

**December 7, 1971**

**Memorandum from Theodore L Eliot Jr. to Henry A. Kissinger, 'Briefing the British Regarding Our Special Defense Programs with the French'**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Eliot forwards a letter sent to William J. Galloway of the American Embassy in London, containing information for the British Foreign Office about US nuclear assistance to France. The letter describes the current status of cooperation between the US and France, including the preparations for nuclear safety talks and the first meeting with the French ballistic missile project.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Washington, D.C. 20520

December 7, 1971

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*9/24/78*

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Briefing the British Regarding  
Our Special Defense Programs  
with the French

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- DOD/ISA
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For your information I attach a copy of a letter dated December 3 from Assistant Secretary Hillenbrand to Mr. Galloway, our Political Counselor in London, instructing him to brief the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in line with the Mildenhall agreement, regarding our talks with the French in the nuclear safety and missile fields.

*Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.*  
Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.  
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

Hillenbrand/Galloway letter.

- cc: DOD/ATDS (AE) - Dr. Walske
- DOD/DDR&E - Mr. Barse
- DOD/ISA - Mr. Nutter
- AEC - Gen. Giller

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Drafted: PM:JTKendrick:bhh Retyped: S/S:hbb 12/7/71

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William J. Galloway, Esquire  
Counselor for Political Affairs  
American Embassy  
London

Dear Bill:

In my letter of May 12, 1971 I noted our intention to undertake discussions with France in several fields related to nuclear weapons and suggested that you brief the FCO in line with the Mildenhall agreement. Your letter of May 18 indicated that you had raised the matter with Clive Rose and that he expressed a desire to be kept informed of developments. Clive later questioned Ron Spiers (July 21) about details but was told that there was nothing further to report beyond that outlined by you.

The projects have been moving very slowly; nonetheless, we believe there has been sufficient movement to warrant filling in the FCO along the following lines:

1. As regards nuclear safety talks with the French, we briefed the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy in executive session on November 9 regarding the project. While the JCAE was not asked to endorse the talks with the French, and did not do so, it did not register opposition on the understanding that new Restricted Data would not be released.

2. We have now informed the French Defense Ministry that we are prepared to discuss with them nuclear safety centered on the operational nuclear safety procedures followed in the field

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by our respective commanders. We suggested that the talks also cover the principles of nuclear warhead safety design, which is unclassified, as well as the types of electrical and mechanical components which are used to assure that an inadvertent or unauthorized nuclear detonation will not occur. The suggested agenda might also include information on storage and handling criteria, quality assurance, and minimum maintenance, as they enhance nuclear safety. Lastly, we said we would be willing to discuss past nuclear accidents which we have experienced, as well as reporting procedures, response capabilities and decontamination experience. The French were informed that we would not be able to exchange information which we treat as Restricted Data or Formerly Restricted Data, although we would be able to talk about information in this category transmitted to the French when we supported their nuclear forces in NATO.

3. The French authorities had earlier said that in principle they would welcome the exchange. We have not yet, however, had an opportunity to hear from them following our official confirmation of willingness to proceed as indicated above. We do not expect that there will be any talks until after the first of the year. We have suggested that the matter be handled on a very confidential plane between the two governments.

4. Regarding discussions in the missile field, there has been one meeting between French and U.S. technical teams in which they discussed tentative arrangements and guidelines for cooperation. U.S. assistance will be in response to specific French requests on a case by case basis, with meetings taking

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place on a regular basis, at not greater than six months' intervals, to review the status of the program. Our assistance is limited in nature with the objective of helping to improve present French systems. We will help them save time and money in solving problems of their own existing systems. We will specifically be constrained in assistance in the areas of guidance, accuracy, and nuclear hardening. The arrangements contain the traditional mutual assurance that information received from the other party will not be divulged to any other government or organization. The French have agreed to these ground rules. Again, we have asked, and the French agreed, that knowledge of this program be closely held.

In the event the British raise the question of possible trilateral cooperation between the British, French, and U.S. in the field of nuclear safety, you should emphasize that while in principle such a program might be desirable, the question of triangular cooperation goes beyond our present authority and policy, and in any case would think that it might be advantageous for us to proceed quietly with the French for awhile before injecting a new element into the picture.

Sincerely,

*MS/*

Martin J. Hillenbrand  
Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of European Affairs

Drafted: PM: JTKendrick: bmh  
X23913 12/2/71

Clearances:

PM - Mr. Spiers *W* DOD/ATSD(AE) - *9ix*  
BMI - Mr. George *4/b.* Dr. Walske  
S/PC - Mr. Gathright *gr* DOD/ISA - Mr. Nutter *22*  
FBX - Mr. Beigel *gr* DOD/DDR&E -  
Mr. Barse *grc*

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