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SECRET

June 14, 1962

TO : The Secretary

THROUGH: S/S

FROM : G - U. Alexis Johnson

SUBJECT: Davy Crockett Deployment

1. In my memorandum briefing you for the recent White House meeting on the permissive link, I stated:

> "In the course of briefings in Dr. Wiesner's office about the permissive link, DOD made clear that it now believed that the link weighs too much to be applied to Davy Crockett and that the dangers inherent in this weapon (a short range low yield firearm for use by infantrymen) could only be avoided by controlling its deployment. When Foy Kohler wrote Paul Nitze last October to express our concern with these dangers, Paul's answer indicated that it was then thought the permissive link could be applied to the Davy Crockett. In view of the present conclusion that this is not feasible, DOD staff advises us that this would be a good time to lay our concerns before Defense, since the issue of Davy Crockett deployment will be a recurring one. We are preparing a letter for your signature on this subject."

2. A proposed letter to Secretary McNamara is attached. (Tab A). DOD staff believe that the Sunday Times story about Davy Crockett makes this letter more, rather than less, useful.

Recommendation:

That you sign the attached letter (Tab A).

June 16, 1962

SECRET

Dear Bob:

In the course of recent inter-agency discussions of the permissive link program, DOD representatives advised us that it would not be possible to apply the permissive link to warheads for the Davy Crockett delivery system, in contrast to warheads for other delivery systems to be dispersed to NATO Europe.

In the light of this information, I wanted to share with you my concerns on two points:

First, there is the control problem. In the event of hostilities, there would be powerful arguments for dispersing Davy Crockett warheads - like other warheads - to operational units, so that any Presidential decision to use nuclear weapons could be readily implemented. In case of the Davy Crockett warhead, however, dispersal would mean loss of physical control, whereas in the case of other warheads such control could still be maintained through the permissive link. The risk of unauthorized firing of the very short range Davy Crockett by individual soldiers in the midst of non-nuclear, or controlled nuclear, hostilities seems, moreover, somewhat larger than in the case of longer range weapons further to the rear, which will be in the hands of well-organized units under the command of well-indoctrinated officers. It seems difficult to be assured that no one of the private soldiers armed with a Davy Crockett would fire off his weapon, without orders to do so, in self-defense as the fog of combat swirled around him. The risk would seem likely to grow with the number of individuals armed with this weapon.

This is

The Honorable
Robert S. McNamara,
Secretary of Defense.

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This is the more true since I believe that, if our allies believed a sizeable Davy Crockett program were underway for US forces in NATO Europe, it would be politically difficult to limit any plans for deployment of this weapon to US forces, thus discriminating against allied NATO forces.

Second, there is the effect which allied knowledge of any substantial US Davy Crockett program for NATO would have on allied attitudes toward NATO strategy. The difficulty of exercising control over this weapon is so clear that I wonder whether such knowledge might not somewhat degrade the credibility of the views outlined in your Athens speech, deprecating the possibility of limited and useful employment of tactical nuclear weapons and emphasizing the possibility of more than transient non-nuclear combat in Europe. Efforts to persuade our allies to support and fulfill the desired NATO strategy might thus be somewhat handicapped. My concern on this point is reinforced by the questions we are now getting from the Germans (both during Strauss' visit and now in the NAC) concerning recent reports of Davy Crockett deployment to NATO Europe.

I realize, of course, that operational military considerations are also involved. I wanted to outline my concerns in the two respects indicated above, however, so that they could be weighed - along with these considerations - in the Defense Department's review of future Davy Crockett programs. Alexis Johnson's and Foy Kohler's people would be glad to discuss these concerns further with your staff in relation to specific proposed programs, if you desire.

With warm regards.

Sincerely,

Dean Rusk

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