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ACTION
August 3, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt
SUBJECT: Franco-American Military Relations

Largely as a result of the President's meeting with Pompidou, we have begun a number of efforts to establish closer cooperation with France on military matters. These efforts range from the more prosaic matters such as contingency planning for ground and air forces in Germany, which have actually been in process for some years, to the more complex and politically sensitive, such as assistance to the French modern weapons programs. While the several projects are not necessarily related and are of different levels of significance, taken together they are the building block of a fundamental policy. For this reason, further movement should not be made without pausing now to consider carefully the political philosophy underlying these disparate measures of cooperation.

The Goodpaster-Fourquet Talks

General Goodpaster has given you a status report on the NATO projects he discussed with General Fourquet, and we have dealt with some of these in a separate briefing memorandum for the President.

To refresh your memory we have, or will complete, a framework of contingency plans for French ground forces in Germany, for air defense, and for tactical air cooperation; in addition, exploratory naval talks on exchange of intelligence and tactical data in the Mediterranean have begun. Except for the Mediterranean project none of this is really new. Contingency planning of this sort was foreseen in the Lemnitzer-Ailleret agreement. It is as much in the French interest as ours to have these plans worked out. It seems obvious, however, that the French are not going to relinquish national controls until hostilities break out.

SECRET/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E02958

By SR NARA Date 7-12-99

SECRET/NODIS

- 2 -

The areas of greatest interest to us will arise later. First, there is the intimation that contingency plans will be extended to French forces in France, now that the First French Army, controlling both French I and II corps (Germany) is the officially designated point of contact. This could open the door to some common logistical planning and use of French facilities, which is of primary interest to us and the one area where French withdrawal from integrated command has done the greatest damage.

The second area, and potentially more important, is the deployment of French tactical nuclear weapons in Germany (1972-73). As that date approaches the French, at a minimum, will have to work out some understanding with the Germans. If they do, then the French will have an independent capacity to initiate a tactical nuclear exchange in the forward areas. It will mean that whatever political agreements NATO reaches, and whatever tactical or strategic doctrine we have for first use of tactical nuclears, the French will be able to preempt these plans--unless there is some political basis laid for coordinating the use of French and NATO tactical forces. Goodpaster has raised this and was put off on the grounds that the issue is premature until the weapons are closer to deployment. There the matter currently rests.

Goodpaster seems satisfied, but the question is whether he could do more. We do not really know whether he feels circumscribed in his role as SACEUR. It is possible that he could do more should a decision be made that he act as the American Commander, rather than solely as SACEUR.

In any case, there is no pressing need for you to decide any issues now or take any particular action at this time.

(Computers for French Nuclear Weapons)

This is a pending issue, requiring a decision. We owe the French an answer on their request to lift our restriction on the use of US computers or US components for computers assembled in France. But more on this aspect later, in connection with the broader issues of cooperation with France as a nuclear power.

The NATO Nuclear Planning Group

In early May the Germans told us of an approach, five weeks earlier, from a member of the French NATO delegation concerning the possibility of the French receiving the two NPG studies, (1) on procedures for release of nuclear weapons, and (2) on the political guidelines for first use. After

SECRET/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E02958

By SR NARA Date 7-12-99

SECRET/NODIS

- 3 -

consulting with us and the British, the Germans replied in June that the French should make a specific request for the documents through Brosio. They were offered only one of the papers (on political guidelines). The French confirmed their continuing interest in the NPG at least on a "bilateral basis", and suggested that the Germans might be the intermediary. The French concluded that they would recommend that their Permanent Representative to NATO make an approach through Brosio. Thus far nothing else has happened.

A disturbing feature of this exercise is that the response from our side was proper but quite restrained. The NPG documents in question are anodyne, and whether the French have them is purely a political question. French association with the NPG is thought to be in our interest and was so agreed last February in the NSSM study prior to the Pompidou visit. But it is also clear that our bureaucracy has not made much of an effort to exploit this opening. If the French back off at this point we may have ourselves to blame.

France as a Nuclear Power--Our Policy Choices

The last administration developed a doctrine for dealing with the rise of other nuclear powers. In effect we sought to restrict the multiplication of nuclear powers, and it was this policy which led to the test ban and the negotiation of the NPT. Consequently, we opposed the French effort, and took executive decision, such as NASM 294 prohibiting any assistance to the French program. Though we did not actively oppose the British, after the MLF debacle we moved away from any thought of a European deterrent.

In this Administration we have not as yet developed a comparable doctrinal basis for policy. There has been no systematic review, and the result is that our position is ambiguous. On the one hand we have signed and ratified the NPT and entered into some discussion with the Soviets in SALT on restrictions on third powers. On the other hand, statements by the President (and by you) suggest that at the least we are willing to tolerate the French as a nuclear power. There seems an implicit doctrine in Presidential statements that the creation of more than one nuclear power in the West makes life more complicated for the Soviets.

Our Fundamental Interest

We need to ask what, exactly, are our basic interests. France will become a thermonuclear power of some significance, whether we help or not.

The question for us to face is whether to oppose the French on this matter, tolerate their efforts, or encourage and assist.

SECRET/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E02958

By SR NARA Date 7-12-99

SECRET/NODIS

- 4 -

Those who point to SALT as an inhibition on our policies have a legitimate point. If the SALT effort is aimed at creating a more stable strategic relationship with the USSR, it is not compatible with a simultaneous effort to create additional nuclear power centers in the West, which could in time become destabilizing (as far as the Soviets are concerned) and perhaps jeopardize the basic SALT understanding (see G. Smith's complaint on this score, Tab C).

On the other hand, it is also true that the French forces, in sheer numbers, even combined with the British, cannot be regarded as very threatening in a world that permits the US and USSR 2,000 missiles and heavy bombers, with freedom to continue most forms of modernization including MIRVs and no restriction on IR/MRBMs. On the other hand, with low or zero ABM levels, the French and British forces could, in time become more significant (as will the Chinese). A MIRVed French force, to take a far out example, would look to the Soviets as rather formidable in the later 1970s (roughly 300 or more thermonuclear warheads).

Finally, we must face up to this basic issue of our attitude toward France, in light of the potential for an Anglo-French combination. We know that the British are conducting a review of their position on a European deterrent based on an Anglo-French force, somehow related to NATO. Heath is on public record favoring it; Douglas-Home raised it without result with Schumann two weeks ago, and Lord Carrington told the Germans they were going to explore it. Both the British and French recognize that our attitude is critical on both political and technological grounds.

In sum, the time has come for defining the fundamental orientation of this Administration. We need Presidential doctrine, before we can really deal with ongoing issues of immediate importance that now confront you and the bureaucracy (listed below).

Assistance to the French Missile Program

John Foster held his private conversation with Blancard and submitted a very brief report to you through Secretary Laird. The French requests were the same they had made before. They relate mainly to technical information on improving the reliability of their missiles, plus one request for data on navigational devices to improve missile accuracy. Defense believes this

SECRET/NODIS

T/NODIS

- 5 -

atter project is out of bounds, and Foster told Blancard so. The other projects present no great problems, and Laird concludes that we can be of help to the French without 'compromise to our security'. Laird wants to meet with you, and you probably should bring State into this act (Tab D).

Computers for the French Nuclear Energy Problem

If you do meet with Laird, it would be well to use such a meeting to deal with the problem of computers.

You will recall that Secretary Rogers was asked by Schumann to consider lifting the restrictions we now impose on the use of US computers or US components for computers in the French nuclear energy program. We require from the French a certification not to use these computers in their AEC. The Secretary recommended against lifting the restrictions. You indicated that you wished to hold up any action on this until Foster returned, and that you wished to ask for some middle-ground alternative to be explored. This has not yet gone to the President.

There are valid arguments against changing our policy, on legal grounds because of the test ban, even though our current restrictions were adopted (in an executive order in 1966) as a retaliation for French withdrawal from NATO. On the other hand, there are political arguments to the effect that our denials and restrictions are no longer meaningful to the progress of the French program, and that our policy is thus little more than an irritant.

In any case, I suggest that you include this issue in a meeting with Defense and State in order to review both the missile assistance already underway (to approve continuing it) and the computers restrictions (to look for compromises). I would further suggest that some group be formed to monitor these projects (Tab E).

Research and Development

Foster's conversations about missiles were held while the formal Franco-American Committee on Research and Development Projects met in Paris. Judging from the report of the meeting submitted to you by Packard the French were eager and forthcoming, but we were not very well prepared. Packard reports were 'less forthcoming' and our exchange performance was 'spotty'. He promises, however, to take several steps in the immediate future to correct the 'imbalance', and will keep you informed (this is the non-missile, non-nuclear field).

SECRET/NODIS

RET/NODIS

- 6 -

I do not think you need do anything further on this for now. (Tab F)

Bureaucratic Organization and Control

As things now stand different aspects of this problem are being handled ad hoc through separate departments. Thus Goodpaster proceeds with Fourquet in a NATO context, reporting occasionally to you (and presumably to the Chairman of the JCS). The NPG is handled between State and Defense, with little White House involvement until the last minute (the entire French overture to the NPG was handled without reference to you or the President). The State Department regards the computer question as their baliwick presumably because Schumann asked Rogers about it. And, under your instructions, Laird and Foster are dealing independently on the missile assistance. All of this should be put in one ad hoc group that specializes in relations with French, operating under a broad Presidential directive.

-- The Verification Panel by its composition and technical resources might be most appropriate. But the presence of ACDA in dealing with what may become the most sensitive of matters may be a drawback (they would want in in any case because of SALT).

-- The Review Group is not the vehicle, nor does WSAG fit the requirements.

-- A new, distinct group might be the best solution, though in the end you will wind up with the Verification Panel by another name.

In any case, you should now take the first step of meeting with Laird and Rogers to dispose of the Foster project and the computer issues, even if you decide to temporize until a more basic paper is prepared by State and Defense on the policy choices in dealing with friendly nuclear powers.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That you send a memorandum (Tab B) to Laird and Rogers asking them (or their representatives, if you prefer) to meet with you to (a) consider how to proceed in these two specific areas and (b) establish some channels of reporting to the President through you, and (c) coordinate the various related efforts.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

2. If you approve, there is a brief memorandum to the President informing him of the status of talks with the French and indicating how you will proceed.