

February 21, 1962

Radio Liberty Policy Position Statement: U.S. Resumption of Atmospheric Nuclear Tests

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Summary:

Radio Liberty outlines its perspective on U.S. nuclear testing, specifying that its goal is to provide credible information, convince listeners and that the resumption of nuclear testing is for self defense.

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Policy Position Statement

U. S. Resumption of Atmospheric Nuclear Tests

Assumptions

When, contrary to their frequent and solemn assertions that the Soviet Union would never be the first power to break the moratorium, the USSR on September 1 initiated an intensive and extensive series of nuclear weapons tests, the U. S. showed its forbearance by announcing that it would not itself resume testing unless absolutely necessary and urged the Soviet Union to reconsider its decision and to move toward an effective agreement in the negotiations which were then going on. As a result of the Soviet resumption of testing September 1, 1961, U. S. President Kennedy on September 5 authorized a series of no-fallout underground nuclear tests, which began on September 15. Subsequently, the U. S. twice served notice in the U. N. Political Committee (October 12 and October 19) that it might find it necessary also to resume atmospheric testing.

On November 2, President Kennedy announced that he had ordered preparations for a resumption of atmospheric testing, if an analysis of weapons progress by the Soviet Union in their series of approximately 50 tests indicated that it was necessary for the U. S. to resume testing for its own defense. Those conducting the tests are under orders to restrict radio-active fallout to an absolute minimum. On January 27 the British Government gave informal permission for the use of Christmas Island as a test site if the United States decides that tests are necessary for Free World security.

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Should the United States resume atmospheric testing, the reactions of Soviet citizens can be expected to be diverse, but keyed mainly to questions of peace and war. Although many Soviet citizens have heard little of the 50-odd-test program conducted over their own territory, there is general awareness of the tests among large sections of the population, accompanied by concern and uncertainty about fallout and blast effects. Their insecurity has been aggravated by official Soviet silence on these subjects. U. S. tests held over the Pacific would probably not generate as much of this type of insecurity, but knowledge that the U.S. was resuming atmospheric tests would make listeners more susceptible to regime propaganda that the U. S. Government places aggressive policies before human welfare. For more politically sophisticated listeners, the knowledge that the Soviet tests of last year were responsible for U. S. tests and that the U. S. will not permit itself to be outdistanced or blackmailed by Soviet nuclear threats may cause them to question the wisdom of the Soviet regime's aggressive policy, if not to accept the fact of U. S. resolution to deter the expansionist aims of world communism.

Objectives

1. To maintain credibility by complete and accurate reporting of U. S. preparations for atmospheric testing and the conduct of such tests.
2. To convince listeners that a resumption of testing by the U. S. is motivated only by a desire for adequate self-defense and does not reflect hostility toward the Soviet people or plans for aggression against them.
3. To persuade listeners that the problem of the nuclear arms race is the most serious problem facing mankind today and can be solved only by

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Soviet acceptance of workable mutual agreements on a controlled test ban and disarmament.

Treatment

During and since the Soviet tests last fall, Radio Liberty has continued to dwell at length on the Soviet breach of faith in violating the moratorium and the resultant dangers of arms escalation and radioactive fallout.

Radio Liberty's position is that danger to humanity from nuclear tests can only be prevented by a ban on testing arrived at through an agreement which provides for international inspection and controls and the strengthening of mechanisms for the peaceful solution of international problems.

In order to prepare its listeners for an intelligent understanding of a U. S. resumption of tests, Radio Liberty will continue to remind its listeners of last fall's Soviet tests and report all facts and informed opinion on the pros and cons of the need for U. S. tests, bringing out the number of pre-announcements, the lack of secrecy, full information on fallout, the military significance of the Soviet tests and their relationship to the balance of power. Should atmospheric tests be resumed by the U. S., Radio Liberty will provide its listeners with full, objective reporting of the tests as they occur and of world comment and reaction. Radio Liberty will report this event as a deeply concerned observer and our level of attention should be equal to that of the neutral European Press.