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UNITED STATES ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: April 24, 1968

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SUBJECT: Consultations with Australians on NPT and Status of Interpretations on Articles I and II (C)

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Ian M.H. Smart, First Secretary, British Embassy
Mr. George Bunn, General Counsel, ACDA
Mr. Culver Gleysteen, Acting Asst. Director, ACDA/IR

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Mr. Smart asked to be briefed on the results of the visit of the team of ACDA and AEC officials which went out to Canberra last week to discuss the provisions of the NPT with officials of the Australian Ministry of External Affairs and Atomic Energy Commission. Mr. Bunn briefed Mr. Smart along the lines of Canberra's telegram 2252 of April 19. Mr. Bunn said that they were particularly impressed by the independence of the officials representing the Australian AEC, the confidence of their ability to manufacture a nuclear weapon and desire to be in a position to do so on very short notice. These officials seemed to have studied the draft NPT most thoroughly and were quite alert to several aspects of the treaty, the interpretation of which could lead to controversy. The political rationalization of these officials was that Australia needed to be in a position to manufacture nuclear weapons rapidly if India and Japan were to go nuclear. Mr. Bunn noted that the Australians were fully aware of the implications of the six interpretations presented to the Soviet Union on April 28, 1967. Indeed, the Australian officials indicated they could not even contemplate signing the NPT if it were not for an interpretation which would enable the deployment of nuclear weapons belonging to an ally on Australian soil.

At this point we digressed into a discussion of the current status of the interpretations mentioned above. Mr. Gleysteen noted that

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the Germans had raised a number of questions about these interpretations and in particular wished to assure themselves that the Soviets would not make difficulties over them at some later stage. Mr. Gleysteen said that Amb. Knappstein had been called in by Mr. Foster on April 22 to discuss interpretations. At that time, Mr. Foster had reviewed the circumstances surrounding these interpretations: their circulation among NATO members, their presentation to the Soviets in Geneva, and the understanding of the basis on which this exercise was carried out with our allies and with the Soviets. This understanding was clear that the interpretations would not be published before the treaty is to be submitted to the US Senate for advice and consent. We see no advantage but, on the contrary, considerable harm in changing our position about this and so informed the Germans. Although Amb. Knappstein could, of course, give no official reaction, he seemed personally satisfied by Mr. Foster's exposition. Amb. Knappstein also expressed FRG gratification over the assurances given by Defense Secretary Clifford at the recent NPG meeting that the NPT would not interfere with the work of the NPG or with the Alliance's nuclear defense arrangements.

Mr. Gleysteen told Smart that we had already informed the Canadians about Mr. Foster's discussion with Amb. Knappstein along similar lines.

Since the Canadians also had raised questions about NPT interpretations with us and we believed that this might have been stimulated, at least partially, by conversations with the Canadian Embassy in Bonn and with German officials. Mr. Smart replied that he was glad to have this information and he thought that it conformed with UK views.

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