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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT  
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: United States Forces Committed to NATO (u)

Each year at this time we prepare a report to NATO which is both a forecast of our force commitments to NATO for the following calendar year (in the present case 1970) and an updating of the commitment for the current year. In the report to be submitted to NATO next week we shall be obliged to report a reduction in our commitment of certain naval units and a reduced readiness in some army units based in the United States. These changes may cause political problems with our Allies, particularly if the current review of the FY 1970 budget results in still further reductions in our NATO commitments. In light of the President's strong personal interest in any actions which might affect the state of relations within the Alliance, we want you to be informed of these actions.

The important changes in our report are, first, a reduction of our Navy commitment (effective now and for CY 1970 as well) by one attack carrier from a current total of ten, by six ASW carriers from a total of eleven, and by 48 destroyers (now mothballed on the Pacific Coast) from a total of 100. Second, we report a reduced readiness in the Army Strategic Reserve units and -- more importantly from the political point of view -- in the dual-based elements of the 24th Infantry Division. In the 1967 Trilateral Talks with the UK and FRG, we undertook to keep these latter forces ready to return to Europe within 30 days. The changes to date do not reduce the levels of our ground and air forces committed to NATO in Europe or dual-based, nor of our fleet in the Mediterranean. However, further changes in our NATO-committed forces may be required as a result of reductions in defense expenditures already announced and under review.

I believe that our rationale for reporting these reductions is a sound one: The present state of these forces makes our current commitment of them unrealistic, and we ought to be honest about it. The Department of State concurs in this view.

The procedures of the NATO Annual Review, of which our present report is a part, represent the normal method recognized in the Alliance for multi-lateral consideration of national contributions to NATO defense. When impracticable to utilize normal procedure, the government concerned informs the Council and the appropriate NATO Military Authorities of the changes contemplated. This is done, whenever possible, in time for

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the Council's views to be fully considered by the government concerned before the execution of decisions on the matter in question.

Since our 1970 commitments will be undertaken during the December 1969 Ministerial Meeting, we consider the period intervening between the submission of our report and the Ministerial Meeting as a period of consultation.

We shall instruct our Mission to NATO to support these reductions in NATO forums by describing them as one aspect of the President's basic policy of realism and candor in our dealings with our Allies and of the avoidance of promises which we cannot realistically expect to keep.

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