

31. National Security Decision Memorandum 8¹

Washington, March 21, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Crisis Anticipation and Management

The President has directed that increased emphasis be placed on the anticipation of potential crisis situations that may affect the interests of the United States. The National Security Council structure provides a means for the orderly review of world situations and of our policies, the formulation of possible courses of action to deal with contingency situations and the initiation of actions, when appropriate, to remedy deteriorating situations.

The President has directed that the National Security Council Interdepartmental Groups shall prepare contingency studies on potential crisis areas for review by the NSC. The studies should include a careful orchestration of political and military actions. It is recognized that not all contingencies can be anticipated and that the specifics of a particular anticipated contingency cannot be accurately predicted. Nevertheless, there are important advantages which might accrue from contingency planning, among which are:

- a clearer assessment of U.S. interests and possible need for U.S. action in a particular situation;
- an increased likelihood that U.S. actions taken will be timely and will minimize risks or losses;
- the possible discovery of actions which might resolve or head off a crisis; and
- the familiarization of key officials with factual material and alternative courses of action in event of a crisis.

The Review Group shall issue instructions for contingency planning and review contingency studies prepared in the Interdepartmental Groups. The Review Group shall forward contingency studies to

¹ Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H-209, National Security Decision Memoranda, NSDM 8. Confidential. Copies were sent to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of the U.S. Information Agency. Documentation on the implementation of NSDM 8 is *ibid.*, and in *ibid.*, RG 59, S/S–NSDM Files: Lot 83 D 305, NSDM 8. Box H-209, National Security Decision Memoranda, NSDM 8. Confidential.

the Under Secretaries Committee. When the study is to be submitted to the National Security Council, the Under Secretaries Committee will comment in light of its responsibilities for crisis management.

The Chairman of the Interdepartmental Groups shall have coordinating authority for the management of crises in their areas when these occur, subject to additional policy and operational guidance provided by higher authority.

The Under Secretaries Committee shall determine the organization and procedures for crisis management.

Henry A. Kissinger