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February 19, 1976

US-BELGIAN MACHINE GUN COMPETITION

Q: Mr. President, what truth is there to the rumor that in some sort of arms trade-off the U. S. Army is being pressured into buying a Belgian machine gun? A Belgian gun will mean more unemployment for the people of Maine.

A: It is my understanding, that at present, the army is evaluating different machine guns and that both U. S. and Belgian weapons are being examined in this process. There is no link between this weapons selection process and any other. The weapons are being considered on their merits, and I believe it is being done with great care -- interested members of the Congress and the GAO are following closely.

Q: Has the army taken a decision yet?

A: No, I don't believe a decision as yet has been taken.

March 23, 1976

TELEPHONE CALL TO KING BAUDOUIN

The President placed a telephone call to King Baudouin I of Belgium on Monday evening. The President welcomed the King and Queen Fabiola to the United States. The King and Queen arrived on Monday for a private visit which will continue until March 28.

The call was placed to the King at New Haven, Connecticut, where he is a guest of Professor Robert Triffin of Yale University. The President spoke to the King from 6:48 p.m. to 6:56 p.m. The King and Queen will tour New Haven, New London, Mystic and Old Lyme, Connecticut and conclude his stay with a weekend in Manhasset, Long Island. (FYI: He has no meetings scheduled with any officials of the Federal Government.)

The President expressed the pleasure of the American people in having the King and Queen visit during the Bicentennial year. He also expressed to the King his appreciation for the hospitality extended when he visited Brussels last year.

DOD INFORMATION ON BELGIAN MACHINE GUN

The Department of the Army today announced that results of competitive tests to find a replacement machine gun for its armored vehicles showed a Belgian manufactured gun to be superior overall to a U.S. version. The Army intends to initiate negotiations for a contract to purchase the Belgian gun.

The Army decided that the operational advantages of the Belgian gun would provide the American soldier with the best weapon possible. Although the U.S. gun rated higher in service life tests and lower estimated costs, the Belgian entry excelled in reliability and operational effectiveness.

Testing has been underway since 1974 to find a replacement of the current weapon which was developed in 1950 and converted to accept standard NATO ammunition in 1959.

* * *

Q. Is the selection of the Belgian machine gun over the American gun related to the Belgian decision to buy F-16's over French aircraft?

A. No.

Q. Did standardization of NATO weapons play a part in the decision to select the Belgian gun?

A. It was considered but did not play a dominant part.

Q. What is the service life of the M60E2 compared to the MAG 58?

A. Service life refers to the total number of rounds that can be fired before a weapon is worn out. The M60E2 appeared capable of 100,000 round service life, while the MAG 58 averaged approximately a 69,000 round service life. Service life, however, is not reliability. The MAG 58 is approximately three times as reliable as the M60E2.

Q. What do you mean by reliability?

A. Reliability is the number of rounds fired prior to a stoppage or failure.

Q. How would production costs for the two machine guns compare?

A. MAG 58 production costs are more per weapon than the M60E2. Exact cost differential cannot be determined because the procurement option has not yet been negotiated.

Q. Is this decision final or is it contingent upon matters you expect to deal with in the negotiations?

A. We would, of course, expect to be able to negotiate a satisfactory licensing agreement.

BELGIAN DECISION TO BUY GENERAL DYNAMICS F-16
FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

A: The President welcomes the decision of the Government of Belgium as well as the earlier decisions taken by the Governments of Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway.

This action will enlarge the area of standardization among NATO Air Forces and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of these forces. Our commitment to a strong Alliance requires that we give continuing attention to modern, technologically advanced equipment for our defense forces -- and that we rationalize our collective defense efforts as effectively as possible.

for technical questions - refer to DoD

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