

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 57307  
By h377 NARA Date 6/19/96*Copy 1, Series C  
1AA Wolfson  
2-26-71*

January 26, 1963

2

TOP SECRET

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION (UNCLEARED)

SUBJECT: State-Defense Meeting on Group I, II and IV Papers

Participants

Defense:	Secretary McNamara	State:	Secretary Rusk
	General Taylor		Mr. Ball
	Mr. Gilpatric		Mr. Merchant
	Mr. Nitze		Mr. Tyler
	Mr. McNaughton		Mr. Schaetzel
	Admiral Lee		Mr. Kitchen
			Mr. Smith
White House:	Mr. Eundy		Mr. Owen
			Mr. Burdett
AEC:	Mr. Palfrey		Mr. Popper
	Mr. Ramey		Mr. Weiss

1. In the absence of Secretary Rusk who was meeting privately with Secretary McNamara, Mr. Ball opened the meeting. He referred to the overall agreement expressing the view that such an agreement could help to clarify the ambiguities in the Nassau terminology. In this connection, he referred to his NATO statement in which he attempted to differentiate between the NATO Nuclear Force, the multilateral component, the national components, etc. Mr. Gilpatric stated that he hoped that we could return to this subject when Secretary McNamara joined the meeting since he knew that Mr. McNamara felt strongly that negotiating an overall agreement would be counterproductive. In this connection, he referred to the recently received letter from Thorneycroft in which the British resistance to such a proposal was reiterated. He also pointed out that Mr. Ball's approach to clarification of the terminology through his statement to the MAC was consistent with the DOD thinking as to how the objectives sought within the overall agreement might be accomplished in a manner other than through negotiation of a formal document.

2. Mr. Ball offered the view that perhaps we need not formally table the agreement but could hand it to the British as a statement of US views. Mr. Gilpatric said that they did not feel that it would be profitable to try to reach a formal accord with the British, but had no objection to attempting to reach general agreement on concepts. Mr. Nitze stated that Mr. McNamara felt it would be a waste of time to attempt to negotiate an agreement. However, if we could put forth the

TOP SECRET

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NMD 59367

By [redacted] NARA Date 6/19/90

TOP SECRET

Rev.

-12-

26. General Taylor questioned whether the proposed delegation to SACEUR was politically acceptable. Mr. Owen responded that it was consistent with the previous commitment made by the US. Mr. McNamara stated that this subject needed a tremendous amount of additional work. He stated that in his view our objective ought to be to participate in all decisions to fire. In response to a question he agreed that this amounted to no advance delegation. Mr. Smith pointed out that we had moved in the direction of advanced delegation at Athens and that we could not appear to be backing away from that position without serious political harm to our position. Mr. McNamara said that he would strongly oppose the delegation of authorization to SACEUR to fire. Mr. Owen pointed out that the language in question was taken from the paper approved by the President prior to the Athens commitment. Mr. McNamara stated that he was perfectly willing to discuss the matter at length but that offhand he could not see the wisdom of such a delegation. He said he would like to explain the basis for his views. Mr. McNamara went on to describe the possibilities which existed for an accidental launch of a missile against the USSR. He pointed out that we were spending millions of dollars to reduce this problem to a minimum, but that we could not assure ourselves completely against such a contingency. Moreover he suggested that it was unlikely that the Soviets were spending as much as we were in attempting to narrow the limits of possible accidental launch... He went on to describe crashes of US aircraft one in North Carolina and one in Texas, where, by the slightest margin of chance, literally the failure of two wires to cross, a nuclear explosion was averted. He concluded that despite our best efforts, the possibility of an accidental nuclear explosion still existed. Therefore, he did not believe that anyone other than the President should decide to launch in response to an apparent nuclear attack. He stated that it was his personal belief that we should not even recommend such action to the President until we know the details about a given detonation -- whether or not it was Soviet launched, how large, where it occurred, etc. He said he realized that this view was not fully shared but that it accounted for his thinking that advance delegation to fire nuclear weapons was not in the US interest. General Taylor asked whether the rest of NATO forces would be tied to such an advance delegation to fire. Mr. Smith replied that it was his belief that other US weapons would have gone off before the SACEUR delegation could have been acted upon. He went on to state that unless there was some movement in the direction of delegation, in his view we

TOP SECRET

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 59307  
By [redacted] NARA Date 6/19/88

TOP SECRET

- 13 -

may as well give up on the possibility of the MLE concept. He said we should not delude ourselves into believing that we could temporize on the issue of control, that the Germans, the Italians, and others will want to know whether the force will be subject to a U.S. veto.

27. The Secretary stated that he shared Secretary McNamara's concern about an accidental firing and had himself been thinking about the need for a special procedure, such as an immediate appeal to the UN to all Nations to cease any military activity in the face of a nuclear detonation until a determination as to its exact nature had been made, to cover the possibility of accidental detonations. Moreover, he said that we must be sure that national governments cannot send messages directly to Commanders of their own nationality to permit them to utilize the authority of the advance delegation. He pointed out that, for example, at some point there might be a German Commander of the NATO Nuclear Force and we must avoid any possibility of his getting word to fire from the German Government, circumventing the established channels and procedures. General Taylor referred to the permissive link. The Secretary asked who would hold the control over the Permissive Link. General Taylor answered that this would be SACEUR and that if we cannot depend upon him then, of course, everything would be gone. Secretary McNamara stated that it was his view that only the President should decide that the conditions specified in the guidelines had been met. Mr. Bundy said that the heads of government would want to retain this decision for themselves and would not want to delegate the firing authority. Mr. McNamara agreed.

28. The Secretary pointed out that it would not be possible to proceed with our proposals without having a solid legislative base. He noted that we had previously stated that we would look at European proposals dealing with the control issue and he questioned whether we needed to go further at this time. Mr. Smith said that he would be happy to see us stand with what we had previously committed ourselves to. He said that Sub-Group IV only attempted to spell out in somewhat greater detail how the control problem might be handled because the Secretary and Mr. McNamara had wanted to see the issue set forth in greater detail. He said he would personally prefer to see the matter left rather general, but that on the other hand we cannot "walk the cat back" in terms of our previous commitments on the veto question for if we do the multilateral force will be a non-starter. Secretary McNamara said that there were two separate problems which needed to be considered. First, there was a question of greater participation by foreign governments in the

TOP SECRET

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 459 307

By b11 NARA Date 6/19/88

TOP SECRET

- 14 -

control issue, the second had to do with advance delegation. He thought these two matters should be treated separately. Mr. Bundy said he thought that the President can reaffirm our willingness to act in Europe's defense but that on nuclear matters we cannot remove ourselves from participation "at the moment of truth." Mr. Smith said the question was can we go as far as we previously have? Mr. McNamara repeated that he was against advance delegation. Mr. Smith said that he wished to make it clear that he was too, except that there was no other way to get the hundreds of millions of dollars for a multilateral force which we were proposing. Mr. McNamara stated that he was not aware that the Europeans had made advance delegation as a condition of their participation in the force. Mr. Smith said that they had not. Mr. Bundy pointed out that the force must, of course, be creditable and we must assure the Europeans that it will go off under certain specified circumstances, including a wide scale attack on NATO. Mr. McNamara said that our representatives should do nothing to encourage the idea of advance delegation and that moreover in his opinion the heads of States will not wish to delegate this authority. It was agreed that a redraft of the paragraph on control would be required.

29. The Secretary then shifted the discussion to the problem of design data. At this point General Taylor left for another appointment. The Secretary pointed out that this might be only one of several issues which would require an amendment to existing legislation. Mr. Palfrey of the AEC said that Sub-Group IV had concluded that it would make no sense to try to get around the legislative problem through the use of gimmicks. Such an attempt would inevitably be seen through and any support which might otherwise be generated would be lost. Mr. McNamara said that there was a feeling of some on the Commission as well as in the Navy that the release of design data to the MLF would eventually result in its getting back to the Soviets. He said that even if the information did get back to the Soviets, and we presumably had to go on the assumption that this was likely, he did not believe that this would be a serious loss given the state of Soviet technology.

30. The discussion then turned to the question of surface vessels vs. submarines. Mr. McNamara said that Admiral Anderson had stated categorically that it was his belief that the survivability of submarines far exceeded that of surface vessels. The Secretary stated that he would accept this judgment as a fact but that it was only one of several matters which bore on the issue of whether it was desirable to opt for surface vessels or submarines. Mr. McNamara agreed. Mr. Ball pointed out, in a

TOP SECRETPreviousMain page