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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

13 January 2015

Mr. John Greenewald



Reference: F-2015-00267

Dear Mr. Greenewald:

This is a final response to your 4 November 2014 Freedom of Information Act request for records on *Project 908 and the National Program Office*. You amended your request on 28 December 2014 by advising us to limit our search to records that have been previously released.

With respect to previously released records on Project 908, we conducted a search of our previously released database but did not locate any records responsive to your request. Although our searches were reasonably calculated to uncover all relevant documents, and it is highly unlikely that repeating those searches would change the result, you nevertheless have the legal right to appeal the finding of no records responsive to your request. As the Acting CIA Information and Privacy Coordinator, I am the CIA official responsible for this determination. You have the right to appeal this response to the Agency Release Panel, in my care, within 45 days from the date of this letter. Please include the basis of your appeal.

With respect to previously records on the National Program Office, we conducted a search of our previously released database and located the enclosed four documents, totaling six pages, which we believe to be responsive to your request. Please be advised that these documents were released as part of another release program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JG" followed by a horizontal line.

John Giuffrida

Acting Information and Privacy Coordinator

Enclosures

1351/2

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Planning Staff

STAT

The DDA has no problems with the attached proposed draft.

EO/DDA

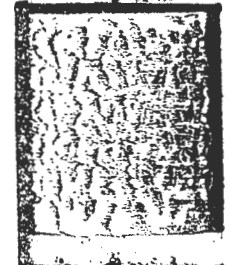
Att:  
DDA 83-1351/2

Date 5 Oct 83

FORM 101 USE PREVIOUS EDITIONS



90-1



**SECRET**

**DRAFT**

Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D.C. 20505

Planning Staff

NOTE FOR: DDCI  
Executive Director

Attached is a letter for DDCI signature responding to a request for a MEDUSA Project Office Representative from the Director, Defense Communications Agency.

A representative from the Office of Communications is recommended as most National Program Office activities relate directly to communications systems issues.

It is not clear, at this time, that full-time representation is either needed or asked for, so designation of a point of contact is an appropriate first step.

This has DDA and D/Commo concurrence.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D.C. 20505

3 October 1983

Planning Staff

NOTE FOR: Deputy Director for Administration  
Director of Communications

*Harvey*  
Attached for your review is a draft letter to Director, Defense Communications Agency, from the DDCI. Also attached is a note to the Executive Director and DDCI about the letter. [redacted] discussed this matter informally with Bill. They agreed that a full-time representative to help out with the Crisis Information and Management System implementation did not seem warranted now. If you concur with the wording, I will forward the letter to the DDCI for his signature.

[redacted]

Attachments

DCI  
EXEC  
REG

**SECRET**

Executive Registry  
83-2730/2

DD/A Registry  
83-1387/2

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SECRET  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D.C. 20505

83-2730/2

3 October 1983

Planning Staff

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25X1



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Distribution:

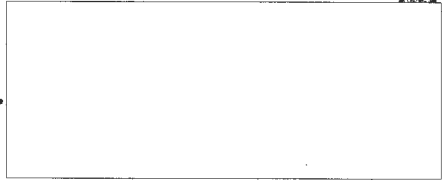
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SECRET



~~SECRET~~  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D.C. 20505

Planning Staff

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25X1



~~SECRET~~

# Nuclear War Plan in 80's Skirted the Constitution

By ERIC SCHMITT  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17 — Acting outside the Constitution in the early 1980's, a secret Federal agency established a line of succession to the Presidency to assure continued government in the event of a devastating nuclear attack, current and former United States officials said today.

The officials reached today refused to discuss details of the plan, the existence of which was disclosed in a television program tonight on the Cable News Network. The CNN report said that if all 17 legal successors to the President were incapacitated, non-elected officials would assume office in extreme emergencies.

Among Government officials at the time who were designated to serve as successors in an expanded list, the CNN report said, were Howard H. Baker Jr., the former Senate Republican leader who later became White House chief of staff; a former Director of Central Intelligence, Richard Helms; the United Nations ambassador, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, and a former Defense Secretary, James R. Schlesinger.

### 'Bringing in People'

In a brief telephone interview, Mr. Helms refused to discuss the classified program or his involvement, but said he was not familiar with "bringing in people from outside of government" to serve as Presidential successors.

The secret agency, the Federal Program Office, was created by President Ronald Reagan in 1982 to expand the list of successors and a network of bunkers, aircraft and mobile command centers to insure that the Government continued to function in a nuclear war and afterward. Oliver L. North, then a Marine lieutenant colonel and an aide on the National Security Council, was a central figure in establishing the secret program, CNN said.

The issue of maintaining civilian, constitutional government during and after a nuclear attack has been a high priority for at least the last three Administrations, although it was always recognized as a remote possibility. The recent thaw in East-West tensions has made such a strike more unlikely. Moreover many questions about the plan's operation remained unanswered tonight by the broadcast and by Administration officials, who were reluctant to discuss the classified program.

In the late 1970's, President Jimmy Carter directed Zbigniew Brzezinski, his national security adviser, to draw up a list of people to be evacuated from the White House in the event of an imminent nuclear strike. Those officials were then to fan out across the country on airborne command posts and mobile command centers.

President Reagan inherited the framework of the plan and authorized its expansion. That expansion included

creation of the National Program Office, which is run by the Vice President, CNN reported.

"It's a very elaborate plan to protect the leaders of Government when the country is under attack," Representative Lee H. Hamilton, Democrat of Indiana, said today. "You put them in, air and get them to hideaway locations, with special communication systems so the Government can function."

Mr. Hamilton, who was chairman of the House Intelligence Committee in 1985 and 1986, said he was not familiar with any extra-Constitutional succession provisions. The status of such a plan was unclear tonight.

The CNN report also said the United States had spent more than \$8 billion on the National Program Office since 1982, much of the money on advanced communications equipment designed to survive a nuclear blast. The communications systems were technically flawed, however, and prevented the State Department, Defense Department, Central Intelligence Agency and Federal Emergency Management Agency from being able to "talk to each other," according to CNN.

The law on Presidential succession makes the order: the Vice President, Speaker of the House, President pro tem of the Senate and the 14 Cabinet officers in order of the creation of their posts, beginning with the Secretaries of State, Treasury and Defense and succeeding to the newest department, Veterans Affairs.

Administration officials today refused to discuss the secret succession plan or the National Program Office.

A leading constitutional scholar who appeared on the CNN broadcast, Prof. William Van Alstyne of Duke University, said today that the very secrecy surrounding the plan could undermine its credibility if it ever had to be put into effect. Who, he asked, would believe an obscure figure claiming to be President under a top-secret plan no one had ever heard of?

The Washington Post \_\_\_\_\_  
The New York Times A13  
The Washington Times \_\_\_\_\_  
The Wall Street Journal \_\_\_\_\_  
The Christian Science Monitor \_\_\_\_\_  
New York Daily News \_\_\_\_\_  
USA Today \_\_\_\_\_  
The Chicago Tribune \_\_\_\_\_

Date 18 Nov 1991



The Washington Post \_\_\_\_\_  
 The New York Times \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Washington Times \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Wall Street Journal \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Christian Science Monitor \_\_\_\_\_  
 New York Daily News \_\_\_\_\_  
 USA Today \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Chicago Tribune \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date 18 NOV 1991

**Secret Agency Devises Plan for Post-Attack Government**  
 WASHINGTON (AP) - A super-secret agency run by the White House devised an alternative plan of presidential succession if a nuclear attack eliminated the national leadership, according to a televised report.

In a one-hour telecast Sunday night, CNN's Special Assignment team said the National Program Office, or NPO, was authorized in a secret 1982 directive issued by President Reagan and remains barely known.

It said George Bush, then vice president, was placed in charge of the office, and that White House national security aide Oliver L. North was instrumental in setting up the covert project, which he discussed briefly in his recently published book, "Under Fire."

The NPO's mission is make sure that a civilian leadership remains in place after a nuclear attack. If all 17 officials in the constitutional line of succession to the president are incapacitated, CNN said, the plan provides for others - both elected and non-elected officials, to take over.

It said that among those in the alternative succession pool at one time were former White House chief of staff Howard Baker, former CIA Director Richard Helms, former U.N. Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick and former Energy Secretary James Schlesinger.

The office devised a network of bunkers and mobile shelters for use by the top leadership in the event of attack, spending \$8 billion on the Presidential Support System that included a nuclear-resistant communications system, CNN said. It said that as recently as last winter, officials could not get the system to work.

The House Armed Services Committee and the Army began investigating contract irregularities in the NPO in 1987, CNN said. Tom Golden, then with NPO, told the network that after cooperating with investigators, he himself became the subject of four separate probes, which the committee and the Army determined was retaliation.