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Talking Paper for the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (Special Coordination Committee Meeting, 15 September 1977, 1600 hours)

SUBJECT: FRG "MBFR Working Paper on Possible Future Steps at the MBFR Negotiations"

(83)

~~(S)~~ PURPOSE OF MEETING:

- To develop a USG position on the German MBFR initiative.

~~(S)~~ ISSUES:

- Issue 1: What should be the US position on the NATO objective that the Soviets withdraw a tank army from Central Europe? Should it be modified in an effort to make the common ceiling objective more negotiable?

- Alternative A: The USG would agree to drop the requirement that armaments other than Soviet tanks be withdrawn and to modify the requirement that the Soviets withdraw a tank army per se to permit the reduction of five divisions (three of which would have to come out of East Germany).

- Alternative B: Only drop the demand that the armaments other than tanks be withdrawn as part of a Soviet tank army reduction.

- Alternative C: No modification is warranted.

- Issue 2: What specific guarantees on the scope and timing of manpower reductions by non-US direct participants should be given the East at the time of an agreement on initial US-Soviet reductions?

- Alternative A: Accept the FRG concept that the West would assure the East that reductions required after Phase I (US and Soviet) to reach a common ceiling would be taken in two equal percentage reduction stages within a fixed period of time.

- Alternative B: In addition to offering the East what the FRG proposes, give the East the alternative choice of a specific commitment on the number of non-US and non-Soviet reductions to be taken within two years after Phase I reductions.

- Issue 3: Should the US propose as part of the initiative that some proportion of its manpower reductions would be taken in units.

- Alternative A: The USG would agree to take two-thirds of its reduction in units and the USSR would only be required to take two-thirds of its reduction in units.

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- Alternative B: The USG would agree that the majority of its reductions would result in the withdrawal of units and sub-units.
- Alternative C: US does not inform the East on unit reductions.
- Issue 4: Should NATO produce an initiative at this time, and if so, to what end?
 - Alternative A: Yes, to seek to break the deadlock on data as soon as possible in Vienna.
 - Alternative B: Yes, to clarify certain aspects of the Western position with a view toward achieving basic NATO MBFR objectives.
 - Alternative C: No not at this time.

(S) BACKGROUND: In his July 1977 Washington meeting with President Carter, Chancellor Schmidt cited a need to develop a new Western MBFR initiative for use at an appropriate time following resolution of the MBFR data discussion and SALT II. The President responded positively and both agreed that MBFR is not dependent upon SALT and could move ahead independently.

The German initiative is linked to FRG domestic politics. Chancellor Schmidt is publicly committed to taking MBFR out of the hands of the "technicians" and providing political direction, and has promised the Brandt wing of the SPD that he would give MBFR a political push after last October's elections. Schmidt will probably meet with Brezhnev in late November and can be expected to stress MBFR and German interest in achieving an outcome of parity in central Europe under the concept of a collective common ceiling on manpower.

Achievement of the common ceiling objective has been impeded because, according to NATO data, the Warsaw Pact would be required to reduce 2-3 times the manpower that NATO reduced. The FRG now proposes that MBFR reductions be taken in three phases to spread out the impact of these large reductions on the East. In this way, and by making some concessions on NATO's demand that the Soviets reduce a tank army as a first step, the FRG hopes to gain Eastern acceptance of Western data and to maintain the focus on collective ceilings which would not single out the FRG for reductions and limitations.

While committed to the concept of parity, DOD has consistently sought to emphasize the NATO objective of maximum Soviet reductions and enduring limitations on Soviet offensive capability. The main issue in the USG is if NATO should fall off this objective in order to improve our chances to obtain parity.

The British have commented on the German initiative and expressed reservations about the FRG "tilt" away from Soviet reductions. Bilateral discussions were held in Washington with the FRG on 12 and 13 September. Trilateral talks will follow between the US, UK, and FRG with a view toward gaining general agreement on the form and substance of a paper the Germans could put into NATO to launch an initiative.

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The FRG originally proposed that, following successful resolution of the data issue, the West should advance either (a) a comprehensive offer modifying the present NATO reduction approach, or (b) an interim protocol following the lines of the present NATO position, which, as in the Vladivostok SALT accord, would serve as an outline for continuing negotiation of details.

As a result of the bilateral talks, the FRG will consider dropping the idea of an interim agreement on principles and indicated that resolution of the data problem with the Soviets in Vienna was not a pre-condition for putting forward an initiative. With respect to the timing of the initiative itself, the Germans believe that it would depend on (1) how NATO weighed Soviet reactions on the data issue, and (2) the speed with which NATO addressed the FRG paper.

A summary discussion of relevant issues arising from the FRG initiative, with abbreviated FRG, OSD and UK comments, is at TAB A. Copies of the FRG MBFR Working Paper and of UK comments are at TABS B and C.

~~(S)~~ RECOMMENDED POSITION AND DISCUSSION.

A. Issue 1: Tank Army

- Recommended Position: The USG should not at this time advocate modification of the NATO position that the Soviets withdraw a tank army with equipment. The USG should further consider action to inform the Soviets that only Soviet tanks would be limited as a result of a tank army withdrawal; there would be no limits on units or on other armaments. 1/

-- Discussion: To allow the Soviets to withdraw any five divisions would increase the likelihood that the reductions would involve scattered rear echelon divisions garrisoned in Poland and Czechoslovakia. It could be politically difficult to try to specify that three divisions come out of East Germany. Tactically, at this time, NATO's demand for a tank army best assures the maximum reduction of Soviet combat capability in the forward area. ✓

As the UK correctly points out in their comments, "it is no exaggeration to say that the success of any MBFR agreement will in large part be measured by what reductions in, and limitations on, Soviet forces it secures." If the West offers concessions

1/ The JCS are currently reviewing their position opposing reduction of the requirement that armaments of a tank army, other than tanks, be withdrawn. Opposition centers on the fact that failure to insist on the withdrawal of those armaments would facilitate reconstitution of much of the withdrawn tank army's combat potential and would result in a limit only on Soviet ground force manpower and tanks. This effect is not considered as significant a reduction in Soviet offensive capability as the West originally envisaged.

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on this major objective in order to seek Soviet flexibility on data, the risk is that there might be no progress on data, but a central element of NATO's MBFR position would have been eroded.

Bilateral discussions with the FRG brought out the point that dropping the tank army demand was suggested to satisfy what they perceived as a US desire. They believe that sufficient flexibility could be indicated if NATO made clear to the East its position that the Soviets need not withdraw all the armaments of a tank army.

The British have expressed substantial reservations about dropping the requirement for the withdrawal of a tank army and are concerned that significant alteration of NATO's Phase I formula for US and Soviet reductions will eliminate the rationale for maintaining a demand for Soviet tanks. But they are willing to consider that the Soviets not be required to reduce all the armaments of a tank army, pending favorable outcome of a NATO study on the consequences of such a concession.

See TAB D for additional discussion.

B. Issue 2: Scope and Timing of Reduction Commitments.

- Recommended Position: The USG should use the opportunity afforded by apparent German flexibility demonstrated in the bilateral talks to press for further consideration of various formulas for commitments by non-US and non-Soviet participants on the collective size and timing of their reductions.

(Request further elaboration from ACDA or the US Delegation on the proposed US concept "that, if Phase II negotiations failed to result in agreement, each side would, nevertheless, be obligated to make those Phase II manpower reductions specified in the Phase I agreement.")

- Discussion: Probably the most important new development to emerge from the bilateral talks is that the FRG is prepared to make commitments on the timing of reductions to be taken by non-US and non-Soviet participants. The FRG also indicated it was prepared to consider various formulas for making commitments on the scope of such reductions.

The British should also be willing to work out language which could be used with the East on this issue, but the British have reservations about the specific FRG reduction/commitment formula which would commit parties to reduce fixed percentages of the manpower disparity in phases.

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A willingness on the part of the Germans to make a commitment is the main substantive element of the FRG initiative. Their reduction scheme is simply a mechanical device for conveying their intentions to the East. If, for some reason, the reduction format proposed by the FRG does not work out, some other way can be found to put this substantive initiative to the East.

C. Issue 3: Form of US Reductions.

- Recommended Position: The USG should not support a statement that two-thirds of our reductions would be taken in units. If applied to Soviet forces, this would have the effect of dropping our tank army demand of 68,000 men to 45,000 Soviets. The USG should support the FRG and UK suggestion that the US indicate a willingness to take the majority of its reductions in units and sub-units. 2/
- Discussion: A 45,000 Soviet reduction would amount to four divisions at the most. Thus, the tank army demand of 5 divisions, 1,700 tanks and 68,000 men could rapidly erode to 3 or 4 divisions, 1000-2000 tanks and 45,000 men.

The British believe that, if anything, our demand on the Soviets should increase, and they propose using NATO guidance (which has already been approved) to tell the East that, if the strength of the tank army to be withdrawn was insufficient to meet the specific requirement for the withdrawal of 68,000 men and 1,700 main battle tanks, the shortfall would have to be made up by equivalent withdrawals from combat units remaining in the reductions area.

The main Soviet objection to the tank army demand is that it requires reduction of an entire Soviet major formation while the US reduces "individual servicemen." Soviet negotiator Tarasov says the East will consider manpower-only reductions on both sides but believes unit reductions on both sides are preferable. By offering to take the majority of US reductions in units and sub-units, we can maintain the focus on meaningful Soviet reductions.

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D. Issue 4: Timing and Purpose of an Initiative.

- Recommended Position: The USG should support the addressal of an Initiative in NATO, but not set any deadlines for putting a new proposal before the East in Vienna. While an initiative may help solve the data problem, DOD has doubts that what is now being considered will assure a breakthrough. For this reason, it is
- 2/ The JCS believe an agreement to indicate a US willingness to take any portion of its reductions in units must be subject to the proviso that US MBFR data be based on authorized strengths. Assigned strengths are only valid for a specific date in the past and will vary widely for units of the same type. Assigned strengths for individual units can not be forecasted in advance and, therefore, can not be used for planning unit reductions.

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important to weigh what an initiative might do in terms of basic objectives as opposed to focusing on its tactical impact alone. 3/

-- Discussion: President Carter has indicated that the USG will support an initiative in MBFR at this time, leaving it to the FRG to take the lead. In the bilateral talks, the Germans made clear that they consider agreement on data very important.

They did not make resolution of the data problem a pre-condition for putting forward an initiative. Both the British and the Germans believe an initiative will require Alliance study. The British see an initiative as being more modest than the German proposal--to put the "ball in the Soviet court." They appear to be somewhat more reserved about deciding on the timing of an initiative, while the FRG believes it may be possible to put something before the East this year.

The problem with the initiative as it may develop is that it could add emphasis to the requirement that the East admit to a manpower disparity of substantial size and then reduce that disparity. Consideration should be given to study of other alternatives in the event that this initiative does not lead to any solution of the current data impasse.

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3/ The JCS believe a military analysis of the final proposal will have to be conducted to determine its impact on NATO's long term security interests prior to its endorsement by the USG.

Approved by _____
Asst. Secretary of Defense (ISA)

Director, Joint Staff

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