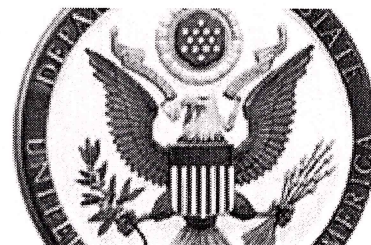


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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 001039

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SUBJECT: FRANCE'S POSITION ON NUCLEAR ISSUES IN THE RUN-UP TO THE NPT REVCON

REF: A. PARIS POINTS JULY 15 B. PARIS POINTS JULY 6 C. PARIS POINTS APRIL 10 D. PARIS 1025

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathy Allegrone for Reasons 1.4(b), (d).

1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: French officials have made clear that nuclear issues enjoy the sustained attention of President Sarkozy and have become a major foreign policy priority, especially in the run-up to the spring 2010 Review Conference (RevCon) of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). France's concerns go beyond the conference, however, to include larger issues of the link between disarmament and deterrence, as well as non-proliferation. In various meetings, French officials have noted repeatedly what they see as worrying trends in both U.S. and UK disarmament policy pronouncements. Based on the calculation that they cannot fight a winning battle against or without us, and alongside a public strategy of positioning themselves as leaders on disarmament, the French are at great pains to coordinate with the United States to assuage their own concerns and present a united front to others on these issues. The seriousness with which the GOF takes these issues means that France can be a valuable partner to the

United States on nuclear issues if we can calm their fears over our position on disarmament while making clear our policy goals and redlines. END SUMMARY.

PUBLICLY PROCLAIMING LEADERSHIP ON DISARMAMENT

2. (S/NF) France kicked off its reaction to President Obama's nuclear policies immediately following his April 5 remarks in Prague with a public campaign to highlight France's efforts toward disarmament, comparing their achievements favorably to the objectives outlined by the U.S. President. On April 9, centrist daily Le Figaro - which tends to reflect official positions - published an anonymous report from the Elysee saying President Obama's statement largely recalled positions long-held by France (ref C). To further highlight French leadership, the same paper reported just prior to President Obama's visit to Moscow that France had opened up the dismantled Pierrelatte fissile material production site to a group of journalists (ref B) as proof of France's commitment to stopping the production of fissile materials ahead of FMCT negotiations.

3. (C/NF) The French MFA also produced statements on July 7 and 10 - immediately following President Obama's Moscow trip - trumpeting France's steps towards disarmament and claiming a unique leadership role among nuclear powers. The statements cited France's reduction of its nuclear warheads to 300, dismantling of fissile material production sites, and a moratorium on fissile material production, while welcoming U.S.-Russian negotiations to reduce nuclear arsenals "which represent 95% of the global stockpiles."

EAGER FOR ENERGETIC ENGAGEMENT

4. (S/NF) This flurry of publicity was followed up in July by a series of high-level, interagency engagements by the GOF on nuclear issues with the Embassy and with key officials from Washington. Political Director Gerard Araud has vowed that France is ready to coordinate with the United States on these issues "every day if necessary" (Note: Araud is headed to New York in late August to take up his new position as PermRep. End Note.). Jacques Audibert, currently A/S-equivalent for Strategic Affairs and Araud's replacement as Political Director, has told us he expects to spend "most of his time" in 2009 on non-proliferation and disarmament issues. He called for continued engagement and early coordination, hoping to meet again on the

sidelines of an expected P5 confidence-building meeting in London in September. Elysee Military Advisor Edouard Guillaud added France was eager to support U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, for example by sending French experts to the U.S. and by providing briefings to Codels in Paris.

FRENCH WORRIES

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5. (S/NF) In large part, France's desire to work ever more closely with the United States on nuclear issues reflects new concerns with U.S. policy, based on analysis of recent statements by President Obama, specifically his comments that: "The notion that prestige comes from holding these weapons, or that we can protect ourselves by picking and choosing which nations can have these weapons, is an illusion," (Moscow) and "No single nation should pick and chose which nations hold nuclear weapons. That is why I strongly reaffirmed America's commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons" (Cairo). The French read this as counter to the spirit of the NPT, in which this discrimination is inherent. Although U.S. interlocutors have pointed out that these speeches were intended to strengthen NPT principles, Araud and Ministry of Defense U/S-equivalent for Strategic Affairs Michel Miraillet said they fear non-aligned nations and NPT violators can easily interpret these remarks to their advantage. Miraillet even asked for advance warning of any speeches about nuclear issues that might contain "surprises." Several of our French interlocutors have expressed concerns that these statements focus more on disarmament than on non-proliferation. Araud, Audibert, and MFA DAS-equivalent for Disarmament and Nonproliferation Martin Briens said that in touting U.S.-Russian negotiations and elaborating a long-term vision of total disarmament in the President's speeches, the U.S. will make it easier for non-aligned nations to focus at the 2010 RevCon on actual progress on disarmament and avoid discussions of non-proliferation.

IRAN

6. (S/NF) The GOF has expressed its dismay at the U.S. decision to not mention Iran by name and make reference to its need to adhere to the Additional Protocol at the PrepCon. The French have indicated that the NPT's most urgent mission is to curb the Iranian potential to develop nuclear weapons. In order to address Iran head-on, Briens

has emphasized that partners will have to abandon fears that they might disturb an atmosphere conducive to larger engagement of Iran. France has also welcomed U.S. assurances that we do not support nuclear capabilities for Saudi Arabia or Egypt, which they said would be tantamount to accepting a nuclear armed Iran. The French focus on Iran at the NPT comes in the context of a general French preference for strong rhetoric and strong action on Iran, based on the apparently broad GOF consensus that a nuclear Iran presents an unacceptable danger to French interests. While numerous French officials have highlighted their efforts to encourage strengthening sanctions against Iran with EU and UN partners, they have little optimism that these efforts will bear fruit. They are now concentrating on close cooperation with the United States and individual bilateral measures by individual partners to help increase pressure on the Iranian regime.

FMCT

7. (S/NF) France is currently reviewing its policy on an FMCT, a process the GOF expects to complete by the end of September. France has stopped its own production of fissile materials, and is in favor of a multilateral FMCT, which they view as a key measure to cap stockpiles in China, India, Israel, and Brazil by addressing the issue of future production in a legal regime. However, Briens has made clear that any effort to address the issue of existing stocks within the agreement is a French redline. Noting France's transparency in admitting its total number of weapons, Briens said limiting its small stocks of fissile materials would undercut the credibility of France's long-term deterrent. While France is willing to discuss transparency on stockpiles within the P5, French officials have repeatedly said they will not accept tabling this issue in Geneva. As France proceeds with its policy review, French officials have expressed interest in U.S. views on verification and sanctions for non-compliance.

8. (S/NF) In the context of an FMCT, French officials have repeatedly mentioned China's expected opposition to real progress, regretting that, unlike France or the United States, the Chinese are not publicly challenged on their lack of action. As part of an effort to encourage movement by the Chinese, the MFA Disarmament and Non-proliferation section's Celine Jurgensen told us that France intends to call for a

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universal moratorium on fissile material production as FMCT negotiations proceed (ref D). Noting potential progress in Geneva on starting these negotiations, Jurgensen said

France intends to move as soon as possible, potentially making its plea for a moratorium at UN First Committee discussions this autumn.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE U.S. RHETORIC?

9. (S/NF) As the GOF's focus on President Obama's speeches shows, French concerns currently focus on U.S. rhetoric and they hope to shape our views in their favor during the current U.S. policy reviews underway. As Briens told us, France is worried that non-aligned countries will try and use the RevCon as a referendum on P5 progress on disarmament to forestall calls to fulfill non-proliferation obligations or take on new ones, such as the Additional Protocol. Even if the U.S. is fully committed to disarmament, the results will be long term, allowing non-aligned countries to cite a lack of progress by the time of the RevCon as a sign of P5 hypocrisy.

FRANCE'S UNTOUCHABLE REDLINE: DELEGITIMIZING DETERRENCE

10. (S/NF) However, France's concerns about U.S. rhetoric go beyond RevCon tactics and to the heart of French nuclear theology. Araud said that any statements that are seen to delegitimize the idea of a nuclear deterrent capacity directly threaten French strategic interests, which are fundamentally and "psychologically" bound to France's deterrent. France's policy of nuclear deterrence is supported by parties across the political spectrum and has become an essential part of French strategic identity. In the negotiations preceding France's return to NATO's integrated military command, President Sarkozy made clear that an independent French nuclear policy was an "untouchable" redline. And in a notable departure from the official refrain that France looks forward to cooperating with the United States, Araud explicitly threatened that France would "stonewall" if it felt its sensitivities were being ignored. In this context, French officials are especially keen for details on how the United States plans to "hedge" by maintaining a deterrent in addition to our disarmament efforts and how U.S. disarmament goals can accommodate build ups by China and possibly Iran.

FRANCE WORRIED ABOUT THE UK

11. (S/NF) France's concerns over evolving U.S. nuclear policy come in the context of similar, but even greater, concerns with the UK. Audibert told us July 10 that the July 6 France-UK defense summit was difficult across a range of issues, but specifically cited British support for eliminating nuclear arsenals (ref A) as a major area of divergence. *Araud and the Elysee's Guillaud fear British nuclear policy is being guided for the moment by Labour Party "demagogues" for domestic political consumption. Briens added that Gordon Brown seems to have decided disarmament will be his legacy, and the UK has moved from talking about disarmament as a political sop to gain parliamentary support for renewing its Trident force, to embracing disarmament as an end in itself.* According to Briens, in some fora, the UK has shown willingness to accept clauses calling for a "ban on nuclear weapons." Critically, UK rhetoric suggests that nuclear weapons are inherently bad, thus implying that maintaining a deterrent force is immoral. For France "nuclear weapons are not bad or good, they just are." Thus, France continues to oppose the phrase "a world free of nuclear weapons," which in Araud's view implies a moral judgment. However, France can accept "a world without nuclear weapons," which the GOF thinks is more neutral.

12. (S/NF) UK Political Officer Ben Fender told us on July 21 that the French have been very vocal in their concern about UK disarmament policy, particularly following a March 17 speech by PM Gordon Brown suggesting the UK was ready for further reductions to its nuclear arsenal. While admitting that Brown cut his political teeth in a 1980s Labour Party supportive of unilateral disarmament, Fender has been at pains to convince the GOF that in the context of the RevCon,

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the UK and France actually have very little to argue about. Britain also wants a balanced focus on all three pillars, and agrees on the need to work with the P3 to reach out to non-aligned countries and discourage spoilers. According to Fender, the short term France/UK disagreement is essentially one of rhetoric: France feels talk of disarmament ultimately weakens the P3 diplomatically, while the UK feels that a publicly pro-disarmament stance gives the P3 diplomatic leverage to shift the discussion to non-proliferation by arguing that the nuclear states are doing their part.

13. (S/NF) Fender added that, in the UK's view, while any moves seen to threaten the legitimacy of France's deterrent will remain a redline, there are other issues that "France will make noise on, but ultimately come along." In the latter category, Fender mentioned specifically transparency measures in an FMCT. The danger, in his view, is that France will feel that its deterrence redline is not being respected by allies and retreat to its box, blocking progress on other issues. Serious engagement by both the United States and the UK will be necessary to reassure the French and prevent this scenario.

14. (S/NF) COMMENT: The GOF is anxious for P3 unity and close cooperation with the United States in rolling out disarmament and non-proliferation goals in the coming year. Therefore, France is nervous that the U.S. position on disarmament is moving further away from their own and that we are more accommodating to the concerns of non-aligned nations over existing stockpiles. The GOF's proactive engagement of U.S. officials suggests a strategy of attempting to influence U.S. policy as it is being elaborated in order to protect, in their view, the diplomatic viability of their own deterrent capacity. The potential pitfalls with these concerns will be if the GOF continues to feel the United States is "delegitimizing" their nuclear deterrent, thus precipitating classic French obstructionism (as threatened by Araud and feared by the British) that could turn a valuable partner on non-proliferation into an institutional "non." Continued communication between Washington officials and their French counterparts will help tamp down misunderstandings of our position before they escalate, while displaying at the same time a commitment to cooperating with the GOF on this policy priority. In this context, the recent visits by Ambassador Susan Burk, Special Advisor Robert Einhorn, and Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Dr. James Miller were greatly appreciated by our French interlocutors.

As next steps, post suggests the following for the Department's consideration:

- Maintaining regular senior-level engagement with the GOF on nuclear issues in Paris, Washington, Geneva, New York, and elsewhere, ensuring direct and clear lines of communication and clarifying our position and our redlines;
- Reiterating to the French that our positions regarding the RevCon are largely in synch;
- Continuing active discussions at both technical and political levels of those topics where disagreements may remain but where we might find common ground, such as the nature of an FMCT or how to deal with Iran at the RevCon;
- Using this engagement as an opportunity to look for early warning signs that French suspicions regarding our position on disarmament may be leading to obstructionist behavior that could halt progress on areas where agreement would otherwise be possible. END COMMENT. PEKALA

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