

**August 10, 1971**

**Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Henry A.  
Kissinger, 'Status Report on Missile Cooperation  
with France'**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Sonnenfeldt reports on the status of the US assistance to the French ballistic missile program. The talks are going well, but he notes that the French will likely soon raise the issue of hiring US contractors for direct assistance.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

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*L. Row*

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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August 10, 1971

Dear Mel:

Many thanks for your letter of July 29, 1971, reporting on the most recent talks with the French. The proposed ground rules for US-French missile cooperation seem very sound.

I shall look forward to receiving regular status reports on our cooperation with the French. Particularly sensitive issues, such as possible use of US contractors, should be referred to the White House for decision.

Warm regards,



Henry A. Kissinger

Honorable Melvin R. Laird  
Secretary of Defense  
Washington, D. C. 20301

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E.O. 12958, as amended, Sect 3.5  
NEW 99-12/22 pt. 3.3(b)(6) letter 5/31/06  
By KMB Date 4-16-09  
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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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ACTION  
August 4, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt *HS*

SUBJECT: Status Report on Missile Cooperation with France

Responding to your request of June 29, Secretary Laird has sent you a report on the June missile assistance talks held by Defense officials in Paris (Tab B). This meeting produced a set of draft ground rules, enclosed with Laird's letter, which will now be reviewed and approved by each government. You will want to look at this document, which essentially repeats the guidance of NSDM 100 regarding the limitations of our assistance in the areas of guidance, accuracy, and nuclear hardening, and confining our cooperation to improving existing French systems, rather than helping them to develop new ones. A number of procedural points are also established, such as a single point of contact in each government (on our side it is Mr. G. R. Barse in Johnny Foster's shop, DDR & E) regular meetings at least every six months, exchanges of written documentation, etc. We recommend that you approve these ground rules in your reply memorandum to Laird at Tab A. The formal adoption of the ground rules will be effected by signature of Dr. Foster and M. Blancard on the final document.

According to Laird, the French were forthcoming in the technical discussion describing the general nature of their present missile systems to set the context and taking the US team to Bordeaux to tour actual propulsion plants and missile assembly facilities. The atmosphere was cordial, as evidenced by a follow-up letter which Blancard wrote to Foster (also at Tab B). Our side was impressed with the caliber of French personnel and their programs. Again, the overall impression was that the French are asking us for help that will save them time and money on rather specific technical difficulties they are having in areas such as propulsion, reliability, simulation techniques, and safety measures. The French will now pass to us written summaries of their problems, to be followed by our replies and another round of talks in Paris in October. Laird is confident that the possibility exists for significant cooperation which should improve our general political relations with France if we make a sincere effort. In short, a good start has been made. We will want to monitor further developments closely.

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One touchy issue we must address soon is whether to authorize use of contractors on some of the problem areas where the French are asking our advice. Although not yet broached formally in the talks, the quest is imminent. Defense feels at this stage that use of our contractors may be essential to achieve meaningful results, including some direct industrial contacts with the French. This will mean some risks, but Mr. Barse, staff coordinator on our side, believes he has a scheme involving two or three industrial representatives, with whom he already has relationships of trust, as intermediaries which could reduce the possibility of leaks still achieve results. We will ask for a formal memorandum on this as soon as possible and will raise the issue with you then for a decision. Obviously, industry-to-industry contacts will increase the chances of our cooperation becoming public.

#### RECOMMENDATION

That you review and approve the ground rules and sign the reply to Lai at Tab A.

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