February 13, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR ANDREW MARSHALL

FROM: Charles Joyce

SUBJECT: Description of Proposed On-Line Briefing Capability

This is an attempt to summarize concisely the briefing capability we talked about this morning.

Purpose

The purpose is to improve on present methods for Dr. Kissinger and the President to keep abreast of current developments. These improvements will come about by:

1. Making the briefing stand out from other business by using special forms of presentation (TV-like).

2. Providing continuous feedback to information screening staff on what has been read, whether the material has been satisfactory, and whether more is desired.

3. Providing several levels of detail on a variety of subjects, with easy control of subject and depth by the reader.

(The value of feedback and control was discussed in my memo of February 6.)

Phases

The capability would be introduced in two phases. In Phase I, the principal reader would be Dr. Kissinger, with inputs controlled by the Situation Room.
In Phase II, the President would be a reader, and Dr. Kissinger would be involved in the selection of items for the President, in addition to his own use of the system.

Phase I

A. How it looks to the reader.

In Phase I, Dr. Kissinger would have a TV-like screen in his office. Whenever he is alone in the office, the screen would display approximately ten short "headlines," considered by the Situation Room to be the ten most significant current developments which Kissinger should be aware of. Additional pages of headlines would also be available on successive headline "pages." The reader can page through the headline pages by pressing a button.

When the reader wants to find out about any headline, he indicates which one (a variety of means for this are possible) and immediately he gets a one "page" summary on the headline. (A page on the TV tube would be equivalent to about a half of a typewritten page of text.) After reading the page, the reader can push appropriate buttons to:

1. Ask for more information.

2. Indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the quality of the writeup.

3. Select the item as a candidate for the President's Daily Brief.

If the first action is taken and additional pages of information are available in the system, the first additional page will be presented, and successive pages would be accessed by pressing a paging button. After reading any amount of this information, the reader may stop, and again take any one of the above three actions.

If the reader calls for more information after having read whatever is available in the system on a given "headline," the request is transmitted immediately to the Situation Room.
Whenever any information has been called out on a given headline, the headline is moved off the headline "pages" and moved to a separate page containing all of today's "noted" headlines, grouped by subject. These "subject" pages provide repeated access to whatever has already been read, and provide a summary of developments throughout the day which may be used in reviewing material for the President's Daily Brief.

The "headline" pages therefore contain only developments about which the reader has not yet read--even the one-page summary. The order in which the headlines appear is controlled by the Situation Room in accordance with some judgment about priority. As soon as any item is read, it is removed from the headline page and other items are moved up.

B. How it looks to the Situation Room.

The Situation Room staff would enter into the system items received from the staff, and items developed by the Situation Room based on messages, cables, intelligence reports, etc.

Items received from the staff should include a one "page" summary and a more lengthy discussion as backup.

The Situation Room would write a one "page" summary of other developments, and would enter into the system as backup lengthier reference material selected from messages, wire services, intelligence products or other sources.

As new information develops during the day, the Situation Room would determine whether to remove or modify existing information in the system or add new items. This determination would be made with full knowledge of:

1. What has the reader already seen?

2. How much did he read about it?

3. Did he ask for more?

4. Was he satisfied with what he read?
As the time approaches to prepare the President's Daily Brief, items which have been identified during the day as "candidates" can be reviewed and collated, possibly edited on-line, and printed out for final review by Dr. Kissinger in hard copy form. (I presume he may want to make editorial changes and would not want to enter these at a console.)

Technical questions.

The principal technical question is how to get departmental and agency products and staff products into the system. There are tradeoffs here between digital versus analog storage and display modes which, in turn, have an impact on input methods. The system should be designed so that the Situation Room does not have to retype materials received from other sources in editorially usable form.

Phase II

Once the capability is developed and shaken down for Dr. Kissinger, consideration can be given to making information available for the President in the same way. This poses new problems, namely:

1. The system would serve two customers who would be in their offices at different times and would make distinctive demands on the system.

2. Presumably, Dr. Kissinger would want to exert some degree of control on the selection and priority ordering of items for the President.

One approach would be to follow the current daily cycle, with Dr. Kissinger reviewing once per day the items to be made available to the President.

It might be desirable to consider updating the President's reading more frequently, but it is not clear whether Dr. Kissinger would want to select individual items without reviewing what the President has already seen and what is currently in the system for the President. If this were too burdensome, Dr. Kissinger would be faced with the choice of relaxing his control over the selection of items for the President or else sticking with a once-per-day update cycle.
Feedback from the President could be enhanced by providing the President with a handset or microphone, connected to a recorder, into which he could dictate comments as he reads. The comments could be transcribed in the Situation Room and entered into the system for future reference, or fed back to Dr. Kissinger or the staff in hard copy form.