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Authority NND969057  
By K.C. NARA Date 12/30/78

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

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S/S *[Signature]*

January 24, 1973

To: The Deputy Secretary Designate  
From: PM *[Signature]* Ronald I. Spiers

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US - French Military Cooperation: Status Report

A. Nuclear Weapons Safety Talks:

US and French nuclear weapons technicians held two rounds of weapons safety talks authorized under NSDM 104 in 1972 (Paris in June; Washington in October). The French and American teams were made up of civilian and military experts representing both the producers (designers and builders) and the "users" (military planners and commanders) of nuclear weapons. The talks went well. The French team appeared to find them useful. As a result of the two sessions (each roughly a week long), the US team concluded that the French have an extensive and sophisticated weapons safety program which is remarkably similar to ours and that the French approach to the whole problem of nuclear weapons safety is gratifyingly conservative. A follow-on session is tentatively being planned for late spring.

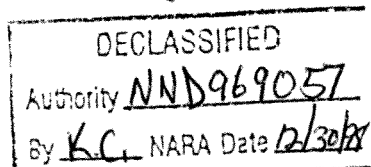
The projected third round will virtually exhaust all the weapons safety topics which, under present agreements and regulations, can be discussed with French Government officials. There is, however, another area of nuclear technology which might lend itself to a further US-French exchange should the President decide to enlarge the area of Franco-American military cooperation: the techniques of underground nuclear testing. The Assistant General Manager for Military Applications of the Atomic Energy Commission and his staff have suggested that a sufficient amount of testing technology (techniques of drilling, instrumentation, recovery of data, etc.) is either unclassified or classified at modest levels to permit a fruitful exchange with the French. The AEC staff believes that the prospect of obtaining this sophisticated technology would

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be extremely attractive to the French nuclear establishment. French nuclear technicians at President Pompidou's request are once again investigating seriously the possibility of under ground testing. (They are considering the use of the Island of Eiao in the Marquesas Islands in the South Pacific, and may be considering other locations.) Discussions of testing techniques with knowledgeable US technicians would add materially to the usefulness of underground testing for the French, increase their confidence in underground experiments, and save them significant sums of money should they decide to move their test program underground. From the US vantage point, encouraging the French to move their nuclear tests underground could serve to reduce the world-wide opposition to all nuclear testing (including our own) and the resulting pressures for the early conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban. AEC has set forth the testing technology technical assistance proposal in a preliminary paper and this week requested Defense and State to assess the feasibility and desirability of embarking on such an exchange program.

B. Missile Talks:

US missile technicians have had a series of technical exchanges with their French counterparts over the past 18 months as authorized by NSDM 103. The French have profitted significantly from these discussions. M. Debre and his subordinates have made a point of expressing their very real appreciation for our technical assistance in the complex areas of propulsion, quality control, reliability, etc., which was proffered principally in the form of responses to their technical questions.

From the outset, the French have pressed for the transfer of extremely sophisticated and sensitive missile technology. While they fully understand the ground rules governing the present exchanges and are aware, for example, that the US team does not have the authority to transfer Restricted Data to them, the French technicians have periodically reiterated their interest in the most advanced technology and have continued in friendly fashion to probe to determine whether the ground rules may have been changed. On instruction from Secretary Laird, the DOD experts made clear to their French counterparts last October that the original limitations still apply, but that a loosening of the restrictions at some unspecified future time was not totally ruled out. Internally, Mr. Laird directed that there were to be no new departures

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until the spring of 1973, and then only if the President decided that he wished to go further down this particular path.

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