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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
Dr. James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense  
Dr. John S. Foster, Jr., Director, Defense Research and Engineering  
Martin R. Hoffman, Special Assistant to Sec. of Defense  
Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: August 17, 1973  
(luncheon)

PLACE: Western White House

SUBJECTS: Visit of French Defense Minister Galley;  
Strategic Programs

Kissinger: Let's talk about the French program. We are having massive problems with the Europeans. This is a totally cynical exercise. But we don't want them to duplicate our mistakes, and if they price themselves out of the nuclear business... If they are going to build a deterrent, it ought to be good.

[Talked about current problems with the Europeans]

We are going to try to bust the Europeans. The French can be useful in this. We will hit the British, ignore the French and deal with the Germans and Italians.

What we would like with Galley is what looks like a step forward but doesn't give them anything yet. I think that if we could give Galley an explanation of their problem and how we might tackle it. We do want to be helpful though. We want a point-by-point analysis. Get the testing in Nevada approved. For October. I want to tell them in August.

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Schlesinger: They will want monitoring equipment for the test. We could give them something here which wouldn't cost much.

Foster: It is of advantage to us to have them keep testing in the atmosphere.

The French program is the worst nuclear program in the world. The Chinese one is the best. Progress from test to test has to do with the quality of the people.

Kissinger: Can we speed up their rate of progress?

Foster: Yes. The best thing would be to look at their designs, without a commitment.

Kissinger: Galley said he would like to have us tell them if they are on the right track.

Foster: One thing would be to get them to refine their objectives and give them ideas to reach it.

Kissinger: We want to whet their appetites in August.

Hoffman: They are being driven by the technicians. They don't have their strategic objectives clear.

Foster: If you would agree to spend six months so they would understand the existing capability and its limitations and how to fix it, and of alternatives for the future, and which one makes sense and is working....

One of their needs is tactical warning. The solution is either to build their own radar and give up because of the expense, or else we give them the satellite readout from our capability.

For the Year of Europe, you might want to offer this down. Link it to all of NATO.

Kissinger: If we can use the French and break their unity, we can deal with the Europeans.

I wouldn't agree with the down link. It would be a conceptual presentation, just to say this might be available.

Is it possible to have a presentation part for me, part for Jim and Foster? I've studied your paper. Tell them: "This is what we think of your capability." I would say we are not against the French deterrent and it should be a useful one. We would first discuss its strategic doctrine, and second, its vulnerabilities and how to relieve them.

How do we proceed? Jim, you would discuss measures to cope with the vulnerabilities. We wouldn't give them anything but tidbits.

We should look more competent than they. Give them the idea it is attainable and we can make progress.

Foster: For example, their missiles might be vulnerable to ENP. We could test this for a few million dollars.

Kissinger: Don't say "if we were going to help" or "we are going to help." Just give them the impression.

Foster: The problem is no matter how careful I am, they turn it later into an implied commitment.

Kissinger: We must be fully cold-blooded. Tell them they have an overall strategic urgent problem and we could help them to overcome it. Then there are vulnerabilities and there are things which can help them.

We would like them to be over the hump by '76. If the program is a failure by the next election, the French might get a neutralist government.

We must break up the Europeans. And the French are essential.

Schlesinger: We could always use the Germans.

Kissinger: That is dangerous. The Germans would use it for nationalist purposes.

Could we have an outline of a presentation by Monday?

Foster: Yes.

Kissinger: I start with a conceptual presentational approach, Jim will discuss strategy, and Foster the technical part, with some things we could do which might help.

Foster: Could we indicate that we don't mind their atmospheric testing?

Kissinger: We didn't object to others' tests.

Schlesinger: On SALT. George Brown will be reasonable and maybe we can get the JCS off log-rolling.

Kissinger: The JCS talks equality. It could be dangerous without stability.

Schlesinger: The Soviet Union will have to spend \$6 billion to come out with the SS-18.

If they used [REDACTED] they could put on [REDACTED]  
We think, though, they will go fo a CF program which would be about 9,700 warheads against 10,000 for us.

As the SS-9 obsolesces, it is removed and not replaced.

Kissinger: What do they get?

Schlesinger: \$10-15 billion, a stable relationship with us, and no additional warheads by us.

Kissinger: They say they need enough for us and China.

Schlesinger: They would have 60 percent of the throwweight at 313 aim points.

The SS-9 doesn't make much sense. On military grounds they should go for more and smaller missiles.

Why would they want to put so much into the SS-18, when we would have to react to it?

Kissinger: These weapons are a religion for them. They are not likely to buy it. What incentives do they have?

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Schlesinger: One is cost. It makes more sense to put the money into smaller weapons.

Kissinger: They will put them into both the 11 and the 18.

We shouldn't give up a program for budget reasons without getting something for it.

Schlesinger: The Trident submarine is a mistake.

Kissinger: Maybe, but we should retrofit the Trident into the Poseidon boat. Dobrynin talks about the American deployment.

Schlesinger: Here are the give-ups: Close down the Minuteman III, or not go to seven MIRV's.

Kissinger: You should get the seven MIRVs out as a concept.

Schlesinger: We could allow missiles with the capability just against the Chinese. Or give some on FBS.

Kissinger: But what can we do if they don't agree?

Foster: You mean what can we get from Congress?

Kissinger: Moorer said he didn't care about throwweight, if we had equal numbers of warheads.

Schlesinger: Keep the Minuteman III line open. ReMIRV to 7, re-design the SLBM to eliminate the Trident boat and have more missiles.

Kissinger: This could be advanced as a no-deployment plan. If they wouldn't deploy SS-18's we wouldn't reMIRV, or deploy more Minuteman III's.

Foster: The Trident boat never made sense. We thought it was a White House program.

Kissinger: We could wind up like the French in 1940. Our programs don't necessarily match our strategic purposes.

Foster: We argued for the B-1. We are technology-driven.

Kissinger: We had to cancel 60% of the tactical sorties in Vietnam.

Foster: We have something as a result of Vietnam which will do it.

Kissinger: We should discuss the contingencies for which we need weapons. You design the weapons, and keep us informed from time to time.

Kissinger: The pure numbers game in SALT is no longer relevant.

Foster: How about starting a 640 design?

Kissinger: If I can sell the Trident boat, I can get you something. Start a 640, get the word out about 7 MIRV's, and keep the cruise missile.

Let's talk about the contingencies for which we need to design our forces.