June 27, 1973


Citation:


Summary:

Kennedy sends Hyland a review of the current status and future prospects of French aid as drafted by Denis Clift, as well as a summary of Dr. Foster's most recent meeting with the French where they discussed new areas of cooperation. It also discusses the advantages if the French were to implement a missile warning system, and how French assistance might be a useful bargaining tool for the U.S. especially when it comes to improving French-European relations.

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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VIA LIX TO SAN CLEMENTE

June 27, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: BILL HYLAND
FROM: DICK KENNEDY

SUBJECT: Jobert Meeting: US-French Nuclear Cooperation

The background and talking points at Tab A, drafted by Denis Clift, review the current status and future prospects for US-French nuclear cooperation.

At Tab B is a DOD paper summarizing Dr. Foster's most recent meeting with the French.

ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS FROM STATE WILL FOLLOW.

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By NARA, Date 4-FEB-2008
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US-FRENCH NUCLEAR COOPERATION

(NOTE: It is not clear how much the French Foreign Ministry has been involved in this issue, if at all. However, because of his earlier responsibilities for President Pompidou, Joberg should have at least a general understanding of the nature of the cooperation.)

Your memorandum of March 9, 1973 authorized Defense to expand its assistance to the French -- on an interim basis and pending interagency NSSM 175 review of the longer-range responsibilities for US-French cooperation -- in the following areas:

-- Information on nuclear effects simulators;

-- Sale of small simulators;

-- General hardening technology; and

The French were notified by Secretary Richardson that the US was prepared to enter into these new areas of cooperation, and in early May, 1973, Dr. Foster met with his French counterparts for detailed discussions. DOD estimates that the newly authorized assistance will carry the program forward for at least six months while the longer-term alternatives for cooperation are being considered within the US Government.

We are in good shape at this point, however, having just informed the French through Dr. Foster of our willingness to enter into several new areas of cooperation. Looking to the future, however, the basic problem is that we cannot go much beyond the present program without direct Congressional approval, and more important, without defining our strategic goals -- whether we want to assist France bilaterally, or move toward an Anglo-French program.

In any case, the President's sympathetic attitude toward military cooperation is one of our strong points in dealing with the French, and, in effect, an incentive for them to cooperate in the Atlantic relations project.
You may wish to emphasize:

-- The President's policy is to support the French as a nuclear power.

-- At some point, if US support is to expand, we will have to go to our Congress.

-- In this context, we want to be able to demonstrate that our relations with Europe are on a new basis, and that France is playing a cooperative and key role.

-- We will review new areas of cooperation in missile technology and inform the French government of how far we could go.

-- We are basically sympathetic to Anglo-French cooperation in strategic forces, but we will not push it until or unless this is desired by France and the UK.
MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

In view of your forthcoming meeting with President Pompidou, I believe you would be interested in a summary of our program for ballistic missile cooperation with France.

We have taken the initial steps to implement your guidance, contained in Dr. Kissinger's memorandum of 9 March, providing for a program expansion in areas of: information on nuclear effects simulators; sale of small simulators; nuclear hardening technology on missiles; reentry vehicles and silos; and information on Soviet ABM. M. Galley, the new Defense Minister, has been notified by letter of the U.S. position, and Dr. Foster met with M. Blancard in Paris early this month to explain and discuss these matters in greater detail.

M. Blancard recognized that the new movement reflects U.S. responsiveness to French requests, and expressed his sincere appreciation therefor. A similar sentiment was expressed by M. Galley, in a brief meeting with Dr. Foster. There is little doubt that M. Pompidou is kept well-informed on this program and, judging by M. Blancard's remarks and also by the very friendly nature of the discussions held at the working levels, we conclude that he probably is pleased with the results to date.

You are aware of our recent submittal in response to NESM 175. Noted therein is our position that the existence of the French strategic missile force is an accomplished reality; that U.S. assistance can save France time and money in improvements thereto, but withholding U.S. help will not significantly alter the final capabilities of that force; that U.S. interests appear to be served best by assisting them as we are doing, with the concomitant improved relations, possible joint planning, opportunities to exert influence, etc., which could be expected to derive therefrom; and that, in the context of a friendly force, a viable French strategic deterrent is also in our interest.
In connection with the viability of the French deterrent, Dr. Foster pointed out to M. Blanchard what could well be a serious problem for them, involving credibility and survivability of their land-based force. Their land-based force is small -- and could easily be overcome by a Soviet first strike. With this the case, the deterrent value of this force is relatively low. An obvious step -- other than the existing hardening of silos and missiles to nuclear radiation, which is never apt to be sufficient in itself -- is to deploy a warning system, to provide an option for launch on warning. This they have not done. Simply the existence of such an option would increase the credibility of their deterrent. Although submarine-launched forces are not subject to the same sort of pre-emptive attack, the lines of communication to these forces, and also the decision-makers themselves, would be. Thus a warning system, which could be used to alert the sea-based forces to impending attack on the homeland, with the option to implement a rearranged launch plan, would increase the deterrent value of sea-based forces as well. It was suggested that they give this problem careful thought.

Not suggested to the French by Dr. Foster, but a possible solution to this problem, would be to tie France into our satellite warning system. This could provide them warning information on Soviet ICBM launches and/or impacts, thereby permitting them to make decisions on launching their own force. Beneficial effects would be:

- Increase deterrent value of French missiles.
- Remove or reduce "trigger happy" tendencies.
- Improve opportunities for Allied responses.

One would expect problems, however, both domestic and abroad, if it became known that we made such an offer to France alone -- even though France is the country for which it makes the most sense. The British, in particular, would probably react strongly.
Congressional reaction might also be unfavorable on a France-only basis, unless it could be shown that France and the U.S. were working towards the common defense -- a difficult thing to demonstrate at present.

If it were placed in a context of providing improved defense for the European community, France included, the picture might change completely. It has been announced that this is the "year of Europe." Perhaps this theme might serve as a vehicle for taking this step. A possible avenue would be to provide a direct tie-in to SHAPE, thereby providing warning information to NATO countries, and provide also a parallel path to France.

We are not presently suggesting or proposing that you offer directly such a capability to M. Pompidou. In fact, there needs to be a careful consideration of the pro and con, including a weighing of the stabilizing/distabilizing aspects, before any concrete decision is taken. It is in this context that we mention it however, since one of the significant pro factors would be the "price" France would be willing to pay in terms, say, of NATO integration or unilateral U.S. desires. In this respect, it might serve as a useful bargaining lever for you to employ as circumstances dictate. From a national security standpoint we can see no significant problem in implementing such a measure.

There may be other problems associated with the scheme, such as UN or treaty actions. We are looking into these possibilities but have nothing concrete one way or the other at this time.

In any event, it seems a possibility worth noting, and potentially of significant value to France, and thus we bring it to your attention prior to the Pompidou meeting.

Another issue raised in the meeting with M. Blancard concerned the related questions of what are French strategic objectives, how do they plan on meeting these objectives, and where do we "draw the line" between improvements to current French systems, as covered in our present formal agreements, and new systems. A clearer understanding of these points would enable the exchanges to be focused more clearly on actual requirements, making for a more efficient and timely operation for France and a more clearly understood and definable position and policy for the U.S.
It was suggested that the objectives should be addressed at a high political/military level in France, with requirements flowing down therefrom. It was also suggested that the U.S. might consider a series of high-level joint meetings -- with U.S. representatives including the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, JCS, a White House representative, and others -- at which France would present its strategic objectives and the U.S. would present its considered view of the best means for achieving these objectives. There is concern within DoD that future projected French systems might not represent appropriate solutions for their problems, and also that without appropriate definition of the future course, requests will be received for release of more U.S. information than actually is necessary.

With respect to "drawing the line," the French described a series of improvements, quite analogous to those within the POLARIS and MINUTEMAN families -- excluding the MIRVed POSEIDON and MINUTEMAN III -- for which firm decisions already have been made. The decisions call for a phased series of improvements to both land and sea-based missiles -- consisting primarily of the same new second stage motor on each, the same new thermo-nuclear warhead (single, not multiple) on each, and nuclear hardening. These phase in over the period 1974-1980 approximately. They also described briefly a completely new sea-based missile (the M4), projected for deployment in 1984 or 85, and expected to carry multiple RVs. This is presently in the early planning stage in Paris.

They proposed "drawing the line" so that the above-described series of single-RV improvements come under the existing agreements, and that the new M4 be considered a new system. They said also that if a high-level US/France planning meeting were held -- which has not been addressed fully within the French government -- the M4 would be the appropriate system for discussion.

We have agreed to drawing the line as described above. We are still considering the matter of a high-level US/France meeting within DoD and will send you comments/recommendations thereon at a future date. We mention the latter subject at this time only because of its possibility, considered remote, that it may be mentioned by M. Pompidou.
As a final point I should note that General Maurin, on his recent visit, left with [redacted] a list of questions -- presumably on the basis of our missile cooperation program.

Maurin also stated that Minister Gallay was aware of, and approved, his request.

Maurin's questions cover two broad areas:

We plan on sending you a more detailed letter on the [redacted] request. We consider the [redacted] to be outside the present scope of our missile cooperation program and thus do not propose to answer it until further guidance is received. [redacted] We note it here so that you may be aware of it and so that, if the opportunity arises, perhaps you can seek clarification from M. Pompidou.

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