MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT: Possible Soviet Interception of Berlin Airlift

REFERENCE: NSC Action No. 118

October 6, 1963

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]
Suggested Covering statement by Executive Secretary,
NAC regarding Report on Berlin Airlift

At its 22nd meeting the National Security Council directed the NAC Staff to prepare for consideration by the Council at its next meeting a report with respect to U.S. courses of action in the event of partial or complete interruption by the Soviets of the airlift to Berlin.

Pursuant to this directive, the Department of State prepared an initial draft paper on the subject which was discussed and amended by the NAC Staff members. The amended report was then considered and discussed at a meeting of the NAC consultants. Subsequent to that meeting, a revised draft paper, enclosed herewith, was prepared. The enclosure is only a working draft and does not represent the final views of any Departments or agencies.

The NAC consultants feel that the serious implications involved in this subject and the need for authoritative advice on our military capabilities under the presumed conditions make it undesirable and,

Struck through
in fact, dangerous to approve specific recommendations at the forthcoming Council meeting on Thursday, October 7. The NAC consultants instead suggest that the enclosed draft report be referred to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for comment and recommendations which may subsequently be considered by the NAC Staff in the preparation of a report to the Council at the earliest practicable date.

S-W-S

E-S
Soviet: The Possible Interference to Berlin Airlift

The Problem

1. To outline the course of action of the United States in the event of partial or complete interruption by the USSR of the airlift to Berlin.

Comment

2. It is assumed that the problem envisages interruption of the airlift as a result of varying forms of physical interference by the Russians with the movement of US planes into or out of Berlin.

3. If we are operating our planes into Berlin by right, and consequently any physical interference with that operation would be in violation of the Four-Power Agreement contained in the decision of the Allied Control Council of November 30, 1945 which established agreed air safety regulations. Such interferences also would be either a provocative or a hostile act on the part of the USSR.

4. The National Security Council at its sixteenth meeting on July 22, 1948 restated the determination of the United States to remain in Berlin in any event. Under date of July 26, 1948, the Secretary of Defense forwarded, for the information of the National Security Council, views which had been expressed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the matter of United States military course of action with respect to the situation in Berlin. Among the views of the Joint Chiefs at that
time was that they were "firmly of the opinion that air transport supply should be continued and should be augmented immediately as necessary to meet the minimum requirements since this is provided and should continue to provide a cushion of time during which some other solution to the Berlin problem may be found and during which appropriate action may be taken toward meeting all eventualities." The SAC at its sixteenth meeting on July 29 also concluded in plans for reduction of the number of dependants in Berlin and for holding those remaining in readiness for immediate evacuation when and if the U.S. Commanding General in Europe deems it necessary.

5. The recommendations outline a general procedure only. Each specific case should be handled according to the nature of the possible interference and the circumstances under which it takes place.

6. The recommendations also deal only with a situation in which U.S. forces remain in Berlin and the airlift continues in operation. They do not deal with the fundamental problem of the course of action of the United States in the event that it becomes impossible to supply and maintain U.S. forces in Berlin which would be dealt with later in the event being proposed pursuant to

7. The U.S., U.K., and France, particularly the U.S. and the U.K., should take joint action as concerns the airlift; and consultations have been given to the British and French Governments that the U.S. will take no action in the Berlin situation without prior consultation with them.
8. The SCS should be requested to submit to the HIC as a matter of urgency their recommendations as to the practicable military measures that might be taken against the USSR forces within or over the air corridors in the event of Soviet acts resulting in the loss of US planes or serious interference with the airlift.

9. In preparing their recommendations regarding the measures of protection against Soviet interference with the airlift, an effort should be made to distinguish between two categories of military measures, although it is recognized that it is extremely difficult and may be impossible to do so satisfactorily.

The two categories are:

(a) those essential for the defense of the personnel and military equipment of US forces; measures which must be put into effect at the discretion of the US Commanding General in Europe, and which may have to include the temporary suspension of the airlift operations;

(b) offensive or retaliatory measures against USSR forces which may be interfering with the airlift to the extent of causing loss of US lives or planes; measures which in the present tense situation might well result in the outbreak of hostilities leading to war, and which have such grave implications that the decision to adopt them must be taken at a top government level in Washington and not unilaterally made by the responsibility of any commanding officer in the field.
10. Receiving receipt of recommendations from the
UCO, the United States should adopt the following
interim courses of action.
13. The airdrop operation should be continued in accordance with the foregoing recommendations, pending a further review of the situation by the National Security Council.

14. The United States should keep the United Nations fully informed regarding all incidents and developments in connection with the operation of the airdrop.