

March 11, 1958

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT
March 10, 1958 - 10:20 AM

Others present: Dr. Killian
Dr. Kistiakowsky
General Goodpaster



Dr. Killian spoke from a memorandum, the original of which he handed to the President.

With regard to the proposal for a well-conceived basic research effort on solid propellants, the President strongly stressed that an overall group, such as ARPA, should conduct this research. Otherwise, it would be done in bits and pieces. In fact, he thought that all research on fuels should be kept centralized, avoiding the wastes of duplicating effort. Dr. Kistiakowsky reported that there has really been very little support for, or interest in, a solid propellant development program. There have been many starts and stops, and the effort that has been devoted to these fuels has been very small. In the interest of economy of effort and continuity, he would agree with putting the program into ARPA. The President suggested that it might even be put in the civil agency now under consideration.

Dr. Killian stressed the need for a review by the President of proposals for "second generation" missiles. The President strongly agreed and asked that necessary directives be developed.

The President further agreed with the recommendation for a program of improvement on the TITAN missile, and for phasing out the ATLAS as soon as consistent with an adequate rate of buildup of total missile forces.

The President said that he conceived of the missile activity as separate and distinct from traditional air, ground, and sea operations. He would accept the logic of a decision by the Department of Defense to assign a submarine-based missile such as POLARIS to the Navy, but he saw no reason for the Air Force or for the Army to try to preempt the field. Instead, he would incline toward a single missile command. Specifically, he agreed that we should not rush into the proposed

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Authority DOD LTR
Date 6/12/75
By DJH, NARS Date 6/24/75

Minuteman program; he asked that there be no approval along these lines until the matter had been much more carefully considered, and presented to him. Dr. Killian repeated his recommendation that Defense should not produce both THOR and JUPITER. The President said that so far as he is concerned there is no problem with dropping either of these. He asked what could be done with the team at Huntsville, which he understood was a group of outstanding ability. Dr. Killian said that they are working on the PERSHING missile family. He also said that this group is well suited to conducting space program activities, either under ARPA or NASA.

The President asked why Drs. Killian and Kistiakowsky thought that the THOR was a better missile than the JUPITER. Dr. Kistiakowsky said it is not better, but simply nearer to quantity production. He feels that the shift to industrial producers of the JUPITER (Chrysler, Ford Instrument, and Goodyear) would delay its availability. The President said that he would agree to closing out the JUPITER, but thought the Huntsville force should be promoted to space and similar activities. He thought consideration should be given to taking them out of their present assignment and assigning them to ARPA, or even to NASA. Dr. Kistiakowsky commented that the PERSHING is an excellent approach, and the President said that the Huntsville group could work on that project too.

The President asked Dr. Killian to prepare for him a series of decisions very tightly drafted and very positive in tenor to accomplish what had been recommended. He said he strongly agreed with the basic proposal to obtain centralized direction and thought this should be done soon.

Dr. Killian asked whether he should ask the Secretary of Defense to carry out studies to give effect to the proposals. The President said this would be all right, but that we should make clear what the scientific conclusions and recommendations are. Dr. Killian said he was prepared to do this.


A. J. Goodpaster
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