



INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Bob Komer's Memo: "The Leber Problem is Bigger Than I Thought"

In your pencilled note on Bob Komer's memo (Tab A), you asked whether I agree that "we have agreement with FRG-MOD to keep working the concept."

My answer is "yes." You and Minister Leber are in full agreement to keep working the hybrid tank concept with the maximum number of common, interoperable components and sub-systems (fire control, tracks, fasteners, fuel, motor). But the success of failure or the whole effort hinges on the gun and the ammunition.

Yesterday's briefing on XM-1/Leopard for the German Minister and his party caused Herr Leber and Dr. Schnell to ask the Army briefers why they "continue to favor" the 105mm gun. In other words, the thrust of the Army presentation as the Germans understood it was: the USG is ready to test the competing 120's, but the US Army remains to be convinced.

In answer to their questions the Germans were told that the US Army prefers its 105: a) because the gun itself is lighter and imposes less strain on the whole weapons system, b) because the smaller 105 shell makes it possible for the tank to carry more rounds, c) because the smaller 105 gun, even with the additional number of rounds, gives the tank crew more internal space and thus improves "fightability," and d) because at the maximum expected combat range of 3000 meters in Central Europe the 120mm is no more than marginally superior to the 105mm.

Dr. Schnell then observed that the Soviets are adopting a 122, the Germans and French a 120 smooth, and the British a 120 rifled. When Karl Schnell cited the advantages of standardization, interoperability, commonality and simplified logistics for Allied forces that should in time of combat mutually support each other, he was told that the US Army has developed an entire family of munitions for its 105 that meets varying American needs in many environments. At any rate, so Leber was told, the US will test available guns in compliance with the House Armed Services Committee resolution (Hillis) and there is good reason to believe that XM-1's dual capable turret can "without excessive cost" be retrofitted to accommodate a 120mm gun in the event the USG eventually selects that armament on the basis of the "test results."

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So my answer to your question is still "yes." You and Minister Leber are agreed. But one must insure that

- o the XM-1 dual capable turret is able to accommodate either 120mm gun.
- o the cost of retrofitting an XM-1 turret from 105 to 120 is not "excessive."
- o the autumn 1977 tests--which are not "gun tests," but tests of gun and ammunition--are just as comparable as possible. That is, each competing gun should use comparable ammunition; and the Department of Defense should in the national interest insure that the tests are comprehensive and honest before choosing "the best gun."

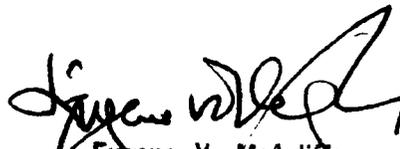
I agree with Bob Komer that the 120mm gun has become a symbol. I believe that the Germans and British and other European Allies will closely watch to see whether the US will conduct fair gun and munitions tests, and then accept the outcome. We bought, and modified, and produced modified HARRIER and modified ROLAND. Four smaller Allies have bought and are co-producing components of the F-16. The Europeans have bought and bought and bought: F-104, HAWK, F-4, etc. I believe they should buy more from us than we from them: 1) because our sophisticated military systems are superior, and, 2) to reduce the net windfall BOP gain that accrues to the Europeans from troop stationing and from infrastructure expenditures. However, the Germans and other Europeans do expect to see some East-West traffic on the "two way street." The hullabaloo in Congress over the procurement of the MAG-58 Belgian machine gun--a modest purchase--created much consternation in many quarters and caused many more Europeans to express misgivings about the sincerity of repeated American reassurances.

Bob Komer has recommended that you and Leber agree to keep working the hybrid tank concept. You have succeeded in achieving that agreement. Bob has also observed that you will need time to work on the Army and on the Congress. On Capitol Hill there are, I believe, some staunch supporters of the rationalization/standardization/interoperability thesis and of the hybrid tank concept, too. If there exists support for these ideas in the Department of the Army, those who harbor such thoughts constitute a silent minority.

Attachment

a/s

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Eugene V. McAuliffe  
Assistant Secretary of Defense  
International Security Affairs

cc: Amb R.W. Komer

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