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CP - 56-45

Document No. 2

March 2, 1956

The White House

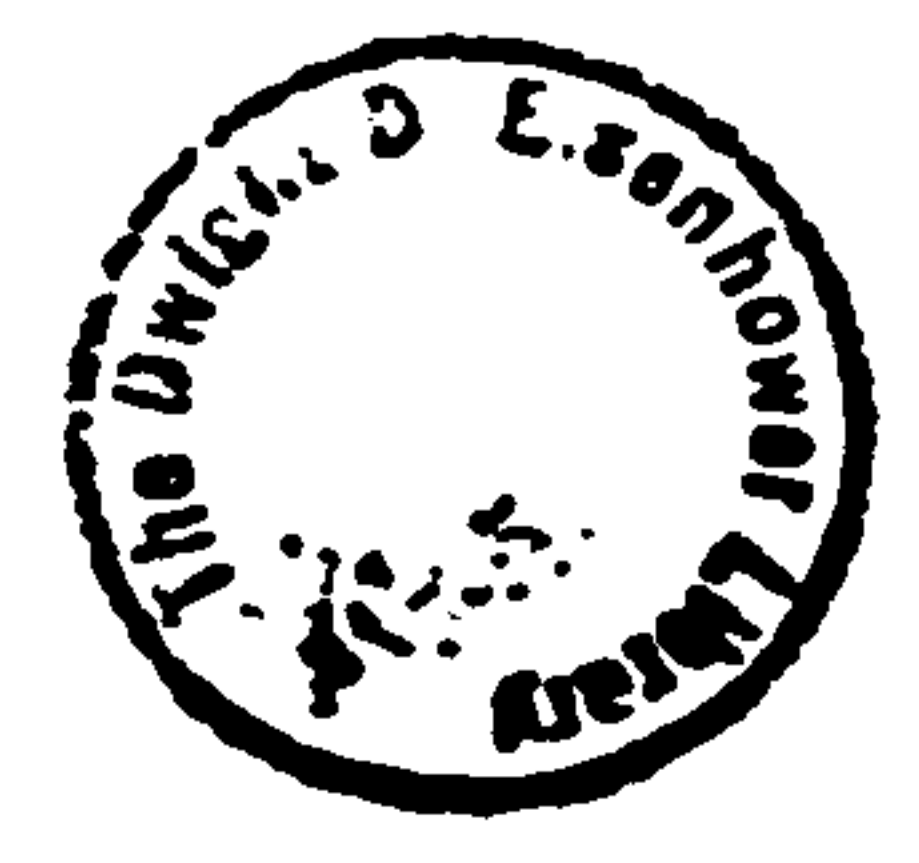
Washington

THE CABINET

Emergency Action Papers

The attached approved paper is circulated for action by each of the Cabinet Departments and by other Agencies affected, under the coordination of the Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization and with the assistance, as necessary, of the President's Special Counsel.

This paper, and the principles and procedures set forth in it, were approved at the Cabinet Meeting of March 2, 1956 (RA - 56-46, Item 3).



Maxwell M. Rabb
Secretary to the Cabinet

Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as
President of the United States,
1953-55 (Ann Whitman File)

Box 6
Cabinet mtg of 3/2/56

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MR 80-239 #2

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Emergency Action Papers

Background

Operation Alert 1955 demonstrated the requirement for having immediately available to the President certain documents which have been prepared prior to the emergency in anticipation of need at that time. Obviously, prompt execution of certain Emergency Actions by the President depends on their having been previously made ready.

The Office of Defense Mobilization has been collecting and screening proposed Emergency Action Papers and recently has developed screening procedures with the Bureau of the Budget. Nevertheless, duplication and confusion exist, and under conditions of emergency there would be question as to the availability of these papers to the President.

Recommendation:

In order to expedite and coordinate preparation of these Action Papers, the following basic principles and procedures are proposed; observance by all interested and cognizant departments of the Government should insure the availability of these papers to the President in the time of need:

Principles:

1. Nothing herein shall be construed as in any manner altering departmental and agency responsibility to insure the presentation of these Actions to the President in time of emergency.
2. Presidential Emergency Actions are defined as matters of supreme national importance requiring immediate action or execution by the President in an emergency involving the national security. Other actions, regardless of legal requirement therefor, which do not meet this definition are excluded, but a summary list thereof shall be maintained.
3. Each Presidential Emergency Action shall insofar as practicable be reduced to the smallest and most critical denominator, so that selection of the course of action desired is the only action necessary. All courses of action available shall be stated.
4. Implementation of Presidential action should not require physical transmittal of documents or physical movement of individuals.
5. Implementation shall be pre-arranged by the responsible agencies in accordance with the alternative courses available. The President's power of decision shall not be abridged.



6. Regardless of the sensitivity involved, Emergency Action Papers upon which the President may be required or expected to act under emergency conditions must be deposited with him in advance so that they will be familiar and available to him in such emergency. Lists summarizing proposed Presidential actions which do not meet the definitions of Presidential Emergency Actions shall be prepared by the respective Departments and Agencies and likewise deposited with him.

Procedures:

1. The responsibility for initiating, expediting, and coordinating the preparation of Emergency Action Papers will rest with the Director of Defense Mobilization. Submission to the White House will be by ODM through normal channels. Each Emergency Action Paper when received at the White House should represent completed staff work, with all necessary concurrences and with responsibilities for implementation clearly stated.
2. In the case of those Action Papers which are of such an extremely sensitive nature that special arrangements must be made, the official responsible therefor should consult with the President's Special Counsel.

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3. Inclusion of a proposed emergency action paper among the Presidential Emergency Action Papers shall be only at the specific direction of the President.
4. Presidential Emergency Action Papers shall be photographically reproduced and distributed, with adequate safeguards, to insure availability of copies under emergency circumstances. Special arrangements will be made with regard to those documents referred to in paragraph 2 above.
5. Responsible Departments and Agencies shall semiannually review each Emergency Action Paper and notify the President's Special Counsel of the status thereof. Notation of dates of review shall be placed on each Paper. If change in any Paper appears necessary it shall be treated as a new paper and the entire above procedures for establishment of same shall be repeated.
6. In time of emergency, the President's action on any Emergency Action Paper shall be made known by all available means to the responsible agencies using code names or any other special procedures specified. This will constitute authority for the agency involved to take the action indicated.



[Defense] Emergency Action Papers. Transmittal Memorandum, Maxwell [Defense] Emergency Action Papers. Transmittal Memorandum, Maxwell Encl.: Same title [Operation Alert 1955 demonstrated the need for having certain documents prepared in advance for the President. Guidelines are forwarded by which the agencies will decide which actions are of "supreme national importance" and prepare, copy, and distribute the necessary paperwork]. Paper, CP-56-45. 2 p. TOP SECRET. Declassified Dec. 12, 1980. Eisenhower Library, Papers as Pres. of the US, 1953-61 (Ann Whitman File), Cabinet Series, Box 6, Cabinet Meeting of Mar. 2, 1956. White House, 2 Mar. 1956. U.S. Declassified Documents Online, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349443099/USDD?u=new64731&sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=72d41ebf&pg=1. Accessed 8 Nov. 2021.