April 01, 1974
From Donald R. Cotter, Assistant to the Secretary for Atomic Energy, to Major General Wickham, 'Nuclear Safety Talks with France'

Citation:

Summary:
Cotter briefs Wickham on recent talks with the French, noting that they have centered mostly on nuclear safety issues. He briefly outlines what he will soon write to Baron, and notes that the French mainly want further operational assistance.

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English

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Memo For: [Name Redacted]

Brent: Should we proceed as indicated in the underlined portion, page 2?

[Initial]

General

[Signature]

[Date] 4/17/74
MEMORANDUM FOR MAJOR GENERAL WICKHAM

SUBJECT: Nuclear Safety Talks with France (TS)

This memorandum is in response to your request for a brief status of
our nuclear safety talks with the French and our proposal for contin-
uation of those talks on a low profile without any new initiatives.

These talks were authorized by NSDM 104 and over the past two years
four such meetings have been held, two in Paris and two in Washing-
ton, with the most recent being here during late January 1974. The talks
have centered on general principles of nuclear safety, operational
nuclear safety procedures and technical aspects of nuclear warhead
safety. Nontechnical subjects have included security of weapons, selec-
tion and training of weapons personnel and some private discussions con-
cerning command and control arrangements. All subjects have been
covered without reference to Restricted Data or Formerly Restricted
Data information.

At the conclusion of the last meeting, the leader of the French delegation,
Engineer General Baron, indicated that they wished to continue the talks
and proposed some avenues for expansion. He said at that time that he
would send us a letter outlining his proposals but he has not yet done so.

It is my intention to write to Baron within the next month acknowledging
his thank you letter of February 15, sending him some material dis-
cussed during the January meeting and mentioning his suggestion for
a fifth meeting during the fall. I will propose subject matter which
logically follows that already discussed such as quality assurance prin-
ciples, high explosive technology, designs for abnormal mechanical and
electrical environments and criticality of weapon arrays. I will suggest
also a continuation of subgroup meetings between experts in plutonium,
dispersal and analysis methods. The clear inference will be that discussion of new subjects will not be started at this time and that the previously used method of concurrent plenary and subgroup talks is desired. Is this direction consistent with the Secretary's desires?

The subjects suggested by the French for expansion of the talks are mainly of an operational nature. They are particularly interested in furthering discussion of military personnel training and also arrangements for non-interference between strategic submarines. Although we shall not broach these subjects during the next round of talks, would it seem appropriate to remain sensitive for any specific request of this type?

As a related matter, you should be aware that the Defense Nuclear Agency is mounting an effort to monitor the weapons designs and effects during the coming French test series in the Pacific.

D. R. Cotter
Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Atomic Energy)