November 15, 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SENIOR NSC STAFF

SUBJECT: United States Courses of Action with Respect to Korea

REFERENCES: A. NSC 81/2
B. Record of Meeting of Senior NSC Staff, November 14, 1950, par. 3

The enclosed memorandum on the subject, submitted by the Senior NSC Member in accordance with the agreement at the Senior Staff Meeting on November 14, is transmitted herewith for consideration by the Senior Staff at its meeting scheduled for Thursday, November 16, 1950, at 2:30 p.m.

JAMES S. LAY, JR.
Executive Secretary
MEMORANDUM TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

November 15, 1950

The one and only source from which the United States and the United Nations need expect aggression either directly or indirectly is from Soviet Russia. Aggression is turned on and off at will by the Russian leaders. Therefore, the one dominant purpose to be borne in mind is to prepare to deal with aggression generated by the Russian leaders, and to attain the stature necessary to repel and defeat it directly.

The aggressive actions of Communist China are the indirect acts of Soviet Russia and should be so regarded. Neither the U. S. standing alone nor the U. S. in consort with its allies has the present military capability to repel and defeat direct Russian aggression; therefore, neither the U. S. alone nor in consort with its allies can afford to become involved in a general war or a continuing local war with Communist China in North Korea or elsewhere. It should now be recognized that the risk of global war has increased. The political, military, and economic actions of the U. S. in Korea should be designed therefore to assure against
involvement of either sort with the Chinese Communists.

The implications of the current situation in North Korea suggest these possible developments:

(1) A continuation of the "probing" actions north of the 38th Parallel. The objectives would be finally to destroy the war capabilities of the North Koreans, the restoration of order, the conduct of elections under U. N. auspices, and the withdrawal of all other than Korean forces. So long as Communist China continues to send "volunteers" into North Korea, equipped with arms and supported by aircraft provided by Soviet Russia, and unless the actions of the U. N. forces in the very near future result in overwhelming these hostile forces, the result will be a long-continued and sanguinary local war. It may be so costly that if continued for 12 months it would seriously jeopardize the ability of the U. S. to survive if war with Russia should follow at that point.

(2) The withdrawal of all U. N. forces to the 38th Parallel. Nothing in the current situation suggests that such a course would have any favorable bearing or effect upon the actions of the Communist Chinese. There is nothing to suggest that a position at the
38th Parallel would be substantially better than the present line in North Korea, or one at the Yalu River, except that U. N. aircraft would be in a position to attack air bases and supply lines behind the battlefront, whereas they cannot presently attack such aircraft bases and supply lines across the Manchurian border.

(3) A continued build-up of U. N. forces to whatever size is determined as necessary to defeat and eject the Chinese Communists from Korea. This would need contemplate the possibility of a commitment of all U. N. forces available, general war with China, and a grave probability of a general war with Russia from Korea. Growing commitments and involvements could well predict this course as inevitable unless now changed.

(4) A negotiated settlement of the Korean question through the U. N. It is possible that such a settlement would prove embarrassing at home and among our allies abroad. Even so, military necessity, the interest of the national security, and the opportunity to select the time and place most favorable to the U. S. and its allies if a general war with Russia should prove unavoidable may recommend its consideration.
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For NSC Staff Consideration Only

In the light of the circumstances, and accepting as a predicate
that (a) Soviet Russia is determined to retain a Communist govern-
ment in Korea and to that end is prepared to accept the risk of
global war if need be, and (b) that Communist China is but the in-
strument for the execution of the Soviet Russian policy, it is
recommended:

(1) That it be recognized that Soviet Russia is prepared
to accept the risk of global war at this time.

(2) That the implementation plans for increasing the
current military stature of the U. S. be accelerated
by every means available.

(3) That negotiations with our allies in NATO for the
purpose of effecting and implementing plans for the
defense of Western Europe be pressed with all vigor
and without delay.

(4) That concurrent alternative plans be developed against
the contingencies (a) that general war might develop
before NATO plans can be implemented; or (b) NATO plans
cannot be consummated for any other reason.

(5) That plans for the ultimate military strength of the
U. S. and its allies be reexamined as a matter of
urgency with the objective of testing anew their
adequacy, in terms of strength of forces, and in terms
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of time of activation, for the purpose of repelling and defeating direct Soviet aggression.

(6) That the U. S. proceed by every honorable means to effect a withdrawal of its forces from Korea at the earliest possible date.

/s/ Robert J. Smith

ROBERT J. SMITH
Vice Chairman