Memorandum

21 April 1971

TO: Director, Plans and Programs
ACTION OFFICER - Col. Dalton, ext 71311

FROM: Action Officer

SUBJECT: PA Representation on ISA PW/MIA Committee and Group

DATE: 21 April 1971

PURPOSE: To inform ASD(ISA) names of representatives from OASD(PA) who will serve on the reconstituted PW/MIA Policy Committee and the newly formed PW/MIA Task Group.

DISCUSSION: Memo from Dr. Nutter to multiple addressees including ASD(PA) dated 15 April 1971 requests names of PA representatives to serve on the Policy Committee and Task Group.

PW/MIA Policy Committee is to be composed of principal addresses (Mr. Henkin) while PW/MIA Task Group is to be composed of Flag/General Officer representatives (Brig Gen James).

While not specifically requested by ASD(ISA), alternates have also been designated: Brig Gen James for Mr. Henkin on the PW/MIA Policy Committee and Col. Dalton for Brig Gen James on the PW/MIA Task Group.

RECOMMENDATION: Signature on attached memorandum to ASD(ISA).

COORDINATION: Capt. Ellis, USN

NEWS CONFERENCE
BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE MELVIN R. LAIRD AT PENTAGON WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 13, 1971 11:00 A.M.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it has become somewhat of a tradition to come down to the press room at World Series time. Two years ago, I came down in the middle of the game. Today I have decided to come down a little bit ahead of the game, as we are having our first night game in the history of world series competition.

You will remember two years ago at World Series time, we discussed at some length the Vietnamization program. Since that time, I can report to you that we are at a strength of 210,000 (current strength which is approximately 330,000) below the figure of two years ago, and we will meet or beat the President’s announced troop ceiling of 164,000 on December 1st. Since that meeting two years ago, at World Series time, we’ve submitted another Defense Report, and in that Defense Report we outlined the application of the Strategy of Realistic Deterrence to bring about and to make possible the application of the Nixon Doctrine as we move to a generation of peace.

During this period of time, I think all of you that have been covering the Pentagon realize full well that the Nixon Doctrine with its 3 pillars of partnership, strength, and willingness to negotiate is being implemented, not only by the Department of Defense, by the Department of State, but throughout our Government.

This is evident in 3 ways, of course. First, the comprehensive efforts and plan for peace which has been put forward by the President. Secondly, we are at a position in the world today where we are living in a more peaceful world, and, third, we have a consistent program for entering into an era of negotiations.

President Nixon has truly established himself as the world leader for peace. We in the Department of Defense are moving forward on all fronts to insure that we do have adequate partnership arrangements, whether they be in Asia or in Europe. We are assuring that we have proper military strength because we feel that military strength and the partnership arrangements are indeed absolutely essential to this period of negotiations which is the third pillar of the Nixon Doctrine.

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All we have to do is to point to the various accomplishments in this area where negotiations are going forward, starting from, of course, the advise and consent which the United States Senate gave to the non-proliferation treaty; to the work that has been done in the field of outlawing biological warfare, the negotiations that are going forward in that area in the new program which was initiated during this Administration.

We also need only to point to Berlin, the SALT Talks, to the prospective mutually balanced force reduction talks, the economic security talks which are imminent in the very near future. We have but to point to the "Hot Line" agreement which has been recently signed here in the United States, or we can point to the incident of the sea negotiations which started yesterday in Moscow, under the delegation which is headed by the Under Secretary of the Navy, John Warner.

All during this period, it's indeed important, if we are to have success in these negotiations, that we maintain a strong, adequate, realistic determent.

Later this month, I will be going to the Nuclear Planning Group which is meeting in Brussels, with Chairman Moorer. We will be attending those meetings during the last week of October. At that time I will be having bilateral discussions with the German Defense Minister, the British Defense Minister, as well as the Italian Defense Minister. We will be talking not only the problems in regard to the nuclear planning papers that are on our agenda, but also the prospective negotiations in the area of mutual and balanced force reductions.

Following that meeting, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Moorer, and I will be going to Southeast Asia during the early part of November, prior to the announcement which will be made by the President of the United States on or shortly after November 15. The President has directed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and myself to visit Vietnam and to make an up-to-date report to him before the middle of November. So, in early November we will be making this trip prior to the time that the President makes his announcement which he has stated will be on or shortly after the 15th of November.

I will be glad to respond to any questions which you may have.

Q: Mr. Laird, what is your assessment of the reported dissension in the crew of the Coral Sea, and is this a symptom that one can see more and more in elements of the Armed Forces or not?

A: I have asked the Navy for a report on the newspaper accounts which have been carried within the last few days.

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the Soviet Union is concerned in the strategic nuclear weapons field. We cannot permit that to happen, and it will not happen as far as the planning of this Department is concerned.

This momentum which I refer to will put the Soviet Union in an entirely new position as far as submarine-launched missiles. They are behind us now, but as I said in the Defense Report, they would equal the number of submarines, Polaris-type, Y class submarines in 1974. In the Defense Report which I will send to the Congress next year, this State will be moved down to a position where they will advance their so-called parity or equality with us in this area by at least one year.

Q: Mr. Secretary, in the case of Sergeant Sexton, the POW, why wasn't correspondence in the possession of the military forwarded to his family?
A: Personally, I think that is a mistake. I have ordered that all of these files be reviewed, and that any propaganda leaflets be forwarded to Washington for immediate evaluation.

Q: Is that what it was, a propaganda leaflet?
A: It was a leaflet that had been distributed, and the family of Sgt. Sexton, of course, in October of 1969 was notified that they were in possession of material which would indicate that his status might be changed from missing to prisoner. This information in 1969 was made available to the family on the basis of the propaganda leaflet, but the leaflet that had been forwarded from the field to Washington was not in the handwriting: the handwritten memorandum was retained in the field; this was a mistake. I believe when a mistake has been made, it should be admitted, and I believe this was a mistake which was made in the field at the time. I can assure you that in keeping with my policy to keep the families of these POW's completely and fully informed to the best of our ability, that this will be corrected, and a review of these files has gone forward.

I would point out one thing to all of you, and that is that there is the Geneva Convention. The Geneva Convention calls on the enemy to keep the other side informed at all times as to the status of prisoners of war and those that are captured by the enemy. These Geneva Conventions should be abided by, and there would be no problem at all of giving complete and total information to these families. Not only have the Geneva Conventions been violated in this case, but they have been violated as far as inspection is concerned, and it seems to me we should be calling on the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong to live by these conventions which they have accepted; this particular problem of keeping these families informed throughout the United States would be solved.

Q: Do you mean that he wrote this on the back of a leaflet, or that the message itself in his handwriting constituted, in your view, a propaganda leaflet?
A: The message was written for distribution and was distributed by the enemy. This was not in the form of a letter to the parents or a letter to anyone in the United States, but it was distributed by the other side. The information came to us, and came to the Army, but it was not forwarded in its original form or in the handwritten form, but was forwarded in the form of a typewritten note covering the information, and that was when the Army notified the parents, in October, that there was some information that would indicate that he was a prisoner rather than missing, but that until it could be completely confirmed, they would still carry Sgt. Sexton as missing.

I just want to make it evident to all of you that this question of reviewing the files is going forward, and I believe that a mistake was made in the field, and when a mistake is made, I think the best thing to do is to admit it.

Q: Getting back to the Soviets, if we may, what current information do you have on new site construction in the Soviet Union and your current assessment on what may be going in those holes?
A: I would stay by my previous statements on the construction momentum of the Soviet Union. It is exceeding the construction estimates carried in the Defense Report and, of course, it is of concern and we're watching it very carefully, but I do not care to go beyond those statements. I will add that we will go into this in great detail in the Defense Report that I give to the Congress next year.

You know, right now, we are in the midst of our appropriations and budget process; every day, is budget day in the Department of Defense. It used to be that it would be about a month, the budget and authorization bills were considered. Now, our budget and authorization bills are considered on a continuing basis. We don't get our authorization, or our appropriations until the year is half over. I spend most of my time apportioning funds so that we don't get ourselves in a bad position in the third and fourth quarters, and we're doing as best we can.

To come out with a change in the Defense Report at this time I do not think would serve our purposes as far as the Congress is concerned. Because I would think that there might be some that would say that these facts, this information, is being put out at budget time. We're going to stay with our Defense Report. I will only indicate that the Defense Report was conservative in all respects.
I would only state that the testimony which I gave in my first appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee well over two years ago, in which I was criticized at great length from one end of this country to the other, that that particular testimony is conservative, and I think it's best if we leave it there.

Q: Mr. Secretary, in your report to Congress next year, in light of the Soviet momentum and the Soviet buildup, are you going to recommend anything new? Are you going to recommend increases in programs to counteract this buildup, or are you relying on SALT?

A: We've already made the decision in our 1972 budget presentation, and I am hopeful that the Congress will approve the funding that we have recommended to go forward with the B-1 as a follow on to the B-52. We're hopeful that program will be approved by the Congress at the funding level that we have requested.

We've also requested additional funding in this bill for the ULMg program, which is the long-range submarine program a follow on of the Polaris Poseidon-type submarine. This particular program has been recommended along with the research and development, as far as the platform is concerned.

We've also asked for funds to develop a new missile system. The new missile system, of course, must be the first development that goes forward, and we are moving as rapidly as we can on that. I would expect that such a continuation would be recommended in the 1973 budget.

Q: Mr. Secretary, there is a story going around the building that has now been published in two places that the Joint Chiefs of Staff have devised an elaborate aid program for Cambodia that would call for spending up to $500 million a year. There's also a report that you are against that, and that Dr. Kissinger will make the final decision. Can you bring us up-to-date on that situation?

A: First, the decision has been made as far as the 1972 program. I did recommend a higher level for Cambodia than is in the present Foreign Aid Bill. My position happened to be the minority position within the Government. As you know, there is $200 million in the bill for military assistance. There will be no supplemental request submitted to the Congress. There has been no decision to go forward with a supplemental budget request as far as military assistance is concerned for fiscal year 1972. The figure which I did recommend was somewhat larger. But in the spirit of compromise it was not much larger. In the spirit of compromise it ended up at $200 million as far as the military assistance program is concerned. I've noticed that there have been reports that a supplemental request is going forward. Those reports are incorrect.

Q: Mr. Secretary, earlier you said the Soviets had advanced their missile-carrying submarine construction, and the wisdom in this building, before you took office, was that second-strike weapons were good for you, the theory being that if you had missiles above ground, it would be easily destroyed, and the sooner they got undersea the easier each side could breathe. My question is, what is the source of your alarm about the Soviet submarine carrying missile buildup, if indeed second strike weapons on both sides are desirable?

A: There are several parts of your question that I would have to disagree with, to start with, but I think I can get to the substance of your question by stating in very simple political terms that I believe we would be placed at a very great political disadvantage if the Soviet Union was in position to ring the United States with a vastly superior submarine, Polaris-type fleet, on all of our coasts and out-distance us by a large number of missiles.

We live in the United States in an open society, and our decisions are made by our people. The people of the United States would be faced with a very difficult decision at that time, and I believe that they want the planning to go forward now in the event that a strategic arms limitation on these numbers is not worked out, so that the United States will not find itself in that kind of a position in the future. It goes to the political considerations just as much as the military considerations, and perhaps a little more.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you have talked about your fears about the Soviet missile buildup. I wonder if you could give us an estimate on how many nuclear warheads the United States has deployed this year. As nearly as I can figure out, we have deployed six Poseidon submarines and three squadrons of Minuteman, which would come into something like hundreds of nuclear warheads. Do you feel that this tends to balance off whatever the Soviets may be doing?

A: I think that we are in a position now where we are truly at and can assure the American people, that we are not inferior, that we have reached that position of a parity position. But I do not want to give you the impression that with the technology that we have, and we have from two years to a four year lead in this particular area, that the Soviet Union is not in a position where it can do the same thing and as a matter of fact on some of its weapons systems has a greater capability as far as its payload capacity is concerned to adapt the technology which we have leadership in at the present time. So, I think it's important for all of you to understand that. The Soviet Union is going forward with an extensive test program, not only as far as the large weapons which we have reported, but recently there have been tests with the SS-11, with 3 warheads. There have been tests of a longer range submarine weapon. There have been tests of a new ABM weapon.

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The answer to your question is, all of these matters are being taken into consideration. But it’s more important today, I think, than at any time in our history as we start many new negotiations and many new dialogues with countries throughout the world, that we be in a very strong position.

Q: Mr. Secretary, won’t it help make the United States stronger if we stopped spending hundreds of millions of dollars on airplanes whose engines drop off while they are still new planes?

A: One of the first press conferences I had, of course, was a press conference in which I discussed with you, as well as many others in this room, the C-5A contract to which you refer. I have had many inheritances since I have become Secretary of Defense, and this is one of the inheritances I have had, is the contract on the C-5A, as well as the F-14, and I can go down the F-111 and certain others.

In every development program there always have been some problems. In the development of any aircraft there have been problems, but I can assure you that we are doing everything that we can to solve those problems because we do need the aircraft as far as our security requirements are concerned.

Q: Do the Soviets have a FOBS weapon operational or deployed, or both?

A: The announcements have been made here from time-to-time on the Soviet Union orbiting FOBS weapons systems. They do have this particular capability.

Q: Mr. Secretary, the President yesterday in making his announce- ment seemed to take a slightly different philosophical view of the strategic arms balance than you do. He seemed to rule out the possibility of one side gaining enough advantage in number to engage in blackmail, where you specifically leave open this possibility. Is that a disagreement between you?

A: There is no disagreement between the President and myself.

Q: Is it a fair summation of your views to say that it’s o.k. for the United States to ring the Soviet Union with submarines because they are a closed society, but they cannot ring our country with their missile carrying submarines because we are an open society?

A: No, I think that is an unfair presentation of my view. If you want to present it that way, I would say that would be very unfair. I think that there are certain disadvantages from the view point of the strategic posture of our country in being an open society, but I support the openness of our society, and I will continue to do so. The problem is that when you talk about sufficiency in an open society and you’re dealing with a closed society,
sufficiency has a much different definition than it does within a closed society.

We tell our potential adversaries all over the world what our position is. We tell them what our position is in the number of weapons that we are developing, and you know, George, having covered this building, that it takes from five to seven years to develop a weapons system. In the first two or three years, if you're in a closed and secret society, there is no way in the world that that development can be discovered. So, I point up that difference because as a defense planner I believe it's important to bear that in mind.

Our announced position, of course, is that we are committed to a retaliatory-type deterrent. We are developing a realistic deterrent, whether it be in the strategic nuclear field, or the technical nuclear field, or in the conventional field. But in dealing in our type of society one has to take into consideration these other variables, which can be a very important factor in defense planning.

Q: Mr. Secretary, we are talking about a closed society here, and the C-5A came up a little earlier, and Ernie Fitzgerald is involved in that particular case. Your department seems to be insisting upon a closed hearing over at the Civil Service Commission. I wonder what your view is on that particular thing, or if you have made the decision?
A: I have not addressed that decision as yet, but I would be very glad to -- perhaps there are certain considerations that the Air Force has taken account of in making that request. I have not reviewed that, Clark, but I certainly would be very glad to review it.

Q: There is a court order on this, Mr. Secretary, and the Administration has appealed that court order and is insisting upon the closed hearing despite this federal court order.
A: I would assume there are other considerations involved. The Air Force now is going forward on that basis. But I would be happy, Clark, to look at it.

Q: Have the economic developments of recent weeks caused you to make any change in some of your earlier projections for the next Defense Budget?
A: I have tried to stay away from making any projections on the next Defense Budget until we have this one approved. I am hopeful that within the next 3 months, and I would hope by Christmas, we can have our 1972 budget and I will be glad to make projections at that time.

As you know, we're in a position right now where this Defense Budget which anticipates the spending of some $76 billion dollars, is below the 1964 budget of the Department of Defense in terms of what we can spend in 1972.

(MORE)
MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (M&RA)
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (PA)
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (H&E)
GENERAL COUNSEL
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

SUBJECT: Policy Direction of Prisoner of War Releases

Our experience in the recent repatriation of SSgt Sexton, USA, and the related release of a NVA lst Lieutenant has emphasized the necessity that we have the capability rapidly to reach and implement decisions involving policy in all such cases.

Secretary Laird views the DOD PW/MIA Task Group with its representatives from all relevant DOD components as the vehicle for policy coordination in prisoner of war releases/exchanges. Since the Task Group Chairman is responsible through me, directly to the Secretary, he is the DOD single point of contact on all matters involving the release of PWs.

For the Chairman to carry out his responsibilities effectively, each Task Group representative of a Service or an ASD must likewise be the single point of contact within his organization for all aspects of PW affairs, and all related activity must be coordinated with that representative. This arrangement will provide a clear, rapid channel for policy coordination, up to the Secretary of Defense if required.

Please insure that your PW Task Group representative is in a position to act as a single point of contact for your organization in all PW matters. He should be able to provide timely information on all related activity under your cognizance, as well as be able to insure that policy decisions in PW matters are promptly made known to all of those concerned in your organization.

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TO RUEADK/DSA
RUBIAA/SECNAV
RUEPAH/CSAF
UNIFIED AND SPECIFIED COMMANDS
BT

FROM ASD;PA

SUBJ: PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE -- EGRESS RECAP PLANNING

1. RECENT RELEASE OF SSG SEXTON BY VC AND OVNI'S RELEASE OF SEVERAL THOUSAND VC PRISONERS OF WAR AGAIN FOCUSED INCREASED PUBLIC ATTENTION ON DOD'S CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR HANDLING U.S. Prisoners of War. Media in Washington and elsewhere have requested detailed information on egress recap plans.

2. ALL ELEMENTS OF DOD SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT CURRENT POLICY PRECLUDES PUBLIC COMMENT ABOUT CONTINGENCY PLANS, FOLLOWING APPROVAL FOR RESPONSE TO QUERY: "DO DOD PLANS FOR REPATRIATION AND RETURN OF PRISONERS OF WAR BEAN BY THE NICKNAME "EGRESS RECAP" THESE? ARE CLASSIFIED CONTINGENCY PLANS WHICH ARE CONTINUALLY UNDER REVIEW AND WHICH ARE CHANGED AND UP-DATED WHEN NECESSARY. DOD POLICY PRECLUDES DISCUSSION OF ALL CONTINGENCY PLANS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IT IS IN BEST INTERESTS OF THE PRISONERS OF WAR TO DISCUSS THESE PLANS WHILE OUR MEN ARE STILL BEING HELD BY THE ENEMY, UNQUOTE.

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MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
DIRECTOR OF DEFENSE RESEARCH & ENGINEERING
ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
GENERAL COUNSEL
ASSISTANTS TO SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
DIRECTORS OF DEFENSE AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Prisoners of War/Missing in Action Matters; Coordination within the Department of Defense

Our experiences in connection with the release and repatriation of SSGT Sexton, USA, have served to emphasize the difficult, complex, wide-ranging, and time-sensitive problems we can anticipate in the repatriation of our prisoners of war and the resolution of the status of our missing men.

The best interests of the Defense Department, the men, and their families require the closest and most thorough coordination of every aspect of the conduct of prisoner of war/missing in action affairs. To this end, Dr. Roger Shields, of the office of the Assistant Secretary (ISA), has been tasked with overall Department of Defense coordinating responsibility for all PW/MIA matters. I ask that you direct all elements of your organization to coordinate with Dr. Shields, or his staff (PW Task Force), all actions related to prisoners of war or missing in action.

I consider this to be the only way in which we can satisfactorily handle this difficult problem, and I earnestly solicit your cooperation to this purpose.

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310

SEP 2 97

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS

SUBJECT: December 1970 PW List from NVN

On December 22, 1970, the North Vietnam Delegate General in Paris, Mai Van Bo, handed a list of 368 US servicemen who are or have been prisoners of war to representatives of Senators Kennedy and Fulbright. Cover letters signed by DRV President Ten Duong Thang (to Senator Kennedy) and by DRV Premier Pham Van Dong (to Senator Fulbright) were attached. Similar lists have been handed to five foreign governments which had discussed US PWs with the North Vietnamese. For your information, a copy of the list and a translation of one of the cover letters are enclosed. I believe, and State Department agrees, that this list constitutes an authentic North Vietnam Government statement of the status of the 368 men listed. However, insofar as it provides information on 368 men, the list is clearly inadequate in terms of compliance with the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention. Further, I do not accept it as a complete list of all the prisoners held in North Vietnam or as an accounting for other men who are not listed.

Regarding the 20 men reported to have died after capture, I agree with the views of your representatives on the DOD PW Policy Committee that we cannot accept this report as conclusive evidence of their death in the absence of positive confirmation such as would be the case if North Vietnam allowed the impartial inspection of prisoners at their places of confinement as required by the Geneva Convention. I agree that this report by North Vietnam cannot be used alone as the basis for a change of status for any of the men listed as dead. In this regard we will not relax our demand for more information about the circumstances surrounding the deaths of the 20 men so reported.