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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: U.S. Troop Levels in Europe and Korea

I am writing in reference to Bill Rogers' 22 September memorandum to you on this subject. I agree with the central point implicit in Bill's memorandum: that the collective defense capability of the U.S. and its Allies must be maintained. But, a commitment to maintain the collective defense capability should not be translated into a commitment to maintain a fixed U.S. force level or mix, either in Europe or in those forces held in the U.S. for European contingencies. Both theoretically and practically, any given level of defensive capability should be attainable with varying force levels through the introduction of efficiencies and improvements. We can also redistribute defense burdens between ourselves and our Allies. Indeed, I think it is today more important than ever before, that, together with our Allies, we pursue the most efficient and equitable way possible of achieving our collective defense objectives. To allow the U.S. to be tied to any specific force level or mix -- particularly numbers of troops -- is inconsistent with this effort.

I believe this reasoning is particularly valid for our forces deployed in Europe which are under severe pressure in Congress. This pressure, together with the policy objectives set forth in the concept of partnership in Europe, make it in my view imperative that we move toward a more efficient and equitable NATO defense posture. To this end, I propose the following plan of action:

1. We should secure early Allied commitment to do more for NATO defense, both through direct budgetary support for U.S. forces in Europe and through force improvements to fix those anomalies in the NATO defense posture identified in NSSM-84. Direct budgetary support should be considered essentially a tactical, short-term move to allay Congressional pressures and buy us time to implement our basic longer-range objective of our Allies assuming a greater share of the NATO defense burden.

2. We should at the same time secure early Allied agreement to develop a NATO plan to achieve by 1976 a NATO defense posture at least as capable as today's, but with a reduced, though still substantial, U.S. presence in Europe. The level partly depends on what might be achieved through MBR. The principal means of achieving this posture will be the development and implementation of force efficiencies and improvements. The Allies should make the major effort not only because their forces have been qualitatively inferior to ours, but also with a view to increasing their role in NATO defense. This five-year plan would be developed with our Allies at the political levels, as well as the military levels. Its implementation

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would be subject to consultation at each step. It would be subject to revision in light of developments in East-West relations and in the threat.

3. It may be useful to make some moderate reductions in U.S. forces in Europe in FY 1972. They would be made principally in support forces and overhead at little or no loss in combat capability. We would inform our Allies of our intention to make these minor reductions at the same time we consult with them about burden-sharing and long-term commitments. The purpose of these cuts would be not so much to save money as to demonstrate to our Allies and to Congress our firm intention to shift the burden and to economize in the long run. If we wish to save money we could cut forces in CONUS reserved for European contingencies.

By the above means, we will have set forth an explicit program for the future which includes both a commitment to maintain substantial U.S. forces in Europe through 1976 and more equitable burden-sharing. I think we can gain Congressional and public support for this program and more broadly for the basic national security policies of this Administration. This program and support for it within the nation should serve greatly to allay uncertainty in Europe about the continued U.S. presence and the strength and durability of the U.S. national commitment to European security.

In contrast, Bill Rogers' proposed commitment to maintain U.S. forces in Europe through 1972, without a satisfactory Allied commitment to improvements and more equitable burden-sharing, and without an indication of U.S. longer-range objectives, simply encourages all concerned to speculate about -- and hedge against -- what happens after that. Public and Congressional pressures would not be diminished. European uncertainty would not be allayed. The Soviets would be encouraged to play a waiting game on MBFR and other European security issues, if that is their tactic. Surely an 18-month extension of our present deployment will not count for much in the longer-range view the Soviets often take on such questions.

I realize that the above program may not be fully in accord with proposals not to reduce unless the Warsaw Pact does likewise. We may wish to consider keeping deployed forces as bargaining counters for MBFR. However, I am uncertain about the Soviets' willingness to conclude anything other than a cosmetic agreement. There is some danger that seeking and concluding an MBFR agreement will constrain us from making reductions in U.S. forces in Europe that might be warranted in terms of optimal use of our resources. And it might handicap us in securing the Allied effort and cooperation that we need in order to attain an efficient and equitable NATO defense posture. I think that if we are to move ahead on MBFR it should be with a clear understanding with our Allies that rather than obstruct the program sketched above, MBFR should be designed to complement or advance it.

Turning to U.S. forces in Korea, the Army does tentatively plan to withdraw the 7th Division in FY 1973 -- a reduction of 14,000 spaces from the end FY 1972 strength. This will still leave an Army force in Korea, however, of about 20,000, including a new special mission brigade similar to the one stationed in Berlin. This unit will have responsibility for security at Panmunjom and on the access road leading from the DMZ.

Final decisions have not been taken, however, and our planning is still flexible. We have a full year or more in which to assess the political and military reactions in Northeast Asia to our FY 1971 redeployments before

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final decisions on FY 1973 reductions must be made. I share Bill Rogers' concern about possible political consequences of another sizable force reduction in the immediate future, but I believe there are compelling reasons for planning further redeployments by end FY 1973.

1. Since the ROK Army clearly has the capability to provide the bulk of the ground forces required for its defense, failure to move ahead with U.S. ground force reductions in Korea could call into question the Administration's determination to implement the Nixon Doctrine in Asia. During the Vice President's visit to Seoul, President Park sought specific assurances that there would be no further U.S. troop withdrawals after FY 1971. The Vice President, of course, gave no such assurances.

2. The Army base-line force currently planned for FY 1972 and beyond is 13 1/3 divisions. If the 7th Division must remain in Korea, rather than in CONUS, as currently planned, U.S. flexibility for meeting worldwide contingencies will be significantly reduced.

3. Reducing forces in Korea by 14,000 in FY 1973 also will save some \$55-\$65 million per year over comparable reductions in CONUS-based forces.

With regard to Bill Rogers' concerns about the impact of further U.S. reductions in Korea on Japanese public opinion, Japan is indeed concerned for the long-term stability of East Asia but shares, I think, our conviction that we can safely move to an Asian equilibrium less reliant on deployed U.S. forces. The concerns expressed to me about U.S. troop withdrawals from Korea have centered on a misconception that the Koreans had not been informed sufficiently in advance of our plans.

Japan is more concerned about the strategic power of her two large communist neighbors than about conventional threats in Northeast Asia. As long as her confidence in the U.S. strategic deterrent remains strong, reductions in U.S. force deployments to the area should not be a cause of alarm in Japan. This is not to say that I belittle the possibility of a Japanese decision to develop nuclear weapons, but I think such a decision depends primarily on Japanese confidence in our strategic deterrent and our commitment to defend Japan against nuclear aggression.

I have sent Bill Rogers a copy of this memorandum.



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