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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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19 FEB 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: United States Force Commitments to NATO

Your decision is needed on whether we should at this time make additional reductions in our commitment to NATO of US naval forces in the Atlantic.

LAST YEAR'S REDUCTIONS

You will recall that last October we informed NATO, through the US Reply to the NATO 1969 Defense Planning Questionnaire, that we were making some reductions in US force commitments for CY 1969 and in planned commitments for CY 1970. At the same time, Ambassador Ellsworth informed NATO of some additional reductions required by FY 1970 defense expenditure cuts but not yet incorporated in our DPQ Reply.

Most of the reductions highlighted to NATO in October were in naval forces:

One (1) attack carrier (CVA) (out of six assigned in Category A: available within 48 hours). * Total commitment in all categories was ten.

Six (6) antisubmarine warfare carriers (CVS) (two out of four in Category A). Total commitment was eleven.

Forty-nine (49) destroyer types (12 out of 116 in Category A). Total commitment was 259.

Five (5) submarines (SS) (out of 36 in Category A). Total commitment was 36.

Twelve (12) maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) (out of 123 in Category A). Total commitment was 219.

In approving these reductions, you instructed the Defense Program Review Committee (DPRC) to review any further reductions in forces committed to NATO and submit recommendations to you prior to implementation or public

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* Category B: available in from 48 hours to 30 days.
Category C: available after 30 days.

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announcement. You also instructed, and NATO was so informed last October, that you would personally review any further changes that might affect forces committed to NATO and that NATO will be consulted well in advance of your decision. ✓

We told NATO last fall that our budgetary reductions had been carried out so as to minimize the impact on our NATO-committed forces, and that the actions did not affect your commitment to maintain substantial forces in Europe. While our Allies were informed that our defense budget review was not yet complete and that Category B and C naval forces would require adjustments, we told them we did not anticipate any further reductions in our combat forces committed to NATO. ✓

At the 3 December 1969 NATO Ministerial Meeting in Brussels, I told the Ministers that:

(1) We were planning, in the FY 71 budget, to maintain US combat forces in Europe at essentially the same level as the one that now prevails.

(2) Some adjustments would be necessary in Fiscal Year 1970 and 1971.

(3) Some further adjustments might be required in Category B and C naval commitments.

ADDITIONAL REDUCTIONS

As you are aware, there have been budget actions which have led to the necessity to reduce total Navy operating forces.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff now propose, and I concur in, the following additional reductions in our CY 1970 naval force commitments to NATO beyond those already communicated to NATO last October: ✓

Three (3) destroyers in Category A.

Twelve (12) destroyers in Category B. (Five (5) of these are a programmed increase in our commitment that is no longer feasible.)

Nine (9) maritime patrol aircraft (1 squadron) in Category A.

One submarine in Category A.

One destroyer escort in Category B.

The proposed Category B reductions are not troublesome; NATO has been led to expect such adjustments, and they are also less sensitive than changes in Category A (immediately available) forces.

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MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS

In making these proposals, the following has been taken into account. In the distribution of our naval forces we must strike a proper balance between national requirements in the Pacific, including those needed in support of our operations in Southeast Asia, and NATO requirements in the Atlantic. A NATO war involves naval forces in the Pacific as well as the Atlantic. Currently, there are about 106 Soviet submarines in the Pacific, of which 36 are missile launchers. These forces pose a threat to the US which cannot be ignored. We must look to the defense of the West Coast, Hawaii, and Alaska against missile attack; maintain the sea lines of communication to Hawaii and Alaska; and protect the movement of Allied shipping throughout the Pacific. While there are more Soviet submarines in the Atlantic and Mediterranean than in the Pacific (238 including 66 missile submarines), the combined NATO resources provide almost twice the ships to combat the NATO threat in an area only one-fifth as large as the Pacific. Interfleet transfers of ASW assets are required to provide the best balance of ASW capability and provide resources required to support the operations of the Seventh Fleet in the Western Pacific.

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There will be adverse political impact from further reductions in Category A naval forces. Allied reactions to last fall's substantial reductions were uniformly negative; a number of countries made it clear that our actions would hurt their own efforts to maintain or improve their NATO defense contributions. More Category A reductions now might be interpreted as a retreat from high-level Administration assurances about maintaining our forces and the priority we give to NATO. While technically we have reserved the possibility of further cuts in any of our committed forces, the Allies could possibly have been given the impression that further adjustments would be limited to Category B and C naval forces. ✓

On the other hand, it is arguable that the repercussions from further Category A cuts will not be severe. Our Allies have traditionally been more sensitive to changes in committed forces located in Europe than to our naval commitments to SACLANT. Moreover, we have maintained our Category A naval forces committed to SACEUR for use in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the majority of the naval reductions have been taken outside the NATO area. Most countries should appreciate that, in a sense, the current issue arises only because NATO has no "Allied Command" for the defense of NATO's Pacific "flank", and therefore this task must fall almost entirely on the United States. ✓

OTHER OPTIONS EXAMINED

We have examined three other possible alternatives:

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- a. Make no Category A reductions at this time; proceed with Category B reductions.
- b. Reduce Category A commitments as proposed but report all such units as Category B commitments; proceed with other Category B reductions.
- c. Same as Option b, except that nine maritime patrol aircraft would be carried as a modified Category A commitment; they would be deployed on the West Coast but reported to NATO as available within 48 hours.

While the political impact of reducing Navy commitments would largely be avoided by accepting Option a, this would result in an imbalance between the fleets, and provide inadequate support for the war in Southeast Asia, for which early interfleet transfers are required in support of deployment schedules. Options b and c would avoid the latter problem but not the former. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have valid objections to each of these alternatives.

DEFENSE PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE (DPRC)

The program engendered by our proposed reductions was examined by the DPRC on 15 January. This memorandum results from that meeting.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE POSITION

The Department of State has considered the foregoing and requests that the State position, differing from Defense, be made known to you as follows:

The Department of State recommends Option a -- that we make no Category A reductions at this time but proceed with Category B reductions.

While not challenging the military merits of the case, the Department of State believes that the political considerations set forth in the Defense memorandum are overriding in this instance. In particular, the Department holds that a reduction in Category A forces, after we have implied that there will be no such reductions, will adversely affect our credibility within NATO. Every effort should be made to avoid piecemeal erosion of our combat-ready forces in NATO. If such reductions are to be made they should be taken only after completion of the NSSM 84 study of NATO strategy and forces now under way in order not to prejudice the finding to be set forth in that study. Ambassador Ellsworth fully concurs in this view.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATION

I have considered the Department of State views expressed above. Nevertheless, due to budgetary constraints and in consideration of the

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military advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I recommend that Ambassador Ellsworth be instructed to initiate consultations with NATO on the proposed reductions, including those in Category A, and the reasons therefore. This should be accomplished as a matter of priority and the Allied reactions reported to you.

Finally, I should note that still more reductions in our NATO-committed forces may be required by the FY 1971 and future defense budgets.



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