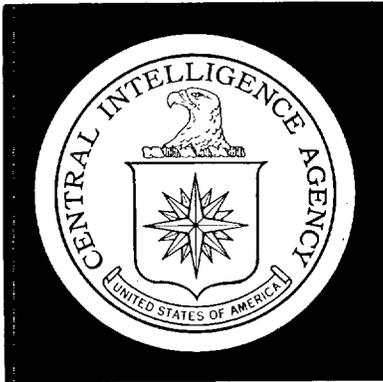


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FRANCE-UK: French initiative on nuclear cooperation.

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FRANCE-UK: A NEW FRENCH FEELER ON NUCLEAR CO-OPERATION WITH THE BRITISH STEMS IN PART FROM CONCERN IN PARIS OVER THE PROSPECT OF FORCE REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE.

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[REDACTED]

A RANKING FRENCH DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICIAL HAS ASKED THE US TO FACILITATE FRANCO-BRITISH COOPERATION BY REMOVING IN STAGES THE LEGAL RESTRICTIONS ON THE UK IN ITS HANDLING OF CERTAIN NUCLEAR INFORMATION. THIS WAS, HE SAID, THE "MOST USEFUL STEP" THE US COULD TAKE TO IMPROVE WESTERN SECURITY AT THE PRESENT JUNCTURE. THE FRENCH PREVIOUSLY HAVE ASKED WASHINGTON TO EASE ITS RESTRICTIONS ON THE RELEASE OF NUCLEAR INFORMATION TO PARIS IN ORDER TO PLACE FRANCE ON AN EQUAL FOOTING WITH BRITAIN.

THE FRENCH APPARENTLY WANT TALKS WITH THE BRITISH ON NUCLEAR COOPERATION TO COUNTER WHAT THEY SEE AS THE ADVERSE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECENT MOVEMENT TOWARD MUTUAL AND BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS (MBFR). THEY HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY STRIDENT RECENTLY IN THEIR WARNINGS THAT MBFR IS ONLY A PRETEXT FOR A DRAWDOWN OF US FORCES, AND THAT THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCE OF THIS WOULD BE A "WAVE OF NEUTRALISM" IN WESTERN EUROPE WHICH WOULD INCREASE THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOVIET UNION.

THE FRENCH INITIATIVE MAY ALSO BE DESIGNED TO TIE LONDON MORE CLOSELY TO PARIS PRIOR TO BRITISH ENTRY INTO THE EC, AND TO REMIND BONN THAT DESPITE ITS RECENT DIPLOMATIC SUCCESSES IT IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE NUCLEAR CLUB. THE DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICIAL STATED THAT PARIS HAD NOT DECIDED HOW TO DEAL WITH THE "CRUCIAL PROBLEM" OF GERMANY IN THIS CONTEXT, AND THAT FOR THE PRESENT, FRENCH ATTITUDES RULED OUT NATO AS A FORUM FOR DEALING WITH THIS MATTER. HE HINTED, HOWEVER, THAT US FACILITATION OF BRITISH-FRENCH COOPERATION MIGHT BRING SOME CHANGES IN THIS FRENCH POSITION.

THE THRUST OF THE FRENCH OFFICIAL'S INTEREST WAS TOWARD INITIATING TECHNICAL COOPERATION, NOT TOWARD A UNIFIED NUCLEAR STRIKE FORCE. ON PREVIOUS

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OCCASIONS FRENCH SPOKESMEN HAVE CALLED FOR COOPERATION IN DEVELOPMENT OF WEAPONS AND RESEARCH, AND IN PLANS FOR JOINT TARGETING.

IN THE PAST BOTH PRESIDENT POMPIDOU AND PRIME MINISTER HEATH HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN INCREASED NUCLEAR COOPERATION BETWEEN THEIR TWO COUNTRIES. LONDON PREVIOUSLY HAS AVOIDED SPELLING OUT ITS POSITION ON THIS ISSUE BY CITING THE CONSTRAINTS OF ITS NUCLEAR AGREEMENTS WITH THE US.

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