

January 5, 1963

**Letter, Robert S. McNamara, Secretart of Defense,
to the Honorable Giulio Andreotti, Minister of
Defense**

Citation:

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Contributed by Bill Burr and Leopoldo Nuti.

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Summary:

Members of the Nassau Decisions Steering Group worked up the texts of letters from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to the Italian and Turkish Defense Ministers, which President Kennedy approved when he met with Dean Rusk and Thomas Finletter in Palm Beach on January 5, 1963. The State Department sent the letters later to Ankara and Rome later that day.

McNamara's letters expand on the points about the need to replace Jupiters with Polaris missiles that he made to Andreotti and Sancar when he met them in Paris. To both, McNamara wrote that the Polaris force would be "on station" by April 1 as the replacement for the Jupiters. Writing to Andreotti, he also mentioned substituting "obsolete" Corporal with Sergeant missiles. In his message to Sancar, McNamara informed him that he is exploring the possibility of accelerated delivery of the F-104s and that "emergency actions" could make it possible to deliver the first squadron during April 1963.

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Rome, January 5, 1963

Dear Mr. Minister:

You will recall that, during our conversation in Paris on December 13, I expressed the view that the Jupiter missiles should be replaced by more effective missiles now available.

In 1957 when the decision was made to install these missiles they, along with the Thors, were the only strategic ballistic missiles the Alliance had ready for operation. The Jupiters helped greatly to build up our early ballistic missile strength, but with the rapid advances in technology and the accelerating growth of missile forces, they no longer form a major part of the Alliance's missile strength. In this year alone, the number of operational strategic ballistic missiles in the Alliance will increase from about 450 to 850. More importantly, as a first generation missile these Jupiters are easily located by the enemy and vulnerable to both conventional and nuclear attack. It is questionable whether they would survive a Soviet surprise attack. Such a system today promises to be relatively ineffective and it presents a vulnerable and tempting target - conditions which we should seek to avoid if we can find an alternative weapon system which better meets our military needs. This is especially true since we must continue to anticipate Soviet stimulated crises of comparable or even greater intensity as for example might occur at any time over Berlin.

It seems to us desirable on these counts to modernize obsolete weapons systems in Italy. I have in mind not only the Jupiter missiles but also the Corporal missiles in SETAF.

We believe the best available alternative to Jupiter is the Polaris missile submarine system. In addition to being less exposed than the Jupiters, these missiles would have a very much higher probability of survival in the face of a sudden nuclear attack. We propose that submarines operate in the Mediterranean, be assigned to SACEUR, and be targeted by him with Italian participation. This Polaris force can be on station by April 1.

The Honorable
Giulio Andreotti,
Minister of Defense.

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It is important that our allies and our enemies understand that the substitution of this modern weapon system creates a more formidable military posture for NATO. It has been our policy and will continue to be our policy to assist our allies in the provision of increasingly effective military defense through a measured and continuous phase-in of modern weapons. In this way the Alliance can have the benefit of the most effective deterrent force we are capable of devising while denying to the Soviets an opportunity to bring political pressures to bear by threatening attacks against highly vulnerable weapons of more limited military value.

We wish it to be clearly understood that in advancing the proposal for substitution of Polaris for Jupiters, we envisage working out all aspects in closest harmony with the Italian Government and would of course be responsive to your views on how the substitution can most expeditiously be effected. Finally, we would believe that Alliance interests would best be served if the substitution were conducted in a low key as a natural evolution to a better weapon system, as in fact is the case, rather than having the substitution misrepresented in any way.

As part of this modernization program we are prepared to improve SETAF by substituting a suitable force of the next generation of missiles, the Sergeant, for the obsolete Corporal missiles, and to continue its support with U.S. troops.

If your Government agrees with these proposals, appropriate staffs of our two Governments in cooperation with SACEUR could begin discussions immediately with a view to working out specific arrangements. Ambassador Reinhardt shortly will raise this matter with the Italian Government.

Sincerely,

Robert S. McNamara
Secretary of Defense

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