



July 06, 1972

Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Henry A. Kissinger, 'Your Meeting with Debré: Additional Points'

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Summary:

Sonnenfeldt briefs Kissinger on additional points for his meeting with French Minister of Defense Michel Debré in July 1972. There is new information about specific technical requests Debré may make for ballistic missile assistance as well as new information about Debré's views on nuclear strategy and cooperation with US and NATO forces.

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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

TOP SECRET

ACTION
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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Debre: Additional Points

Since my talker of yesterday for your July 7 meeting with Debre (Log #5317), we have received information supplemental to that in the memorandum on some of the issues:

Missile Cooperation

Defense tells us that Blancard has very recently written Foster confirming that Debre will request from Secretary Laird additional information from us on how to harden reentry vehicles.

Defense is very bearish on providing such information and would not want Debre to take away from his conversation with you any sense of commitment on our part to assist on this sensitive problem. This reinforces my previous suggestion that you should

-- be cautious in responding to any request that Debre might make for RV hardening help. (We will need a new policy review if this becomes acute.)

MBFR

We understand that Debre has expressed an interest in the US presentation on MBFR explorations (Tab A), which was circulated within NATO this week as a letter from Ambassador Kennedy.

We have asked Defense to provide him a copy before his meeting with you.

Nuclear Strategy and Cooperation with US and NATO Forces

Our military in Germany have learned that at a classified briefing at at French First Army Headquarters earlier this year, Debre told his senior officers that the withdrawal of "significant" numbers of US troops is the "greatest danger" that NATO and Europe face and that it is in France's interest to keep the largest possible number of them in Europe. He also reportedly:

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-- approved completely existing planning contacts between French military in Germany and CENTAG (the NATO command for the Central Front); and

-- said that the Ailleret-Lemnitzer understanding is out of date and will require revision in the near future.

Should you want to draw Debre out on cooperation with NATO, you could

-- solicit his views on the adequacy of the Lemnitzer-Ailleret understanding.

White Book

We have just received an advance copy of the French Defense White Book, which was put together under Debre's stewardship and appeared at the end of June. It is the first time that the French have put all their thinking on strategic, budgetary, procurement, and personnel problems together in one document. While we have not as yet had time to go through it, we note that in the section of the force de frappe, the White Book refers to the requirement for developing penetration aids, hardening reentry vehicles, and developing a MIRV.

You may care to

-- take note of the White Book, saying that you look forward to reading it.