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**Your agency has been determined to be the  
Agency of primary interest.**

**Please review for your agency's equities and  
obtain any necessary concurrences.**


MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT  
WASHINGTONTOP SECRET/EYES ONLY

Memo No. 347-79

April 26, 1979

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

FROM: Denis Clift 

SUBJECT: Update of Presidential Emergency Action Documents (PEADs)

Some weeks ago we staffed a memorandum for your signature to Hugh Carter and Zbig thanking them for having advised you of the interim update of various PEADs (Tab A). We have since learned that Hugh Carter, in his capacity as head of the President's official household, is concerned that the entire PEADs series is obsolete given the total devastation which could be expected from a thermonuclear attack on the US -- and the need for an updated approach to reconstituting order and organization at the local, state and federal levels of the Government. Hugh has talked to the President about this, and this has resulted in the President's comment on one of Hugh's memoranda asking you to read the memorandum (Tab B) and to discuss it with Hugh and Zbig.

The problem of updating the PEADs -- part of the larger problem of how best to conduct our affairs as a government in the event of a thermonuclear attack -- is incredibly complex. Hugh, it should be noted, is under continuing pressure from the military on issues relating to the SIOP and the White House Emergency Plan (WHEP) to agree to modifications which Defense believes would further improve the survivability of the national command authority. In this field, Defense has a number of suggestions, including some which do not lend themselves to peacetime implementation, such as quartering the President's helicopter on the White House grounds at all times.

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Classified by Source  
Review

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A further problem with updating the PEADs is the fact that the civilian side of the government is not fully manned and effective at present in this field. Logically, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should take the lead in an interagency update of the PEADs. At present, FEMA has only an acting director, former Seattle Fire Chief Gordon Vickery (Tab C). Against this background, Zbig and his NSC staff have been trying to run an interagency update tasking the Director of the Federal Preparedness Agency to lead the effort (Tab D). FPA has simply not been up to the challenge.

Hugh Carter continues to be frustrated because of the lack of effective action. He believes that:

- (1) Zbig and the NSC should give higher priority and attention to the PEAD update effort, and
- (2) a full-time FEMA Director with savvy and political clout should be appointed to take the lead for the NSC in the PEAD update.

I believe it is fair to say that Hugh asked the President to make the comment that he did at Tab B so that you would read yourself into the issue and, in turn, ask Zbig to focus more attention on the problem.

#### COMMENT

I believe a capable, full-time FEMA director will be essential if we are to make progress on the PEADs. I know you have had occasion to discuss the FEMA appointment. I believe the Administration should attach higher priority to finding a good person to formally fill this job.

Secondly, I recommend that you invite Zbig and Hugh to your office noting the President's request of you to discuss the issue with them and asking them for a status report.

Your purpose in such an informal discussion would be to ask Zbig to get back to you with recommendations on how the PEAD update can be expedited so as to meet the President's request.

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TOP SECRET/EYES ONLY

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Finally, I do not think this is an area where blame should be attributed to any individual or agency. The questions that have to be answered are extraordinarily difficult. I believe Hugh is right in his belief that the problem requires priority attention.

\* \* \*

RECOMMENDATION

That you schedule a meeting with Zbig and Hugh Carter to receive a status report on the PEADs update and to invite their recommendations on steps to expedite the update.

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