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July 8, 1959

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT
July 8, 1959

Others present: Secretary Herter
Mr. Allen Dulles
Mr. Bissell
General Goodpaster

The President said he had asked for the meeting because he wanted to hear Mr. Herter's views about a proposal for a reconnaissance flight. He expressed his own concern over the possibility of getting involved in something costly and harmful.



Mr. Herter said that the intelligence objective in his view outweighs the danger of getting trapped. He noted that a single operation was being proposed. He recognized that there is always the chance of loss of the plane, but our experience has been very good. He had been much interested in the idea of a flight straight through, but understood that this was not practicable. Mr. Dulles confirmed this, commenting that the proposed flight will enter through one country and leave through another.

It was agreed that, in case of protest, we would defend ourselves with an absolute disavowal and denial on the matter.

Mr. Bissell said that the Soviets have a fighter which could probably zoom to the altitude of this plane.

The President then said that Khrushchev seems almost to be looking for excuses to be belligerent. By doing nothing he can put us in a terrible hole in Berlin. Holding the cards he does, he could very readily say that such an event as this marks the end of serious negotiations. There remains in the President's mind the question whether we are getting to the point where we must decide if we are trying to prepare to fight a war, or to prevent one.

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After all the discussion, the President indicated that in view of the unanimous recommendation of the officials having the operating responsibility, he would assent to the operation being conducted.



A. J. Goodpaster
Brigadier General, USA



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