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December 6, 1968

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Room 1035
50 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, N.Y.

Dear Henry:

Enclosed is the memo you asked for, following up the suggestion in our joint (Areeda-Kissinger-Lindsay-May) memo of November 1. Though you have very little time for leisure reading, I also enclose a draft of a paper I am to deliver to the American Historical Association. It deals in greater depth with a corollary idea -- a project which Mac Bundy is willing to finance, for Langer and Gleason type histories of national security policy since World War II.

You asked for names of potential planners. Very few occur to me, other than the military types I listed for Haldeman. One policy area for which you may especially want early staffing is Latin America. Since it has not been an area of special interest to you, the chances are that agency people who deal with it will be making special efforts to exploit transition uncertainties. Also, it could easily be the area where your first crises could appear. Haiti or Panama could blow up. So could Cuba, where, as a result of the economic pinch and Czechoslovakia, an anti-government National Liberation Front is gaining strength. (Or so some refugees assert.)

The only two dependable first-raters I have run into in the Latin American area are Harry W. Shlaudeman, an FSO who is now a Special Assistant to the Secretary, and Jerome Levinson of AID. In the Dominican crisis, Shlaudeman was probably the most perceptive and farsighted participant. My impression is that everyone from Adam Yarmolinsky around to General Palmer would share this judgment. Levinson is a lawyer-economist who wrote a very penetrating unpublished study, raising questions about the political purposes of U.S. aid to Brazil. Albert Hirschman thinks it far the best study

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Dr. Henry A. Kissinger

of its kind. Levinson is now on leave at the Center for Inter-American Relations in New York, broadening it to deal with all aid programs in Latin America.

One possible Latin-American staffer apt to be suggested to you is Peter Krogh, who was a White House Fellow and is now an Associate Dean of the Fletcher School. Ed Gullion thinks very highly of him, and Ed knows him well. I do not, but, for what is worth, offer the opinion that he is not as bright as Ed thinks. Similarly, though I have some admiration for both men, I am doubtful that either John Plank of Brookings or Kalman Silvert of the Ford Foundation would be long-headed enough for your purposes.

Warmly,

Ernest R. May

/sd
Enclosures

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

Research Support for the President's National Security Staff

1. The Problem. The President's national security advisers deal with a panoramic range of problems. At one moment their concern may be speculative pressure on the franc; at another, a coup in a Middle Eastern capital; at still another, the merits of a nuclear-powered carrier. In each case, they must acquire detailed understanding of the issues, explain them to the President, appraise for him conflicting arguments, and analyze for him the possible consequences of alternative courses of action.

In performing these difficult tasks, the President's assistants are largely dependent on their own reserves of information and expert knowledge. Unlike agency spokesmen whose cases they hear, they have no large bureaucratic organizations spinning out background papers and analytical studies. Their own small NSC staff has relatively little institutional memory. Bromley Smith, to be sure, has been on station for fifteen years, but few of the staff specialists go back even to Bundy's time. (And this is as it should be, for the NSC staff should constantly take men from agencies and send them back.) Also, the specialists serving the new administration will have relatively little reference material to draw upon, for crucial White House files will all be in Austin or Waltham or Abilene.

There exists obvious need for the staff serving the President's assistants to have some better access to background information and to

past analytic studies of the problems on which they must prepare briefings. Any arrangements to meet this need would have to take account, however, of several important constraints:

(a) First, the President's assistants cannot load much more on the existing NSC staff. It has deliberately been kept small and select. Its duties of monitoring Situation Room traffic, ensuring that relevant agency views are clearly presented, and checking on execution of presidential decisions occupy it to the full and neither can nor should be curtailed.

(b) Second, any effort to root out background material could easily lead to creation of a large new staff. One has only to note the numbers employed for such purposes by State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) -- still the largest unit in the Department, despite Hilsman's having reduced it by half -- to perceive the danger of mushroom growth.

(c) Third, the President's assistants clearly ought not to enlarge significantly the staff working directly for them. The more manpower they use, the more complicated the NSC structure will become, and the more time the President's assistants will spend managing bureaucracies of their own instead of attending to the President's business.

(d) Fourth, even if the President's assistants could increase staff without adding to their own management responsibilities, they might have trouble obtaining the requisite money and even more trouble finding suitable space in already overcrowded White House and Executive Office facilities.

Any solution therefore should be one involving a minimal addition to burdens on the present NSC staff, increase in that staff, increase in the managerial responsibilities of presidential assistants, and strain on the White House-Executive Office budget and physical plant.

2. Suggestions for Remedy:

(a) A Budget Bureau Research-Analysis Unit. One reason for fearing that a research unit under the NSC would become unwieldy is the volume of material from which background information must be culled. The State Department Secretariat estimates that State generates internally about twenty thousand staff studies a year, or almost eighty per working day. The Pentagon and the CIA between them probably turn out three or four times as many. Outside contractors also make contributions. The current finding list of RAND Corporation studies runs now to four closely printed volumes. And one cannot leave out of account newspaper stories, articles, and books appearing in public print.

Complicating use of the mass of material is the fact that items relevant to any particular subject may be extremely hard to locate. Some but not all studies produced by or for State, together with a few foreign area studies done for other agencies, have been abstracted and the abstracts coded for computer retrieval. The Secretariat has cruder indexes. The CIA has a reasonably effective computer-finding system, though one that is apt to produce an excessive quantity of unselected references if questions are posed at any level of generality (e.g., if one asks for information on Soviet missile defense programs instead of asking for current estimates concerning the Talinn system). The Office of the Secretary

of Defense, the Joint Chiefs, and the services have no means of identifying past staff studies other than through numerical filing systems which are not uniform and which have been subject to the vagaries of frequently changing secretaries and filing clerks.

The volume of material and the difficulty of picking through it combine as factors making any research effort for the White House staff seem likely to end up as a large-scale undertaking. However, an interest in making the research material more useable is, or ought to be, shared by the Budget Bureau. Some \$35 million a year is spent on contract foreign area research alone. The costs of contract research on national security issues more broadly conceived probably runs to at least five times as much. And this is only the tip of the iceberg, for vast amounts of time and money are devoted to comparable work within the government. It would make great sense if a unit of the Budget Bureau were to extract from all relevant agencies abstracts of research and staff studies, so presented that the Bureau could detect duplication and overlap and make comparisons of relative costs.

Such an undertaking would be difficult and expensive. Most of the pain and cost would, however, fall to the individual agencies. The Bureau would have only to prescribe the information it desired and the computer code to be used. The principal charges on it would arise in formulating the program and then supervising and auditing agency responses. In the end, in all probability, the Bureau would be able to enforce savings well in excess of the initial outlay.

The result would also be a computerized central register of research reports and staff studies, useable by the various agencies and by men working in the President's behalf.

While a Budget Bureau research-analysis effort would not in itself provide Presidents' assistants with background information, it would enable them to address that problem without having to contemplate recruitment of a large staff of specialized researchers -- an Executive Office INR -- to deal with their needs.

(b) White House Special Projects. Even without such a Budget Bureau effort, or before it yielded a useable central register, the President's assistants could begin to deal with their problem on an ad hoc basis.

A few issues likely to arise in the national security area are evident now -- a project for a new Bretton Woods conference; a crisis over Berlin; a new Middle Eastern conflict; Communist insurgency in Libya or Thailand; revision of the Japanese security treaty; chaos in Haiti; an anti-American uprising in Panama or an anti-Castro uprising in Cuba; a budgetary battle concerning anti-missile systems, the Advanced Manned Strategic Aircraft, and carrier and amphibious capabilities. If the President's assistants were to make judgments now about those issues on which they would most probably want background information six months or more in the future, they could commission studies on the history of those issues.

One possibility would be to ask for their preparation by CIA or State. Another would be to parcel out assignments among agencies, asking INR to prepare one, WSEG to prepare another, and so on. Either approach might, however, yield an agency-biassed product or at least an institutional product -- another staff study; and in either case the President's

assistants and their staff would be turning for information with which to evaluate agency recommendations to men representing agencies with interests at stake. On the whole, it would seem preferable for the President's assistants to commission studies from individuals rather than from organizations.

Some separate organization would have to be established, perhaps under a label such as "White House Special Projects" or Executive Office Special Studies," but it could be housed in any guarded facility anywhere in Washington. The materials to be used by its members are scattered all over the capital. Very few are located in the White House or EOB. Any individual members currently within the government could remain on the rolls of their agencies and simply be on temporary assignment with the NSC. In most cases, their salaries could continue to be carried on agency budgets. Any commissioned from outside the government would probably have to be designated as consultants to the NSC or perhaps the Budget Bureau. In some cases, possibly, the necessary arrangements could be made through RAND's Washington branch, IDA, or some other contract research organization.

The number of individuals commissioned would, of course, depend on the number of issues on which the President's assistants wanted research. The qualifications required of each would depend on what these issues were. In general, the type of person desired would be not a policy-analyst but an analyst of evidence -- a historian, a historically-oriented political scientist or economist, or a lawyer with some research experience. Each

should be capable of rapid, sustained work, and each should be imaginative and articulate enough to respond precisely to oral questioning. At least at the outset, anyone commissioned to undertake a special project should already know his way around some part of the executive labyrinth.²

The assignment given each would be to master the background of a given problem. Each would have to have the whole panoply of clearances (including Q and S1) and be equipped with a presidential letter, requesting access to all relevant files and cooperation from officials asked for interviews. Probably, though not necessarily, each individual should be asked to prepare a compact written narrative which could thereafter be used for reference by the NSC staff. At any time during the period of assignment, each individual should stand ready to provide oral or written information to members of that staff or perhaps even to the President's assistants or the President himself.

Special studies could be commissioned in small number and with no significant levy on the time of the President's assistants or the current NSC staff. Administrative arrangements could be made by the Executive Secretary of the NSC. (If the effort were broadened to include some domestic subjects, the Secretary to the Cabinet might be more appropriate.) The men engaged in these studies would not be underfoot but would be on call when and if needed.

If one assumes a dozen researchers paid at super-grade levels, the salary cost would run to roughly \$300,000 a year. Six research assistants, four secretaries, and office major domo would cost another

\$90,000. Even with rental of space, provision of copying equipment, etc., total annual cost could probably be kept under \$500,000. Probably, the Budget Bureau could devise means of making the toll on the Executive Office budget considerably lower.

This would hardly be an insignificant expenditure. On the other hand, it could more than repay itself. Had such a facility been in existence during the Kennedy administration, Bundy and his Southeast Asian assistant, Forrestal, might have been given some better understanding of why it had seemed in the past unwise to field American troops in Vietnam. If so, the President might have been shown more reasons for being skeptical about the Taylor - Rostow recommendations. While there can be no guarantee that research initiated now would ever have pay-off for President Nixon and his assistants, even a small chance of its contributing to avoidance of a future mistake should justify its being initiated.

Ernest R. May

1. One drawback to using such organizations lies in the fact that their doing research for the White House could result in their being penalized by their prime contractors. RAND risked losing its Air Force sustenance in consequence of doing research for OSD. Probably, one or two projects could safely be assigned to RAND, IDA, RAC, or some other agency-sustained research organization. Any more substantial use of such organizations should probably be accompanied, however, by notice to the supporting agencies that in future the Budget Bureau will review contracts with these organizations and ask that any reduction in level of support be justified and explained.

2. A few possible names of men meeting some of these qualifications are: on economic issues -- Richard Leighton (ICAF); on Europe -- Ray Cline (CIA), Maurice Matloff (Army), Howard M. Smyth (State); on the Far East -- Allan Evans (State), Melvin Gurtov (RAND), Stanley Falk (ICAF); on Latin America -- Stetson Conn (Army), John Plank (Brookings); on strategic-military hardware issues -- Alfred Goldberg (RAND), Ernest Giusti (JCS). (Smyth, Conn, Plank, and Goldberg may be a little too deliberate for the purpose.)