

July 4, 1972

Henry Kissinger to President Nixon, 'Proposed NSSM on the Implications of an Indian Nuclear Test,' with cover memorandum from Richard T. Kennedy

Citation:

"Henry Kissinger to President Nixon, 'Proposed NSSM on the Implications of an Indian Nuclear Test,' with cover memorandum from Richard T. Kennedy", July 4, 1972, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Nixon Presidential Library, National Security Council Institutional Files, box H-192, NSSM-156. Obtained and contributed by William Burr and included in NPIHP Research Update #4. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113903>

Summary:

National security assistant Henry Kissinger asks President Nixon to approve a proposal for a national security study memorandum [NSSM] on the implications of an Indian nuclear test for U.S. interests.

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Authority E.O. 12958
By WTH NARA Date 3-23-07THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTONSECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

July 4, 1972

MEMO FOR: JEANNE DAVIS

FROM: R. T. KENNEDY 

The attached NSSM is approved for signature. SecState has seen and agrees.

Attachment

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Authority E.O. 12958
By WTH NARA Date 3-23-07

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBJECT: Proposed NSSM on the Implications of
an Indian Nuclear Test

We have received recurrent reports in recent months suggesting the likelihood that India may conduct a nuclear test. Although we have no hard evidence that India has made the political decision to test, one report indicates that a test device would be ready within six months.

There are a number of reasons why I believe we should have a study of what an Indian test would mean for U.S. interests, the issues we would face, and alternative postures we might adopt.

- The non-proliferation and test ban issues. An Indian test would certainly stimulate concern in these contexts, including, for example, mounting pressure for a comprehensive test ban. We would need to react ourselves, and to deal with the reactions of others, with the greatest care so as to avoid initial statements that could foreclose future options.
- The South Asia context. Such a test would likely affect the attitudes of the USSR and the PRC toward South Asia, and would probably generate Pakistani pressures for enhanced security guarantees. Again, we should carefully consider our position.
- The ramifications for India. A test would raise important questions about India's nuclear potential and about the effect of a nuclear weapons program on India's other policies and programs.

Given the real possibility of a test in the not-too-distant future and the importance of the issues it would raise, I think we need to do some hard thinking in advance. A draft NSSM is at Tab I. In light of the sensitivity of this issue, it calls for the review to be handled on a close-hold basis.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve my issuing the draft NSSM:

APPROVE [Signature]

DISAPPROVE _____

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Authority E.O. 12958
By WTH NARA Date 3-23-07

MEMOR

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

ACTIONSECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

June 23, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR:

MR. KISSINGER

FROM:

RICHARD T. KENNEDY *RTK*
HAROLD H. SAUNDERS *HS*

SUBJECT:

Proposed NSSM on the Implications of
an Indian Nuclear Test

Several months ago exchanges took place with the British and Canadians concerning India's nuclear intentions. Although there is no hard evidence that India has made the political decision to test, there have been recurrent reports that a test is likely, including one indicating that a test was being studied within the GOI, and that India would have a device ready within six months.

In light of the possibility of an Indian test in the not-too-distant future, we believe we should have a study of what a test could mean for U.S. interests, the issues we would face, and the alternative postures we might adopt.

-- An Indian test would likely stimulate increased interest and concern in the non-proliferation and test ban contexts. Pressures likely would mount for a comprehensive test ban, for example. Although the position of third countries, both nuclear and non-nuclear, cannot be predicted with certainty, we would undoubtedly be called upon to react to India's action and to deal with the reactions of others. We want to ensure the most careful analysis possible of U.S. interests in such circumstances in order that any statements, public or private, do not lock us into a position which could foreclose important options for the future.

-- Similarly, an Indian effort to go nuclear certainly would affect the attitudes of the USSR and the PRC toward the sub-continent, and would have serious ramifications for Pakistan as well. We need to think through how PRC and USSR reactions might affect our interests. We need, also, to consider carefully how we will respond to inevitable pressures from Pakistan for enhanced security guarantees.

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY*19. [Signature]*
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By WTH NARA Date 3-23-07

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-- Finally, a test would raise important questions about India's nuclear potential and the implications for India of an effort to develop weapons and delivery systems.

Given the importance of these issues, we believe there should be hard thinking in advance so that a possible test does not catch us unprepared to face them. The memorandum for the President at Tab A forwards a draft NSSM to accomplish a study of the subject and recommends his approval. It specifically calls for the review to be handled on a need-to-know basis.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you forward the memorandum to the President and with his approval that you sign the NSSM at Tab I calling for an examination of the implications of a possible Indian test.

Concurrence: John Walsh *JBW*

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