

January 23, 1956.

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DIARY

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General George (retired from the Air Force), assisted by a staff group, made a presentation on net evaluation of the damage that would be anticipated in the initial stages of nuclear war between Russia and the United States. The date chosen was July 1, 1956.

The report was in two parts, each based on a particular assumption as to a condition under which the war might develop. The first anticipated no warning until our DEW line was reached. The second anticipated a month of strategic warning, although without specific information as to when an attack would be launched by the Russians.



I.

Under the first case, the United States experienced practically total economic collapse, which could not be restored to any kind of operative conditions under six months to a year. Members of the Federal government were wiped out and a new government had to be improvised by the states. Casualties were enormous. It was calculated that something on the order of 65% of the population would require some kind of medical care, and in most instances, no opportunity whatsoever to get it.

The limiting factor on the damage inflicted was not so much our own defensive arrangements as the limitations on the Soviet stock pile of atomic weapons in the year '58.

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While these things were going on, the damage inflicted by us against the Soviets was roughly three times greater. The picture of total destruction of the areas of lethal fall-out, of serious fall-out and of at least some damage from fall-out, was appalling. Under such an attack, it would be completely impossible for Russia to carry a war on further.



For ourselves, it would be clear that there would be no shipping in and out of our country except some small or improvised vessels for many months. It would literally be a business of digging ourselves out of ashes, starting again.

II

Under the second case, it was concluded that the major effort of the Soviets would be made against our air-bases rather than against the United States alone. Nevertheless, there was no significant difference in the losses we would take.

It was concluded that there was little we could do during the month of warning in the way of dispersal of populations, of industries, or of perfecting defenses that would cut down losses. The only possible way of reducing these losses would be for us to take the initiative some time during the assumed month in which we had the warning of an

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attack and launch a surprise attack against the Soviets. This would be not only against our traditions, but it would appear to be impossible unless the Congress would meet in a highly secret session and vote a declaration of war which would be implemented before the session was terminated. It would appear to be impossible that any such thing would occur.



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