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September 5, 1980

Mr. Secretary:

The attached raises serious questions about the coherence of the Administration's internal understanding and public line on PD-59 and the countervailing strategy.

The basic Administration line--most authoritatively stated in Harold's Newport speech (which all agencies cleared)--is that PD-59 is "evolutionary" and "not new". Now Zbig tells the President and us that, on the contrary, PD-59 (and related steps) constitute the "third major revision of strategic doctrine since World War II", and that the Administration "should get public credit for this." Nor is this only a matter of conflict in general statements--it extends to specifics. For example, Harold and others cite Schlesinger's innovations in 1973-74 as part of the doctrinal roots for the "evolutionary" development this Administration carried along. Now Zbig says that, on the contrary, "PD-59 is fundamentally different" from the NSDM 242/Schlesinger ideas.

On the face of it, five conclusions are obvious:

(1) The President's senior advisors don't agree on the extent to which our current strategic doctrine departs from previous strategic doctrine. This is a question of substance and coherence of views within the Administration, going to the heart of what our current doctrine is, not just a squabble over history.

(2) If, as Zbig suggests, we try to get more "public credit" for a "major revision" in our strategic doctrine, this will directly and publicly contradict the Administration's public stance only recently authoritatively stated in Harold's Newport speech. You can judge for yourself the consequences of this at home as well as abroad.

(3) To argue that PD-59 and the countervailing strategy is a "major revision" is to make much more of it as a war-fighting doctrine than it is. There would be hell to pay with our allies if we went in this direction.

(4) It is clear you, Harold, and Zbig need to talk--including perhaps with the President--to make sure that there is a common understanding and line on our strategy and how we describe it to the public and to our allies. The Newport speech should remain authoritative.

(5) This is especially important because you and Harold will be testifying in open session on September 16 on PD-59.

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Zbig's memo is addressed to you and the Vice President and there is no evidence that he sent a copy to Harold, though the President notes that he should do so. It is possible Harold got a copy from Zbig with a private and different message, but I talked with Slocome (protect) and he knew nothing about the memorandum, and he generally would know if Harold had received it. When I briefly described it to Slocome, he was at least as disturbed as I about the potential for crossed signals and confusion in both the Administration's basic understanding and public line on PD-59.

I think you need to do the following:

(1) Call Harold, make the five points above, tell him that you intend to relay them to Zbig and invite him to weigh in with Zbig as well. You should suggest to both Harold and Zbig that the three of you meet to discuss this early next week.

(2) Based on your discussions, you want to decide whether to take this up with the President, either in a meeting involving all of you or in a memo from you in which you should raise your concerns. (I will prepare a memo for your consideration.)



Reg Bartholomew

cc: Mr. Christopher
Mr. Billings
Mr. Tarnoff
Mr. Lake

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