

Response from the U.S. Government to the Aide-mémoire of the French Government (Washington, 12 april 1966)

Caption: In March 1966, France took the unilateral decision to withdraw from NATO integrated command. Having drawn conclusions from this withdrawal, on 12 April 1966, the United States sends a memorandum to the French Government with regard to France's position within NATO.

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Washington, April 12, 1966

Aide-mémoire

The Government of the United States acknowledges receipt of an aide-mémoire from the Government of the French Republic on March 29, 1966. The United States Government has been and will continue to be in consultation with its other Allies in NATO on the questions to which the actions of the Government of the French Republic give rise, and which affect the security of all members of NATO.

The United States Government takes note of the view expressed by the French Government that the measures it proposes to take are made necessary “because of the impossibility of amending, by mutual agreement and under satisfactory conditions, the provisions in force in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.” The United States Government calls the attention of the French Government to the fact that the drafters of the North Atlantic Treaty recognized that changes might occur in the factors “affecting peace and security in the North Atlantic area.” They, therefore, provided, in Article 12 that, after ten years of the operation of the Treaty, any Party should have the right to request a consultation of the Parties “for the purpose of reviewing the Treaty.”

The United States Government recalls to the French Government that, having in mind Article 12, it has, like many other NATO Governments, over the past several years invited the French Government to submit any proposals it might have for the revision of the Treaty or the Treaty Organization. Moreover, it has assured the French Government that such suggestions would be given the most careful consideration. The United States Government cannot, therefore, understand the basis upon which the French Government has concluded, without consulting the other Parties to the Treaty, that it is impossible to amend the NATO arrangements and that it must act unilaterally. The United States Government calls attention to the fact that the Declaration of Fourteen of the member countries dated March 18, 1966, was issued only after the French Government had given notice of its intentions to act unilaterally and without advance consultation.

The United States Government takes note of the intention of the Government of the French Republic to terminate the assignment to the Allied Command in Europe of the French ground and air forces stationed in Germany on July 1, 1966. In doing so, the United States recalls that all forces stationed in the area of Allied Command Europe were, by agreement, to be placed under the authority of SACEUR, in conformity with the 1954 London Final Act and the subsequent NATO Council resolution to implement Section IV of the London Final Act. Furthermore, the Government of the United States wishes to inform the Government of the French Republic that upon the termination of such assignment the Agreement dated September 6, 1960, between the United States and France regarding the NATO Atomic Stockpile of Weapons in Germany for Support of the Utilization by French Forces Assigned to NATO would, by its own terms, cease to have application.

The United States Government further notes the intention of the Government of France to withdraw French personnel assigned to NATO commands, also to take effect July 1, 1966, and from the NATO Defense College after July 23, 1966.

The aide-mémoire states that “the withdrawal of the French elements assigned to the Allied Commands and to the NATO College entails the transfer of the headquarters of these bodies outside of French territory;” and that the French Government believes that the transfers “might be completed by April 1, 1967.” On this alleged basis, the French Government has denounced the Paris Protocol on the Status of International Military Headquarters of August 28, 1952, to take effect on April 1, 1967. It is not clear to the United States Government why the intended withdrawals of French personnel should entail the removal of NATO headquarters from France by April 1, 1967.

This entire subject is now under study among the other North Atlantic Treaty Allies. Accordingly, it has not been determined when withdrawal of Allied Headquarters would be accomplished. Consultations of this subject will be necessary and it is the hope of the United States Government that all Governments will approach further discussions of this matter in the spirit of Allies seeking to reach agreement with minimum

adverse effect upon the security of the North Atlantic area and with as little mutual inconvenience as possible.

The aide-mémoire further states the desire of the Government of France to terminate United States military activities under certain bilateral agreements freely entered into between France and the United States. These agreements provide that they shall remain in force for the duration of the North Atlantic Treaty unless the two Governments by mutual consent decide beforehand to terminate them. They include the Chateauroux Depot Agreement of February 27, 1951; the Air Bases Agreement of October 4, 1952; the United States Military Headquarters Agreement of June 17, 1953; and the Pipeline Agreement of June 30, 1953.

The United States Government cannot agree with the suggestion of the French Government that April 1, 1967 “would be appropriate for completing the necessary operations” with regard to the transfer of personnel and installations involved in these agreements, but, on the contrary, believes that such precipitate action could jeopardize the security interests of all members of the Alliance. It notes, moreover, that the System of Communications Agreement of December 8, 1958, between the United States and France, provides that, if one party should wish to modify its terms, the parties will consult, and that, if they are unable to come to agreement within one year, that agreement may be terminated effective after a period of one additional year. The United States Government expresses the view that since this method of adjusting the position of the parties was considered to be desirable when the system of Communications Agreement was concluded on December 8, 1958, it remains so today and might appropriately be availed of in consideration of the bilateral agreements concluded earlier, which by their terms continue for the duration of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Accordingly, while the United States intends to remove its facilities from France as promptly as possible in view of the attitude of the French Government, the United States Government would be prepared to give its consent to the termination of the agreements referred to above only on the condition that there be applied to all such agreements the provisions of consultation and termination set forth in the system of Communications Agreement. The United States Government is prepared to explore with the French Government the question of future United States military activities in France, together with arrangements for the use of essential facilities, and mutually agreed conditions for the orderly withdrawal of those facilities that are not to remain in France. In this connection, the United States Government notes the willingness of the French Government to make special provision for activities authorized by the Chateauroux Depot Agreement of February 27, 1951 and the Pipeline Agreement of June 30, 1953.

United States activities under these Agreements between France and the United States have been and continue to be in support of the North Atlantic Treaty. Accordingly, it will be necessary in this case as well for the United States Government to seek the views of its other Allies with regard to this aspect of consultations with the Government of France.

The Government of the United States notes that the French Government is prepared to begin conversations regarding mutual facilities which might be made available in the event of an armed attack within the terms of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Finally, the attention of the French Government is called to the fact that its actions in withdrawing from, abrogating or repudiating existing agreements will entail financial problems and responsibilities that must be taken into account in any discussion of these actions.