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FEB 26 1948

SUBJECT: The United States Air Force and Atomic Warfare

TO: Commanding General
Strategic Air Command
Andrews Field
Washington 20, D.C.

1. I intend in this letter to make known to you my convictions on the meaning of atomic warfare to the United States Air Force; in consequence of my convictions, I intend further in this letter to state a course of action.

2. The National security hinges on the capability of the United States Air Force to wage sustained atomic warfare. Only through the decisive use of atomic weapons can the Armed Forces of the United States hope to defeat the USSR. Only the United States Air Force is capable of reaching the targets, the destruction of which can bring decision.

3. All of us must realize that atomic weapons have given to the United States Air Force a capability in comparison with the capabilities of the conventional weapons of World War Two out of all proportion to the cost in men, materiel and money. There is much loose reference to the atomic bomb as an expensive weapon. The fact is that, properly employed and well aimed, the atomic bomb is a cheap weapon; one well placed bomb can destroy almost any individual target in the world. With this in mind, you will understand the gravity of our obligation, the necessity to get ready at once for the eventuality of atomic warfare, both offensive and defensive.

4. In the past, security regulations have operated to hinder Air Force participation in the Atomic Energy Program. Now, however, the machinery for obtaining information is established and working. All interested agencies of the Air Force must use that machinery. We are not using it effectively now.

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5. I therefore direct that all commands and all staff agencies grant the highest priority to preparation for sustained atomic warfare, offensive and defensive, and further that we become capable of waging effective atomic warfare as soon as is humanly possible.

CARL SPAATZ
Chief of Staff, United States Air Force

Originals sent to:

Comptroller

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