

**January 23, 1970**

**Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Henry A. Kissinger, 'Memo from Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense on Assistance to France on Ballistic Missiles'**

**Citation:**

"Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Henry A. Kissinger, 'Memo from Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense on Assistance to France on Ballistic Missiles'", January 23, 1970, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Security Council Files (NSCF), Box 676, France Vol. IV 11/69-31 Jan 70. Obtained and contributed by William Burr and included in NPIHP Research Update #2.  
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**Summary:**

Helmut Sonnenfeldt informs Kissinger that France has made a direct request to the Pentagon for technical assistance with their ballistic missile program. Attached to the memo is a series of correspondence between Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard and the Director of Defense Research and Engineering, John S. Foster. Foster proposed that he meet with the French Minister of Armaments.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

ACTION

January 23, 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt *HS*

SUBJECT: Memo from Deputy Secretary of Defense on Assistance to France on Ballistic Missiles

This is an extremely interesting (and appalling) set of memoranda. They are interesting because they represent the first direct request from the French for technical assistance in the development of their ballistic missile program from the French Minister of Armaments, Blancard. It is appalling in that the Pentagon has been sitting on this since mid-December, and apparently has decided how to handle it without the slightest effort to consult with you, or anyone outside. You will recall that we went over all of this in the French NSSM, and it is still part of that exercise. It would have been nice to know of Foster's private diplomacy.

The memoranda are self explanatory and you should read them. (Tab B)

Mr. Packard has stalled any further movement, which is fine for the moment. What is at issue is whether in the context of the periodic Franco-American scientific meetings on research and development, we should offer advice on the areas mentioned by the French: reliability star-tracker navigation reentry vehicle material, US contractor support on development and early production of boosters. Foster feels that information on reliability and reentry vehicle could be divulged without problems

The second issue is Packard's question to you: whether a planned visit by Foster to Paris should include a private meeting with Blancard, who has already mentioned the subject to Foster in December. I strongly urge you to call off Foster, until after the Pompidou visit for two reasons:

1. As of now, we could not possibly make a decision on this question; it should go before the President as part of the Pompidou preparations.
2. Should we decide to explore some cooperation after the Pompidou visit, then we could use Foster's contact with Blancard as a first move.

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By	MW NARA
Date	5/18/02

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One more aspect: We are in no position to decide this issue until we have more information from Packard and Foster as to what we can do in the technical field, and what are the legal problems, if any.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the memorandum to Packard (Tab A) which urges against the Foster visit, or at least any further explorations with Blancard and asks for a memorandum on the technical aspects of cooperating with the French in this field.

Att:

Tabs A and B.

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Authority E.O. 12958  
By MW NARA Date 3/18/02

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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January 27, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

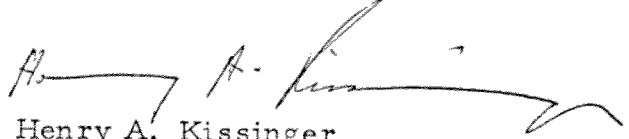
SUBJECT: Assistance to the French Missile Program

Your memorandum of January 21 concerning the French request for assistance in developing their ballistic missiles raises a major policy issue. It will ultimately have to go before the President and the NSC as part of the general review of our relations with France. Accordingly, I feel it would be best if Dr. Foster did not pursue this further with Blancard at this time. He could indicate, however, that we have the general question under consideration.

Before we can bring this issue to a decision, it would be very useful if you could have a background study prepared. We will need to know what we have already provided in the way of assistance for French R&D, what kind of assistance the French want now, and may ask for in the future.

We will also need a clear understanding of what the legal restrictions are concerning the provision of various kinds of information or assistance. Such a study would be helpful as a supplement to the work that has already been done in connection with NSSM 60. We should have the study before the Pompidou visit.

Should it be decided that we want to be cooperative with the French on their missile program, the Foster-Blancard contact might be one means to do so.

  
Henry A. Kissinger

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E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.6

OSD  
By ASMB NARA, Date 1-10-02

Authority EO 12958  
By W NARA Date 5/1/02

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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

21 January 1970

Honorable Henry A. Kissinger  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs  
Executive Office of the President  
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Henry:

The French have become more open with us about ballistic missile programs and this seems to be an area where we can further cooperate with this country. As a part of this dialogue, Dr. Foster has the opportunity to visit with M. Blancard, French Minister of Armaments. Attached is a copy of Dr. Foster's request to establish contact with the French and a copy of my guidance to him for these discussions.

If you think that such a visit would contribute to the success of M. Pompidou's meeting with the President, Dr. Foster will meet privately with M. Blancard early in February. In the absence of such an indication from you, Dr. Foster's trip will be scheduled at an early date but not necessarily prior to the arrival of M. Pompidou.

Sincerely,

David Packard

Enclosures - 2  
As stated

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Authority

By

NARA Date

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DIRECTOR OF DEFENSE RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

16 December 1969

## MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Cooperation with French

The French have been more open with the U. S. about ballistic missile development programs since the departure of General de Gaulle:

- . At the military service level, U. S. Air Force Major General Glasser requested and did visit the French missile test facility Centre d'Essais des Landes. In turn, French officers are scheduled to visit Ogden, Utah, and Fort Warren. In making the visit arrangements, the French indicated a desire for assistance on French components.
- . M. Blancard, French Minister of Armaments, during my recent visit, privately mentioned they were having difficulties and indicated they would like our advice.
- . M. Blancard, 12 December, through the Washington Embassy, asked that we discuss the matter 12 January at the time of the planned U. S. - French Cooperative R&D Steering Committee meeting. Four areas of interest were outlined:
  1. Reliability - what they can expect to achieve component by component through development.
  2. Star-tracker navigation equipment - information on technology.
  3. Re-entry vehicle materials.
  4. Possibility of U. S. contractor support on the development and early production of boosters.

With respect to the four areas I believe we can give help on reliability and materials innocuously and without disclosure of critical or sensitive classified technical information. I see no way of getting U. S. contractor

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support for their booster program without a formal, open arrangement and doubt that we could go ahead because of the international political situation. Star-tracking navigation would be important only to the accuracy required for counterforce application of French missiles, which I believe does not make sense in view of the disparity in numbers.

Clearly this issue is dominated by non-technical considerations:

- . Possibility of obtaining French assistance to strengthen NATO or U. S. position on the Continent.
- . Current review of U. S. policy vis a vis France.
- . Relationship to obligations under the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty.
- . Impact on U. S. - U. K. relations.
- . Views in U. S. Congress.

In view of my planned visit early in January and because Premier Pompidieu might raise the subject with President Nixon in February, your guidance is requested on the Blancard request.

*John S. Foster, Jr.*  
John S. Foster, Jr.

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By W NARA Date 5/1/02

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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

31 DEC 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF DEFENSE RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING

SUBJECT: French Requests for Ballistic Missile Cooperation

This is in reply to your request of 16 December 1969 for guidance, particularly in connection with the 12 January meeting of the US-French Cooperative R&D Steering Committee Meeting.

I agree that this matter raises issues which are dominated by non-technical considerations; you have listed points which have major political/military and policy implications.

As you know, the subject of future US policy toward France, including our policy toward possible nuclear cooperation, is undergoing review. NSSMs 47 and 60 are tentatively scheduled for consideration by the NSC and/or the President before President Pompidou's February visit. In addition, NSAM 294 of April 1964, which prohibits significant US assistance to the development of French independent nuclear warhead or delivery capabilities as long as French weapons are not committed to NATO, is currently under review in connection with NSSM 71 -- the export of advanced technologies vital to our national security.

To avoid prejudging the outcome of either of these studies, and to leave all options open to the President and the NSC, I believe that subject matter related to nuclear weapons development and strategic delivery capabilities must for the time being be excluded from cooperative R&D endeavors with the French. Technical materials on ballistic missile development, maintenance, reliability, testing, guidance, environment, navigation, or other aspects of nuclear weaponry and on other strategic delivery systems should not be provided to the French and are not appropriate for discussion with them at this time. These subjects should not be on the agenda for the planned January US-French Steering Committee Meeting. If the French insist on raising such items at the meeting, you should inform them that these matters are highly complex and extremely sensitive, and that you have reported their requests to your government.

*471.6 Davis*

*31 Dec 1969*

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I understand that the question of French admission to the NATO TACSATCOM project is also on the proposed agenda. Like the question of assistance to French strategic systems, it is under review in current policy studies. We will not be in a position to give the French a response in mid-January. This issue is far less sensitive than the other question, however, and I do not rule out the possibility that we can be more forthcoming. The question of quid pro quos other than those in the technical R&D field, e.g., access to French facilities, also is involved in the current policy studies and should not be raised by the US in the January meeting.

Despite these continuing restrictions on discussion of nuclear and other highly sensitive matters, I do believe that it is possible and desirable to have productive exchanges with the French concerning cooperative R&D. A careful case-by-case approach is necessary; benefit to the US and security should continue to be the principal governing considerations. Because of the strong policy overtones of some of the French initiatives concerning the January meeting, please ask your staff to work closely with ISA as the agenda and position papers are prepared. I suggest that you pass copies of this memorandum to the interested military service representatives for their guidance, as well.

Signed  
DAVID PACKARD

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