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SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY
S/AE

The Joint Chiefs of Staff
Washington 25, D. C.

MAY 19 1954

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30 April 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: A Proposal for a Moratorium on
Future Testing of Nuclear Weapons

1. This memorandum is in response to your memorandum dated 16 April 1954 regarding a proposal for a moratorium on future testing of nuclear weapons.

2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have examined this proposal in the light of the factors discussed below, which they consider should be governing in arriving at a United States position on this subject.

3. United States policy with respect to the regulation, limitation, and balanced reduction of armed forces and armaments (NSC 112) states, in part, as follows:

a. "In the light of the present world situation the security interests of the United States demand that the first step in the field of regulation of armaments and armed forces be achievement of international agreement on at least the general principles involved."

b. "International control of atomic energy is inseparably related to international regulation of armed forces and all other forms of armaments."

c. "The international control of atomic energy must be based on the United Nations Plan or some no less effective plan."

A basic requirement in the United Nations Plan and in the United States position is that there be established a competent international authority for the control and administration of adequate safeguards.

4. A moratorium, either complete or limited, on the testing of nuclear weapons would constitute a step in the international control of atomic energy. If this proposal were to be adopted, the initial concrete action toward such control would have been taken without the benefit of prior international agreement on the general principles involved, without relation to any international regulation of armed forces and all other forms of armaments, and without there having been established a suitable international control body. Were the United States to depart from its position, which the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider to be sound, it could be expected that soon thereafter pressures would be brought to bear for further and progressive

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limitation on the military application of atomic energy, without the universal acceptance of a comprehensive disarmament system which would provide effective safeguards to insure compliance by all nations and to give adequate warning of possible evasions and violations.

5. There is no reason to expect that the Soviet Union would adhere in good faith to an agreement to suspend future tests. On the contrary, based on the entire pattern of past performance, it is certain that the Soviets would evade and circumvent such an agreement, and that they would violate or abrogate the agreement at any time they considered it would be to their advantage to do so. Moreover, any charges of Soviet violations, even though substantiated with scientific data, would most certainly be categorically denied by them.

6. It is believed that the United States has, at present, an indeterminate advantage over the USSR with respect to the technical status of thermonuclear weapons development. While a moratorium on tests of such weapons might, at first thought, appear to maintain this advantage, a moratorium would not prevent the Soviets from advancing their theoretical studies so as to approach the present stage of development in the United States. The advantage which the United States is believed now to hold might then readily be neutralized should the USSR elect to violate or abrogate the moratorium agreement and conduct proof tests of their theoretical studies.

7. While it is recognized that certain political advantages might accrue to the United States in making or accepting a proposal for a moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons, it is believed that any political advantages would be transitory in nature, whereas the military disadvantages probably would be far-reaching and permanent.

8. In the light of the foregoing, the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that it would not be to the net advantage of the United States to propose or to enter into an agreement on a moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons. It is recommended that the United States adhere to the position that it will not enter into any agreement providing for the limitation of atomic armaments outside of a comprehensive program for the regulation, limitation, and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments, conforming in general to the principles set forth in NSC 112.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

/s/

ARTHUR RADFORD,
Chairman,
Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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