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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

10 JAN 1984

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Ambassador Abshire Armaments Cooperation Initiative (S)

✓ Ambassador Abshire has recommended that the US undertake a major, high level initiative to reinvigorate trans-Atlantic cooperation in armaments development and production, as a means of strengthening NATO's conventional posture, making a more efficient use of defense resources, and combating protectionism in the defense sector.

✓ Although I share Ambassador Abshire's concern and have for some time thought that meaningful steps need to be taken to reinvigorate trans-Atlantic cooperation in armaments development and production, there remain a number of outstanding obstacles that need to be addressed in a realistic and creative fashion on both sides of the Atlantic before any substantial progress can be achieved.

✓ Ambassador Abshire proposes the creation of either a Presidential Commission or a highly visible ad hoc committee of representatives from Congress, industry, labor and the Executive Branch to foster the necessary consensus within the US. Though I agree that to improve the balance in armaments cooperation between the US and our European allies is a pressing political reality, and that we will eventually need a consensus to make armaments cooperation work, I believe that there are necessary and practical interim steps we need to undertake first.

✓ Given past defeats by Congress and the Services, it would be more productive to adopt, initially, a quiet in-house approach to this issue rather than a high profile public relations program that will inevitably be used against us if it goes nowhere, which is a very real possibility. The time involved in setting up a high level commission or ad hoc group, not to mention the time it would take to agree upon recommendations and to implement them, would be considerable.

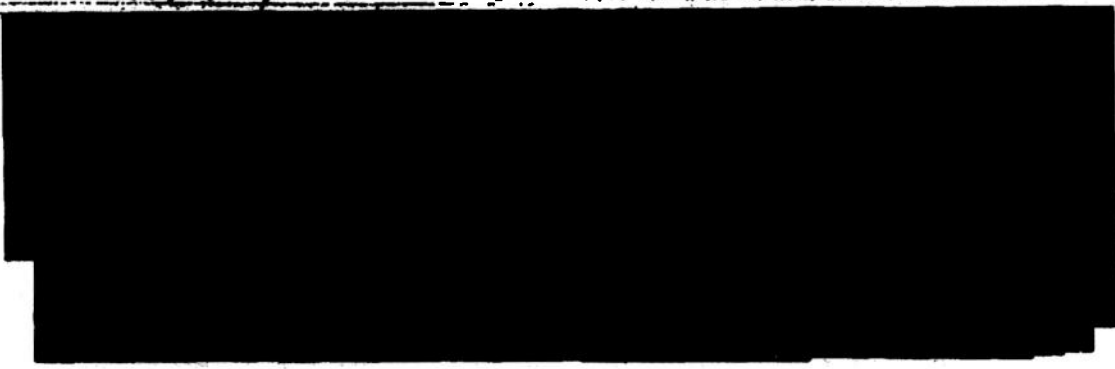
✓ The approach I suggest would initially be led by the Department of Defense, where we would mount a determined effort to identify a number of promising near term and future oriented US-European cooperative weapons systems or other defense items for NATO cooperative development and/or procurement consideration. These would include some European systems that the US needs and that are demonstrably competitive with any rival US products. In pursuing this matter we would take fully into account helpful

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studies such as the recent Currie report of the Defense Science Board on industry-to-industry international armaments cooperation and the recommendations of the 15 August 1983 Dancoo DOD Task Group Report on International Coproduction/Industrial Participation Agreements, most of which Dick DeLauer and Dr. Ikle approved for implementation.

(U) A significant element of this process would be devoted to identifying all interested US parties and consulting with them in the course of the review and selection process. These would include the Service or Services concerned; the State Department; potential US industrial competitors; Congressmen from Districts potentially affected by selection of the European/joint US-European product as well as other Congressional leaders whose general support would be important. The impetus and idea underlying the "family of weapons" concept would be worth reexamination in this process. Having involved some key members of Congress in the selection process, we would then seek some Congressional endorsement -- formal or informal-- of the proposed ventures; for example, they could be anointed as special programs serving the broader interests of greater NATO armaments cooperation.

(U) Once the cooperative programs were firmly launched and if they demonstrated real progress, one might envisage a second phase: creation of an ad hoc committee with representatives from the Executive Branch, Congress, industry and labor to encourage further cooperative undertakings and to consider broader changes needed in the overall political and industrial structure of trans-Atlantic armaments cooperation. Still later, we might initiate, as envisaged in the Abshire proposal, US-European talks to negotiate a new structure of cooperation.

(U) The Department of State agrees with the approach outlined above.

Sincerely,

cc: Secretary of State

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS + S.A.S.C. 3552
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