

**Philip J. Farley Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 11/1/1966**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Philip J. Farley  
**Interviewer:** Joseph E. O'Connor  
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**Biographical Note**

Farley (1916 - 2004) was Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Atomic Energy and Outer Space from 1961-1962, and Chief, Political Section, US Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1962. In the interview Farley discusses establishing the communications satellite program, the politics that went along with it, and the Multi-Lateral Force, among other issues.

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By Philip J. Farley

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Philip J. Farley – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

With

Philip J. Farley

November 1, 1966  
Paris, France

By Joseph E. O'Connor

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'CONNOR: I wonder if you'd begin by telling us simply what your position was in the Kennedy Administration initially?

FARLEY: I was special assistant to the Secretary of State handling outer space and atomic energy matters, liaison with the National Aeronautics and Space Agency and the Atomic Energy Commission, and also with the Pentagon and the National Space Council in these areas.

O'CONNOR: Could you tell us something about the changes that might have taken place? You were, in effect, in the same position under the last years of the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] Administration. Was there any major difference when President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] came to power or particularly when Vice President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] came to office?

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FARLEY: I do not think of the change in these areas as a major change in policy. In the atomic energy field, indeed, we were not confronted with major international issues. What one had was a continuity really of the policies of nonproliferation of atomic energy cooperation within a policy of nonproliferation, which had obtained for some time previously. In the outer space field we did have very interesting

and novel problems which were dealt with on their merits by the new Administration. But because they were novel, one did not think, “Aha, here we have a new situation, a new team taking a new approach.”

O’CONNOR: President Johnson, or Vice President Johnson at that time, was really the man you were most involved with, is that correct?

FARLEY: In the Administration, yes. The space activities of the country were divided between NASA and the Pentagon, and the coordinating agency was the National Space Council of which the Vice President was chairman. Since Vice President Johnson, when he was a senator, had been very interested in space, he was a very active chairman. In effect, as I saw it, the President really delegated responsibility for this program to him.

O’CONNOR: Can you tell us something about the sort of problems you were involved in under the Kennedy Administration, under the guidance, in effect, of President Johnson, or under his influence?

FARLEY: The two principle problems were, first, the establishment of the communications satellite program which involved some very interesting internal political problems in the United States and, secondly, the accelerated establishment of a broad program of cooperation with other countries, including United Nations’ space program and policy.

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The first of these was, as I say, a very interesting test case of American politics as a new policy program comes along. We had a unique situation in that we were taking the lead in establishing a new international means of communication, communications satellites. We had inevitably to work with other countries because you can’t talk internationally unless you talk to another country. Virtually every other country in the world – I can’t think of any other exception – operates its communications as, in effect, a national monopoly. We do not. We operate it as a domestic monopoly. [Laughter]

O’CONNOR: Certainly added clearly to the problem of the interests.

FARLEY: I may say that the operating agencies in the United States, the companies, were very effective politically, and, indeed, their case was heard very sympathetically by the most powerful members of Congress who had to pass the enabling legislation which would permit us to engage in international negotiations. This, of course, was a situation made to order for the talents of the Vice President. And yet one thing, which I must say struck me as quite interesting, was the effective manner in which the Vice President and the then Attorney General [Robert F. Kennedy] worked together on this problem. We had, needless to say, some sharp differences of view in the government, in the Administration. Some of us, and certainly the State Department was the leading in this

respect, felt that the potentials of communications satellite were such that we ought to examine seriously our own method of organizing and running communications in the United States in this respect so that we could, if possible, cooperate with other countries on a nearly comparable basis, even perhaps consider a United Nations kind of operation here, which would have required changes, an increased role of government direction in communications, from what the United States had traditionally done. There was a sharp difference as to the degree to which space communications could be civilian as against military.

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O'CONNOR: A sharp difference. You don't mean within the State Department. You mean between the State Department and...

FARLEY: I'm sorry. In this case between the Defense Department and the commercial interests, the Defense Department wanting to reserve the possibility of a separate, highly secure communications net of its own, the commercial people wanting to have the fullest possible amount of business and thus leave open the possibility of handling the Defense business also. There were a number of kinds of conflict within the government in different agencies, and private interests, also, through their spokesmen had different points of view to put forward. In this complicated situation we had first the Vice President as the person who was interested in developing a policy which, as much as possible, reflected the legitimate interests of all the agencies – we could see very well what he meant by a consensus policy – and also a desire to find a policy which would be acceptable to the congressional committees who had to pass our legislation.

But because of the very nature of the task – which involved the regulatory relationship between the government and the industries, involved preparation of new legislation – we found that the most active single agency came to be the Department of Justice. And the man who was finally used as the mediator between all the departments and the White House and the Congress was a gentleman named Nicholas Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach], who was then, of course, Deputy Attorney General, later Attorney General and Under Secretary of State. So I might say, parenthetically, that his example of Mr. Katzenbach as a policy maker in the international field made it somewhat less surprising to me that he should turn up as Under Secretary of State at this date.

O'CONNOR: I was wondering in, in effect, resolving the difference between the various agencies, departments, and so forth, you said Mr. Katzenbach played a role in this. Can you elaborate at all on this? This must have involved, well, a certain amount of knocking of heads together.

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FARLEY: I think that's a useful question to have put because there's a distinction. I would say the knocking of heads together was done by the Vice President, the bandaging up in nice legal language was the job of Mr. Katzenbach. There has to be, in any team like this, a good cop and a bad cop.

O'CONNOR: Mr. Katzenbach was the good cop.

FARLEY: The Vice President was the bad cop, and Mr. Katzenbach was the good cop. [Laughter]

O'CONNOR: I was interested particularly in the problem of the bad cop, or the problem of knocking heads together. Can you elaborate at all on really the steps that President Johnson, or Vice President Johnson at that time, had to undertake in order to...

FARLEY: I don't have the kind of memory which would enable me to give you a step by step, so I will be more helter-skelter. We were certainly one of the first heads to be knocked in the State Department. There were quite vigorous discussions as a result of which it was made clear that the Administration was not disposed to envisage a communications satellite program as a governmentally operated program whatever the case there might be for international consistency for the effectiveness of the integration of communications satellites into either other worldwide communication systems or simply the bilateral communications across the Atlantic.

A second area was that the commercial people were made very clearly aware that they could not have a preemptive right over defense communications. The effort would be made to devise a single worldwide system which would serve communications needs of the military and of the other sensitive government agencies to the extent this proved feasible. But if the process of organizing an international system meant that we could not fully assure adequate U.S. protection of vital communications links, then the possibility had to be open of a separate communications system by

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satellites for defense purposes, which, by the way, has proved to be a prudent thing because that is the direction we are now going, having two systems.

I think those are probably the two most striking cases. One was protection of the basic commercial interests of the system by which the United States had hitherto operated its own communications. The second was carving out the possibility, nevertheless, of a separate system for defense purposes.

O'CONNOR: Do you think this attitude on the part of the government, particularly on the part of Vice President Johnson, was the result of his own personal views or do you feel that pressure from commercial organizations had a great deal to do with it?

FARLEY: I think clearly both of the things were present. Pressures from commercial organizations is one way of describing the activity of the firms who operate telephone-telegraph nets in the United States, television nets, or our overseas communications which also go by private firms for our half of the thing. But it's



also true that this is partly a matter of conviction based on the experience of a very effective communications operating system in the United States, a very effective system of developing new equipment. So that it was partly conviction by which the United States developed novel technology and applied it, the result might well be slowing down the program.

The other point here is that I know this is a matter which was discussed with President Kennedy because the importance of the communications industry in the United States – the A.T.&T. [American Telephone and Telegraph], for example – the importance of Senator Kerr [Robert S. Kerr], who was chairman not only of the Senate Space Committee but also the Senate Finance Committee, was such that a matter of this kind was a basic issue in the Administration. And I suspect the personal interest of the Attorney General meant that he would insure that the President had a chance to pass on something which did affect our international interests, our

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military interests, as well as relations between the Kennedy Administration, the Congress, and American business. It is fairly clear to me from my discussions with the people who were involved that this was considered to be a rather important case of demonstrating that the Kennedy Administration was prepared to listen to American industry and its spokesmen, either direct or through the Congress, and that this did have an effect on the manner in which the international program was operated, which is a rather hybrid scheme.

O'CONNOR: You mentioned Senator Kerr, for example. Of course, it's impossible to talk to him about this particular problem now. Were there any other senators or congressmen that were particularly important, that you can recall, in representing various commercial interests or in presenting the other side of the case for it?

FARLEY: The senator who was perhaps most constructively interesting in these activities was Senator Pastore [John O. Pastore] who was chairman of a subcommittee, I think, of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee and who had a long background in communications affairs. I remember the Senate as being the house of Congress which was most actively concerned. There were hearings and informal consultations also with the House of Representatives, but the lead was really taken by the Senate committees, both Space and Interstate Commerce because this was a communications as well as a space program.

O'CONNOR: Were you yourself approached by any senators or congressmen who would, for good reason or bad, frankly try to influence your position on this matter?

FARLEY: Well, this was a program which was the subject of hearings both public and private before a number of committees, this being the result of

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this fact that it combined communications and space so that both the Space Committees and the Interstate Commerce – because they handle communications – Committees of both House and Senate were interested, and they all had hearings. We had informal consultations with all of them. I think it's fair to say that the general sentiment of the members of Congress was that, "Look, we have a way of doing communications business in the United States. What is there about this, just because we use some different gadgets, that requires use to change our way of doing business?"

In general, the contrary view came essentially from a very few liberal congressmen and senators – Senator Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] in the Senate, Representative, I think it was, William Ryan [William Fitts Ryan] of New York in the House – who campaigned quite strongly on the concept that this should be a government-run program, primarily for international reasons, whatever their other attitude may have been. As you know, in the end a very few senators conducted quite an extensive filibuster on this issue.

I should say that most of us in the State Department – and you might be interested sometime in talking to Leonard Meeker [Leonard C. Meeker] who is the present legal advisor if this aspect of the thing interests you – were convinced, after our heads were knocked together, that we were essentially right as to the better way to do it, but that it was a perfectly proper decision to make as to what the practical politics of the situation were because we were also convinced that it was possible to organize the international program in the way in which, indeed, it has been organized, with a mixed participation of governmental and private organizations. In fact, we were able to devise this scheme which, as I say, is a perfectly feasible way to do it; and it's not the case, therefore, in which I think examination will show anything in the way of influence in the pejorative sense of the term. It was a genuine case where you had a clash between new wine, in the form of new technology, and old bottles. It was a perfectly good case of pouring the new wine in old bottles.

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And I do think that the most interesting aspect of this particular story is the respect in which it shows the frequently rather pragmatic approach that was made to cases like this. I could have accepted – in fact, pretty independently had come to the conclusion – that while the feelings ran pretty high on both cases there wasn't much doubt about which way you had to come out if you wanted legislation which would be passed by the Congress in time to get ahead with an urgent program.

O'CONNOR: Did you feel that at the time that the solution which, as you are inclined to indicate, had to be reached included too great a participation of private interests to the disadvantage of international requirements or Defense and State Department requirements?

FARLEY: I think the Defense Department interests and requirements were fully protected. I think the participation of private interests was perfectly proper. None of us felt that you could reorganize American communications operations and equipment development because of the introduction of

satellites. What we did think was not quite fully enough protected was the policy control of the government and, indeed, the specific manner of organization of communications satellites' operations themselves in the United States where we felt that it would have been possible to apply to international communications the same reservation that was made in behalf of defense communications – that is, that this could be operated separately from other international communications by a specially organized and government controlled entity. As is always the case, even a losing argument has some advantages. We think that the fact that the argument was held did contribute somewhat to the strengthening of the hand of the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] and to the institution of a more effective tele-communications advisor in the White House to try to see that in the hybrid scheme which did emerge, the policy interests of the government, or, as we would say, of the American people, were more fully protected.

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O'CONNOR: You don't feel that any specific arguments were simply overridden then. You feel that there was a legitimate hearing of all arguments.

FARLEY: Oh, absolutely. What happened was that at some point the decision had to be taken which way it would go, and it was done. This is not a case where anyone felt he did not have his day in court. To come back to the Vice President, it was an excellent example of his consensus approach to things. We all had our hearing. We had our hearing in Congress, too, and it was pretty bloody for George McGhee who had to be the State Department witness.

O'CONNOR: Okay, we can move on to another problem unless you have any more that you'd like to add about this particular one.

FARLEY: No, that's plenty on that. You said you wanted to ask about the MLF [Multi-Lateral Force]. If you want to try some of your questions, we can see whether that's the sort of thing on which I can be any help.

O'CONNOR: Well, first of all I'd like you to tell us, if you would, how you, if effect, moved from the position you initially held in the Kennedy Administration to the position you now hold. How did this come about, this change?

FARLEY: I would say two things. One is that having been in the government for, what, sixteen years – that is, since the war – and in the State Department for eight years, just before the transition in 1962 it seemed to me sensible to regularize my status. In the State Department regularizing your status means joining the Foreign Service, and joining the Foreign Service means you get sent overseas. So I joined the Foreign Service, and got sent overseas. The other aspect of the thing was that I was a Democrat in the Eisenhower

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Administration, brought in as a Democrat consciously because it was hard in those days to find anybody who could work in the State Department comfortably who knew something about atomic energy. I nevertheless found that being a Democrat from the Eisenhower Administration in a Democratic Administration was not quite the same as being someone who had been out in the wilderness all that time, and it was more comfortable to be overseas.

O'CONNOR: All right, I said I wanted to ask you some questions about the MLF. I don't know whether that is the problem in which you'd like to start, but certainly we can start that. You said you came to this office in 1962. Is that correct?

FARLEY: That's right.

O'CONNOR: Well then, early in 1963, really, is when the problem of MLF really began to arise, so perhaps we could start with that.

FARLEY: I should say, however, that in my atomic energy-outer space capacity in the State Department I was a participant in the decision and U.S. offers in 1959 and '60 which really initiated the MRBM [Medium Range Ballistic Missile] problem as a matter formally on the table in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], so I am familiar with the pre-Kennedy Administration background.

O'CONNOR: The problem of the MLF was not pushed so strongly during the early years of the Kennedy Administration. In fact, many people commented that it was not pushed very strongly until after the Franco-German Treaty of early 1963, I believe it was. I wondered what your feelings were toward the reasons, I don't know whether you feel that you'd like to comment on this or not, but the reasons why the Kennedy Administration in 1963 began to push very strongly for MLF.

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FARLEY: I can't really answer that question because I don't know. I would say that the link with the Franco-German Treaty is a completely new thought to me. What I would like to make is a few remarks about the continuity of the problem because it may help and perhaps reduce the impulse to find specific things like that which are extraneous.

The origins of this problem go back to Sputnik. When Sputnik first started sailing around the sky, there was a kind of convulsive shudder of reaction in the American government. One of the reactions was the NATO heads of government meeting of December 1957, and as a prelude to that heads of government meeting, we had a very thorough review of American science and of America cooperation with our allies in fields of military technology as well as pure science. When President Eisenhower came over to Paris in December of '57, he brought with him a little satchel full of proposals. One of the proposals was that to insure that our allies appreciated the basic American competence in the fields of

space and the related field of missiles – because the basic technology's the same – and that they appreciated our readiness to continue to maintain alliance solidarity in the face of the rather remarkable competence the Soviets had shown, we had a proposal that the Europeans join us in the development of what are called mid-range, or intermediate range, ballistic missiles. There was a formal decision taken by the NATO council which is on the public record, though not much noted, that NATO would consider joining in the production of missiles.

Now this action was taken in haste and under great emotional pressure. After it was taken there were many of us in the United States government – I was certainly one of them, so I'm speaking firsthand here – who began to wonder whether this was a wise thing to do. This was a period when nonproliferation began to be a term of policy and we were aware that proliferation should involve not only the nuclear warheads but the major delivery systems such as the missiles. So the question was put to ourselves: should we encourage our allies to get into missiles production? And the answer we came up with pretty quickly was no, that was

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not a very fortunate idea. So that gradually the proposal was walked back from a proposal that they join us in producing missiles to a proposal that they join us in the stationing and operating of missiles, but under the famous two key system whereby not only the warheads but the missiles would be furnished by the United States. This had its first fruit in the stationing of Jupiters and Thors in Turkey, Italy, and the United Kingdom. These were not very good missile systems, and they were withdrawn later.

But because the Europeans had been interested in the more exciting idea of joining us in missile production, we put forward a replacement proposal. It was put forward by Mr. Herter [Christian A. Herter] in December 1960 after the election and with informal checking with some members of the new team to be sure it would not be considered an unfriendly act. This was a proposal which was really the ancestor of the MLF; that is, that we consider joining in a cooperative deployment of intermediate range ballistic missiles. This was a scheme which did not progress very far, partly because it required a good deal of thought on the part of our European partners, partly because we had a new Administration then. It took a year or so, with all the housecleaning that went on in the Defense Department and the many other problems that a new Administration had, before this sort of scheme came back to the top of the deck.

Now I must confess to being a little vague, as I try to think about it, as to just what the occasion was for the revival of the proposal for a cooperative, even integrated, deployment of intermediate range missiles in Europe within the NATO context. I know that one occasion was the SACEUR [Supreme Allied Command in Europe] – i.e., first, General Norstad [Lauris Norstad] and then General Lemnitzer [Lyman L. Lemnitzer] – had always felt, in 1957 and later, that they needed in some form intermediate range missiles in Europe as an offset to the Soviet missiles which were operational and were directed at NATO Europe even though their range in most cases was not nearly enough to threaten the United States. They felt that as military commanders they needed means which corresponded to the means of the enemy they were facing. This proposal was revived by Norstad and endorsed by Lemnitzer in

'62 and in '63, which was the period of their change of

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command and the period when I was first over here. Now there were clearly political interests in substituting for a proposal essentially that missiles be deployed in a two key scheme under the NATO commander proposals which would have had the greater control inherent in a multi-lateral organization, and this was certainly one reason for a renewed interest in the MLF.

I would have said that the event which was more directly related, however, was the Nassau meeting rather than the Franco-German Treaty because in Europe the Nassau meeting was, in effect, represented – I think tendentiously represented, but there were people who did it – as an evidence that the United States was more closely tied to the United Kingdom than to the continental European countries, and the MLF was considered a way of illustrating that we were trying to find imaginative new schemes for involvement in the continental European countries too. The question of a German interest in nuclear adventurism is one which, of course, has been an underlying speculation from the early period that I was speaking of, December '57. I don't recall that there was any particular heightened speculation that this was a timely thing. In general, as I have seen the position of people in the State Department who considered this a very weighty argument for schemes like the MLF, it has never been that there was an active or pressing German interest in developing an independent nuclear power. This is, indeed, precluded politically by the German posture vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and vis-à-vis its western European neighbors in the short term. It's always considered to be a long term possibility which it was easier to sterilize if you integrated German involvement in such military programs with the alliance and the United States early rather than offering this at a time when a possible independent German program did begin to have life of its own. There's a nice diffuse answer for you.

O'CONNOR: A fine answer. Do you feel that the proposals that were offered in '63 – for example, the proposals that were put forth for an integrated

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force – added to the confusion or added to a real solution to the problem, which has been the problem that has plagued NATO now for quite some time, of nuclear control within NATO?

FARLEY: That is a hard question to answer. It certainly sharpened the issue, brought it to a rather clear point where a decision did have to be made at the end of '64. The program which was mounted, looking toward the possible organization of MLF, or in its later alternative the ANF [Atlantic Nuclear Force], was efficiently, effectively done so that it began to seem like a real possibility in Germany, but certainly also in the United Kingdom, in the Soviet Union, and in France. For different reasons in each case the possibility was not a too attractive one because it seemed like a real possibility. These countries and others – but I think these are the three most important ones –

had to look respectively to their ways of mounting counter influence: the British by joining and then changing; the French by warning privately and then publicly that they would not agree to it in NATO; the Soviets by propaganda attack and by the carrot of indicated interest in the nonproliferation treaty if this project were laid aside. So that I would say it certainly served to clarify the issues, to sharpen the controversy. I don't think, certainly in retrospect, that it did contribute significantly either to bringing NATO together or to advancing the dialogue on the nonproliferation. But these are both inherently very difficult problems, both of them, and I would not say that the MLF project or its eventual – is demise too strong a word at this point? – came at a time when they prevented something more promising from happening.

O'CONNOR: Well, do you think the way in which these suggestions were offered had anything to do with the difficulties involved in their reception? In other words, I've heard it stated a number of times that the United States offered this and many of its other proposals toward NATO in a very paternal fashion which was not appreciated by its western European allies. I wondered if you had gotten any reactions along this line from the people that you had to deal with in this country.

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FARLEY: Of course, the United States offers on the MLF were always somewhat ambiguous. I understand that this was to some extent policy – I guess policy – on the part of the White House. That is to say that the President was never fully persuaded that the MLF was a good idea, but he would put his full weight behind it if it proved to be a scheme which was attractive to our allies. It was therefore pretty carefully defined as something which the United States was willing to consider sympathetically but had to be assured would indeed genuinely meet some real interests of a substantial number of European allies. So that it is a case where here – and I can only testify now to the place where the negotiation and the planning was done – the difficulty which we ran into was really, one, that the program could only be defined effectively by the United States since we were the ones who had the technical and managerial know-how for a missiles program, and yet on just the points which were most difficult to settle we were in the position of saying, "Now what do you think?" So that I would say the problem was really one more that we were involved in a program which was of the highest political and military delicacy but on which we were not prepared either to commit ourselves or to define precisely our positions.

O'CONNOR: Do you feel that this proposal was a genuine move toward greater European control of nuclear weapons, or is this, in effect, a kind of a smoke screen? Genuine European control, I'm referring to.

FARLEY: Yes. I think it was intended to be, and probably would have been, a completely – well, I was going to say ambiguous step; I guess noncommittal is a better word. The MLF, like many things, was different things to different people. To some of the European proponents it was a step toward an

independent European nuclear force. To the United States it was primarily a way of tying the alliance together. And I think it's clear that there were even different views in the United States – some who, in effect, saw this as a way of

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giving up the least possible of our nuclear monopoly and, in effect, setting up a smoke screen of European participation without the real control begin watered down. There were others who felt that the European participation in men and money would be so substantial that they would, as a practical matter, have a substantial involvement which would be meaningful. But whichever nuance was applied, it was intended as a way of tying the United States and Europe together rather than as a waystep toward a more independent Europe. As the fact of the program was, I think it would have been up to subsequent events to determine because it certainly would have given the Europeans more experience, capability, and it would then have been a political decision on their part whether they chose to use that in conjunction with us or to free themselves somewhat.

O'CONNOR: We can wind this up pretty quickly.

FARLEY: Yes.

O'CONNOR: But there's at least one other question I wanted to ask you. That was, did you find that in representatives of European governments that you may have dealt with had a particularly strong reaction one way or the other on this question? In other words, were some very distrustful of this particular offer privately or publicly, and did others feel that this was a genuine offer of European participation, European control?

FARLEY: I don't think that the European countries who were interested in the MLF understood it as an offer of European control. Some of them did believe that the United States saw just the kind of ambiguity I was describing – that is, a greater ability to make choices on their part in the future – and accepted that as the consequence of the first step that would be taken in the MLF. But certainly the Europeans were told unequivocally, both

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in private and in public, that the United States made no promise of divesting itself of its veto on the use of nuclear weapons in or through the MLF. The most they had any ground for hoping for was that while we made no promises, we would be creating consciously a situation which would in the end lead us of our own free will to reconsider our position. That is the kind of thing which, of course, was hinted to them in Mac Bundy's [McGeorge Bundy] Copenhagen speech of May '62 and by some State Department people.



O'CONNOR: Okay, unless there's any other comment you can make, why, we can wind this up.

FARLEY: No. I'm afraid I'd better get back to my....

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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