

May 25, 1971

**Letter from David Packard to Henry A. Kissinger,
Possible US Assistance to the French Ballistic
Missile Program**

Citation:

"Letter from David Packard to Henry A. Kissinger, Possible US Assistance to the French Ballistic Missile Program", May 25, 1971, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archives, Record Group 59, Numeric-Subject Files, 1970-73 Top Secret Files, box 5, DEF 12 FR. Obtained and contributed by William Burr and included in NPIHP Research Update #2. <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/112251>

Summary:

Packard describes Foster and Blancard's meeting to discuss US assistance to the French ballistic missile program, stating that it "went exceedingly well." Blancard was appreciative of the US's assistance and understood the limitations that had been set. The next step would be a visit to France of top level personnel from US nuclear projects.

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English

Contents:

Original Scan

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

25 MAY 1971

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COPIES TO:

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S/S-SHonorable Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Executive Office of the President
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear Henry:

This is in response to your letter of April 28, in which you expressed an interest in French reactions to Dr. Foster's meeting with them regarding U.S. assistance to their ballistic missile programs.

As a follow-up to his letter of April 20, Dr. Foster met with M. Blancard in Paris on May 12. From all appearances, the meeting went exceedingly well. Dr. Foster restated the President's decision to provide assistance, outlined the type of assistance we would be willing to furnish, stated there would be limits, indicated their nature, and emphasized that our help was to be directed towards helping fix their present systems, so they work in a reliable manner and achieve their design objectives, rather than to help make major performance advances in these systems or help develop next generation systems with significantly improved performance characteristics.

Dr. Foster also noted the overall sensitivity of the matter, calling attention to the security classification and close-hold basis assigned it in the United States, and requested the French accord it similar treatment.

In order to initiate the exchange it was suggested that the next phase consist of a visit to France, in early June, by a team from the U.S., led by a member of Dr. Foster's staff, accompanied by top level personnel from both our Polaris and Minuteman program offices and a member of G. Warren Nutter's staff. The purpose of this visit would be to learn more of the technical details of the French problems, work out tentative arrangements for assistance in their solution, and to write a series of guidelines and ground rules to

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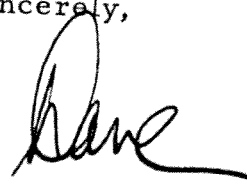
cover the implementation of the assistance program. These guidelines would be worked out jointly with the French, reviewed by higher levels in each government, and eventually adopted in some form of mutual agreements.

M. Blancard expressed his strong appreciation of the positive and helpful attitude of the U. S., stating he fully understood our need for restrictions and that, in fact, he would have been surprised had we not adopted such a position. He stated also a complete understanding of the security aspects and agreed to handle the matter in the manner requested. He seemed genuinely pleased with the arrangements and noted that the talks were very constructive. He noted that his overriding priority is just what we proposed, i. e., to make his present systems work properly and reliably, and that he is not seeking our help to make major advances in present systems or to build an advanced system or systems. The proposed meeting in early June was completely satisfactory to him.

I shall send you another report after this next meeting and, prior to adoption, a copy of the proposed guidelines so that we can incorporate therein any provision you may wish.

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Irwin.

Sincerely,



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