

11. National Security Decision Memorandum 2¹

Washington, January 20, 1969.

TO

The Vice President

The Secretary of State

The Secretary of Defense

The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

The Director of Central Intelligence

The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Director of the US Information Agency

The Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness

¹ Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Subject Files, Box 363, National Security Decision Memoranda, NSDM 2. Confidential. A January 13 memorandum from Pedersen to Rogers proposing revisions in NSDMs 2 and 3, together with typed drafts of the NSDMs with handwritten revisions, are *ibid.*, RG 59, Pedersen Files: Lot 75 D 229, NSC.

SUBJECT

Reorganization of the National Security Council System

To assist me in carrying out my responsibilities for the conduct of national security affairs, I hereby direct that the National Security Council system be reorganized as follows:

A. The National Security Council (NSC)

The functions, membership and responsibilities of the National Security Council shall be as set forth in the National Security Act of 1947, as amended.

The National Security Council shall be the² principal forum for consideration of policy issues requiring Presidential determination. The nature of the issues to be considered may range from current crises and immediate operational problems to middle and long-range planning.

The Council shall meet regularly, and discussion will—except in unusual circumstances—be limited to agenda subjects.³ The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, at my direction and in consultation with the Secretaries of State and Defense, shall be responsible for determining the agenda and ensuring that the necessary papers are prepared. Other members of the NSC may propose items for inclusion on the agenda. The Assistant to the President shall be assisted by a National Security Council Staff, as provided by law.

B. The National Security Council Review Group

An NSC Review Group is hereby established to examine papers prior to their submission to the NSC. These papers may be received from NSC Interdepartmental Groups,⁴ from NSC Ad Hoc Groups,⁵ or from Departments (at their discretion).

The role of the Review Group shall be to review papers to be discussed by the NSC to assure that: 1) the issue under consideration is worthy of NSC attention; 2) all realistic alternatives are presented; 3) the facts, including cost implications, and all department and agency views are fairly and adequately set out. The Review Group shall also be empowered to assign action to the NSC Interdepartmental Groups or NSC Ad Hoc Groups, as appropriate.

² NSDM 2 as approved by Nixon on January 11 (see Document 8) stated that the NSC shall be “a” principal forum, not “the” principal forum.

³ The Director of Central Intelligence will brief the NSC on each agenda item prior to its consideration. [Footnote in the source text.]

⁴ Discussed below. [Footnote in the source text.]

⁵ Discussed below. [Footnote in the source text.]

The membership of the Review Group shall include:⁶

- The Ambassador to the President for National Security Affairs (Chairman);
- The representative of the Secretary of State;
- The representative of the Secretary of Defense;
- The representative of the Director of Central Intelligence;
- The representative of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Depending on the issue under consideration, other agencies shall be represented at the discretion of the Chairman.

C. The National Security Council Under Secretaries Committee

The NSC Under Secretaries Committee shall consider:

1. Issues which are referred to it by the NSC Review Group.
2. Matters pertaining to interdepartmental activities of the US Government overseas:

—which are of an operational nature⁷ (in distinction to matters involving a substantial security policy question); *and*

—on which NSC Interdepartmental Groups have been unable to reach agreement, or which are of a broader nature than is suitable to any such groups; *and*

—which do not require consideration at Presidential or NSC level; *and*

—which are then referred to it by the Secretary of State.

The results of NSC Under Secretaries Committee consideration of the matters listed in 2. above, will be submitted to the Secretary of State.

3. Other operational matters referred to it jointly by the Under Secretary of State and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

The membership of the Under Secretaries Committee shall include:

- The Under Secretary of State (Chairman);
- The Deputy Secretary of Defense;
- The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs;
- The Director of Central Intelligence;
- The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Depending on the issue under consideration, other agencies shall be represented at the discretion of the Chairman.

⁶ NSDM 2 as approved by Nixon on January 11 (see Document 8) did not include the words “The representative of” for any members.

⁷ Determination shall be made jointly by the Secretary of State and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. [Footnote in the source text.]

D. National Security Council Interdepartmental Groups

Existing Interdepartmental Regional Groups and the existing Political-Military Interdepartmental Group, chaired by the appropriate Assistant Secretary of State, are hereby reconstituted as part of the National Security Council structure. The Interdepartmental Groups shall perform the following functions: 1) discussion and decision on interdepartmental issues which can be settled at the Assistant Secretary level, including issues arising out of the implementation of NSC decisions; 2) preparation of policy papers for consideration by the NSC; 3) preparation of contingency papers on potential crisis areas for review by the NSC.

The membership of the interdepartmental regional groups shall include the agencies represented on the NSC Review Group. Depending on the issue under consideration, other agencies shall be represented at the discretion of the Chairman.⁸

E. National Security Council Ad Hoc Groups

When appropriate, I intend to appoint NSC Ad Hoc Groups to deal with particular problems, including those which transcend regional boundaries.

The operational responsibility or authority of a Secretary over personnel from his Department serving on interdepartmental committees—including the authority to give necessary guidance to his representatives in the performance of interdepartmental group duties—is not limited by this NSDM. Nor does this NSDM limit the authority and responsibility of the Secretary of State for those interdepartmental matters assigned to him by NSDM 3.⁹

Copies of reports of the interdepartmental groups shall be transmitted to the heads of Departments and Agencies simultaneously with their submission to the NSC Review Group.

NSAM 341 is hereby rescinded.¹⁰

Richard Nixon

⁸ Committee Data Sheets, prepared annually for each IG, which provide information on membership and meeting frequency, are in the National Archives, RG 59, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Management, Interagency Committee Files: Lot 76 D 185, Committee Lists.

⁹ Document 12.

¹⁰ See Document 3 and footnote 3 thereto.