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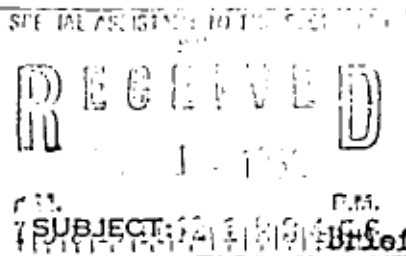
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## Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: May 10, 1962



Briefing of Joint Committee on Atomic Energy Staff on Defense  
Issues at NATO Athens Meeting

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. James Ramey, JCAE Staff Director  
Mr. John Conway, Deputy Staff Director, JCAE  
Mr. Russell Fessenden, Director, RPM  
Mr. Alan James, RPM

COPIES TO: S/S; G; G/PM; M - Mr. Owen; S/AE; EUR (2); L; RPM (2); WE; GER;  
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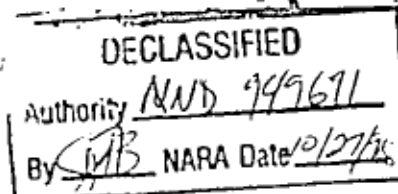
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At the request of Chairman Holifield of the JCAE, Mr. Conway arranged a briefing this afternoon on Defense issues raised at the NATO meeting in Athens. Since Chairman Holifield was at the last minute unable to be present at the briefing, Mr. Ramey received it on his behalf.

Mr. Fessenden opened by stating that the Athens meeting had been considered very successful and had made solid accomplishments, especially in the field of nuclear policy. The three main areas of discussion at the Athens meeting were: 1) assurances, 2) nuclear information, and 3) guidelines. Regarding assurances Mr. Fessenden said that the US confirmed its previously stated undertaking to provide NATO with an adequate nuclear capability. This, he said, was a general guarantee and did not go into specifics regarding numbers of nuclear weapons. Mr. Ramey interjected to ask whether there was any discussion about numbers of nuclear weapons to be maintained in Europe and asked whether the Europeans knew about the proposed resumption of dispersal of nuclear weapons. In reply, Mr. Fessenden said there had been no talk of numbers and as far as he could tell, at this moment at least, the Europeans were not aware of the dispersal question at all. Our assurances, Mr. Fessenden continued, were well received by all members of the Alliance. Mr. Ramey then asked whether there was any implication on the part of the US that we would send additional weapons to Europe. To this Mr. Fessenden stated no; we had merely stated in general terms that an "adequate" level of nuclear weapons would be maintained in NATO. Resuming, Mr. Fessenden said that there was a second part to the assurances, namely that Soviet targets threatening Europe would be adequately covered. This, too, he said, was a generally phrased assurance and cast in terms of "as fully as possible". The US stressed that we were not giving priority to targets of concern mainly to the US.

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The second topic, nuclear information, involved giving NATO fuller data on nuclear matters. Mr. Fessenden said that a special nuclear information committee had been set up to provide the mechanism for passing this information to NATO. He indicated that this was not intended to be a means of passing Restricted Data to NATO, but rather the general kinds of information needed to help reinforce our assurances. To reinforce our assurances it is essential that NATO should know more facts about our nuclear arsenal and planning. The significance of the data program lies in the fact that it will contribute to the education of our allies and help to reinforce the case for the conventional buildup. Mr. Ramsey observed that within the JCAE there was considerable doubt that adding further weapons to the NATO stockpile would encourage the conventional buildup.

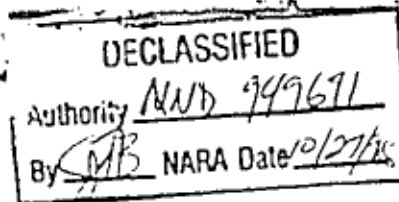
There then ensued a discussion concerning our intention not to pass Restricted Data through the special nuclear information committee. Mr. Conway wished to know precisely what kinds of information would be passed. To this, Mr. Fessenden replied that the information would be of a general character regarding planning for nuclear warfare. Mr. Conway said he saw certain advantages in giving at least formerly Restricted Data to our allies through the special information committee. He thought that it would be important for the allies to know, for example, how many warheads would be available through 1965, and he wondered why a restriction had been placed on not passing Restricted Data through the committee. He pointed out that under the 1955 Atomic Cooperation Agreement with NATO, Restricted Data may be passed for Defense planning purposes.

Mr. Fessenden, answering Mr. Ramsey's question about the effect of the conventional build-up, said that by giving NATO general information on numbers of weapons available we would show how complete was the nuclear defense of NATO. This, in turn, would reinforce our case for the conventional buildup. Mr. Fessenden called particular attention to the fact that some of our allies actually fear that NATO nuclear defense is being cut down. Mr. Ramsey agreed on this point, and noted that we can under the 1955 agreement or the bilateral agreements pass a good deal of Restricted Data.

Mr. Fessenden said the guidelines are the third element in our "package". They spell out the circumstances under which nuclear weapons might be used and the rules for consultation. They serve the dual purpose of assuring those countries which fear that there may be an unwarranted delay on use and those which fear they would not be consulted. There is nothing new in these guidelines, Mr. Fessenden pointed out, they merely make more formal and elaborate somewhat on what the US said in April, 1961 in the North Atlantic Council on which the JCAE had been fully briefed. At that time, we said that in the event of an all-out nuclear attack by the Soviets, nuclear weapons would be used and that nuclear weapons would be used in the event of conventional attack by the Soviets with which NATO forces could not cope. One of the important objectives of these guidelines is to give assurances especially to the more exposed members of NATO to our readiness to use nuclear weapons.

Mr. Ramsey

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Mr. Ramey inquired whether we had given any assurances on not removing nuclear weapons. To this, Mr. Fessenden said no commitment had been given not to pull out nuclear weapons. The only relevant statement had been the general assurance that adequate weapons would be available.

A further aspect of the guidelines, Mr. Fessenden noted, was the undertaking given by the US to consult on the use of nuclear weapons anywhere in the world if time permitted. At Athens, the Ministers confirmed their understanding of these three aspects of NATO's nuclear program. Mr. Fessenden noted that we had a problem at Athens with the French on the guidelines but that a solution had been found through an "empty chair" approach.

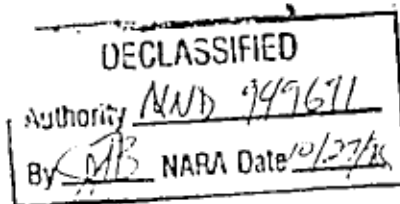
One of the major items at Athens was our announcement that we were committing Polaris submarines to NATO. This had elicited a very favorable response, Mr. Fessenden said. We had stated that, effective immediately, we were "earmarking for assignment to SACLANT" five Polaris submarines to NATO. We stipulated that by the end of 1962 two more will be committed and by the end of 1963 twelve will have been committed. Allowing for two submarines to be in overhaul NATO would have a net of ten committed by the end of 1963. Mr. Fessenden pointed out that we had stressed at Athens that the Polaris submarines had been committed for the defense of the Alliance as a whole and that their control, firing, timing and the like would have to be regulated to meet the needs of the Alliance as a whole and not merely the requirements of one commander or one theater. Mr. Ramey observed that the Joint Committee had gone along with us on our intention to announce the commitment of Polaris submarines. In Mr. Fessenden's opinion our announcement of commitment had a good effect; we have preserved our freedom of action but the commitment has been a helpful symbol of the indivisibility of the defense of the Alliance.

Mr. Fessenden stated that MRBM's and multilateral force were not really a major subject at Athens. All the US did was to state that, if the Allies are interested in the creation of a multilateral MRBM force, we would be prepared to discuss with them the possibility of establishing a seaborne, multilaterally owned and controlled force. We did stress, however, that any action in this field would have to go hand in hand with the conventional buildup. Our announcement of the commitment of the Polaris submarines had an additional helpful effect, Mr. Fessenden stated in that it should help to relieve pressures for precipitate action on an MRBM force.

Mr. Conway interjected to note that our military had been encouraging the Europeans in their quest for MRBM's. Mr. Fessenden noted that many Europeans say they want a comparable capability to that of the Soviets, facing as they do some 100 Soviet MRBM's targetted on western Europe. Continuing, Mr. Fessenden said, that the US is trying to show the Europeans that our external forces cover Soviet MRBM threats. It is for this reason that target coverage is an important aspect in our information program.

In response

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In response to a question from Mr. Ramey as to any talk about an independent NATO force, Mr. Fessenden said that the US had not been pressed on this subject; we have tried to go as far as we can to give the Europeans a greater role in nuclear matters in order to head off national capabilities. While the French, of course, had trouble with our approach, Strauss and others indicated satisfaction with it. Mr. Conway asked whether the nuclear information committee would be made up of military or civilians. Mr. Fessenden indicated that the committee would probably be a committee of the Permanent Council as a whole and thus a civilian body. Mr. Fessenden indicated in reply to a question that much of the information to be passed to the information committee would be of a character all ready known to NATO military officers. Mr. Ramey inquired whether any details had been discussed in connection with the guidelines and further what would be done if there were no unanimity. Mr. Fessenden said there had been no discussion of implementation or what might be done if there were not unanimity. The guidelines, he thought, struck a good balance between our readiness to consult and our retaining freedom of action to respond quickly in the event of an emergency. It has been a fundamental principle in NATO, he stated, that the respective members might act collectively or individually in their own defense, as the Treaty itself states. The US, he stressed, must always be a party to the decision to use nuclear weapons.

Mr. Ramey asked whether Secretaries Rusk and McNamara had made prepared statements at Athens and whether the committee might have copies of those statements. Mr. Fessenden indicated that he would look into this matter.

Mr. Fessenden emphasized that at Athens we had also hit hard on the importance of the conventional buildup. He noted that over the last year we had made a certain amount of progress. Mr. Conway called attention to a recent speech by General Clarke at the War College in which he had indicated that the strength of German forces was more apparent than real, primarily because of lack of depth in their logistic support. Mr. Fessenden stated that the US is attempting to give the Germans help in the logistics area, and noted that the Germans have worked out some bilateral arrangements with the French and other countries to improve their logistics support. Mr. Fessenden noted improvements made by France in its conventional forces. He conceded that British forces remain a problem, with the BAOR not as strong as it should be but with some prospects of improving its posture.

Mr. Conway noted that during the briefing of the JCAE by the Executive Branch on May 1 on resumption of dispersal of nuclear weapons, it had been stated that Defense and State would review the question of dispersal of nuclear weapons to Turkish strike aircraft. In this connection he mentioned that the report of the Subcommittee of the JCAE on its trip to Europe in 1960 had cited Turkey as a problem area in respect to quick reaction alert dispositions. Mr. Conway said that personally he thought State and Defense in examining the current situation in Turkey should not be constrained by the Subcommittee's report, particularly in light of the permanent facilities for Quick Reaction Alert now in place in Turkey and the generally improved security situation at sites in that country.

In concluding

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In concluding, Mr. Emsoy asked for more information on why Restricted Data would not be passed through the special information committee, reiterating his view that this might be done under the authority of the 1955 agreement. He also stated that the Committee might be writing a letter shortly concerning the Executive Branch decision to resume dispersal of nuclear weapons. (It is assumed that he was referring to the concern of the Committee over the so-called parity concept whereby it is deemed desirable militarily to make available to forces having the same mission, the same kinds of weapons.)

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