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US Comments on the UK Proposal of a Project for an Atlantic Nuclear Force

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Summary:

General comments relating to the establishment of an Atlantic nuclear force, objectives that any new arrangement of NATO nuclear forces must meet, specific comments on the UK's proposal, characteristics of the force, components, contribution of the United States Forces, non-dissemination of nuclear weapons, command and voting arrangements, review provisions.

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U.S. Comments on the UK Proposal of a Project for an
Atlantic Nuclear Force

1. Preamble

After review of our own views and those of our allies, and after particular consideration of the proposals of HMG for an Atlantic nuclear force, we offer the following comments relating to the establishment of such a force. These comments are designed to take account both of the extended discussions which have occurred since 1962 and of the new proposals of HMG.

We believe that any successful plan must be responsive to the real requirements of as many members of the Alliance as possible. In this spirit, we emphasize that these suggestions are subject to discussion and revision in the light of the comments which will be sought from other interested governments.

As the President and the Prime Minister have agreed from the beginning of these discussions, no agreements or commitments are being made in this first exchange of views. Moreover, the issues before us extend far beyond the interests of our two nations alone, and any future agreement must be acceptable to the Alliance.

2. Objectives

We believe that any new arrangement of nuclear forces of NATO must meet the following objectives:

a. To deter nuclear proliferation by making it possible for non-nuclear members of the Atlantic Alliance to participate in the ownership, management and control of NATO's nuclear forces through collective action and without the creation of new independent national nuclear systems.

b. To strengthen the unity of the Alliance by providing for systematic and greatly increased collaboration and consultation in the nuclear field.

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3. Specific Comments on the UK's proposed force

We believe that it would be appropriate to have discussions with other interested NATO governments of a concept of an Atlantic nuclear force which might have the following components:

a. Three or four POLARIS submarines to be transferred to the force by the British Government.

b. Such elements of the British V-bomber force as HMG is prepared to contribute.

c. A POLARIS surface fleet having substantially the characteristics - if not the size - of that contemplated in the discussions of the working group in Paris. This force should have a size adequate to the needs and interests of non-nuclear powers which wish to participate in it, but we are prepared to discuss reductions from the initial proposals in the light of other contributions now in contemplation.

d. Such strategic nuclear forces as the United States or France might be prepared to subscribe.

4. Characteristics of the Force

a. We consider it essential that all elements of the force be under a common command and control arrangement, including permissive action links. While the POLARIS submarines could be organized at least initially on a basis of national manning, the eventual mixed-manning of submarines should not be precluded if subsequent studies indicate its feasibility and desirability.

b. We also consider it essential to the success of this proposal that there should be a substantial UK contribution of manpower for the operation of the mixed-manned surface force, in order to insure that this arrangement commands the confidence of other participants.

c. Creation of this force should be conceived not as an addition to strategic forces that would otherwise be provided, but as a partial substitute, since it is the current expectation that presently programmed US forces will be appropriately reduced as the new force comes into being.

d. We believe that the new force, whatever its eventual components, should have a strength of not less than 200 missiles.

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e. All the weapons systems transferred to the ANF would be committed for the life of the force. In the event of dissolution of the force, submarines and bombers would revert to the national ownership of the respective contributing state. Missiles and warheads in the surface fleet would also be returned to the supplying country.

f. We are prepared to consider a change in the name of the force, but we believe a decision on the name should be reserved to later multilateral negotiations.

5. Contribution of the United States Forces

Should the concept discussed above prove acceptable to other allies, we would be prepared to consider a contribution to this new force of certain U.S. strategic weapons provided that discussions with other allies indicate a general desire for such a contribution, and provided that it can be made on terms which are practicable for the United States.

6. Non-Dissemination

The treaty establishing the new arrangements should include undertakings whereby nuclear members would agree not to disseminate nuclear weapons and the non-nuclear members would undertake not to acquire, or obtain control over, them.

7. Command Arrangements in Relation to NATO

We take note of the suggestion that the Atlantic missile force described above might be assigned to a separate commander. We are also familiar with the strongly expressed view of other allies that this force should be under the command of SACEUR. We think that this question of command should be left open for discussion among all interested parties.

8. Voting Arrangements

The agreement of the United States would be required in order to fire the force. The votes of the European members should be cast in a manner agreed to by them. The voting procedure could be revised only with the agreement of all of the participating nations.

9. Periodic Meetings of the Ministers of Defense

In order to make more effective the present procedures for consultation among the Western Powers, we suggest periodic meetings of the Ministers of Defense. These meetings would be held on an informal basis, and would consider targeting policy, new nuclear and conventional weapons developments, nuclear dispersal plans, future force structure, resource allocation, and strategy.

10. Review Provisions

We believe any agreement should contain provisions for review of the arrangements if (a) Germany is reunified; (b) a unified Europe is established, or (c) there is a major movement toward arms control or disarmament.

As stated in 8 above, any new agreement would require the approval of all participants, and we note that in the case of the US any change in control arrangements would be subject to full Constitutional approval.

The agreement should be so drafted that termination of the Force would not result in the creation of new national nuclear systems.

11. Future Procedure

a. A meeting of representatives of interested governments should be held early in 1965. They should be asked to review these matters and to prepare recommendations for their respective governments.

b. At an early stage in the development of these recommendations, and well before any final agreements are reached among interested parties, arrangements should be made for discussions with the Government of France.