

Minutes of NSC Meeting on Chemical Warfare and Biological Warfare,  
November 18, 1969

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Vice President Agnew  
Secretary of State Rogers  
Secretary of Defense Laird  
Attorney General Mitchell  
General Earle Wheeler, Chairman, JCS  
Director of Intelligence Helms  
U.S. Representative to the U.N. Yost  
Assistant to the President Kissinger  
Under Secretary of State Richardson  
Lee DuBridge, Science Advisor to the President  
Philip J. Farley, Deputy Director, ACDA  
Ronald I. Spiers, Director, Bureau of Politico-Military  
Affairs, Department of State  
William Watts, NSC  
Michael Guhin, NSC

RN - This is a difficult and unpleasant subject about which we have little real knowledge.

HELMS - (Director Helms briefing is attached.)

RN - I hope we know more about ours than about theirs.

WHEELER - At the end of World War II, we captured a great deal in the way of German shells and stockpiles.

There is an apocryphal story that the Germans planned to use (chemical warfare) against the Normandy landing. It is apocryphal because the German General Staff ignored orders.

The main use to us of Chemical Warfare is as a deterrent. I am inclined to think that the Soviets' capability is greater than ours, since ours is so small. They can resupply quickly by land to Europe or Asia.

They do show plans to use them. They have experimented with decontaminants.

If the enemy used chemical warfare and the U.S. lacked defenses, the advantage would accrue to the enemy.

Historically, the use of chemicals has never been initiated against a nation which had them. The Italians used them against Somalia, and the Egyptians used them in Yemen.

If we had no retaliatory equipment, we would have to be prepared all the way along the front. If both had such equipment then neither would have the advantage.

I therefore conclude that we should have a modest deterrent capability. Chemical warfare has many uses:

- Attrition
- in actions smaller than nuclear exchanges
- to give credibility
- for long-lasting effect

We must deploy our stocks forward; we can't move them rapidly in time of crisis.

There are chemical incapacitants which we don't have in large enough quantity. They having five too many.

With regard to our biological warfare program, its major value is deterrence. If this fails, then we have a modest ability to retaliate. Our stockpiles are in terms of pounds, not tons.

We don't know what the Soviets have, but they are interested.

If the enemy uses BW, we must take a massive conventional or nuclear response. A nuclear response means the risk of nuclear escalation. The psychological impact would be high. Our BW program is the only free-world program. Eighty percent of our program is RDT&E. It costs \$7 million a year for agents and delivery systems.

Our facility at Pine Bluff can go into production in 30 days. If it were closed, it would take two to three years to reactivate.

The JCS believes that, on balance, it has a low cost, that it would be a catastrophe if we can't respond, and there is a difficulty in verifying enemy capabilities. Therefore, the JCS believes that we must retain our present stockpile and the option of production if needed.

With regard to riot control agents, these are primarily tear gas. They reduce casualties. They assist in withdrawal and breaking off contact. They can reduce the fire aimed at helicopters. They can be used to deny the enemy avenues of approach.

Herbicides improve vertical and horizontal visibility and help reduce ambushes.

KISSINGER - (Presented the issues and options as contained in his talking points in attached NSC book.)

RN - Charlie (Yost), any comment?

YOST - The only action to go to the UN on the subject has been the Canadian

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procedural item which refers the subject back to Geneva. There is general concern at the UN with CBW and seabeds. If we can present a generally cooperative position, then there is no immediate problem. We can go with the Canadian resolution.

FARLEY - We need to decide the security requirements first. It is difficult to devise an inspection scheme. We would welcome limiting our own efforts to R&D. We would then be willing to look at the UK initiative. But we must look at verification, inspection and complaints procedures, and the question of aid to countries who claimed they were attacked.

DUBRIDGE - There is great public interest in this subject. What is the military use? The value of a BW retaliatory capability is not clear. There is slow incubation, perhaps two weeks, and then 2 weeks to retaliate. We don't know how it spreads and we are unsure about possible epidemics.

The military retaliatory value of BW is not great. I would think it was better to go to chemical warfare than nuclear. We could be in a better situation.

The whole issue is not clear from the scientific side.

RN - The UK proposal would allow R&D for defensive purposes?

FARLEY - It is hard to be sure.

ROGERS - The language is flexible. It could be done.

WHEELER - We don't feel as strongly about BW as about CW. We would like to see a minimal RDT&E program pointed to defense, guarding against offensive actions by the enemy.

KISSINGER - On incapacitants, what we have is lethal to anyone without two nurses.

It would be unlikely that we would use lethal chemical weapons in a strategic attack. Nuclear weapons would be more cost-effective. We should therefore use chemical weapons for tactical purposes.

The tear gas question concerns ratification of the Geneva Protocol. It would ban the first use of CW and BW. It is not clear about tear gas and herbicides.

ROGERS - Australia has ratified without making an interpretive statement.

Wasn't the Protocol withdrawn in 1948? Would we have to resubmit it? There is Congressional pressure to resubmit it, and we could say we comply.

YO ST - In 1966, the Administration called for support of the Protocol.

KISSINGER - If we ratify, we must fill in the gap about the first use of incapacitants. It would be another unverifiable arms control agreement.

ROGERS - If we exclude tear gas, we wouldn't have really changed our position.

LAIRD - This was a good study. We should go beyond it. I must defend these programs.

We are falling into a bad trap. CW and BW should not be put together. People who are against biological warfare also go against chemical warfare. But the latter is necessary for deterrence. These are two entirely different subjects. We need to clarify what CW and BW really mean.

BW does not have a deterrent quality.

We need a strategy for CW. We need a simple and understandable policy statement on it. We need a legislative and public relations game plan. This paper doesn't do that.

I believe we should renounce biological warfare, but go forward with an immunization program and research. There are communicable disease programs in Atlanta and under HEW. The scientists there can do good work.

From the standpoint of deterrence, the deterrent program is good.

We are on the verge of losing our CW capability. In the transport of phosgene gas, we do one percent and private industry does 99 percent.

RN - It is not a good paper.

LAIRD - Two points are particularly important: CW and BW should be separated, and a public relations and legislative game plan is not set forth.

MITCHELL - There should be no prohibition of tear gas. This would be hard on our law enforcement. We need tear gas. And it makes your sinuses clearer.

LAIRD - It helps with the reduction of casualties in Vietnam. And not only necessarily in preparation for attack. It gets the enemy out so you can see who they are.

DUBRIDGE - I agree with General Wheeler and Secretary Laird. CW has a deterrent effect. There is the danger of transportation. This can be lessened with binary weapons.

LAIRD - We are close to this.

RN - It is important to distinguish these. Also, you should move some programs to HEW and still get all the information you need. That relaxes the scientists.

ROGERS - There is not really much disagreement. We need decisions, and

we can work out a scenario. We should not delay.

LAIRD - We shouldn't leak this around town.

RN - The public relations aspect is very important.

KISSINGER - You should reflect for a day. We can then issue an NSDM and work out the public relations and game plan.

RN - We could take a forthcoming position.

YOST - And ratify the Geneva Protocol.

RN - Does this bother you?

ROGERS - We should do it with no reservation.

RN - We should approve it without reservation, but make a statement of understanding. We need tear gas and will use it.

KISSINGER - We can show this in the NSDM.

RN - We should clear this with Sato.

We have mixed CW and BW together and should get them separated.

RICHARDSON - There is no significant international pressure for getting rid of CW stockpiles. The Protocol applied to its use.

FARLEY - It will go to Geneva, and then you can get it passed back to me.

RN - We can fuzz up the language. We should develop a simple statement within 48 hours. Then I want a positive public statement. It should emphasize that this is an example of the right leadership, but which has the national security in mind.

WHEELER - The last time this was before a National Security defense panel was during President Eisenhower's Administration.

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ROGERS - We shouldn't do this while SAto is here.

LAIRD - That is no problem.

RN - I want a well thought-out statement. It should be released Sunday for the Monday papers, Bill.

DUBRIDGE - It should say we will destroy dangerous chemicals and are moving to binaries.

LAIRD - We would need three years to burn them.

RN - Bryce Harlow thinks it is imperative to brief the legislature on Okinawa. Phil Farley and Henry Kissinger did this on SALT. We should do it on Okinawa.

ROGERS - Yes. Alex Johnson and Henry should do it at first, and then you should come in.

RN - We must brief the Armed Services Committee. They will be against it.