

December 14, 1962

Memorandum of Conversation between Robert S. McNamara, Robert S. McNamara, U.S. Secretary of Defense, Paul H. Nitze, Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), Ilhami Sancar, Minister of Defense Turkey, 14 December 1962

Citation:

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Summary:

During his meeting with Turkish defense minister Sancar, McNamara raised the risks posed by, and to, the Jupiter missiles and the need to withdraw those "obsolete" missiles and replace them with Polaris SLBMs. Turkish officials would play a role in targeting the missiles at NATO military headquarters. Worried about the implications of withdrawing the Jupiters, Sancar expressed concern about the impact that removal of the missiles would have on Turkish "confidence" in the U.S., the need to avoid "moral depression" (meaning morale) among "the people or the army" and stressed that the U.S. ("the best of allies") was leaving Turkey "to a condition of 'aloneness.'" McNamara did not believe that substituting Polaris for Jupiters would have that impact. Both agreed on the importance of proceeding in secrecy.

When Sancar observed that the late delivery of F-104G's would adversely affect morale, McNamara said that an earlier date would be possible and suggested the possibility of announcing earlier delivery with the removal of the Jupiters. McNamara added that "time was of the essence."

The State Department later sent a telegram to the ambassadors in Italy and Turkey reporting on McNamara's meetings with Andreotti and Sancar.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

McNamara
Jupiters
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Time: 14 December 1962
Place: Turkish Delegation
Ministerial Meeting of
the North Atlantic
Council
Paris, France

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Participants: Robert S. McNamara, U.S. Secretary of Defense
Paul H. Nitze, Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA)
Ilhami Sancar, Minister of Defense, Turkey

Mr. Sancar began the discussion with an expression of Turkey's concern about the military assistance being given the Iraqis by the Soviets. He was particularly concerned about the MIG-21s which he claimed were being supplied. Mr. McNamara stated he did not believe they were receiving MIG-21s. In any case, Iraq did not have the capacity comparable to Turkey of operating and maintaining an Air Force. Mr. Sancar said it was not a matter of Turkey being afraid of Iraq, but it was important to make it clear to the Iraqis that they shouldn't even think of being able to challenge Turkey and that Turkish public opinion should be sure of US support in this matter.

Mr. McNamara said it was quite clear that Turkish public opinion shouldn't doubt the purpose of the US to assist them. He did, however, wish to raise one question -- this was the matter of JUPITERS in Turkey.

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When the Russians had raised the question of the comparability of their missiles in Cuba to JUPITERS in Turkey, we had firmly refused to discuss the matter with them. This is our position today and will continue to be our position. But there was another aspect of the matter. When we considered plans for striking the Soviet missiles in Cuba, we thought the Russians would almost certainly respond by striking the JUPITERS in Turkey. This consideration acted as a strong restraint on our action. We had no desire to draw on one of our Allies a Soviet reaction to an action of ours. In any case, we consider the JUPITERS obsolete even though they have a certain residual value. We think it essential in the interests of our Ally, Turkey, that they should be promptly removed. Mr. McNamara said he would presently describe an alternative. The reason we thought they should be removed was that Berlin might come to a crisis again in three months or so. We would not want to see Turkey under the danger that might flow from such a crisis. At the same time, we saw merit in having more modern missiles available, targeted against the same targets that the JUPITERS are now targeted against -- missiles with a faster reaction time and greater protection. Therefore, we believe it would be advisable if, prior to April, the JUPITERS in Turkey were to be dismantled and as a substitute POLARIS submarine-based missiles be assigned to SACEUR and that Turkey participate with SACEUR in the targeting of those missiles. Only in this way do we believe Turkey could be relieved of serious danger.

Mr. Sancar said he would submit and expose Mr. McNamara's views to his government. He said they had thought that a more secure weapons system could be substituted for the JUPITERS, but that this should be done taking into account all the political and military factors. Their place should be covered by efficient weapons covering the same targets. Turkey was not prepared to have the JUPITERS removed in a manner which would leave a vacuum which would attract an attack upon them.

Mr. McNamara said he agreed; it was not our thought that this should be done until POLARIS missiles, under SACEUR, with Turkish participation in targeting, were on station. We did think that this could and should be done by approximately the first of April.

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Mr. Sancar said that the core of the problem was Turkey's confidence in its Ally; there must be no moral depression -- either in the people or the Army. One shouldn't create the impression that the best of Allies was leaving Turkey to a condition of "aloneness." They couldn't agree to anything which would suggest the US was leaving Turkey to its own fate.

Mr. McNamara said that he could not believe that the assignment of POLARIS missiles -- clearly a more efficient system than the JUPITERS -- should produce moral depression in either the people or the Army. He did, however, think the best way to proceed was to limit knowledge of this discussion to the smallest number of people absolutely necessary. Under no circumstances, should the Soviets be allowed to know what we were discussing. He suggested that Mr. Sancar discuss the matter with his government. We would send them a note, putting our ideas in writing. Mr. Sancar said that the matter would be dealt with in the highest secrecy.

Mr. Sancar then reverted to the question of aircraft. He said they had very serious shortfalls. They had expected the F-104G at an earlier date. Now they were told delivery had been postponed to December 1963. This was having an adverse effect on the morale of Turkish forces. It restrains their capacity for training. He asked Mr. McNamara to use his influence to have the delivery date accelerated.

Mr. McNamara indicated we would have problems in accelerating delivery, but we can work to resolve this problem. He said it would be appropriate to link an announcement of an earlier delivery date with the replacement of the JUPITERS. He indicated that time was of the essence. He suggested that Mr. Sancar send him a personal cable after he had consulted with his government. In the meantime, he would explore the F-104G problem.

Mr. McNamara referred to General Sunay's request for rifles. Mr. McNamara said we were going to send 25,000 M-1 rifles a month, beginning, he thought, in April, and we would continue to do so up to a total of 250,000 rifles.

The meeting adjourned.