

February 18, 1960

Hugh S. Cuming, Director, Office of Intelligence and Research, to Secretary of State, 'Growing Revelation of West German Interest in Nuclear Striking Force in Europe'

Citation:

"Hugh S. Cuming, Director, Office of Intelligence and Research, to Secretary of State, 'Growing Revelation of West German Interest in Nuclear Striking Force in Europe'", February 18, 1960, Wilson Center Digital Archive, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 1960-1963, 740.5/2-18/60. Contributed to NPIHP by Bill Burr.
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Summary:

This State Department intelligence report touched upon a key issue for West German policy: a desire to upgrade West Germany's nuclear role without putting it in control of nuclear weapons. According to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), the West Germans faced a "dilemma" because of the development of Soviet strategic missile capabilities.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

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Authority NND 94 9500
By KCS NARA Date 2/2/78

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FEB 13 1960

TO : EUR - Mr. Foy D. Kohler
FROM : INR - Hugh S. Cumming, Jr.
SUBJECT : Growing Revelation of West German Interest in Nuclear Striking Force in Europe

This evaluation has been prepared in response to a request from the Office of German Affairs and the Office of Regional Affairs and copies have been sent to these offices. Copies have also been sent to Assistant Secretary Policy Planning and Special Assistant to the Secretary for Disarmament and Atomic Energy.

There is mounting evidence from our own reports as well as other sources over the past few months that Chancellor Adenauer and his military and political advisors have become convinced that strategic nuclear striking force is needed in NATO Europe and that control over it should not rest exclusively with the United States.

The military leaders of West Germany believe that the security of the Federal Republic is dependent upon the presence of United States troops. These troops constitute the most important element of the Shield forces and are a guarantee that the strategic striking power of the United States will be used in the event of Soviet aggression. The absence of alternatives in the West German mind reinforces adherence to NATO strategic doctrine. In their view the massive striking power of the Sword makes forward strategy feasible and provides the framework for increasing the effectiveness of the NATO Shield forces in Western Europe.

The growth of Soviet military power since 1957 has, however, created serious concern in West Germany about the continuing credibility of the United States deterrent. This concern stems partly from the apprehension that Soviet advances in military technology may lead the USSR to believe that the United States would not resort to a massive nuclear strike in the event of hostilities in Western Europe. It also stems partly from fears that such a Soviet estimate might in fact be correct under certain circumstances.

The Germans have regarded the responses of the United States and United Kingdom to the Soviet threat in Berlin as a manifestation of a degree of weakness, not precisely measurable, but seemingly indicative of some downgrading of their commitment to Western Europe. The influence of de Gaulle on Adenauer and the French support of the Federal Republic on the Berlin question have helped to increase these doubts. These doubts have contributed to a feeling in West Germany that there is danger in a situation which leaves to non-Continental powers the exclusive authority to use or not to use the only strategic weapons which could decide the issue in the event of Soviet attack on Western Europe.

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Thus the West German military and political leaders are confronted with a dilemma. They feel themselves unable to take steps or advocate policies which will cast doubt on the primacy of the United States role in the defense of Western Europe or on the soundness of NATO strategic doctrine. To do so would undermine Adenauer's foreign and military policy, be destructive of NATO military integration, and cause political repercussions in the Federal Republic most unfavorable to the present Government. Also a demonstrated lack of faith in the United States might tend, West Germans believe, to weaken U.S.-German ties and to accelerate the rising threshold of provocation that would evoke a U.S. response.

Confronted with this dilemma, it is unlikely in the near future that the West Germans unilaterally will advance proposals calling for a deterrent which is not subject to U.S. veto. They will, however, lend political support, and possibly technical assistance, to French development of nuclear armament. There is no evidence to suggest that West Germany has the will at the present time to produce atomic weapons or to exercise national control over the use of any such weapons which may be made available to them. Such a development, the West Germans believe, would be an almost intolerable provocation of the Soviet Union and might cause a political crisis in the Federal Republic itself.

From the West German point of view, the most practical solution would be the stationing of U.S. strategic weapons on the Continent. This would be regarded as strengthening the U.S. commitment and would constitute an addition to the defense of Europe. For the time being, the West Germans would probably accept the present NATO stockpile arrangements for warheads if IRBM weapons were placed in the custody of Western European forces and under joint control.

The West Germans feel that such an arrangement, in combination with other defensive measures, would either deter Soviet limited aggression, halt such aggression if it occurred, or inevitably involve the United States in case of strategic attack on Western Europe.

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