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Authority **NND 989528**By **AD** NARA Date **6/8/05**TOP SECRET OOP: .....<sup>4</sup>.....OF.....<sup>5</sup>.....COPIES*Mr Arneson**8/15/51 - P4**from S. Arneson***AUG 16 1951***copy 4 of 5 copies*MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

August 6, 1951

**SUBJECT:** Discussions with British regarding use of atomic weapons**PARTICIPANTS:**

Joint Chiefs of Staff: General Bradley, General Collins, General Vandenberg, Admiral McCormick, General Boite, Admiral Duncan, General White, Admiral Lalor, Lt. Col. Addleman

State: Secretary Acheson, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Arneson, Mr. Ferguson

Defense: Mr. Lovett

General Bradley explained that the thing that was worrying the JCS was that political-military talks with the British might end up in some implied agreement or commitment ahead of time. He thought that our Chiefs should discuss the matter with their Chiefs since this would not commit anyone. He said he did not know whether that would satisfy the British. He said that his people had the feeling the agreed paper went beyond NSC 30 and NSC 73/4 and they weren't sure but that it should go to the NSC. He explained that he was not quite sure whether some of it should be used for discussion with the British or what should be done.

The Secretary of State explained that this matter started with the Truman-Attlee talks and the communiqué that was written at that time. He said that Attlee asked to see the President alone and then came out with a paragraph saying that he and the President had agreed the U.S. would not use the bomb without consulting the British. The Secretary said that he and Mr. Lovett went in to see the President and pointed out the disadvantages of such a commitment and the President told them to talk the matter over with Attlee and Franks and work out a new paragraph. This was done and it took the form of the paragraph in the communiqué which said the President would keep in touch with the Prime Minister on the world situation.

The Secretary also explained that Ambassador Franks had come to his house and showed him the Slessor paper and asked what he ought to do about it. The Secretary told him that there would certainly be trouble in starting on a course what would attempt to bind us on prior consultation or limit our use of the bomb. He told Ambassador Franks that he should go along with what the President had approved and Ambassador Franks consulted his Government on that basis. Later the British gave a copy of the Slessor paper to General Bradley and to the State Department. The Secretary said that we had tried all along to

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limit the thing to a review of the situation. He added that this had a bearing on the talks with the Canadians where we have been trying to get agreement with Canada to use their bases as if they were our own, which we had not been able to do. We do, however, meet with them and review the situation in the world every few weeks, and we think this the best way to go about the problem.

The Secretary said we must avoid a commitment and what we want to do is to work toward a situation in which our allies will go along with us and go along promptly. We can't successfully take the position that they must give us a blank check. They feel that if a strike takes off from their territory there will be one coming back the other way.

The Secretary said he thought it would be helpful to work out some procedure for political and military talks, together or separately, with the British, giving them in general our view of the situations in the world but with no commitment. He said he had hoped what we could do, perhaps after the President had seen the paper, was to talk over with the British those places in which the dangers looked greater at any given time and those places in which we might act differently than in other places. He explained that of course whatever our views of these dangers were, the decision would always have to be made by the President and we could not commit or bind him in any way.

General Bradley said that their feeling was that if this thing could be approached on the basis of what would mean world war they would not be so worried. When the British try to tie the question to the bomb, the Chiefs feel that they are trying to get a commitment on its use.

Mr. Lovett remarked that Slessor had talked quite frankly about this and made it clear that they were interested in the use of the atomic bomb.

The Secretary of State said he was sure that the British had started out with that idea, but that it was also true that there is some identity between the use of the atomic bomb and general war. He said he would not draw the conclusion that because the British wanted to do something we did not want to do that we should not talk at all.

Mr. Lovett asked whether there were not two problems: conditions which might precipitate war, and the use of the atomic bomb.

General Collins said that a further complication is that we all agree that in the event of war we will use the atomic bomb tactically. He said that he we could limit the discussion to what would lead to general war it would be okay with him.

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General Vandenberg said that it makes one suspicious in view of the fact that the British had tried to get the President on the line, the fact that Slessor and Elliot have tried to smooth the thing over, and the way the paper was presented to the State Department. He thought they were trying to get an implied commitment. He said with the Canadians you can lay it on the table and they will understand it. He thought we should first have military discussions and say we can make no commitment and in this way we can find out whether there is more than meets the eye in the British approach. After these discussions have gone on for some time General Vandenberg felt that we could decide whether to talk on the political basis. He wondered whether the agreed State-JCS Working Group paper should have the blessing of the Secretaries of State and Defense and the President before we even start the military talks. He thought we could talk without actually using a paper in the discussions and that would be an additional protection for the State Department.

General Bradley thought the British would talk on a military level first but that they would insist on political talks and finally talks on the Prime Minister-President basis.

Mr. Lovett asked if we could not say we have nothing to discuss on atomic matters so that the talks would only be about what would kick off a war. Mr. Acheson said he agreed pretty much with what Mr. Lovett and General Vandenberg had said but that of course this was a life and death matter for the British and they will want to know whether we are sober and responsible. He felt that the British had a right to know what the Chiefs and we and the President think about these questions. He feels that if we could get into the heads of the British the idea that we were very serious about these questions we would be in a much better position if a crisis arose. He felt that with respect to the atomic part we could say that their conclusion is ours, i.e. that we cannot imagine a real war without the use of the atomic bomb.

Mr. Lovett wondered if there was not another point and suggested that if Russia stepped into Korea he assumed that would be war as far as we were concerned but that some of our allies might not think so. He said that if we treated it as a full war we would throw the book at them and whether we got into war alone or with allies we would have to use everything. The Secretary of State said that the British needed education on how serious to our national interest an attack by the Russians on Korea and Japan would be.

General Collins said he thought we should start on a military basis and see what the British were after. He thought we could take the line that war would mean the use of the atomic bomb and then look at situations where our military men would recommend going to war. After discussions with the British General Vandenberg thought the Chiefs

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could get together with the State Department representatives and let them know what the military had learned so that the State Department representatives would be prepared for the political talks. He thought one thing we should find out was whether the British were prepared to deny us bases unless we made commitments.

Mr. Matthews said he was sure this was not the case. Mr. Lovett remarked that on British bases we had to remember we were guests and could not use them if they did not want us to.

General Collins thought that possibly the difficulties we were having with the British over Spain related to the fact that we might secure bases in Spain which we could use for atomic attacks, and Secretary Acheson thought that might be so but that there was nothing reprehensible about it. He said that after all they are now the tail of the kite and they are concerned about where the kite is going. He felt that the British had lodged their paper on the question of the atomic bomb because there had once been an agreement with respect to that and they realize that they cannot get a treaty with us saying neither of us will go to war without the other's consent. The Secretary said he should hope that what we would do, realizing what the British are trying to do, is say clearly that they will not get a commitment but that we will go over the situation with them. He thought there was real merit in having military talks first. He thought, for instance, that the military could explain that in the event of attack on us in Korea by the Russians the matter would be so serious we would have to react with everything we have. He felt that they should also understand that if we get into war by carrying the burden of defense in the Pacific they would have to go along with us, just as we will go along if Europe is attacked.

Admiral McCormick asked whether the military should have advice from the State Department before talking with the British and General Vandenberg asked whether we should go over the agreed Working Paper and take out what we don't like and get it cleared. General Bradley felt it would be better if the military simply spoke for themselves.

General Vandenberg asked if the military should insist on talking with the British Chiefs and General Collins said he thought they should and that they should insist in talking to all of the British Chiefs. General Bradley suggested that they say there must be at least one of the British Chiefs present.

General Collins reverted to the agreed Working Paper and said they should not use this paper since it talked about the use of the atomic bomb. Admiral McCormick thought it would be better to have another paper and clear it with the State Department before using it. General Collins did not agree but thought the military

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should say what they would recommend without bringing the State Department into it. Mr. Acheson said that he would not show the agreed Working Paper to anyone, but if it is agreed that the use of the atomic bomb means war the Working Paper could be used as a basis of discussion. General Collins said that he would go so far as to say that the atomic bomb should be used only in general war but Mr. Lovett felt that we should not say that because it was a self-imposed limitation. General Vandenberg said that the Chiefs did not agree with some of the things in the paper. General Collins pointed out that the military would not use Parts II and III of the paper at all. General Vandenberg thought that even with respect to Section I the object of the talks ought to be to get the British views, but General Collins felt we had to go further than that and tell the British what we would recommend under present circumstances. Mr. Matthews said that if the Chiefs differed with any of the material in Part I of the paper he felt the State Department should go over the disagreements before the Chiefs met with the British. General Vandenberg then said that there was no material difference of opinion with respect to Part I, that the differences related only to Parts II and III which would not be used.

The Secretary of State said that if the Chiefs meant by omitting Parts II and III in the talks that they would not tell the British what those portions were about, that was fine but he felt that Parts II and III would help him if he were doing the talking and might also help the Chiefs.

Mr. Lovett urged that when talking of the atomic bomb we should not speak only of general war because we might be in a war with the U.S.S.R. and use the bomb without it being a general war, and the Secretary of State agreed.

General Bradley said that the Chiefs would go ahead and hold the military discussions and say that if there is war with Russia we will use the atomic bomb. Mr. Lovett then mentioned the possibility of the Beretschaften moving against our troops in Germany or some of the eastern satellites coming in, and asked whether we would want to limit ourselves and say we would not use the atomic bomb. General Bradley said we would not limit it, we would simply say that we would use the bomb in a war against the U.S.S.R. and whether we would use it in other circumstances would depend on the situation existing at the time.

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General Bradley then turned to the question of a recommendation from General Ridgway for the removal of the limitation on attacking Rashin. Mr. Matthews said the recommendation had not come over yet, but the Secretary said we were prepared to talk about it if the Chiefs wished to. Mr. Lovett then described the Joint Chiefs' recommendation that Ridgway be permitted to attack Rashin by air and naval forces and the Secretary of State asked whether this

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meant surface vessels. General Collins said he remembered that Admiral Sherman had not wanted to use Navy surface vessels. General Bradley said that the orders could be limited to the use of air.

Admiral McCormick wanted to know what the objection was to the use of the surface Navy and General Bradley said that Admiral Sherman had been afraid one submarine captain could get over-ambitious. Mr. Lovett referred to the fact that in the past Rashin had been a part of call for Russian vessels so that there was an extra hazard if our ships approached within naval firing range. Mr. Acheson recalled that one of the things talked about when the question was up before was the danger of having surface vessels with air cover only 17 miles from the Soviet border, and Mr. Lovett said he thought it increased the proneness to accidents. Admiral McCormick said that was why the air attacks had been stopped, since there had been accidents.

Mr. Acheson said that when this was discussed before he had understood that there was no rail line below Rashin, and General Bradley said that was correct, that the railroad had not been finished below Rashin yet and that they were using trucks. He also said that this matter had been discussed so much on the Hill that the enemy had been building up their stocks in the area. Mr. Lovett asked whether we had not said at the hearings that the enemy could always store the stuff only 17 miles away, and General Collins said there was a lot there now and you could at least get that. Mr. Matthews felt that you had to measure the advantages of destroying the stocks against the pathological feeling of the Russians near the border. He said he knew Mr. Kennan felt that the Russians have not decided on whether they want war and therefore Rashin is risky. Mr. Matthews said he felt that perhaps it was less risky while the armistice talks were going on.

Admiral McCormick said Ridgway seemed to want the Navy surface vessels to help do the job, and General Collins said that he thought the orders should be limited to the use of air. Admiral Duncan said that if we want to destroy the stocks that were there it was not reasonable to limit the means. He pointed out that General Ridgway already has general instructions as to the limitations on an approach to the Soviet border with naval forces. General Bradley asked whether the screen for the fleet would not come pretty close to the Soviet border.

General Collins said that he recommended that the proposed instructions be recalled and the authority limited to the use of air and Naval air. General Bradley said that when the paper reached the State Department the State Department should consider the word "air" written in and the additional limitation that the attacks be undertaken only when visual observation was possible. He added that he thought the attack should only be carried

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out once with no publicity. He said we were bound to get some publicity since we had said in the MacArthur testimony that we did not think it was a profitable target.

The Secretary of State said he felt we could go along.

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General Bradley then referred to the September NATO Council meeting, and said he hoped we would avoid talking about military matters. Mr. Acheson said that had been made a condition of the meeting. General Bradley asked whether we should even talk provisionally about a command for Turkey before Turkey was in NATO, and Secretary Acheson said he did not think we should. General Bradley pointed out that the Council of Deputies was asking for information on the command set-up and that the Chiefs did not believe they should be given this information. The Secretary of State said that was our view.

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General Vandenberg raised the question of the North Eastern Command and asked if, from the Department of State's point of view, there would be any difficulties with having that command include Canada. He said his people thought a Canadian Deputy would be a good idea. General Bradley added that as soon as Canada could tie in part of their defense it would make sense, but he felt that would take three or four months. He reported that Folkes (?) thought it would help a great deal.

Mr. Matthews said he thought we would have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

General Vandenberg said he thought we might extend it and ask Canada to put a few officers in our Air Defense Command, and Mr. Matthews agreed that would be all to the good. Secretary Acheson suggested that we study the idea and give our views.

General Collins said the only difficulty is that Folkes wants a combined chiefs, and General Bradley said he thought this was a problem to go before the Permanent Joint Board before we approved it.

Mr. Acheson asked General Vandenberg if his proposal was limited to the North Eastern Command, and General Vandenberg said it was. He didn't feel ready to do anything more now; the North Eastern Command only has bases outside the U.S. All he had in mind was to determine if there would be political objections if the military thought it was a good idea. Greenland, Nova Scotia and Labrador are included in the command. Mr. Matthews agreed to look into this point and to let General Vandenberg know.

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Mr. Matthews reported an understanding that the military were studying a proposal for six more Turkish Divisions and asked if this was so.

General Bolte said General Arnold, on his recent trip to Washington, had made a presentation to the Chiefs on this. Admiral Duncan said he was at the hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when Arnold gave his story about the cost of Turkish Divisions. Senator Wiley had suggested instead of U.S. troops, why didn't we send Turkish troops to Europe; and he was told that the military thought that was a bad solution to the problem.

Mr. Matthews said the State Department had considered the proposed six divisions in connection with the Caucasus and Middle East. General Collins said there were limits on what we could do; and Admiral Lalor added that the question was not presently under study; it was merely part of Arnold's presentation.

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