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financing, control and manning.⁶ Indicating his assent, the President commented that we must explain what is involved in the question of ownership including the matter of who gets the ships at the end of the treaty period. Mr. Merchant agreed that this question should be spelled out clearly. Some inconclusive discussion then ensued as respects the difference between the concepts embodied in the word ownership and those embodied in the word financing. In this connection Mr. Merchant emphasized that multilateral ownership was essential to the concept of a really integrated NATO force as distinct from national ownership.

In conclusion the President directed that the planning should go ahead in connection with the project on an urgent basis. It was important that the case be got ready for the Congress and presented. In the second stage at least he felt we were bound to have to have an amendment of the law. As to financing, he suggested that Defense could perhaps budget for two additional Polaris submarines in FY 1962.

Following the meeting Messrs. Gates, Irwin, Goodpaster, Merchant and Kohler met in General Goodpaster's office to iron out remaining differences in the wording of the paper. (See Mr. Merchant's letter to Mr. Irwin for final text.)⁷

⁶ The revised version of paragraph 4a agreed to by the Departments of State and Defense, which is attached to a letter from Merchant to Irwin, October 3, reads: "that the force be developed on the basis of multilateral ownership, financing and control, and with mixed manning to the extent considered operationally feasible by SACEUR." (Department of State, Central Files, 740.5611/10-360)

⁷ The revised version of the paper on NATO MRBMs is attached to the letter from Merchant to Irwin, October 3.

269. Memorandum of Conversation

October 4, 1960, 8–9:15 a.m.

SUBJECT

NATO Atomic Force

PARTICIPANTS

The President
Paul Henri Spaak, Secretary General of NATO

Source: Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, DDE Diaries. Secret; Limit Distribution. Drafted by Kohler and approved in M on October 7, U on October 8, and the White House on October 12.

Mr. Dillon, Acting Secretary
Mr. Merchant, Under Secretary for Political Affairs
Mr. Kohler, Assistant Secretary
Mr. Burgess, Ambassador, USRO
Mr. Glenn, Interpreter

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.¹

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 matériel 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 agreed 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.

Mr. Spaak 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

¹ A memorandum of Dillon's October 3 conversation with Spaak on MRBMs and defense aspects of NATO long-range planning summarized their discussion on a new U.S. proposal on a NATO MRBM force. (Department of State, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 64 D 199) A copy of the U.S. proposal, which contains the same text as the one cited in footnotes 6 and 7, Document 268, is attached to the Spaak-Dillon memorandum of conversation.

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. It is certain that Chancellor Adenauer would be happy to cooperate since such an integrated force would solve the problem of Germany and nuclear weapons.

The President agreed that such an approach should be made. However, it would also be necessary to consult the five Congressional committees which would be involved.²

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 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 Germany³ and the awkwardness of the French position if they isolated themselves completely from their Western European neighbors.

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

² Reference presumably is to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy.

³ In a memorandum to Merchant, September 12, Kohler wrote: "Norstad has just met with Debré and worked out a means for proceeding to settlement of this long-standing issue [of air defense] and permitting NAC approval of the principle of integrated air defense." (Department of State, Central Files, 740.5/9-1260) The NAC approved establishment of an integrated air defense system on September 28. No full record of this NAC meeting has been found, but NAC approval of a statement by the NATO press spokesman on the matter was transmitted in Polto 437 from Paris, September 28. (*Ibid.*, 375/9-2860)

[1 paragraph (9 lines of source text) not declassified]

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

[1 paragraph (6 lines of source text) not declassified]

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. [1-1/2 lines of source text not declassified] 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.

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. Mr. Spaak indicated 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.

Mr. Spaak insisted 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. [2-1/2 lines of source text not declassified]

Mr. Spaak said that 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.

[1 paragraph (4 lines of source text) not declassified]

Mr. Spaak raised 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.

[8 paragraphs (19 lines of source text) not declassified]