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By ~~FR~~NARA Date 5-12-04

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Dear Jim:

British atomic stockpile requirements, as you may recall, have heretofore been handled on an ad hoc basis, sometimes intergovernmentally and sometimes between the respective military services. There is, for example, the intergovernmental agreement covering the United Kingdom Corporal forces in Germany and there is the interservice agreement covering the British Canberra units.

In view of new requirements for British forces it seemed timely to negotiate with the United Kingdom, as we have done with other NATO members, a general intergovernmental agreement setting forth the basic principles governing all NATO stockpiles in which the British have an interest. Having one comprehensive stockpile agreement with the British would be orderly and compatible with our practice with other NATO allies. An important factor in negotiating these arrangements with other governments has been our assurance that all the agreements are virtually identical. With Defense concurrence we have opened negotiations for such an agreement with the British. They now wish to be sure that the agreement would be broad enough to cover all foreseeable requirements.

In that connection, I understand SACLANT may have requirements for nuclear support of British maritime patrol aircraft and for stocks of nuclear weapons on British naval vessels. If so, we would want the basic agreement to embrace such situations. Before taking such steps, however, we would like to know the sort of actual custodial arrangements you envisage for such situations.

The basic agreement, of course, could as elsewhere be supplemented by detailed arrangements between the respective services covering the technical aspects of the various stockpiles. Any such existing arrangements would not, from our standpoint, need to be modified if they are

consistent

The Honorable
James H. Douglas,
Deputy Secretary of Defense.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 5.8

NND 951125
By HM/AL Date: 4/4/06

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consistent with the principles set forth in the proposed basic agreement. At this point we are not sure that such is the case in all instances since we have not had an opportunity to review the independent inter-service Arrangements, such as that covering the Canberras, that have been concluded. I believe we should review them before proceeding further with the British and, accordingly, I would appreciate it if you would send me copies of the Canberra and any other such inter-service arrangements concluded with the British forces, together with descriptions of the custodial arrangements now in effect.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Livingston T. Merchant

Under Secretary
for Political Affairs

S/S-RO

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A true copy of signed original

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