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Tuesday, September 5, 1961 - D. C. Office

OFFICE DIARY  
 GLENN T. SEABORG  
 Chr USAEC, 1961-72  
 FOLDER-PAGE 009008

I met with President Kennedy in his White House office from 11:00 to 11:50 a.m. Others present were: Mac Bundy, General Taylor, Harold Brown, Ros Gilpatric and Gen. Betts. The discussion centered on the question of the yield of the first test. The President did not want to accept any delay beyond 15 September, but he was concerned that the disparity between the [REDACTED] and the first Soviet test at over 100 KT would invite such adverse comment as to be unacceptable. He wanted a much larger test, [REDACTED] if possible. I informed him that although we have the device capability to conduct tests [REDACTED] such a large yield test done in the very short time frame of less than two weeks would jeopardize the availability of the rest of the tunnel complex in which such a shot might be carried out. The President accepted my recommendation that such a large yield test not be conducted in the very early time frame indicated. The President then asked what possibility existed to do a test at a yield larger [REDACTED]. General Betts recommended that the [REDACTED] warhead, [REDACTED] be considered for the first experiment. The President was informed that this experiment could be conducted within two weeks, i.e., by Friday, the 15th, if approval was given immediately to go ahead with preparations. He was informed that this would be in the nature of a proof-test of a warhead which would apply to the Terrier fleet air defense

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guided missile, as well as to other tactical weapons. The President accepted this recommendation and instructed us to take the necessary steps to carry out this test on the 15th of September. The President was informed that this action would result in a general increase of activities at the test site and that since these steps could not be hidden from the public view it would become obvious that deliberate steps were being taken at the site to prepare for testing. The President said he was aware of this but that he was prepared to accept whatever press reaction might follow.

It was pointed out to the President that John McCone had been on a television program yesterday, at which he was asked questions about the U.S. position with respect to nuclear weapons testing. McCone's answers coincided with the general position being taken by the present Administration. The President then expressed a desire to have McCone discuss this problem with him and a meeting was arranged for tomorrow morning, September 6.

The President then raised the question as to the relative merits of in-atmosphere as opposed to underground testing. A discussion followed during which Harold Brown and I assured him that most of the development tests now proposed for a test program could be conducted underground. The President was informed that underground tests would prove to be much more expensive than testing in the atmosphere.

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At about 1:00 p.m. we learned that the Soviets tested a third device in the atmosphere early this morning. This was announced by the AEC immediately. This Russian test resulted in President Kennedy announcing, at 5:00 p.m. after clearance with the appropriate parties, the immediate resumption of underground nuclear testing by the United States. (Copy of announcement is attached.)

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