recommendations with respect to the U.S. foreign intelligence effort and its product. In addition, the President wishes to receive from time to time the views of the Board with respect to U. S. foreign policy matters (for example, shall we let the Middle East go down the drain?). The President pointed out that the Board members do not have any bureaucratic attachments and are in a position to make sound recommendations to the President with respect to foreign policy matters.

XIV. With reference to the recent coup in Libya, the President emphasized that we had no advance intelligence whatsoever.

XV. Noting the prospect of SALT negotiations, the President said that it is absolutely essential for the U. S. to have available the highest quality of intelligence pertinent to this subject.

A. R. Ash

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