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~~TOP SECRET~~

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS

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Downgraded To: ~~SECRET~~ *CO* January 27, 1961  
EO 11652: XERO *CO*

Authorized *10/1/61*  
August

Recategorized as  
**Category "A"**

September 21, 1966

By Warren A. Henderson

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TO: The Secretary  
THROUGH: S/S *W*  
FROM: M - Mr. Merchant *W*

I attach herewith the Top Secret file you handed me this morning relating to the Prime Minister's message of January 26, 1961 to the President concerning consultation before the use of nuclear weapons and the use of bases in the United Kingdom. (Tab A)

In accordance with your instructions I asked Lord Hood to come in this morning in Ambassador Caccia's absence from town. I ascertained from him the following:

(1) In the absence of precise instructions on the point, he assumed that Mr. Macmillan expected that re-affirmation of existing undertakings in this matter would be accomplished by a letter from the President to the Prime Minister in reply to the latter's message.

(2) In light of the assurance from Senator Kennedy (contained in your letter to Mr. Herter dated January 7) (Tab B) that "the understandings in question would continue pending a prompt exchange on the matter immediately after Inauguration," the Prime Minister was not pressing for an immediate reply, though obviously he would welcome it.

*Carded*  
*10-11-66*

(3) The Top Secret memorandum on "Understandings with the British on the Use of British Bases and Nuclear Weapons" (copy in the attached file), which I handed Sir Harold in the original on January 9, accurately reflects the British understanding of these past undertakings subject to three minor clarifications. Lord Hood read these to me orally and in his view and in mine they merely clarify without modifying the language of the memorandum under reference. (Tab C) At my request Sir Harold Caccia will send you a letter setting forth these minor clarifications.

Mr. Fessenden

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Mr. Fessenden of EUR was present during my talk with Lord Hood and is preparing a full memorandum of the conversation.

I suggest that you defer discussing this matter with the President until the letter from the British Ambassador is received. Upon its receipt I recommend that it be reviewed by Mr. Kohler, Mr. Farley and the Acting Legal Adviser, who thereafter could prepare a draft reply by the President to Mr. Macmillan for you to consider and, if you approved, discuss with the President.

Attachment:

1. Top Secret File handed to Mr. Merchant by Secretary Rusk January 27, 1961 (Tab A)
2. Letter to Mr. Herter of Jan. 7.) (Tab B.)
3. Memorandum on "Understandings with the British on the Use of British Bases and Nuclear Weapons" (Tab C.)

cc: EUR - Mr. Kohler

LTM/sp

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