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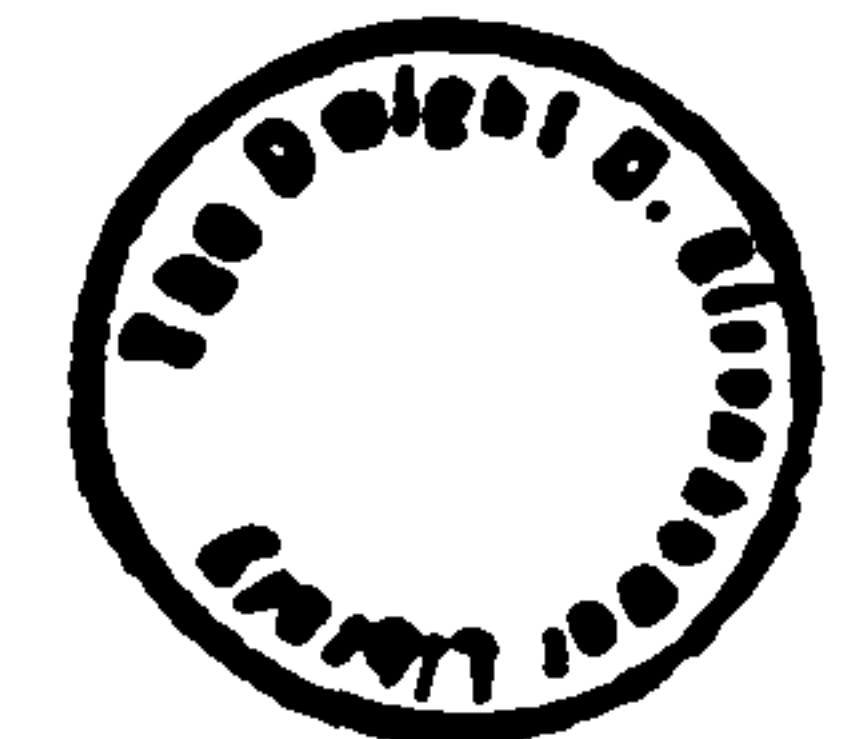
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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**Memorandum of Conversation**

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Approved in U 10/8/60  
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Approved in White House 10/12/60

DATE: October 4, 1960  
8:00 - 9:15 a.m.



SUBJECT: NATO Atomic Force

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Paul Henri Spaak, Secretary General of NATO  
Mr. Dillon, Acting Secretary  
Mr. Merchant, Under Secretary for Political Affairs  
Mr. Kohler, Assistant Secretary

COPIES TO: Mr. Burgess, Ambassador, USRO  
Mr. Glenn, Interpreter

S/S  
S/P - Mr. Smith  
G - Mr. Eare  
EUR - Mr. Kohler  
USRO - Ambassador Burgess  
H - Mr. Macomber  
Department of Defense - Secretary Gates  
Mr. Irwin  
White House - Brig. Gen. A. J. Goodpaster

After some general discussion during the breakfast, which touched upon NATO affairs and the current Communist harassment of West Berlin, Mr. Dillon raised the subject of the proposed NATO MRBM Force by reporting on the discussion of the subject which he had had with Mr. Spaak yesterday afternoon.

The President said he had been mulling this question over at length. It was clear that the establishment of such a NATO force on the basis of national contributions in ships, men, and materiel would not be satisfactory. In fact he thought the best way would be through the establishment of a kind of a "Foreign Legion" under exclusive NATO control and financed by contributions of the member states. This was the only manner to do away with nationalism and to prevent the possibility of the withdrawal by any nation of its own units. Only a force loyal exclusively to NATO would be safe from such a danger. Of course certain difficulties existed before a full integration could be obtained, due among other things to the lengthy training necessary.

Ambassador Burgess added that the question of languages would also present a difficulty but that this did not appear insurmountable.

Mr. Spaak

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NSC letter 11/28/62  
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..... that if a proposal to create a NATO nuclear strike force were made, it could well take the form of the creation of a foreign legion type force. Difficulties might be expected, however, on the side of General de Gaulle. It was extremely important to arrive at the result desired and a means should be found to persuade General de Gaulle to participate in the project. If this could not be done, the big question would arise as to whether or not to proceed without France.

The President said that proceeding without France might well lead, step by step, to a withdrawal of France from the alliance.

..... reiterated that a procedure should be found to obtain French participation. Such participation seemed possible, because France would find herself completely alone if she did not participate in the proposal. One might wonder if the best way might not be a letter from the President to General de Gaulle. At the same time Chancellor Adenauer might be approached and asked to help convince General de Gaulle. The present moment might be opportune, because General de Gaulle had aroused great alarm by his hints that the United States could withdraw from Europe. A proposal to create an integrated nuclear strike force, made at this moment, would reassure the European partners of NATO and receive practically unanimous support. ....

The President agreed that such an approach should be made. However, it would also be necessary to consult the leaders of the five Congressional committees which would be involved.

The President explained at this point that this was necessary because Congress had reserved for itself, as far back as 1947, certain prerogatives which should belong in the executive branch. While the President thinks that this is not constitutional, the position has not really been challenged because of concern about appropriations. Congressional concurrence in the idea would therefore be necessary.

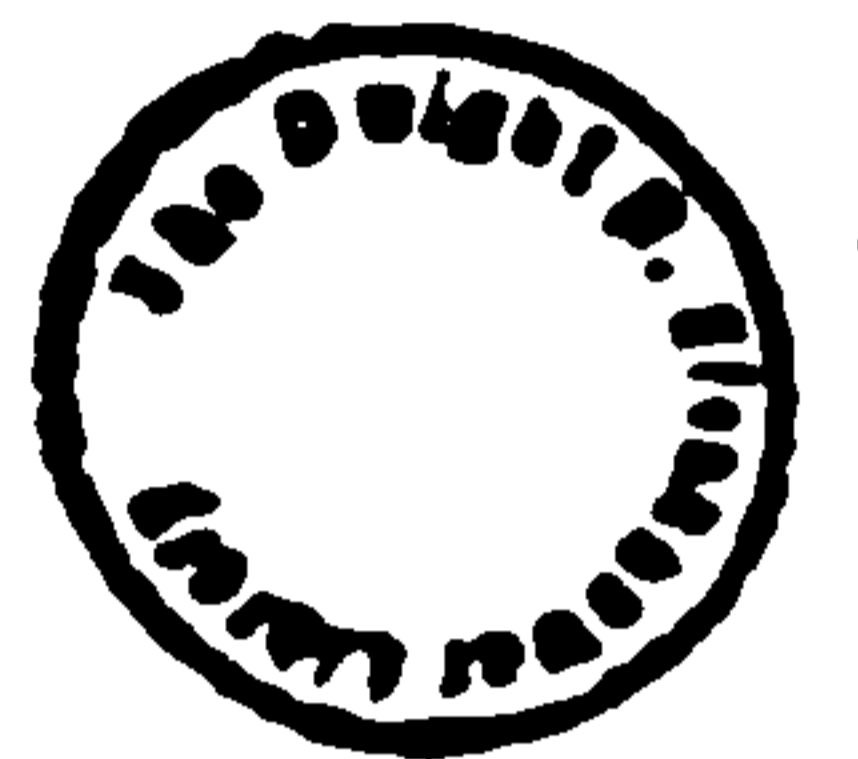
Mr. Dillon suggested that Congressional leaders should be contacted before any approach is made abroad. Otherwise there is a danger of leaks and rumors reaching Congress creating misunderstandings and opposition due to an inadequate presentation of the question. The President agreed with this point of view.

Mr. Merchant

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Mr. Merchant reverted to the President's remark that France might withdraw from NATO. While he agreed that France might not accept the MRBM proposal, at least initially, he doubted that de Gaulle would actually withdraw from the Alliance. He cited, in this connection, the modest progress made recently as respects French cooperation in the fields of air defense and atomic stockpile arrangements in Germany and the awkwardness of the French position if they isolated themselves completely from their Western European neighbors.

..... another difficulty existed. If the United States turned nuclear weapons over to NATO, who would have the authority to decide on their use?



.....

..... there were two types of circumstances under which NATO might want to use its atomic strike forces.

.....

The President said that at the present moment the two opponents are providing their forces with such a variety of atomic weapons that any conflict in Europe which would not involve their use is hardly conceivable, the more so in that European countries are rather small in size and therefore any penetration into their territories would be sufficiently serious to mean an all-out war. .... Thus there seems to be no possibility whatsoever of any non-atomic conflict in Europe, though the possibility of a more limited type of conflict could be considered in Middle East countries, such as Greece, Turkey, or Iran.

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Ambassador Burgess noted that Iran is not within NATO even though connections between NATO and CENTO do exist. He thought also that the Soviet Union understands that an attack on Turkey would be as serious an undertaking as an attack in Europe.

The President noted that in any case a non-nuclear war in Europe is so improbable as to make the question of who is to decide the use of nuclear weapons somewhat academic. At the present moment the Supreme Commander in Europe is an American and a decision, therefore, could be made under the present law. ....|general agreement regarding the improbability of large scale non-nuclear war in Europe.

Ambassador Burgess commented that even now SACEUR is organized somewhat along the lines of a foreign legion because of the presence on the staff of officers of many nationalities. It is entirely possible that the need for decision might arise at a time when the Supreme Commander would be unable to act, in which event the responsibility would fall on his deputy, a non-American.

Discussing the possibility that Congress might seek to stipulate that the post of Supreme Allied Commander be reserved to an American as a condition for providing nuclear weapons, the President said such a condition could not be justified and should not be contemplated.

.....|on the enormous political and psychological importance of the proposal under discussion, which would signify closer and more binding ties between the United States and Europe than ever before.

The President spoke of his desire that a start be made promptly, commenting on the many problems which would have to be solved and the difficulties which would have to be surmounted. He agreed with .....

.....|the chances of convincing the French appear to be enhanced by the fact that General de Gaulle's plan to create a French nuclear strike force is meeting considerable opposition in the French parliament. A proposal such as the one under discussion would undoubtedly receive strong support from the French public opinion and increase the opposition in France against an independent nuclear force and thus pressure on de Gaulle.

The President

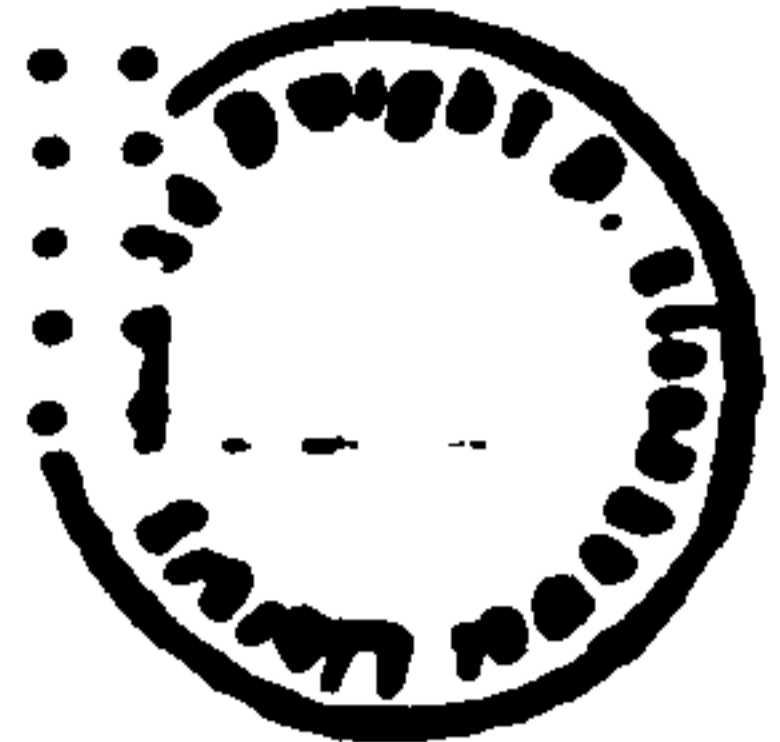
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the question of the attitude of the standing group and suggested that the American representative in the group be instructed to support the Polaris system without too many mentions of competing weapons.

The President mentioned that Polaris was unquestionably the choice for a submarine based weapon, but that cheaper and equally powerful weapons such as the Pershing were preferable for land use, the difference residing in the complexity of the guidance system needed for a weapon fired from a mobile launcher away from all landmarks, as against a launcher with known coordinates.

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