

April 23, 1975

Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Henry A. Kissinger, 'Meeting with French on Missile Cooperation'

Citation:

"Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Henry A. Kissinger, 'Meeting with French on Missile Cooperation'", April 23, 1975, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archive, Record Group 59, Records of Henry A. Kissinger, 1973-1977, box 11, April 1975 Nodis Memcons. Obtained and contributed by William Burr and included in NPIHP Research Update #2. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/112423>

Summary:

Description of a meeting between Sonnenfeldt and Jean-Laurens Delpech, French Minister of Armaments. Delpech was concerned about the slow response to the French requests for further nuclear assistance. Sonnenfeldt explained that they were awaiting a detailed technical analysis of the requests and limitations of US policy. Delpech also raised the issues of French use of the Nevada Test Site. Attached to the memorandum is a handwritten letter by Delpech to National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

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Authority 009029
By EK NARA Date 6/8

THE COUNSELOR
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON



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~~EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~

HOB 3-8-78

April 23, 1975

SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM: Helmut Sannenfeldt *HS*
SUBJECT: Meeting with French on Missile Cooperation

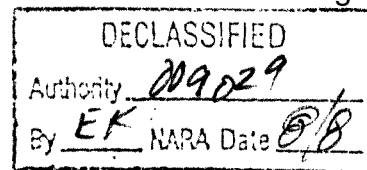
Scowcroft and I met with Delpuch and Barron at the White House today. Delpuch had written a letter to Scowcroft (Tab A) noting the lack of movement in his talks at the Pentagon and wondering whether this might be remedied by an updating of the written agreement concluded between Blancard and Foster in 1971 (which had defined the terms of cooperation at that time).

We explained to the French that we had indeed been slow in getting ourselves organized but that this is due not to any deliberate policy but to the fact that we were awaiting a detailed technical analysis of French requests (as conveyed in the blind memo they handed to you). This was required so that we would know clearly how far the Executive can go without changes in our laws or Congressional consultation. We told Delpuch that we hoped to have this analysis very shortly and that thereafter we would be in a position to give adequate guidance to his contacts at the Pentagon. We also pointed out that matters were complicated now by the fact that there was no single contact for him at the Pentagon, as Foster had been for Blancard.

We further told Delpuch that he absolutely had to stop giving accounts of his White House conversations to his Pentagon contacts since this would lead to misunderstandings and confuse the political and technical aspects of our relationship. We further noted that someone on Sauvagnargues' staff had talked to Congressman Findley about our contacts and that the latter in turn had informed our Director of Arms Control. Delpuch said that no one at the Quai knew of the substance of our exchanges, only of the fact, but that he would immediately talk to Brossolette to put a stop to chatter.

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2.

Delpech then referred to the President's and your assurances to Giscard at Martinique that the Nevada Test Site would be made available for French tests. Delpech said he anticipated problems in this regard because our safety regulations will require arrangements that would become public. The French would not mind if this happened but there obviously have to be negotiations. I pointed out that in addition we had to take account of our laws, the LTBT and the NPT and that for all these reasons we might in the end well require some formal arrangement that would become known. (In fact, there is serious doubt that all the legal hurdles can be overcome. But we need a study. This problem has also been raised at Defense.)

We left it that we would do our best to get the appropriate Pentagon officials properly instructed so that matters can go forward. We told Delpech that for the regularly scheduled meeting between himself and Barse on April 28 we may not yet be in a position to issue new guidance but we would try. In any event, we expected for his subsequent contact our people would have positive guidance. We again told him categorically that he must not in any way refer to his White House conversations when he deals with his Pentagon contacts since none of them, individually, had the full picture, and their guidance must come solely from the White House. Delpech, who had wanted to tell Barse that he can expect instructions from the White House, assured us he would shut up in future.

We also agreed that there is no need for a new written agreement.

In the course of the conversation, Delpech said the French would be very open in telling us about the technical characteristics of their systems.

NOTE: We are expecting a technical analysis from the Pentagon as well as a draft NSDM. When we have worked this over, you will need to review the matter with the President and probably Schlesinger. Thereafter, we should make clear to Schlesinger that we will need (1) a detailed prospectus before every contact with the French, subject to White House approval, and (2) a detailed report on every contact.

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LE DÉLÉGUÉ MINISTÉRIEL
POUR L'ARMEMENT

Paris, April, 8, 75

Secret
by messenger
to be delivered personally

General Scowcroft
White House

Dear General,

Following the meeting which took place on March 1st at the White House, I had, as recommended by you, a pleasant interview with Mr. Donald Cotter at the Pentagon.

We reviewed the main topics of interest, the list of which had been presented to Mr. Secretary Kissinger during my visit (January, 23) to the State Department.

Mr. Cotter was very kind and our exchange of views covered the whole field.

Nevertheless, I was given to understand that our extended cooperation could not actually start as long as Mr. Cotter was not formally authorized by Mr. Secretary Kissinger to proceed along the lines verbally agreed.

To my knowledge, Mr. Cotter has not yet received such authorization.

As you know, our present cooperation, which developed very harmoniously, was based on written agreements signed by Mr. Foster, on your side, and my predecessor, Mr. Blancard, on the French side.

It seems to me quite probable that a new Agreement,

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of the same general structure, should be signed between your representative and myself so as to provide a basis for the formal authorization required by Mr. Lotter.

We probably overlooked this step during our talks and it may explain the delay in concretizing the agreement reached between our President and Mr. Secretary Kissinger when they last met in Paris.

As you suggested that, in case of difficulty, I should inform you, I take the liberty to write this letter and to entrust the bearer, Mr. Long (whom you met during our March meeting and who belongs to my most inner circle) to deliver it to you and to bring back your answer. Of course, this way to communicate has been chosen in order to protect the complete secrecy of the proceedings.

I plan to fly to Polynesia for an inspection trip and, on my way back, I can very easily stop over in the U.S.A. I expect to be in Washington from Wednesday April, 23 till Friday afternoon April, 25.

Could I meet with you in the afternoon of April, 23 or the morning of April, 24 and then proceed with Mr. Lotter?

This would provide us ample time for the discussion and signing of an agreement. It would allow me, too, to define with Mr. Lotter the practical steps to be taken.

Thanking you in advance, I remain, dear General,

Very truly yours,

W. DeLoach