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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

June 16, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Answers to Eight Questions re European Nuclear Matters

1. The chief argument against the French having nuclear information has been the effect it would have on the Germans, encouraging them to desire the same. Are we certain that cooperation with the French will have that effect? Is it possible to make an arrangement with the French that would limit the Germans in their demands?

Two principal arguments are advanced against our giving nuclear help to the French: (1) we would be aiding a country whose head of state holds a view of the NATO Alliance in general and of nuclear strategy in particular which is sharply at variance with our own views; (2) it would strengthen the incentives, first in Germany and then elsewhere, for additional national nuclear forces.

It now appears virtually certain that the French nuclear program will be carried on post de Gaulle. Our non-cooperation is not going to bring the program to an end. It seems to have enough support in French industry, the military and parliament for its existence to be virtually assured.

However, the vigor with which the program will be pursued once the initial goal of a minimal, largely symbolic, operational force exists, does remain in question. And the French assessment of its political and military virtues may alter. It should be an important objective of our European policy to bring the French, first, to an understanding of the political and military limitations of a weak, independent, nuclear force (we have made a good beginning on this - but more is needed) and, second, to influence the French to limit the scale of their nuclear effort and to link it increasingly to our own nuclear force, initially perhaps through coordinated planning of the use of the force de frappe and, in time, French participation in a NATO multilateral force.

One question is how best to bring about these desired changes in French attitudes and programs. Should we try to wait for de Gaulle's power to decline, as it seems likely to, or to wait for his successor while holding to a firm policy of opposition to his nuclear policies and programs? Or should we moderate our position of opposition in return for concessions on the part of the French? And if the latter, what explorations would be possible without setting up counter-productive expectations in France and elsewhere, particularly Germany?

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In any case, the continuation of a vigorous, if modest, French program would undoubtedly generate pressures within Germany over time for an independent German force, unless the political unification of Europe moves faster than now seems likely. Moreover, an additional motive for a German program may exist as compared with the British and the French; the desire to strengthen its bargaining position vis-a-vis the USSR over reunification and Berlin. The Germans might be prepared to forego nuclear independence as part of a larger deal on unification. But for this leverage to be effective they would have to have the nuclear option open to them.

Alliance opposition to German possession would be formidable, however. Moreover, the transfer of loyalties and nationalist feelings from individual European nations, Germany in this instance, to Europe may proceed fast enough to offset a feeling of nuclear discrimination. The French, and British, nuclear forces may come to be regarded by the Germans and others as the European's nuclear forces. But we should not count on this happening.

If the United States were to give nuclear aid to France, it is probable that we could obtain a commitment from France not to transmit nuclear information to third countries without our consent and to coordinate their targeting, etc., with the U.S. and the U.K. The question is the effect of such an arrangement on the Germans. It is most improbable that there would be an immediate demand within Germany for comparable treatment. But, over the longer run (e.g., 3 - 5 years) the Germans are likely to feel increasingly discriminated against, and to feel that their treatment within the Alliance is not commensurate with their behavior as good "Europeans" and as members of NATO making a greater contribution to its non-nuclear defenses than either Britain or France. This feeling of discrimination could become acute if, in addition, the U.S. and the USSR were to conclude a nuclear non-diffusion agreement that inevitably would appear to be directed largely at Germany. Even in this situation, however, the obstacles, principally allied opposition, to German possession of nuclear arms, would remain formidable.

Various arrangements are possible which might make it easier for the Germans to be satisfied with, and consent to, an arrangement under which the U.S. gives nuclear assistance to the French. For example, if the French were to increase their projected commitment of ground divisions to NATO from the four contemplated in MC 26/4 to six divisions, and to agree to move some of these divisions into Germany to aid in the forward defense of the southern part of the line, the Germans might be more willing to support nuclear aid to France. Similarly, if France were to participate in, or at least not object to, a NATO multilateral force which the Germans might hope would eventually evolve into a

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European force within NATO, they might have less long-run difficulty with our providing nuclear aid to France. Defense Minister Strauss has indicated that he would welcome at least a small number of U.S.-owned and controlled land-based mobile MRBMs in Germany. An agreement to go forward with such a program might also ease the German situation.

It should be noted that Strauss in his discussion with me at Athens indicated he would prefer to have us furnish nuclear assistance to France rather than to have the current situation continue. It may be, however, that he was merely attempting to smoke out whether we were contemplating such an arrangement.

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2. Is it possible that refusing to give the information to the French will encourage them to go to the Germans - thus making German possession more likely?

The French may seek support from the Germans, especially as the costs of the force de frappe mount. Moreover, if the government really believes what Couve de Murville has said, that a German program is inevitable, the French might seek to link up the Germans with themselves in a joint program rather than see an independent German program develop. However, there is little in de Gaulle's policies toward Germany that suggests that he would take an action that would make German possession of nuclear weapons substantially more likely. In any case, most of their allies would clearly be strongly opposed to such a move. And Germany, in particular, is in no position to adopt a policy that would meet with powerful resistance in the U.S., Britain, the Low Countries and Scandinavia. In short, the French may make the offer but the Germans, for some time to come, are almost certain to refuse. Only if Germany were to lose confidence in the U.S. ability or will to defend Germany's vital interests would such an offer stand much chance of being accepted over the next several years. *

If we continue to deny nuclear information to the French, the more likely development is that the French will attempt to weave Germany more closely into European, as opposed to NATO, defense planning with the inducement that in the long run the Germans will be able to share in France's nuclear capabilities through the European route.

* Conceivably if Adenauer's faculties deteriorate enough, he might adopt a policy that would run directly counter to a main and constant objective of his foreign policy - to keep the U.S. intimately involved in Europe's and Germany's defense. His likeliest successors, however, Erhard or Schroeder, are not likely to abruptly reverse this policy.

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3. Is not the entry of the British into the Common Market ultimately going to bring the French into nuclear discussions either directly or indirectly?

The French have made it quite clear that they do not consider British membership in the Common Market to be consistent with nuclear inequality between France and Britain. It is probable that de Gaulle will maintain his present position that it is beneath his dignity to ask for nuclear cooperation either from the British or from the U.S. His associates, however, have in the past, and can be expected increasingly in the future, to bring home their view of the inconsistency, and of the unacceptability to them, of a continuation of differential U.S.-U.K. and U.S.-French nuclear relationships, particularly in the context of joint French-U.K. participation in the Common Market.

To us there is a clear distinction between our relationships with the U.K. and our relationships with France. Except for several short-lived episodes, such as the abortive Suez affair, British foreign policy for a century has rested on the proposition that it cannot afford a fundamental split with the U.S. This drawing together has become far more explicit in recent times in view of the over-riding importance the British attach to the American Alliance. The British have accepted the status of junior partner in the firm in exchange for a special relationship which they believe affords them a unique opportunity to influence U.S. policy.

It is within the context of the vital relationship that the British have created their nuclear policy - first in the environment of five years of wartime collaboration, then during twelve years of independent efforts, and finally during four years of enjoying the fruits of cooperation with the U.S. under Sections 91 (c) and 144 (c) of the Atomic Energy Act as amended in 1958. Coterminous with this 21 year period was the rapid shrinkage of the colonial empire and a return to the Little England policy of Gladstone, the admission of growing dependence upon U.S. security forces, and a financial situation which did not permit lavish expenditures upon atomic programs.

The advantages of this cooperation to the British are manifest. For a relatively small expenditure they have acquired a nuclear warhead capability which compares favorably with that of the U.S. on a qualitative (but not quantitative) basis. The possession of the Bomber Command has seemed to the British to be an important factor in giving the British the second place in the eyes of world opinion in the councils of the Free World.

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In this connection, however, it is to be noted that the British position is unrestrained except with respect to actions which they know will disturb Washington or the American public. They can buy from the U.S. or manufacture themselves as much nuclear material as they can afford. There are no U.S.-imposed limitations, except retransmission, upon the size of their technical-scientific establishment, upon the nature of their research program, upon the number and type of nuclear weapons systems or upon their test programs.

Within the 1958 bilateral, the British have enjoyed great advantages. Except for gaseous diffusion data, they are privy to virtually every U.S. development in the nuclear weapons field. They had the run of almost every U.S. research institution; access to a large part of U.S. intelligence data; and they could, if they chose to do so, construct almost any one of the U.S. weapon designs. In addition, they are able to exchange their surplus of plutonium for American U-235. That they choose not to apply much of this sharing information to development of their own weapon systems is due to their own policy decisions and not to any control exercised by the U.S.

This is not to say, however, that the British have not had to pay for this special relationship. The size and nature of U.S.-based facilities in the U.K. have been a difficult problem for several British governments, the most recent incidents being the Holy Loch affair. Similarly, the British have accommodated the U.S. on a number of colonial issues in a way they would have felt no obligation to do if it had not been for the higher stakes of the American Alliance.

In short, by their own volition judged in terms of their own national interest, the British are able to profit from the fruits of their unique sharing relationship with the U.S. To give up this relationship would be costly to British prestige, quite apart from the losses which would be incurred for their security forces, their research organizations and their engineering industries. On the other hand, with a possible acceptance of conditions which would govern their entrance into the EEC, there are no forces impelling them to disturb their harmonious nuclear relationships with the U.S.

A comparable relationship between the U.S. and the French is difficult to imagine. We lack the long experience of close partnership. Not only de Gaulle's ideas, but French ideas generally are not easily assimilable to our ideas. It is probable, therefore, that some difference in U.S.-U.K. and U.S.-French relationships will persist even though we were to move quite far down the road of attempting an equalization by increasing our cooperation with France and playing down the special relationship with the U.K.

It is, therefore, almost inevitable that the question of nuclear relationships will arise between the U.K. and France if the U.K. enters the Common Market.

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4. Isn't our presumption that we could attract French support ultimately, perhaps post de Gaulle, to a European deterrent becoming increasingly slim?

Two separate questions arise under this heading: one is the prospect of French support for a European deterrent; the other is the prospect of French support for a NATO deterrent.

If the U.S. and the U.K. do not in the meantime find some tri-lateral or NATO-wide solution acceptable to the French to the nuclear problem, it is not at all unlikely that the French will in time participate in some type of European deterrent. While de Gaulle is opposed to multilateral solutions, the center of gravity of French public opinion is much more pro-European and pro-NATO than is the General. There is an inherent inconsistency in an independent French national nuclear deterrent and a European Community gaining depth in the political and economic fields. It seems probable that any successor to de Gaulle would be likely to support a European deterrent, even though he may not abandon the capacity for independent French action in an emergency.

As between a European deterrent (excluding a U.S. veto or preponderant influence) and a NATO deterrent (including a U.S. veto or preponderant influence), the French position will depend critically on the state of their understanding of nuclear warfare, and their recognition of the implications of this choice on the nature and extent of the commitment of the U.S. to Europe's defense. The French, and the other Europeans, are still in the elementary stages of learning about nuclear warfare. It would appear to be in the U.S. interest and that of the West generally that education and action make possible a NATO-wide solution to the problem rather than a division between a U.S. deterrent and a European deterrent. In the end, if we handle ourselves intelligently, Europe and the French should come out strongly in favor of close association with the U.S. on nuclear matters.

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5. Isn't it obvious that the French are now going to have this nuclear deterrent, that they will have no obligations to us, and that we will lack the element of control that our cooperation with the British has given us?

It would be difficult to contend that the U.S. controls the British nuclear program in the sense that we make, or influence, the British to do things to which they really object. Rather, the more reasonable interpretation is that the harmonization of their nuclear policy with that of the U.S. caused them no pain, and that the atomic assistance received from the U.S. has been sheer profit.

For reasons which are unnecessary to spell out, the French relationship to the U.S. is vastly different from the British. There is no background of a century of harmonization of policies. There is no counterpart in a U.S.-French alliance. Unlike the British, the French under de Gaulle are determined to re-establish a political position they have not had for generations. Furthermore, the negative French attitude toward NATO and their unwillingness to receive U.S. nuclear forces on French territory are important obstacles to harmonization of U.S. relations with France. Perhaps U.S.-French nuclear cooperation would diminish or remove these obstacles, but there is not a firm and well-established foundation of mutual confidence and trust which would seem to be an essential for an activity so delicate and important as nuclear sharing. It is, perhaps, likely that the French would give up their atomic cooperation with Israel in return for "substantial progress" sharing with the U.S. But in this matter, as in the cases of disarmament and the test ban, de Gaulle has shown himself to be exceptionally sensitive, if not to say intransigent, with regard to actions which limit his freedom of action. The British have been willing to live within the nuclear policy favored by the U.S., and they have done so without having to sign any written commitments to this effect beyond the arrangement not to retransmit data and atomic materials. On the other hand, there is reason to believe that de Gaulle is unwilling similarly to restrict his policy options whether this pledge would be written or unwritten. As for control over the flow of weapons designs, nuclear material, and missile technology, if the French were to shift scientists and technicians to other activities and not expand nuclear production plants, the U.S. would have the power to disrupt the French program by cutting off aid. However, if, as is likely, the French were to continue to invest scientific talent and money heavily in nuclear and missile technology, despite U.S. support, the extent of U.S. direct control might be small.

In short, the British have not surrendered their independence, however little it may be worth. And the French are no more likely to. Finally, since the U.S. is the great nuclear power, the French have every incentive to seek coordination with us whether or not we assist them rather than the other way around. The problem to be overcome is de Gaulle's sense of pride.

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5. Is it not a fact that the NATO nuclear concept is stillborn - really not developing in any way and no longer a likely prospect?

If the French and British actively oppose the NATO nuclear force, it will not come into being. If they both abstain from opposing but refuse to participate, the prospects would be slightly better but still poor given the high cost of such a force. A force of 300 - 350 missiles in strength would probably cost close to \$2 billion. If we want this force to come into being, we may not only have to put up most of the money, but also push the program vigorously within NATO.

The basic reasons for the tepidity of European interest in the NATO multilateral force would seem to be two: (a) confidence in the commitment of the U.S. to Europe's defense and a consciousness of U.S. nuclear power, and (b) a desire for greater freedom of action and less dependence on the United States which a NATO force would not provide but which they think a European force would provide.

The U.S. has attempted, with what appears to be considerable success, to make clear to the Europeans that the major nuclear forces that deter the USSR from attacking Europe, and would act if Europe were attacked, are, and should be, located all over the world. A separate question has been the willingness of the U.S. to act. On this, we have reiterated our intent and backed this up by continuing to station several hundred thousand troops in Europe plus several thousand nuclear weapons. It would appear that on these crucial matters there is no serious widespread European concern about the nature and extent of the U.S. commitment.

Many of the reasons why many Europeans would today prefer a European force to a NATO force may turn out to be illusory. There would remain the crucial matter of the control. It would not seem to be much easier to work out a system of control which excluded the U.S. than one which included it. Is the typical problem of a European country one of trusting the U.S. less than other allies in Europe? And since the U.S. would almost certainly be forced to consider reducing or halting its commitments to Europe if such a force were created and not closely integrated with NATO, the net effect of the creation of a European force might be either a sharp reduction in the felt security of at least the most exposed European members of NATO or no greater freedom of action than Europe now enjoys.

In any case, it seems unlikely that the NATO nuclear concept can be translated into reality in the near future. In the longer run, it might be possible if the continuing exploration of alternatives persuades both the U.S. and the Europeans that no alternative offers a better solution to the manifold complex of problems involved.

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7. Is it a fact that if we help France at this point it will encourage other national deterrents? Does our refusal to help her really discourage the development of other national deterrents? Which countries are likely to follow the French example?

Within NATO there is a fairly well established pecking order of national power and prestige. A partial ordering runs, after the U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, Italy, the Low Countries. In general, we can expect those lower in the list not to aspire to, or even consider, having nuclear weapons until the country next higher up the scale has them. The reason is not one of technical competence or even of resources. Rather, the motives for having them are largely, and vaguely, political. But with strong inhibitions against their possession unless the domestic political pressure has built up. Thus, today there are some in Germany beginning to anticipate German possession, but there is virtually no one in Italy, the Low Countries or ~~any~~ visibly contemplating national possession. When France is clearly in the club, it would be normal to expect the process to go on to Germany. In light of Germany's special history and position, it is likely, however, that the process will stop at France or at least be delayed for a long time before pressures in Germany build up sufficiently strongly to overcome the counter pressures that operate on the German situation.

The effects outside of NATO of the French program are likely to be small. If the process of nuclear diffusion stops at France, the USSR would not thereby be motivated to help any of its allies. The Swiss and Swedes, both with the technical competence to carry out programs and having evidenced some interest in national programs, might come to consider that the shape of the world called for national possession, but there is little evidence that they are close to making the decision to go ahead. Then there is French assistance to Israel. It seems on the face of it incredible that Israel would go so far as to try to obtain nuclear weapons given its vulnerability. Or that the French would help them to. In the unlikely event the Israeli's attempt to get nuclears, we should seek to dissuade them.

3. With the French reluctance to commit troops to Germany, and the German troops held at 12 divisions, is it going to be possible for us to implement the forward strategy? If not, should we consider whether it is possible for us to reduce our forces in the European theater?

At present the French have 2-1/3 divisions stationed in Germany. They are, however, stationed close to the Rhine in positions that do not support the forward strategy. The French have agreed under MC 26/4 to commit 4 divisions to NATO. Furthermore, they have recently indicated their willingness to move their force forward.

To implement the forward strategy, General Horstad believes that he needs at least the full number of divisions called for by MC 26/4 (29-2/3 divisions on the central front). The Germans, however, believe the allocation of a requirement for 40 brigades to them and 4 divisions to the French is inequitable. Strauss has indicated that he will press for a revision upward of the French commitment to 6 divisions coupled with a downward revision of the German requirement. We would prefer to see the French commit 6 divisions to NATO with no cut in the German allocation from the present target of 40 brigades. We do, however, agree with the Germans that the present allocation between Germany and France is inequitable.

Carrying out the forward strategy would be greatly assisted by French willingness to commit additional forces to Germany and, particularly, to accelerate the equipment of these divisions and their movement to forward positions in Germany. However, even without French cooperation beyond that now foreseeable, there is scope for improvement in the placement of Central Region forces. The U.S. forces are poorly located in Bavaria; the British hold too wide a portion of the front; the Belgians and Dutch forces are too far to the rear; there is need for a screening force along the border in the North. These changes can be done independently of the French.

However, the slow pace of the French effort to strengthen their non-nuclear force and to put them where they would be most effective is most hurtful to NATO. It leaves NATO in a weak military position. The U.S. and Germany are thereby forced to carry a disproportionately high burden if the MC 26/4 goals, necessary for the forward strategy, are to be met.

In order to impress upon the Germans the importance of the use of their influence to get a change in the French position, we have told them that, unless adequate forces are produced for the forward strategy, we will have to consider reducing our forces in the European theater. To actually reduce our forces would be a most serious step

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which could well bring about a fundamental weakening of the Alliance unless the situation becomes less tense and threatening than at present. To start reducing our effective combat forces at this juncture would collapse the current effort and make the U.S. desire for options other than the nuclear option in that part of the world hopeless.

Signed by Mr. McNamara

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