

**July 9, 1965**

**Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Rusk and Rusk and West German Ambassador Heinrich Knappstein, 'Nonproliferation'**

**Citation:**

"Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Rusk and Rusk and West German Ambassador Heinrich Knappstein, 'Nonproliferation'", July 9, 1965, Wilson Center Digital Archive, NARA, RG 59, Subject-Numeric Files, 1964-1966, Def 18-6. Contributed to NPIHP by Bill Burr.

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**Summary:**

In this broad discussion, one of the topics was the report on nuclear proliferation by a presidentially-appointed committee chaired by former Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric. The Gilpatric report left open a controversial issue: whether a nonproliferation policy agreement should include provisions for MLF-type arrangements or eschew them.

**Credits:**

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

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

DEPARTMENT OF STATE 6/13/65

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Memorandum of Conversation

Approved in S  
7/23/65

PART I OF II

DATE: 7/9/65  
July 9, 1965

SUBJECT: Non-proliferation

This document consists of 3 pages.

Number of copies, Series A

PARTICIPANTS:

- The Secretary
- Richard Finn, Deputy Director, GER
- Ronald I. Spiers, Deputy Director, RPM
- Heinrich Knappstein, Ambassador of Germany
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Ambassador Knappstein said that he had asked to see the Secretary because of his concern, reflecting that in Bonn, about the growing U.S. debate on non-proliferation. The Gilpatric Report, the Robert Kennedy speech (and the strong verbal approval it had received from a number of Senators), Mr. Foster's article in "Foreign Affairs," and the reports from Britain that the UK was heartened about the new United States attitude on non-proliferation, all contributed to the German unease. The new UK draft non-proliferation agreement had been studied in Bonn and was unacceptable to the FRG. Both the Kennedy speech and the Foster article appear to give very high priority to non-proliferation over other foreign policy objectives, including the Alliance, the MLF (or other new nuclear arrangements similar to this). The FRG knows the attitude of the State Department on this question but sees dangers of a building up of public pressures in the US which could change the present position. To some degree this is what happened on the MLF. The Secretary interjected that we must be very clear between Bonn and Washington that we had pulled back on the MLF only when Bonn told us they did not want it to come into being before the September elections. This word came to us from the "highest authority" and may not be known generally in the German Cabinet. The MLF thus has only been put on ice until after the election, and there is no U.S. policy change. Ambassador Knappstein noted that Schroeder on November 20, after his visit here, had reported he was convinced fully and firmly that the U.S. would go ahead with the MLF. Then on December 15 came the President's statement (i.e. the Reston Report on NSAM 322). The Secretary reiterated that there should be no misunderstanding of the U.S. position: what we had done "was strictly responsive to your wishes." Ambassador Knappstein suggested it might be useful for him to withdraw the comparison.

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Ambassador Knappstein said that while he had no instructions to raise this matter with the Secretary, he was interested in "trying to bring Bonn to a less nervous attitude." Bonn fears the theme which emerges in the Kennedy speech that the FRG is a kind of obstacle to a non-proliferation agreement. Bonn feels the West would only limit itself by such an agreement, since the Russians will not proliferate in any event, and the Chinese are "outside of the game." (NOTE: it was not clear whether the Ambassador was speaking of a universal non-proliferation agreement or one that would only be signed by the Western powers.) The Secretary observed that it was in the nature of nuclear weapons that those who have them do not want to give them away. Ambassador Knappstein questioned whether this would be true, for example, as between China and Indonesia. A non-proliferation agreement between the US and USSR would have no effect in this circumstance. He then read Schroeder's press interview statement of July 3 regarding the requirements for nuclear reorganization in NATO, which he noted could be settled by the MLF or a similar force, and which would then allow the FRG to renounce national ownership of nuclear weapons, and the relationship between non-proliferation and the problem of reunification. The Secretary noted that the relationship between non-dissemination and reunification was a new element in Bonn's thinking and that we are not ready to accept a linkage between the two.

Secretary Rusk noted that we do not intend to make the Gilpatric report public or to make it available to other governments. However, he wished to state that this report did not, contrary to press reports, urge priority for a non-proliferation agreement over nuclear reorganization in the Alliance. Of course it was natural that Gilpatric would give high priority to non-proliferation, since this was the subject he was dealing with. We agree on the importance of this subject and are more concerned about the development of national nuclear programs by the twenty or so countries who have the technical capability than we are about the present nuclear powers passing control over nuclear weapons to others.

Secretary Rusk said that we had not accepted the Soviet view that the MLF has anything to do with nuclear proliferation. It does not involve proliferation, and he is convinced that the Soviets object to the MLF on other grounds than this. The Soviets would do anything they can to stop the MLF, but we are not going to compromise or abandon our efforts because of Soviet objections. We would like to see the 1963 Agreement we proposed to the Soviets come into being, but there is little chance of this because of the Soviet attitude. He recalled that the FRG had approved this agreement. Maybe after the new nuclear Alliance arrangements are worked out, the Soviets will accept our proposal.

With respect to the Foster article, Ambassador Knappstein noted that the author had "expressed himself very carefully." The Secretary noted that it was appropriate and suitable, given his responsibilities, for Mr. Foster to urge priority for disarmament objectives. There was no change in US policy, however.

The Secretary said that he thought "if by some miracle" it would be possible to achieve a non-proliferation agreement, we would probably be pressed very hard in the Senate on the issue of the MLF on two grounds: (1) do the Europeans really want

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the MLF or is it a divisive element in the Alliance (this is why it is important that a considerable number of European countries show an active and friendly interest in the project); (2) some Senators will be worried by the Soviets' characterization of the MLF as an obstacle to better East-West relations. That attitude clearly exists on the part of some Senators. On the whole, however, the Senate would see this argument as a "phony" and agree with the position of the Executive Branch. The Secretary thought, however, it was clearly in the Alliance's interest not to have more national nuclear forces. This would break the Alliance to pieces. Furthermore, it was not in the interest of the Alliance for such countries as Sweden, Switzerland, India, Brazil, Israel and Egypt to develop national nuclear programs. Ambassador Knappstein agreed and noted that this was why a program of joint ownership in the Alliance was significant. The Secretary said that the Soviets would not get a non-proliferation agreement if they insisted on their viewpoint on the MLF. This is a position which the US cannot accept, and which he personally had spent the last three years not accepting. After substantial discussion, Gromyko had finally confessed that Soviet objections to the MLF went beyond the non-proliferation issue: they object to NATO and anything which strengthens NATO. Ambassador Knappstein asked whether the "non-proliferation agreement at any price" attitude could gain ground. Secretary Rusk said he saw little chance of that. This entire matter is very much in the hands of the President and the Executive Branch. He was certain there was plenty of time to get the German elections out of the way and to take a thorough look at the nuclear problem in NATO. He noted we were informing the British that we did not agree with their new draft non-proliferation agreement. He felt our original 1963 language was the best. Ambassador Knappstein said that he was very comforted to hear this. The Secretary said that the FRG should not be too worried about a general debate on this subject in this country.

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