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SECURITY AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: MBFR Questions

This memorandum responds to your questions (Tab A) on my recent MBFR memo. I have grouped them under the headings of the issues they raise.

I. Timing and Character of MBFR Decisions

Question 3 (Tab A) asked if it was not premature for the USG to table a specific option now as a preferred negotiating position. This poses the question of what the USG should send to NATO in April and when we and NATO need to settle on an agreed initial negotiating position.

As I noted in my earlier memo, the NSC effort is now aiming at sending NATO in April:

- The broad approach the USG proposes to take on MBFR;
- Some of the six MBFR options now being worked up, together with accompanying analyses;
- An indication of which of these options the USG would support, consistent with our broad approach, as the framework for development of a common Allied negotiating position.

Looking beyond April, our target in the June NATO Ministerial would be Alliance agreement on a broad approach and on the option or options to be further developed here and in NATO between June and the opening of negotiations in late September-early October.

A 15 March Verification Panel meeting is scheduled to review the six options in play, and to address the issues of:

- An initial force limitation agreement;
- Pre-reduction constraints;
- Verification;
- The role of nuclear forces in MBFR.

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There will be a second Verification Panel meeting about the first of April to review, inter alia, the results of the options analyses, followed a week or so later by an NBC meeting which will decide what we send to NATO at mid-month.

Against this background, I agree that it would be premature to table an option now with all the specifics and numbers nailed down. But I strongly feel that we must table in NATO in April the essential framework of an option with the understanding that specifics and numbers are to be developed and decided later. This is precisely what Option A now is, since such elements as the exact numerical limits of constraints or the specific units or manpower to be withdrawn are illustrative and for the purposes of analysis.

It is, in my view, essential to table such an option in April because without it we risk a continued and ever more severe worsening of our relations with the Allies, and entering negotiations in the autumn ill-prepared and divided.

We now have an Alliance problem on MBFR which, if it continues, would not only make a shambles of MBFR, but also damage the basic cohesion of the Alliance. The Allies are suspicious, to say the least, of our objectives on MBFR and fear that we may work bilaterally with the Soviets for a quick and sizeable "cut and run" reduction that will destabilize the political and military situation in Europe. It is these suspicions and fears which have made Vienna a difficult and divisive enterprise. The US is in good part to blame for this state of affairs, for we have not told them our MBFR position despite their persistent demands -- and despite our persistent efforts in DOD over the last 18 months. No amount of general reassurances -- such as Secretaries Rogers and Laird offered at the December NATO Ministerial -- will ease the Allied problem. The only way this can be done is by presenting them in April a position which will indicate clearly that the US will not use MBFR as a vehicle for large scale reductions and the instrument for developing a whole new military (and political) relationship with the Soviets in Europe.

Sending them only our broad approach (together with an array of options and analyses) might have done much to reassure the Allies and pull the Alliance together last September when Secretary Laird proposed this to the President. But for the present situation it is, in my view, too little, too late. What the Allies want, expect, and need from us in April is not just our broad approach, but at least the framework of an initial negotiating position that they can come to grips with. Sending them just our broad approach and an array of options will smack to them of past US efforts to give them as little as possible. Moreover, if in fact the broad approach is the one I understand you are prepared to endorse, then we will effectively have also endorsed Option A since it is the only option among the six now in play consistent with this approach. This can only confuse the Allies further. And not to send them any options and analyses -- which we committed ourselves to do months ago -- would be extremely damaging.

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The capital point in all of this is to proceed in a manner that will bring the Alliance into negotiations in the autumn fully prepared and united. The Allies entered CSCE in this manner, because they had for many months grappled together with a common framework of negotiating positions. We have lacked this thus far in MBFR, and we need to set about it immediately. We need to start now because it will take all the time we can get to reach agreement by October on the essential elements on an Allied negotiating position, given the complexities involved and Allied differences. Unless we do so, we will enter negotiations without a unified position and without a clear understanding of each other's views on the principal questions. We have paid heavily for this in Vienna: we would pay far more heavily in the autumn.

For the past 18 months DOD has led the effort to get the US to decide its MBFR position and transmit it to the Allies. It has been tough going in the face of the apparent desire of many in Washington to keep all options open. But DOD pressure has been a central element in getting us the decisions we have and pushing us to the decision point now before us. If DOD now eases up on the pressure, I am afraid that we will stop dead in the water, or proceed at a pace inconsistent with the situation we now face.

II. Fallback

Question 2 asks what we fallback to from the initial position sketched in Option A. Option A was designed to meet three criteria:

- to point us toward an outcome consistent with our broad approach;
- to provide us trading-room, following the principle that one never ends where one begins in any negotiation;
- to give us, at the same time, an initial position with a sufficient logic and rationale to permit us to make a presentable case for it to our Allies as well as to the East.

What we need to settle on first of all -- in Washington and Brussels -- is a defensible going in position consistent with our basic approach -- and Option A fully meets this. With this in hand, we can then focus on the essential task of establishing the limits of what NATO can afford to give up and the bounds of a minimal acceptable outcome for a first-phase MBFR, and beyond.

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Date: SEP 07 2018 4

We have tried repeatedly to get Washington to address this: without it we and NATO will risk being driven by the negotiating process toward blind outcomes to our disadvantage. And, as I described in my briefing and recent memo, we have explicitly stated that a manageable minimal acceptable outcome for a first-phase MBFR should include, inter alia:

- an equal 10% stationed ground force reduction, combined with,
- constraints on force movements and maneuvers into the area.

But Washington -- and principally the White House -- have regarded any effort to establish limits and outcomes either as a threat to flexibility, or as impossible to do short of the negotiating situation itself.

As a major part of its work program beyond April, the Task Force will examine limits and outcomes for the option or options we and NATO decide to develop. This will be focused on a report for you which could be the basis for a further effort to get Washington (and subsequently Brussels) to come to grips with the problem.

III. Status of Option A

Questions 1 and 5 (Tab A) touch on the status of Option A within DOD. Option A was designed and developed principally by the Task Force in collaboration with OSD/SA (and some State participation), and Gardiner Tucker agrees with it as a going-in position.* It was discussed with the JCJS MBFR people before its transmission to the VPWG, and parts of it (for example, the air stabilizing limitations) were expressly adjusted to take account of JCJS views. Moreover, I believe the JCS generally agree with the broad approach that underlies Option A, and that they will support it. However, the JCS have not yet formally indicated their preferred framework option and clearly prefer postponing doing so -- until the early April NSC meeting.

Question 4 asks if you should be committed to a specific option without having seen the range of options in detail. As I noted above, of the six options in play, only Option A is consistent with the broad approach I sketched in my MBFR briefing and recent memo, and in particular with the initial focus on small (for NATO) stationed ground forces reductions:

- Option B is a common ceiling on tanks and aircraft and also includes indigenous forces.
- Option C is a mixed package which includes nuclear systems and aircraft.

* That is, a "going-in position" to NATO.

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- Option D is an asymmetrical ground and aircraft reduction.
- Option E is a common ceiling including indigenous forces and nuclear warheads.
- Option F proposes 20% US-USSR symmetrical ground personnel reductions.

We will almost certainly want to adjust Option A further as we move ahead -- and as I said above, we will have ample room and opportunity to do so. I am, for example, ever more convinced that inclusion of indigenous forces at any stage is unwise and inconsistent with our longer term European objectives.

IV. Conclusion

With this said, while I personally believe it the best course, it is not essential that you endorse Option A now. But I do think it important that you indicate to Henry Kissinger and Secretary Rogers your views on how to proceed from here, the broad approach you believe we should take, and the need to advance a framework option consistent with this approach. I also think it would be useful for you to seek Secretary Rogers' collaboration in reaching State-Defense agreement on these dimensions.

Recommendation: That you sign the attached memorandum to Henry Kissinger and letter to Secretary Rogers.


Lawrence S. Eagleburger
Acting Assistant Secretary

Attachments

- Tab A, Background
- Tab B, Memo to Henry Kissinger
- Tab C, Letter to Secretary Rogers

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