July 6, 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT: Suggested Action by the NSC for Consideration of the President in the Light of the Korean Situation

REFERENCE: NSC Action No. 315

The enclosed copy of a statement by the Chairman, National Security Resources Board, on the subject, read and discussed at the 60th Meeting of the National Security Council, is circulated herewith for the information of the Council members pursuant to NSC Action No. 315.

James C. Lay, Jr.
Executive Secretary

cc: The Secretary of the Treasury
MEMORANDUM

Suggested Action by the EOC for Consideration of
the President in the Light of the Korean Situation

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The invasion of South Korea came as a surprise and shock, not only to the people of the United States and the world, but also to the people around this table, whose job it is to keep the President correctly advised.

As we see it, there are further shocks which must be absorbed, the possible consequences of which it is our duty to present to the President.

First is the now unmasked great and growing combined military strength of Soviet Russia, and such of its willing and ambitious satellites as China and North Korea, a strength so great that it will be impossible for the United States to settle this dispute in this little country of Korea for some months; and if additional "outbreaks" of communist satellite countries force us into further attrition of our own forces, the ramifications of this incident might not be settled for many years.

Second is the serious current inadequacy of our own military forces, to the point where, even in order to settle this Korean incident, and without considering the millions of trained Chinese and Russian regulars which might be used against us in the Far East, we are already being forced to seriously weaken the defenses of the United States.

(As example, if the Russians re-impose the Berlin blockade there are not enough airplanes available to handle simultaneously another Berlin airlift, the Korean campaign, and the absolute minimum airlift necessary for the military defense of the United States. This is still true even if we commandeered the planes of all our airlines, which action would of course seriously cripple the domestic economy.)

Third is the fact, also presented by the Munitions Board less than two months ago, that there is no long-range strategic defense plan. Without such a plan neither the Munitions Board, the Resources Board, nor the State Department can operate with efficiency.
In other words, on any really accelerated basis, nobody knows what to make, or how much to make, or when, or why.

If a general war starts tomorrow, therefore, everybody will want everything yesterday; and the operating chaos resulting from such an approach to joint military-civilian planning would be further complicated by the knowledge that any time, from here out, this planning might have to also include recognition of the problems of major sabotage and devastating atomic attacks.

This situation is a far cry from the number of years we have always been favored with in the past when it became necessary to handle, with relative leisure, military and civilian mobilization.

Prior to now also there has been no requirement for any true civilian defense.

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Those are the facts. As we see it, the important point now is to first recognize these facts and then present to the President the actions we believe necessary to reduce this critical danger to a minimum as quickly as possible.

Now the situation developed is now secondary. What is primary is that we are in it; and what would now seem most important is our best considered advice to the President as to how to get out of it.

With this in mind, the Resources Board advises the National Security Council to recommend to the President action based on the two following premises:

(1) When they believe they are ready, the Soviet Union plans to attack the United States, because it is their often reiterated intention to rule the world.

(2) In the interim, the Soviet Union can be expected to harass the United States through such satellites as North Korea, communist China, and eastern Germany.

In the light of these two premises, we should start now to spend more money instead of less money for our national security; we should embark promptly on whatever program is necessary to support the position which, with our advice, the President has taken before the American people, and the world.
In order to properly support this proposed change in security planning, it is necessary that all agencies of the Government operate from the same long-range strategic defense plan.

We do not now have such a plan. It is essential as the foundation for military-civilian planning, and also for that information required by the State Department to conduct foreign affairs.

In 1945 the President directed that such a plan be formulated. Now, five years later, he has not yet received it.

The need for this plan is no theoretical matter. Answering the President's five-year-old directive may now be essential to our survival.

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In summary, Russian tanks and soldiers are now reported in South Korea, part of the 116,000 troops estimated as now fighting against us in that theater. In addition, close to the Korean border there are reports of a minimum estimated 100,000 Chinese communist regulars, plus another 60,000 Russian communist regulars; or a total force striking or ready to strike of at least 276,000.

In addition, we know that the military posture of the communist nations all over the world is steadily strengthening.

Against this number, and that posture, similar forces of the United States in that area now total 52,000 combat troops, plus 73,000 housekeeping personnel.

Of these combat troops, around 10,000 United States soldiers and some 25,000 regrouped South Koreans are now engaged with the enemy.

No airpower on either side is included.

The British refused to face up squarely to the menace of Nazism until the invasion of Poland. Some might feel as late as the invasion of Norway.

The President carefully avoided that mistake when he electrified the country and the world by sinking, with the support of the United Nations, the Republic of South Korea.
In order to carry out what is essential to maintain the
President’s position, should we not now recommend erring if
anywhere on the “too much” side instead of on the side of
“too little”?

Our national survival is now paramount over all other
considerations. Is it not possible that if we are to have
any chance of maintaining the freedoms we cherish above all
else, any delay in taking the action necessary to implement
the President’s policy may result in our being too late?