

MEMORANDUM

ACTION - 4049

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

September 13, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: DAVID ELLIOTT *D.E.*

SUBJECT: Shipment of Highly Enriched Uranium
to France

REFER TO DOS

DOE REVIEWED 15-Dec-2010: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

Last spring, the French requested additional shipments of highly enriched uranium (HEU -- which is useable for weapons) as part of a continuing contract they have with the U.S. to supply such material for a number of their peaceful nuclear research facilities. The pending request is for just over 100 kilograms and we have shipped 2200 kilograms in the past. This request would have been honored in a routine fashion except it came to our knowledge that the French intend to ship 400 kilograms of HEU to India as part of a joint breeder reactor research program carried out in India. France does not apply IAEA safeguards to such material but rather uses "French" safeguards. We have little knowledge of what the French safeguards involve but have learned informally that they may rely on no more than the French presence at the facility because of the joint nature of the work.

In light of our proliferation concern following the Indian nuclear explosion, it was decided to hold up on the HEU shipment to France and to inquire what France intended to do in the way of supply to India of weapons grade material and what their safeguarding consists of. We do not want to be in a position of being either a conduit of this material to India or of freeing up the limited French supplies allowing them to provide material to India under conditions that we might consider inadequate.

Our inquiry was made through the U.S. AEC Brussels office, but owing to their lack of pursuit of this matter we have received no reply over a period of three months. The AEC feels that it cannot continue to hold up the French order unless there is an Administration decision to do so. They would like to reach a decision within the next couple of days since Dixy may be asked about the matter by the French at next week's IAEA meeting.

DOS REVIEWED 07-Mar-2011: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

Some at State feel we should allow the shipment to proceed since HAK is meeting with the French Foreign Minister in two weeks, and will be discussing,

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inter alia, nuclear relations between our two countries. We may not want to send negative signals at this juncture by continuing to withhold the French order of HEU. (It should be noted, however, that the French have been silent and not pressuring us for the order.)

In my view, it would be wrong to ship the material now simply because we defaulted on our earlier attempt to obtain information from the French which would be important to our decision on whether or not to ship. The fact of our deferral need not be conveyed explicitly to the French -- rather the matter can just continue to be in suspense. /yes

In any event, I don't think this issue would have an appreciable impact on the discussions between HAK and the French Foreign Minister. Judging by the talking paper that is being prepared for the meeting, the nuclear part of their talk is pretty bland. If the HEU question arose in the talks, however, I think HAK could legitimately make the point that we must be concerned that our Congress might view our shipments to France as a conduit of weapons material to India. Congressional reaction to that situation could lead to actions on their part that would have a significant influence on our nuclear relations with others.

If you approve I will convey to Chairman Ray your view that pending an assessment of the issues involved in French nuclear shipments to India and the relation of these to our shipments to France, it would be your view that we ought to defer such shipments.

Denis Clift concurs.

APPROVE

DC

DISAPPROVE

continue in suspense. Don't take from [unclear]

This matter has not been handled very well by State/AEC and it seems reasonable for the Under Secretaries Committee to seize this issue. If you agree I will prepare the package to direct such a USC study.

APPROVE

DC

DISAPPROVE

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