A REPORT

TO THE

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

by

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

on

U.S. COURSES OF ACTION
IN THE EVENT SOVIET FORCES ENTER KOREAN HOSTILITIES

July 25, 1950

WASHINGTON
NOTE BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
to the
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
on
U. S. COURSES OF ACTION IN THE EVENT
SOVIET FORCES ENTER AFGHAN HOSTILITIES
References: NSC Action No. 398-g
NSC 76

The enclosed comments on NSC 76, prepared by the Department of State and the National Security Resources Board Consultants, respectively, are submitted herewith for consideration by the National Security Council in connection with its consideration of NSC 76 as Item 2 on the Agenda of the Meeting scheduled for Thursday, July 25, 1950.

The National Security Council Consultants recommend that after discussion by the Council, NSC 76 together with the enclosures be referred to the Consultants for preparation of a report on the subject in the light of the discussion by the Council.

JAMES S. LAY, JR.
Executive Secretary

cc: The Secretary of the Treasury
1. The State Department agrees completely that full-scale mobilization should be initiated immediately it is determined that major Soviet combat units have entered Korean hostilities or have indicated their intention of engaging. The further decisions set forth in NSC 76 relate to the most basic national policies and should not be taken except at the highest level in the light of all relevant circumstances at the time.

2. The determination whether major Soviet combat units have entered Korean hostilities or have clearly indicated their intention of engaging in hostilities, and the decision to initiate the actions contemplated by NSC 76 should be made only by the President. It is difficult at this time to foresee clearly the various possible ways in which the engagement of Soviet combat units might be indicated or occur. It would be of the utmost importance that a course of action not be touched off by an incorrect evaluation of the actual situation which had arisen.

3. The phrases "prepare to minimize its commitment in Korea" and "prepare to execute war plans" appear to require clarification. The State Department assumes that the phrase "prepare to minimize its commitment" means that the evacuation of Korea would be prepared and undertaken. The State Department is not clear as to what, in addition to the initiation of full-scale mobilization, is contemplated by the phrase "prepare to execute war plans". In any event, it is the opinion of the State Department that the actual decision should be made by the President in the light of all the circumstances at the time. It is the State Department's opinion that, prior to the actual execution of war plans, careful consideration should be given to the following points, among others:

   b. The effect on our relations with our principal allies. The Atlantic Pact does not by its terms cover hostilities breaking out in Korea.
   c. The advisability of the immediate execution of war plans under the particular state of facts which had occurred. In this connection it would be important to determine:

      (1) Whether the nature of the commitment of Soviet forces had been such as to secure the clear support of world opinion for the execution of war plans by us.
(2) What would be the effect upon our allies, in particular our European allies, of an immediate generalization of hostilities.

(3) Whether the country was sufficiently mobilized to carry out its war plans with maximum effectiveness in the light not only of the immediate military situation but also of the total campaign to be waged, or whether additional time for mobilization would improve the prospects of ultimate victory.

d. The type of action to be taken by the Congress before the initiation of war plans. A decision as to what action the Congress should take would have to be made by the President.
1. The NSRB recommends that United States action in the event Soviet forces enter the Korean hostilities be considered on the basis that such a situation is most likely to occur within the next six months and, therefore, that any policy dealing with the situation be related to our military forces-in-being at the present time and as they may be developed within the next six months.

2. The overt entry of major Soviet forces into the Korean hostilities might occur under two sets of circumstances. It could occur either conjunctive with other Soviet aggression elsewhere in the world, or it could occur in isolated form in Korea.

3. If the Soviets overtly enter the Korean fighting on a major scale in conjunction with Communist aggression elsewhere in the world, United States action should be one of participation in UN retaliation against Soviet Russia to the limit of war plans for United States forces-in-being at the time.

4. If overt Soviet action should be confined to the Korean theater, certain alternatives should be considered, and action directed by the President in light of circumstances prevailing at the time. Since the majority of our deployable forces-in-being are already and will be for the next few months committed to the Korean fighting, these alternatives in this instance would seem to be restricted to two general courses of action:

   a. Comparatively immediate retaliation against the Soviet Union, subsequent to Presidential direction and in execution of United States war plans for all of such forces as we have in-being at the time. This retaliation to be made, if possible, in behalf of the United Nations, and in conjunction with the initiation of full-scale mobilization of the United States.

   b. Attempt to confine the United States-Soviet combat to the Korean theater as long as possible in order to gain time to build further material strength and gain additional international support against the latest time when action as suggested in paragraph 4 becomes unavoidable.

5. In any event, it is recommended that every immediate and continuing effort be made to recruit at least token participation by other nations on behalf of South Korea in order that, should an overt Soviet action eventually occur in Korea, its aggressive effect would be directly against the greatest possible number of UN member nations.