

**April 23, 1979**

**Memorandum of conversation Vice-President  
Mondale - Prime-Minister Van Agt and others during  
Mondale's visit to The Hague, April 21 & 22**

**Citation:**

"Memorandum of conversation Vice-President Mondale - Prime-Minister Van Agt and others during Mondale's visit to The Hague, April 21 & 22", April 23, 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archive of the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands, [apa/gs/1975-1984/1121](https://apa/gs/1975-1984/1121). Translated by Ruud van Dijk  
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**Summary:**

Meeting minutes prepared by Ambassador Tammenoms Bakker. Topics of discussion include: Enhanced Radiation Weapons, the Dutch role in NPG, Grey Areas, SALT II and the Middle East.

**Credits:**

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

**Original Language:**

Dutch

**Contents:**

Translation - English

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Archive of the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands, apa/gs/1975-1984/1121  
Translation from the Dutch and footnotes: Ruud van Dijk, University of Amsterdam

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Memorandum

From: Dr. C.A. van der Klaauw

Date 23 April 1979

To: Mr. A.A.M. van Agt

No. 18/79

SECRET

Following a report prepared by Ambassador Tammenoms Bakker and approved by me of the discussions in limited circle with Vice-President Mondale.

Present from the American side: Vice-President Mondale, Ambassador Joseph, National Security Advisor Clift.

Present from the Dutch side: Prime-Minister Van Agt, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Van der Klaauw, and Ambassador Tammenoms Bakker.

The Prime-Minister opens the discussions and underlines the confidential and informal character of the meeting. He announces to want to raise three connected subjects:

- 1) production and deployment of Enhanced Radiation Weapons,
- 2) Grey Areas,
- 3) Dutch demand for a change in the composition of the Nuclear Planning Group.

Vice-President Mondale states that on American side too there is a desire to discuss these subjects, and he announces he'd like to add two other points: SALT and the Middle-East.

He begins the discussion with a survey of SALT, this at the special request of President Carter. He reports that the second SALT-agreement is practically ready. It mainly comes down to it that both sides involved can only design one new type of missile. Furthermore, satisfactory arrangements are envisioned to enable each side to observe what the other does and to determine if it keeps to the agreements. It appears the signing can take place very soon. President Carter has appealed to President Brezhnev in writing on the importance of having the signing by both heads of state, in the context of a more general summit meeting. That it has not come to a summit meeting between the two heads of state so far is the consequence of the fact that early on the Soviet side formed an incorrect judgment of President Carter. Now a better understanding has been established, and a meeting between the two heads of state can therefore be envisioned. It has not yet been decided where the meeting will take place. President Brezhnev's health probably makes it

difficult for him to undertake a long trip. For the U.S. it is unacceptable, however, to have the meeting take place in the Soviet Union, this both for reasons of prestige and with an eye on practical aspects which tend to occur in Moscow, like bugging and dividing the American delegation between several locations. During the visit to Stockholm a few days ago the Swedish prime-minister announced to Vice-President Mondale that the summit meeting would be held in Stockholm, but Mondale said that he had not received any information about this.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs says that he has heard from a French source--this with an eye on the coming visit to Moscow by President Giscard d'Estaing--that Brezhnev's health would have improved. He notes the general impression of the difficulties ratification of SALT II could encounter in the American Congress and announces that any Dutch help that would be welcome will gladly be given.

The Vice-President confirms that there are Congressional difficulties. The right wing uses, among other things, the argument that SALT II would be at the expense of the security of Western Europe. He rejects this representation, referring to the fact that there have been constant consultations with West European partners. He believes the idea is justified rather than SALT II will contribute to more security for the North Atlantic Treaty region. The more European leaders could speak about this aspect, the better. As a politician with a lot of experience in the Senate he has the feeling that the pessimism over the ratification of SALT II is exaggerated. He recalls that according to estimates initially only 8% of the American people was inclined toward ratification of the Panama-canal treaties, and this eventually did get through the Senate. Currently estimates point out that 70-75% of the American people wants ratification of SALT II. This mood can only have been reinforced by the recent occurrence at the nuclear plant in Pennsylvania. As a result of this the awareness of the need to reduce nuclear risks must have increased. He therefore foresees that the Senate will have to orient itself toward the national mood. An important aspect furthermore is that in an international negotiation over a matter as essential as nuclear arms the authority and the prestige of the President and the American system of government are at stake. At the moment however nothing can be taken as settled and the American Government would therefore be grateful for any help it could get from Europe.

The Prime-Minister notes that there can be no doubt over the expression of the Dutch position because Dutch public opinion practically unanimously is convinced of the importance of SALT II. He next brings up the issue that has become known under the keyword "neutron bomb." His government has constantly taken the position that production and deployment of Enhanced Radiation Weapons do not get rejected unconditionally. They do, however, have to be elements in arms control discussions with the Soviet Union and decisions have to depend on the course of these discussions. This has been the position thusfar. The attitude of the Dutch Parliament toward the neutron bomb, however, becomes ever more rejecting and the government is "fighting a losing battle." If premature decisions were to be taken a situation could develop which the government could not survive. He recognizes that in essence a decision over production and deployment falls under the sovereign prerogatives of the U.S., but points out that the

response of his government to a query from the side of the American President about a decision for production of the neutron bomb would be negative. Naturally this would also be the case concerning a question about deployment of the weapon on European territory. The Dutch government is especially worried about the following. On the one hand it acknowledges the importance and the complexity of the problem and of the arguments which can be used in favor of a positive decision. On the other hand a positive decision about production, let alone deployment, of Enhanced Radiation Weapons would make it extremely difficult to get parliamentary approval for the issue of modernization of Theater Nuclear Forces. The mood in the Netherlands was undergoing a change. In the past there only tended to be a small minority arguing for a complete removal of nuclear weapons from Dutch territory. This group, however, was growing. In part this was a reflection of a thought process, and subsequent positions, in the Dutch churches. A complication like a premature decision over the neutron bomb would accelerate this process and thus become a risk for the TNF-matter.

The Vice-President recalls that in the U.S. there is no lack of elements feeling emotional aversion to the neutron bomb and the entire idea of nuclear arms. President Carter himself belongs to these elements. Fact remained, however, that one has to counter one way or another the large Soviet increase in other areas, like e.g. tanks. Some measures have been taken in connection to the possibility that at some point there would have to be a positive decision in regard to the neutron bomb. He underlined, however, that about production itself no decision had been taken and that the ultimate decision would depend in part on the behavior of the Soviets. The latter could also influence the European positions. The American Government took the politically explosive character of the question into account and hoped that the current stage of the decisionmaking could be continued ("stabilised"). An aspect of the current situation was that a sword continued to hang over the Russians' head and hopefully bring them to reasonable behavior.

The Prime-Minister says to realize that a negative decision cannot be had from the American Government at this time. He adds, however, that in the Netherlands the political pressure is considerable to reach that kind of a decision. The Minister of Foreign Affairs adds that the government has maintained throughout that the issue of Enhanced Radiation Weapons had to be employed in the context of general arms reduction talks. Public opinion, however, began to wonder if anything was happening there. The pressing political problem for the Dutch government consisted of the difficulty the issue of the Enhanced Radiation Weapons could form during the discussion of the modernization of Theater Nuclear Forces.

The Vice-President points out that for years he has presented himself as an arms reductionist. However, since he has been able to observe the Soviet Union from a position of responsibility for ten years he has become convinced that unilateral disarmament from the side of the West would only encourage the Russians in their ambitions. Persistent military pressure formed one of the means with which the Soviets constantly tried to exploit other possibilities in Western countries. During his recent visit to Norway he had received striking examples of this again. One further needed to recognize the fact that the Soviets constantly continued with the development of new

weapons-types. The Intelligence-reports of the U.S. point out that practically no month passes without a new development from Soviet side. As examples he mentions the appearance of a new generation of SS 20 and the fact that the Soviets are busy placing more warheads inside the missiles than is permitted under the treaties. Since 15 years the West has not introduced modernization in the Theater Nuclear Forces. The Soviets do this all the time and apparently seek to realize a breakthrough in this field.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs again underlines the increasing emotional character of the difficulties in the Netherlands. The campaign against the neutron bomb was initially started on the communist side but has since been taken up by other groups. At the moment a large majority of Parliament is concerned about the prospect of a new wave in the area of nuclear weapons, regardless of the form it takes.

The Vice-President recalls that he himself has agitated against anti-ballistic missile systems. Today he has to state to be glad to have lost this struggle. If the U.S. had not developed ABM the Soviets would have continued unilaterally in this area. The U.S. would then have had to take compensating measures later. The result is that now a balance has been established at the cost of 5 billion dollars, which otherwise would have cost 75 billion dollars. He did not expect however that from the American side a connection would be made between Enhanced Radiation Weapons and modernization of Theater Nuclear Forces and therefore did not foresee any reason for concern for the Netherlands.

The Prime-Minister notes that the time has not come yet for a decision on the modernization of TNF. One statement does need to be made by him in all clarity: the modernization of TNF could not even give the impression that the role of nuclear weapons systems is being increased. The Dutch government would argue for certain shifts within the area of TNF. The number of warheads could not be increased and he hoped very much that an approach like that would prove to be possible.

The Vice-President states that the U.S. in principle certainly is not inclined against the reduction of nuclear arms. It wanted however to see the level go down on both sides. At the same time the necessity of modernization remained, this as a result of the West being behind. Naturally there was a connection to the question of arms reduction in a more general sense. The urgent issue of modernization would preferably be approached in connection with the general matter usually referred to as *détente*.

The Prime-Minister notes again that he has not stated any personal opinions. He has painted for the Vice-President a precise picture of existing moods in the Netherlands and of the limits of the possibilities which manifest themselves for his government.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs adds to this that there is still a majority in Parliament that recognizes that nuclear arms remain necessary, but that the preference of this majority is for the concentration of efforts toward a few weapons-types. As far as the air force was concerned there was no problem yet, neither for the Lance; nuclear artillery however was doubtful already. It was absolutely mandatory to maintain this majority, but in order to

achieve this it would be necessary to be able to demonstrate that in overall terms a reduction and not an increase of nuclear arms was envisioned.

The Vice-President says to know from his parliamentary experience that time can often be gained by bringing several points together in one package. Could the Dutch Government not keep things quiet by emphasizing as much as possible the connection between détente/arms reduction and modernization? He acknowledged that discussions between the Netherlands and the U.S. about the entire complex of issues ought to be much closer. On the American side there had been a beginning already with the intensification of these discussions.

The Vice-President next asked for the Dutch opinion on the membership of the Nuclear Planning Group.

The Prime-Minister recalls that around this time discussions take place in Miami between the Defense Ministers, where this subject is on the agenda. The issue is that circumstances have changed since the Netherlands accepted a rotating membership of the NPG years ago. Then nuclear armaments were practically entirely of a strategic nature; Theater Nuclear Forces at the most were at a beginning level. As a result of technological developments and increased emotional involvements, a country like the Netherlands nowadays felt connected territorially in every respect to the question of nuclear armament and its consequences. Hardly a week passed without the government having to answer questions in Parliament about nuclear issues. It had become essential now for the Netherlands to be involved in a credible way to all sides and in every respect with allied decisionmaking on nuclear arms. There was an additional aspect of a practical political nature. The current Dutch Defense Minister enjoyed great respect in Parliament. But he would have to be able to demonstrate therefore to be able to achieve something vis-a-vis the allies. On this issue seen by the entire nation as so important, he had to be spared a defeat.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs gives several examples of the important contributions which the Dutch Government has made to allied defense and its modernization: the nuclearization of the Lance, the ordering of large numbers of new tanks, the ordering of navy aircraft, modernization and renovation in other areas. Against this background the Netherlands really should be able to claim a role in the overall thinking and decisionmaking process, especially in the most sensitive area.

The Vice-President says to be impressed by the Dutch presentation and promises to take up the issue of a revision of the membership of the NPG with Secretary of Defense Brown, in the sense that the Netherlands could become a member.

[next, there was a discussion of the Middle East; the meeting concluded with a brief comment by the Prime-Minister about a recent statement by Finnish President Kekkonen]