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April 10, 1997



ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR SAMUEL BERGER
KITTY HIGGINS
JACK GIBBONS
MELANNE VERVEER

THROUGH: PAUL BUSICK *PED*

FROM: FRED ROSA *FR*

SUBJECT: Proposal to Extend the NSC Gulf War Illnesses
Directorate Through May 1998

This memorandum forwards a proposed decision memorandum (Tab I) for the Chief of Staff recommending extension of the Gulf War Illnesses directorate at the National Security Council through May 1998. This temporary directorate was established in November 1996 for a six-month period and is currently slated to stand down in early May 1997.

The decision memorandum identifies and assesses a full range of options (see Tab A), including reassigning the Gulf War illnesses problem to another NSC directorate or transferring this responsibility to another White House entity. However, the consensus view among all of the various staffs with an interest in this matter is that extending the existing NSC directorate through May 1998 is the best course.

Concurrence by: *PED?* Bob Bell; *PED* Tony Blinken; *PED* Bill Danvers; David Johnson; *PED* Alan Kreczko; *PED* Randy Beers *PED*

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign and forward the attached decision memorandum to the Chief of Staff.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Attachment
Tab I Decision Memorandum

April 10, 1997

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR ERSKINE BOWLES

FROM: SAMUEL BERGER
KITTY HIGGINS
JACK GIBBONS
MELANNE VERVEER

SUBJECT: Proposal to Extend the NSC Gulf War Illnesses
(GWI) Directorate Through May 1998

Issue

How should the EOP continue monitoring and coordinating federal agency activities related to the GWI problem after the six-month period initially established for the NSC/GWI directorate?

Background

NSC/GWI was established in November 1996 to provide a single EOP focal point for monitoring and coordinating federal agency activities related to the GWI problem, with instructions to keep all of us fully informed on developments. The original plan envisioned the Presidential Advisory Committee (PAC) on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses reporting out in late December 1996 and then disbanding, with NSC/GWI orchestrating the PAC *Final Report* rollout and ensuring that the involved agencies moved quickly to implement the PAC recommendations. This was projected as a six-month undertaking. Two White House personnel slots were provided to NSC (to terminate on May 4, 1997) and an outside agency agreed to lend a no-cost support person.

Several significant events have intervened. First, the PAC recommended that, "[F]urther investigation... should be conducted by a group independent of DOD.... Full public accountability is critical." In response, we recommended, and in January 1997 the President directed, extension of the PAC through November 1997 to oversee DOD investigative activities. These intervening events, coupled with the increasing volume of investigative outputs and sustained media interest, have extended the time horizon required for NSC/GWI to accomplish its mission.

Outlook

Continuing White House involvement (likely including POTUS) is clearly inevitable given the importance and volatility of the issues, the high-profile White House commitment to Gulf War veterans, and current indications of continued media and Hill interest. Moreover, the critical DOD/VA/HHS/CIA interagency working relationships, as well as DOD's and CIA's interface with the PAC, will clearly need constant monitoring and coordination for the foreseeable future.

Transition Options

The full range of options includes: (1) extend NSC/GWI for a specified period; (2) stand down NSC/GWI and provide a full-time action officer for GWI issues in another directorate; (3) stand down NSC/GWI and shift primary responsibility for GWI issues to another EOP entity; or (4) stand down NSC/GWI and pass the baton to DOD, VA or an interagency coordinating body. An overview of pros and cons for each option is set forth at Tab A.

Our review of these basic options in the light of projected developments (see timeline at Tab B) leads us to conclude that the best option is to extend NSC/GWI for one year through May 1998. As examples, the Khamisiyah plume modeling work will not conclude until late this summer at the earliest, six different executive branch investigative or oversight activities are only just beginning to report out their results, many of the key health studies will not conclude until 1998, and the President's detailed Action Plan in response to the PAC's *Final Report* recommendations will take months to implement.

An extension will best enable the White House to: ensure that the senior leaderships at involved agencies fully implement the PAC recommendations; orchestrate the rollout of the PAC *Supplemental Final Report*; coordinate the response to any additional PAC recommendations; monitor all DOD/HHS/VA/CIA activities, including the ongoing investigations, to keep White House principals fully informed; and avoid any perception that POTUS is not following through on his commitment to veterans.

Recommendation

That you approve extension of NSC/GWI through May 1998, with two personnel slots as well as appropriate support and office space.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Attachments

Tab A Overview of Transition Options

Tab B Projected Gulf War Illnesses Timeline

ASSESSMENT OF NSC/GWI TRANSITION OPTIONS

<u>OPTION</u>	<u>PROS</u>	<u>CONS</u>
1. Retain NSC/GWI	* Continues current level of EOP attention * Retains existing means of focusing agency leaderships on GWI problem * Provides for management of PAC needs * Best facilitates interagency coordination * Preserves tangible symbol of importance of GWI problem to POTUS/FLOTUS	* Requires extension of two EOP slots * Requires appropriate allocation of space * Requires extension of other agency administrative support (or an alternative) * Requires \$30K for office space rental plus cost to SCIF one of two offices
2. Retain NSC action officer only	* Provides dedicated EOP focus * Provides management of PAC needs at reduced level * Frees up 1 EOP slot	* Requires extension of 1 EOP slot * Requires that an NSC senior director assume significant additional workload * Increases risk of poor interagency coordination * Reduces likelihood of senior level agency attention * Introduces possibility of perception of declining POTUS/FLOTUS interest
3. Shift responsibility within EOP	* May free up 1 or 2 EOP slots	* Reintroduces steep learning curve for new staff * Likely still requires EOP slot(s)/space allocation * Generate possible confusion about EOP focus on GWI problem * Requires identification of another EOP entity (when no more logical choice is apparent)
4. Transfer responsibility outside EOP	* Distances White House from a problem that will continue to trigger "bad news" * Frees up 2 EOP slots	* Runs contrary to "no stone unturned" and is sure to be perceived as signal of declining POTUS/FLOTUS interest * Concedes GWI "initiative" to Hill * Removes EOP focal point for monitoring * Increases risk of poor interagency coordination still further * Gives up EOP tool for managing PAC needs

GWJ PROJECTED TIMELINE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
Early APR	Projected Commencement of 18-month PRD on Health Preparedness
Mid-APR	Projected Completion of IDA Plume Modeling Evaluation
Mid-APR	Projected Availability of Preliminary Khamisiyah Survey Data
04/27/97	SEN Wellstone GWJ Field Hearing in Minneapolis
End of APR	Target: Completion of Enhanced CIA Document Identification & Declassification Effort
04/30/97	President's E.O. Deadline: PAC Interim Report (<u>Note</u> : expected to include assessment of both adequacy of the ongoing DOD investigations and the progress of all agencies in implementing PAC's 12/96 recommendations)
04/30/97	Target: Completion of Army IG Investigation
06/01/97	Target: Completion of DOD Intel Oversight Investigation (<u>Note</u> : unclassified report -- prior classified briefs could be done for Hill & PAC)
06/30/97	Target: Completion of CIA IG Investigation
07/01/97	Earliest Possible Completion of Khamisiyah Pit Field Testing
10/31/97	President's E.O. Deadline: PAC <i>Supplemental Final Report</i>
Early NOV	Administration Rollout of PAC <i>Supplemental Final Report</i>
Various	Periodic Releases of <u>as many as 60</u> DOD Case Narratives (only the first on Khamisiyah has been released to date)
Various	Remaining PAC Public Meetings (<u>Note</u> : Salt Lake City was first in series)
Various	Planned Congressional Hearings
Unknown	Timetable: Senate Veterans Affairs Committee GWJ Investigation
Unknown	Eddington Book Release (Allegations of CIA Coverup)
Undetermined	Target: Completion of DOD IG Investigation

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

DATE: August 13, 1997

LOCATION: OEOB 208

TIME: 1015

FROM: Paul Busick

I. PURPOSE

To discuss the options for continued oversight of the Gulf War Illnesses research and investigations effort after October 1997.

II. BACKGROUND

The final public PAC panel meeting will be held here in D.C. on 4-5 September. Following this public hearing, the PAC will submit its final report and make recommendations. One of the recommendations will be for continued oversight of the VA/DOD/HHS effort currently underway. This meeting will explore the possible courses of action for follow-on oversight of the Gulf War Illnesses issue.

III. PARTICIPANTS

Thurgood Marshall Jr.
Melanne Verveer
Paul Busick
Anne McGuire

IV. SEQUENCE

1015 Background (Heyl)
1020-1120 Discussion
1120-1130 Summary - Next Steps (Busick)
1130 Meeting Ends

Attachment

Tab [A] GWI Oversight Courses of Action

Gulf War Illnesses - Oversight Courses of Action (COA)

COA#1: Continue presidential level oversight:

COA#1A- Extend the PAC with new membership. Advantages: Executive Order in place, funding in place, oversight continues. Disadvantages: No sense of PAC having met objectives, current PAC does not favor this option. PAC has lived out its usefulness.

COA#1B- Appoint a new Advisory committee with a different scope (i.e., no public hearings). Possibly use PRD. Advantages: oversight without public meetings that generate negative stories. Disadvantages: Need a new Executive Order, source of funding.

COA#2: Appoint non-presidential level oversight committee:

COA#2A- Use existing entities that can perform an oversight role, i.e., Institute of Medicine, Sen. Rudman, PGVCB. Advantages: Oversight at a lower cost. Disadvantages: No unity of effort -- different entities have aspects of the research and investigation effort, competing demands.

COA#2B- Appoint a new entity to act as a Federal Advisory Committee. Advantages: Same as COA#3A. Disadvantages: Little continuity, start-up required, funding considerations.

COA#3: Do nothing, PAC turns in its Final Report and individual agencies act on the PAC's recommendations. Advantages: PAC accomplishes its mission, public hearings that generate negative press end. Disadvantages: Not responsive to the PAC's recommendation to continue oversight, public perception that agencies, esp. DOD, need oversight. Possible future criticism that government ignored the Gulf War vets.

GWJ Oversight Assumptions

- GWJ issue will remain emotionally and politically charged.
- President will remain committed to getting all of the facts out and providing the best care possible for the vets.
- PAC will be terminated in October 1997 after its Final Report is completed.
- Closure on the PAC's role is desired; move to the next phase in coming to resolution.
- PAC will provide a list of recommendations that will require action by federal agencies.
- PAC will recommend that some type of oversight should continue.
- Government action must continue until the relevant questions are answered.
- Public perception of DOD and other agencies involved with GWJ remains distrustful.

• WH is waiting & considering at least
thru 6/98

final
Report due
near Vets day -
WH event.

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