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Top Air Force Official Told JCS in 1971: "We Could Lose Two Hundred Million People [in a Nuclear War] and Still Have More Than We Had at the Time of the Civil War"





The Moorer Joint Chiefs of Staff: JCS Chairman Admiral Thomas Moorer, flanked to left by Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., and to the right by Air Force Chief of Staff General John Ryan and Marine Corps Commandant General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr. (copy from [Naval History and Heritage Command](#))

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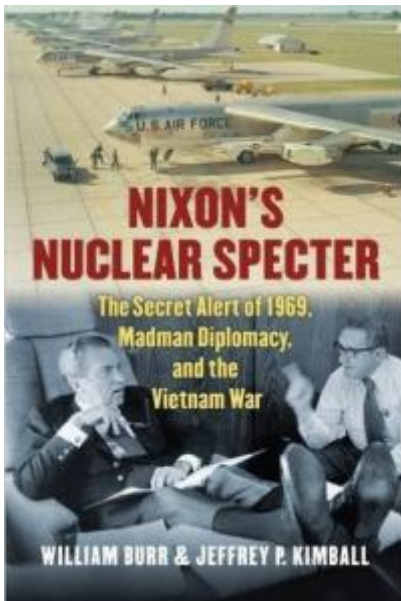
Declassified Diary Excerpt and Other Records of Ex-JCS Chairman Moorer Detail Highest-Level Military Deliberations, Including with White House



JCS Minutes, Once Thought Entirely Destroyed, Partially Preserved in Moorer Records at U.S. National Archives



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Washington, D.C. February 15, 2017 – The Air Force chief of staff told the Joint Chiefs at a September 1971 meeting that in a nuclear war the United States “could lose two hundred million people and still have more than we had at the time of the Civil War.” The quote comes from a recently declassified and highly revealing diary entry by JCS Chairman Thomas Moorer, published today for the first time by the National Security Archive at The George Washington University. The other chiefs did not challenge Gen. Thomas Ryan’s inaccurate numbers, seemingly choosing to ignore his comment altogether.

The notes are not only an eye-opening acknowledgement of certain senior military attitudes about nuclear survivability in the early 1970s, but are part of a critically important discovery – the existence among Admiral Moorer’s files of at least a partial record of JCS meetings that were thought to have been lost after the Chiefs in the late 1970s destroyed their entire collection of minutes going back to 1947.

Today’s posting includes only a small portion of the Moorer diary, along with other related records. Additional portions of the voluminous Moorer diary are currently under declassification review at the U.S. National Archives. This excerpt captures many of the most sensitive issues of the day – in addition to the sometimes difficult working relationships among top military and civilian officials such as Henry Kissinger and Pentagon number 2 David Packard.

* * * * *

On 10 September 1971, the Joint Chief of Staff held a discussion of proposals by Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard to reform nuclear command, control, and communications arrangements. According to the meeting record, published today for the first time by the National Security Archive at George Washington University, during a discussion of emergency procedures in event of a major crisis, JCS Chairman Thomas Moorer explained that Packard “believes as I do that [a nuclear conflict] might evolve to what amounts to a protracted nuclear war.” Air Force Chief of Staff Thomas Ryan brought the discussion to another level by asserting, virtually out of *Dr. Strangelove*, that “We could lose two hundred million people and still have more than we had at the time of the Civil War.” The other chiefs did not challenge Ryan’s numbers (which were inaccurate) and left his comment alone by continuing the discussion of emergency plans.[\[1\]](#)

The record of the JCS meeting can be found in recently declassified diaries of Admiral Thomas Moorer, who served as JCS chairman during 1970 through 1974. During the late 1970s, the Chiefs destroyed their entire collection of minutes going back to 1947; apparently the only surviving JCS meeting records were those kept by Moorer.

The Moorer diaries capture the policy issues of the day as well as the sometimes difficult relations among senior officials. In September 1971, with bad weather threatening a bombing operation in North Vietnam ordered by President Nixon, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird told Moorer about a recent telephone conversation with a nearly apoplectic National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, who “damn near went through the roof” saying that “you people over there don’t you have an Air



Another issue that surfaced was a flap over the Shah of Iran's efforts to recruit Lt. General Hamilton A. Twitchell, who was leaving his role as chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Iran, to work for the Iranian military as a consultant on military purchases. Laird, Moorer, and others thought that Twitchell taking that role would be "bad." Laird saw it as an "unconstitutional conflict of interest" while Warren Nutter, the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, said that it would set a "terrible precedent" with all the "Shahs, Sheiks and Kings around ... hiring the MAAG chiefs as they leave or retire."

A central issue captured in Moorer's diary for September 1971 was the effort by Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard to reform the U.S. government's command, control, and communications systems. As noted, the September 1971 material includes detailed discussion of C3 issues which Packard wanted to reform, in part because he was concerned about delays in sending orders to implement the nuclear war plan – the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) – during a crisis. Worried that Packard wanted to cut the JCS out of the chain of command, some of the Chiefs advised noncooperation, but Moorer thought it better to work with Packard in order to keep the JCS in the decision-making loop.

One of the issues in the Packard reforms that troubled Moorer was the relationship between the Chiefs and the National Command Authority (NCA). Originated in a directive signed by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in 1962, the definition of the NCA included the Chiefs. The concept that David Packard was developing limited the NCA to the top two civilians in defense policy: the president and the secretary of defense. Moorer could not challenge the fundamentals of civilian control but he successfully worked to keep the Chiefs in the chain of command for transmitting orders to execute nuclear war plans.

This posting includes excerpts from the Moorer diary for September 1971: a number of diary entries, two minutes of JCS meetings, an NSC Meeting, and two records of meetings with Packard. The diary entries include detailed records of conversations and meetings with others, including Laird, Kissinger, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Eno "Bud" Zumwalt, other members of the Joint Chiefs, and senior officers in the Joint Staff, among others.

It has long been known that Admiral Moorer kept a diary; some of it, such as records of meetings and telephone conversations, have been declassified and published in the *Foreign Relations of the United States*, including the volumes on Vietnam, during 1970-1973, and the Arab-Israeli Crisis, 1973. Only government historians knew what the diaries looked like until the National Archives declassified several months of them, for October 1970, September 1971, and September 1973 in response to a mandatory declassification review request filed by Peter Kornbluh of the National Security Archive. (One month, November 1970, was exempted in its entirety.)

Before selections from the Moorer diaries became available, this writer believed that all of the JCS minutes had been destroyed in a terrible act of historical vandalism during August 1974. The JCS Secretariat obliterated the entire collection of JCS meeting records that had been regularly prepared since 1947. According to a subsequent account, written up in a [letter to the National Archives in January 1993](#), the JCS's Secretary had determined that the records of meetings did not constitute "official minutes" but were "merely working papers reflecting the reporter's version of events."

Therefore, the Secretary "ordered the destruction of virtually all transcripts over six months old after



screening for historical significance.” After August 1978, there would be nothing more to destroy because the practice of “recording the meetings terminated.”

The stated reasons for destroying the minutes, the subjectivity of the records, was plainly specious. Perhaps the JCS didn’t want disconcerting comments, such as General Ryan’s, exposed to the light of day. Congress was then in the processing of strengthening the Freedom of Information Act, which it accomplished in October 1974 when it overrode President Ford’s veto of FOIA reform legislation. Perhaps the Chiefs got wind of the FOIA developments and wanted the minutes destroyed as a precautionary move. Whatever the motives were, the decision meant the loss of nearly 40 years of historical records, which would have covered significant developments from the Berlin blockade and the Korean War to the Taiwan Strait crises of the 1950s and the escalation of the Vietnam War. All that was left were excerpts from minutes on the Cuban Missile Crisis and the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

That the JCS minutes are interspersed among the Moorer diaries may have spared them from vandalism. As the Moorer collection is large and will take some years to process fully, only when that is complete will it be clear whether the diaries include minutes for all meetings during his time in office.

* * * * *

The documents that follow are from the National Archives, Record Group 218, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman JCS Admiral Moorer History File, Admiral Moorer Diaries, box 3, folder 17, September 1971

READ THE DOCUMENTS

(Note: A list of acronyms follows the documents below.)

Document 1: Diary, Thursday, 2 September 1971

Among the topics of the day were the proposal for an Advanced Airborne Command Post, whose purpose was to “provide communications to the outside world in the event of a nuclear attack.” Modified from the Boeing 747, the latest version of the National Emergency Airborne Command Post (NEACP), invented in the early 1960s, would materialize in 1974.[2] Also discussed were command and control, which Moorer saw as being relevant both to SIOP execution and “post-strike management,” the establishment of the Readiness Command (previously STRIKECOM and later Central Command), and Moorer’s opposition to National Security Agency Director Noel Gayler’s proposal to reduce signals intelligence (SIGINT) staffing in Southeast Asia.

Document 2: Memorandum for the Record, “Command and Control Briefing Presented to DEPSECDEF, 3 September 1971,” 3 September 1971

During a specially prepared briefing on command and control systems, Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard expressed concern that orders from top officials to carry out the SIOP would not be properly transmitted and received. Believing that current U.S. strategy surrendered a first strike option, Packard “emphasized the increased importance of transmitting orders for a second



streamlined and resilient system were necessary because even after the first SIOP strike had been launched it was “not the end of the world” and “war-fighting capabilities [were] required thereafter.” By contrast, Moorer was more concerned “over the problem of securing a decision from the NCA [National Command Authority],” the top civilians – the president and the secretary of defense – who would make the decisions in a crisis.

Document 3: Diary, circa 4 September 1971 (headnote excised)

What was declassified from this diary entry consists of lengthy conversations with Rear Admiral Daniel Murphy, who was military assistant to Secretary of Defense Laird, and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Eno Zumwalt. Among the topics covered were guerilla operations in Laos, the Advanced Airborne Command Post, and an ongoing controversy over a Defense Department decision to merge the Navy’s Military Sealift Command into an Army-controlled organization, a move which Moorer and the Chiefs had opposed.[3] The central topic in both conversations was Packard’s initiative to reform the C3 system. Moorer was critical of Packard’s management style (“petulant” “boyish”) and there were policy disagreements between the two over how best to update the C3 system. One thing about C3 that Moorer found worrisome was “getting a decision from the President” in a crisis (implying, perhaps, doubts that Nixon would not be decisive when nuclear use recommendations were before him). Further, according to Moorer:

I told Packard that we needed decisions on the hardware now. He reiterated

that he was not making any decisions on hardware until he got the organization first. I again pointed out to him that no matter what kind of an organization you had you still needed the hardware and surveillance satellites; and the communications satellites to permit UHF communications. I am going to go to the mat with him on these decisions and I would even go talk to the President.

Document 4: Memorandum for the Record, “Meeting with DEPSECDEF, Monday, 6 September 1971 (Command and Control),” 7 September 1971

This record of Moorer’s meeting with Packard gave both a chance to clarify their differences over how best to manage the C3 problem. Moorer was worried about efforts to reduce the authority of the JCS and objected to what he saw as a plan for a “super” CINC [commander-in-chief] to manage C3. Packard was more concerned about “too many ‘nodes’ and too many people involved in the decision process.” Further, he wanted to assure “civilian control” of the command and control system. While Moorer saw “nothing new” in the memorandum that Packard brought to the meeting, its language spelled out Packard’s strong interest in a C3system that was resilient enough to assure “the survival of Presidential Authority” in the event of a surprise attack.

Document 5: Diary, Friday 10 September 1971

Moorer had meetings and telephone conversations with a number of officials, including Admiral Zumwalt, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs U.Alexis Johnson, Joint Staff Director Lieutenant General John W. Vogt, and Vice Admiral John “Blackie” Wienel, who was Moorer’s Assistant. Among other issues, they discussed the cruise of the U.S.S. *Fox* in the Sea of Okhostk, Military Sealift Command issues, the Navy’s requirements in Bahrain, Okinawa reversion, and Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands negotiations. Also on the phone with Moorer was Rear Admiral James C. Donaldson, a



went over the weekly meeting of the U.S. Intelligence Board that reviewed DIA plans to close several military attaché posts, which DIA Director Bennet claimed was a JCS proposal but which Moorer saw as an “end run” by DIA.

Admiral Weinel told Moorer about the rewriting of the National Strategic Targeting and Attack Policy (NSTAP), apparently in response to President Nixon’s request for more options and more flexibility in the SIOP. Options related to Warsaw Pact countries (perhaps whether to target them or withhold from targeting), NATO war plans, and withholds for China or the Soviet Union, in the event they were not at war. Moorer also made a point about plans for a “dedicated” reserve force of about 10 ballistic missile submarines. Such a force would survive an initial nuclear exchange “so that it can be used as the JCS determine.”

Command and control remained one of the issues of the day and the JCS held a lengthy meeting to discuss the reforms sought by David Packard (see Document 6). A wiring diagram describing organizational arrangements was under discussion and so was a proposal for emergency circumstances, to transfer the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff (JSTPS) – which produced the SIOP –, to the Rock”, the Alternate National Military Command Center (ANMCC) at the Raven Rock Mountain Complex in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Document 6: Memorandum for the Record, “JCS Meeting, 1500, Friday, 10 September 1971,” 13 September 1971

After further discussion of the sealift command issue, the Joint Chiefs held a detailed and highly candid review of C3 problems, during the course of which Air Force Chief of Staff Ryan made his comments about losing 200 million Americans.

The chiefs were divided over how to respond to Packard’s drive for reforming the C3 system. Believing that the Pentagon’s civilian managers wanted to “take over all forces,” Army Vice Chief of Staff Bruce Palmer spoke out against helping Packard and wanted to put the “onus” on the civilians for coming up with ideas. Moorer, however, came up with wiring diagrams for organizational changes (not included in the file) and had several proposals to meet Packard’s concerns. One was to have a dedicated group look at C3 problems and make recommendations for decisions. Another was to appoint a two-star officer to be “Director for Command and Control Systems.”

Another Moorer proposal concerned SIOP execution. He explained that “he has eliminated the ‘nodes’, as Mr. Packard calls them, and the execution message would go straight from the JCS to the delivery forces and simultaneously to the CINCs who would follow up with appropriate action.” This Admiral Zumwalt approved: “it’s hard to argue against the logic of saving four or five minutes” during a nuclear crisis, although, as Ryan mentioned, the time saved would only cover the instructions to ICBM forces. The Pentagon would “still have to go through the TACAMO to get to the submarines.”

To better manage nuclear targeting during a crisis, Moorer proposed moving the JSTPS to Fort Ritchie, putting it close to the “Rock” in the Blue Ridge Mountains. According to Moorer, the Rock was secure against a Soviet SLBM attack, which would “buy some time” for conducting a war, until it was destroyed by the heavier Soviet SS-9 ICBMs.



During the course of the day, Moorer spoke or met with General Vogt, Secretary Laird, Admiral Zumwalt, Captain Andrew Valentine, Lt. Gen. Richard T. Knowles, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Warren Nutter, Admiral Weinel, and Captain William Crowe, who later served as CNO and JCS chairman. Topics included the ongoing debate over command and control reform, Military Sealift Command issues, and the question of who should direct **pacification** in South Vietnam – the office of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development [CORDS]; (William Colby had recently left the job). The chief candidates were General Frederick Weyand. Deputy CORDS director George Jacobson, CORDS official John Paul Vann, and Ambassador Charles T. Cross (Singapore). Moore, Laird, and others discussed the pros and cons of the various candidates, with none of them having a clear lead (although Jacobson would eventually be chosen).

With Zumwalt, Moorer discussed White House interest in small aircraft carriers and coached the CNO on how to handle the issue with Henry Kissinger. Moorer had already discussed aircraft carriers with Kissinger and recalled that Kissinger had said that “maybe we should just build submarines and not carriers to which I responded that the nuclear submarine program is certainly vital, but we have not had one submarine to speak of in Vietnam in 5 years.” According to Moorer, “there is no way that you can handle the crisis in the small countries around the world with submarines.”

With Warren Nutter, Moorer considered the Shah of Iran’s controversial proposal to let outgoing MAAG chief Hamilton Twitchell advise his armed forces on military procurement. General Ellis Williamson, the incoming MAAG chief, had threatened to resign if Twitchell was still in the country when he arrived. Laird, Moorer and others thought that Twitchell taking that role would be “bad.” Laird saw that as an “unconstitutional conflict of interest” while Warren Nutter, the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, said that it would set a “terrible precedent” with all the “Shahs, Sheiks and Kings around ... hiring the MAAG chiefs as they leave or retire.” It would be “even worse than a contract officer here in the building hiring the man whose [sic] had been getting his contracts.” The State Department and U.S. Ambassador Douglas MacArthur II, however, strongly supported the Shah’s initiative, and Laird was eventually persuaded to let Twitchell advise the Shah indirectly through the Stanford Research Institute.[\[4\]](#)

A topic of great interest to Moorer was the negotiations over the Trust Territory of the **Pacific** Islands, becoming known as Micronesia. The United States had held the islands in a U.N. trusteeship since the 1940s – using some for nuclear testing and others for CIA and military training – and was under growing pressure from the islanders for greater autonomy. The White House had appointed F. Hadyn Williams to handle the negotiations, and Captain William Crowe would be his military aide. For Moorer, the Navy had a great stake in the outcome: “this negotiation determines the US defense posture in the Western **Pacific** for the next 50 years. I pointed out [to Crowe] that in Cam Ranh Bay [South Vietnam] we were giving away everything; that we had turned back Okinawa; we were decreasing emphasis in Taiwan; and we need a place that is US territory.”

Document 8: Diary: Monday, 20 September 1971

The central development on 20 September was the PRIZE BULL operation, the bombing of POL installations in North Vietnam, which Moorer discussed with Laird, Vogt, Kissinger, and others. Ordered by President Nixon through Moorer and Vogt, the bombing was supervised by General John D. Lovelle, who was later fired and demoted for “allegedly conducting unauthorized airstrikes



Laird and Moorer over whether the Air Force could launch attacks in adverse conditions, but by 7:30 that evening Moorer had word that the “first wave” of the PRIZE BULL bombing attack had begun despite bad weather that was getting worse.

As mentioned, Moorer’s diary entries shed light on Henry Kissinger’s sometimes tense relations with Pentagon officials. Later in the afternoon Moorer and Kissinger discussed the bombing plans. After more discussion of weather conditions, Kissinger acerbically commented that “the next time we should give them an operation in the desert on stationary targets in July,” to which Moorer protested, “Come on Henry you are being unfair.” (Kissinger’s record of the conversation does not include Moorer’s complaint).

A few hours before Moorer testified before a House subcommittee on the Military Sealift Command situation, he spoke with Rady Johnson, Laird’s legislative aide. After Johnson cautioned that “even though it was in executive session [we do] not want to get any flap generated,” Moorer replied: “I still have to tell the truth.” Commenting on his testimony, he wrote that “Somehow the committee had gotten ahold of all the JCS papers and left me no alternative and no flexibility so I was forced to say exactly what I thought.” (As it turned out, the JCS papers had come from Assistant Secretary of Defense Barry Shillito; see entry for 23 September.)

In a discussion of the C3 problem, General Vogt brought up a problem that had to be resolved: the definition of the National Command Authority. Packard had told him that the NCA was the “the President and Secretary of Defense working through the CJCS.” That, Vogt said, was the “old description of the NCA without including the Chiefs.” Moreover, because the chairman “will not command forces how can he be in the NCA”? Trying to think the problem through, Moorer observed that the Packard directive “says that the NCA is the President and SECDEF.” Starting with that language, Moorer wanted it to include “the Chiefs who act in my place and want a more cosmetic directive.” In other words, the Packard directive should provide a role for the Chiefs in the NCA to ensure that the top civilians consulted them in a crisis.

Document 9: Memorandum for the Record, “NSC Meeting, Monday, 20 September 1971,” 23 September 1971

Moorer prepared his own account of a National Security Council meeting on 20 September; his account was necessarily compressed (he could not take notes on his extemporaneous statements, for example) compared to the highly detailed **White House record** published in the State Department’s historical series *Foreign Relations of the United States*. The thrust of Moorer’s account, especially Nixon’s insistence on supporting Thieu and the (implicit) dominos that would fall if Washington abandoned him, is consistent with the detailed record.

Document 10: Diary: Thursday, 23 September 1971

During the course of the day, Moorer had meetings and conversations with Zumwalt, “Blackie” Weinel, Generals Vogt and Knowles, CINCLANT Admiral Charles K. Duncan, General Walter Woolwine, ISA official Armistead I. Selden, and Colonel Robert Lucy (with the Joint Staff). Topics included relations with David Packard, a controversial directive from the new CINCPAC, General John L. Throckmorton, proposal C3 reorganization, the Military Sealift Command controversy, large aircraft carriers, Vietnamization, the SALT negotiations, who should fill the CORDS slot, and assessment of



With General Vogt, Moorer continued the ongoing discussion of David Packard's plans for C3 reorganization. Moorer believed that the most important problem was the "chain of command and the NCA." According to the National Security Act, the chain of command included the president, the secretary of defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which would "provide strategic direction." For Moorer, the gap in Packard's draft was that the JCS's role was not defined.

A conversation with Zumwalt touched on the SALT negotiations, which Moorer believed had been handled "very poorly," even amateurishly. Part of that conversation concerned the agreement with the Soviets that Kissinger had reached earlier in the year: the SALT agreement would freeze ICBMs but not SLBM forces, a "loophole" that would enable the Soviets to enlarge their SLBM force. Zumwalt and Moorer believed that "if they build we must build," which would include the U.S. plan for the Underwater Long-range Missile (ULMS), later known as Trident. They also reviewed the debate over whether an ABM treaty should have an NCA exception, that is, to allow anti-ballistic missile defense of Washington, D.C.). Moorer believed the NCA option made sense while "Bud" Zumwalt disparaged the SALT negotiators by suggesting that "the disarmament troops did not want us to be too safe."

Moorer told Zumwalt what he had said to Nixon about the strategic advantage of the SLBM force: "our submarines operate in friendly waters and their submarines operate in unfriendly waters. We will always have an advantage if we maintain a large Navy that adds to the stability of our sea base[d] deterrent and decreases the effectiveness of their sea-base[d] deterrent." In other words, the U.S. Navy protected the Polaris and Poseidon submarine force while putting Soviet missile-launching submarines at risk in the event of a conflict.

Document 11: Diary: Friday, 24 September 1971

Discussions with Vogt and Rear Admiral Robert G. James on the C3 issue culminated in a meeting of the Chiefs (see Document 12) after which Moorer saw Packard to discuss the directive. The changes that Moorer sought were based on the idea, as explained to Vogt, that "the NCA consisted of the President, SECDEF as well as the JCS when they are transmitting their advise [sic] to the unified and specified commanders." According to Moorer's account, the meeting with Packard resulted in changes in the directive that were to his liking, a "moral victory," as he put it.

After meeting with Packard, Moorer called up General Palmer telling him that he "got [Packard] to agree that the NCA definition consisted of the President, SECDEF or their designated officers as well as the Joint Chiefs of Staff when discharging their responsibility to provide guidance, etc." Palmer replied: "'Oh you used Bud Zumwalt's solution,' and I said no that was really mine. Palmer said he did not want to take any credit from me."

The draft directives are not available, but the **paper** that Packard signed in December 1971 did not go quite as far as Moorer wanted. Presumably the fuller story will be available as more information is declassified from the Moorer diary. The NCA would not include the Joint Chiefs but only the president and secretary of defense or their "deputized alternates or successors." Nevertheless, Packard's directive put the Joint Chiefs directly in the chain of command:

The chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense and through the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commanders of the Unified and Specified Commands. The channel of



sensitive operations shall be from the NCA through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the executing commanders

Moorer also spoke with JRC director Rear Admiral Donaldson, Admiral McCain, and Secretary Laird on a CINCPAC plan to have four ships follow the Soviet fleet into the Sea of Okhotsk “to observe any exercises if they were conducted.” As a secret operation, the 40 Committee had to approve the plan, but Laird rejected it because of the political environment: Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko was coming to Washington while Secretary of the Navy Warner would be attending an incidents-at-sea conference in Moscow. No untoward incidents were wanted. McCain, however, would draw up a plan that could be used when the political situation cooled down.

The problem of who should manage CORDS remained unresolved. With Lt. Gen. Knowles, Moorer discussed whether General Weyand could be Deputy MACV and Deputy CORDS at same time, which was what Admiral McCain and General Creighton Abrams preferred. When Moorer spoke with McCain about the top CORDS job, both objected to Ambassador Charles Cross, although Moorer worried that Cross was still in the running because he had been Laird’s college roommate.

Document 12: “JCS Meeting. 1400, Friday, 24 September 1971,” 27 September 1971

Before the Chiefs focused on the C3 issue, they received a briefing from Ambassador to Cyprus David H. Popper on U.S. interests and the political situation on the island. Concerned about Greek-Turkish tensions, differences between Greek Cypriots and Athens, and a possible Turkish military intervention if Greece made a move, Popper explained that “It is in our interest to keep them talking and not let another crisis develop. We have got to find new procedures to keep them talking for 2 or 3 years.” As far as Popper was concerned, if a crisis broke out, a U.S. political intervention was to be avoided: “in 1964 and 1967 the US played God to avert a full scale civil war between the Greeks and the Turks. The people in the island have never forgiven us for intervening.”

In the discussion of the C3 directive, Moorer noted that the NCA concept had no legal standing; it had been invented in a **1962 directive** signed by Secretary of Defense McNamara. While the 1962 definition of “National Command Authorities” included the Chiefs, the definition that Packard would follow included the president and the secretary of defense only, which the Chiefs found objectionable. According to General Palmer, “limiting the NCA to the Secretary of Defense and the President limits survivability. The NCA should be ... broader than two [civilians] when considering SLOP.”

Moorer had been willing to seek “cosmetic” changes that would “work” the JCS into the language describing the NCA. As he explained during the meeting, “they might insert the thought in the NCA definition” by stipulating that the Joint Chiefs of Staff would “carry out their statutory responsibilities.”

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADP – (automatic data processing)

ASW – Anti-submarine warfare



BRDP – Blue Ribbon Defense Panel

CINCREC – Commander-in-chief Readiness Command

CORDS – Civil Operations and Rural/Revolutionary Development

CVS – Anti-Submarine Aircraft Carrier

JRC – Joint Reconnaissance Center

JSTPS – Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff

MACV – Military Assistance Command Vietnam

MAAG – Military Assistance Advisory Group

MSC/MSTS – Military Sealift Command, formerly Military Sea Transportation Service

NCA – National Command Authority

NEECAP – [tk]

NSA – National Security Act (when not National Security Agency)

NSTAP – National Strategic Targeting and Attack Policy

POL – [tk]

SGU – Special Guerilla Unit

SSBN – Submersible ship ballistic missile nuclear-powered or ballistic missile submarine

TACAMO – (Take Charge and Move Out) military aircraft that would receive and then transmit **Emergency Action Messages** (EAMs) to strategic forces

TTPI – Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

ULMS – Underwater Long-range Missile System

Notes

[1] In 1860, the U.S. population was over 33 million. In 1970, the population was over 205 million.

[2] For the origins of the NEACP, see Thomas A. Sturm, *The Air Force and the Worldwide Military Command and Control System*

(U.S. Air force Historical Division Liaison Office, August 1966).

[3] “Chiefs Veto Transport Merger, Baltimore Sun,” and “Navy Opposes Sealift Loss to Army Unit,” *The Sun*, 21 June and 14 September 1971.

[4] See U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969–1972* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 2006),

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve04/ch3?start=31>, documents 135,



[5] Mark Clodfelter, *Violating Reality: The Lavelle Affair, Nixon, and Parsing the Truth* http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/casestudies/nwc_casestudy-1.pdf

(Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2016), 1, 7.

Categories: **Armed Forces and Military Strategy**

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Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird meeting with the Joint Chiefs in 1969. Facing Laird from left to right: Moorer, JCS Chairman Earl Wheeler, Westmoreland, Ryan, and Chapman (image courtesy of Office of Secretary of Defense [OSD] Historical Office)





Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard at his desk (image courtesy of OSD Historical Office)





Joint Staff Director John Vogt, Jr. (copy courtesy of OSD Historical Office)

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