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~~OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE~~

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

SEP 10 1977

In reply refer to:
I-23956/77

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL

Authority: EO 13526

Chief, Records & Declass Div, WH

Date: JUN 01 2016

SUBJECT: Next Steps in MBFR (U) - INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

(U) As a result of the Carter-Schmidt meeting of 14 July and the subsequent delivery to us of a German working paper, the MBFR scene has become active. The U.S. and the FRG will hold bilateral discussions on the German paper on 12 and 13 September. The SCC is scheduled to meet on 15 September, and finally, the U.S. and FRG will join with the British in early October to trilaterally discuss next steps in NATO. We need to advise you of the state of play.

(S) The FRG paper outlines a reduction proposal (discussed at TAB D) which would make some modifications in the current NATO first-phase reduction requirement for a Soviet tank army. The other change from what we are proposing to the Pact now in Vienna would be to take reductions to a common ceiling in three phases instead of two, using a formula described as "equal percentage reductions of the disparity" between Eastern and Western manpower totals.

(S) The German initiative appears to be at least as much an invitation to re-examine current NATO purposes and tactics and to set some new values on NATO objectives as it is a formal reduction proposal. OSD analysis suggests that the working paper is a vehicle for Schmidt to let the U.S. know that he would support an initiative but not necessarily limited to the specific course of action outlined in the FRG paper.

(S) The importance Schmidt attaches to raising MBFR to the political level and removing it from "the jungle of experts' arguments" is clear. His commitment to the details of the reduction proposal in the working paper is less obvious. However, in the interest of supporting an FRG initiative without delay, the NSC staff has decided against the U.S. proposing any significant modifications to the German proposal and against the U.S. proposing that NATO use the opportunity of the German paper to debate basic issues (a summary of issues is at TAB A). Rather, the U.S. will begin working with the Germans bilaterally on 12 September with a view toward advancing their three-phase reduction scheme to NATO and to the East with minimum changes.

NATO 320-3 MBFR

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~~SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO YEAR INTERVALS. DECLASSIFIED ON 31 DEC 85~~

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~~(S)~~ State takes no exception to this approach. ACDA sees merit in an alternative approach which would give consideration to other reduction options, but nevertheless accepts the NSC program. Ambassador Resor believes that the President and Schmidt have already made the decision to have an initiative this fall ("November is the minimum target") and that the USG has no choice but to take a decision with the Germans on the details essentially as described in their paper. The fact that a German initiative is under consideration is public knowledge, and Ambassador Resor stresses that the East will not move in Vienna until they find out what the Western initiative is. He endorses the NSC staff decision.

~~(S)~~ DOD representatives have accepted the NSC staff decision with the understanding (1) that any discussion with the Germans with respect to departure from the present position must be conditional and would be subject to review by the SCC, (2) that the U.S. would tell the FRG we would be willing to consider modifications in NATO's objective of seeking militarily significant Soviet reductions through withdrawal of a tank army but that we had reservations about such modifications, and (3) that the issue of timing and tactical purpose of an initiative would be left open subject to addressal by the SCC.

~~(S)~~ The main concern the OSD and OJCS staff representatives have is with the elimination of the requirement that a Soviet tank army as such be withdrawn and the concomitant withdrawal of the current Western proposal that U.S. and Soviet manpower be reduced on an equal percentage basis. Their concern is that despite what they see as significant precedential concessions with respect to U.S. and Soviet reductions, if the German reduction proposition is accepted more or less as it is, the much heralded NATO initiative may be so modest as not to represent the kind of move either President Carter or Chancellor Schmidt envisioned when they endorsed the concept of moving MBFR ahead independent of SALT (TAB B is a summary of the differences from NATO's present MBFR position).

~~(S)~~ In summary, the German approach (with minor modifications proposed by the U.S.) would reduce emphasis on the tank army in order to weight our objectives toward a common ceiling outcome represented by collectivity, minimum constraints, and the concept of parity. It does not address French opposition to the common ceiling and continues to demand Eastern acknowledgement of a manpower disparity as a first requirement. It could be time consuming and difficult to negotiate with the East (and the French). But, assuming U.S. and FRG support, the other Allies would probably agree readily. Thus, Ambassador Resor sees this approach as the only one likely to produce NATO agreement on a new move in any reasonable period.

~~(S)~~ The analytical alternatives are described at TAB C ("Approach 1" is basically the German reduction concept). The alternative OSD representatives submitted for discussion in the working group ("Approach 3") would place emphasis on equal percentage U.S. and Soviet reductions (and maintain the current demand for a tank army withdrawal) while being less rigid with respect to

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agreement on data and acknowledgement and elimination of the manpower disparity. It provides a way to side-step the French problem and seeks to avoid confrontation with the East on data. It could, however, be time consuming and difficult to negotiate with the FRG and possibly other Allies. But, if presented to the East, it could extract the negotiations from the current data impasse while being faithful to long standing DOD concern to keep militarily significant cuts on the negotiating stage.

~~(S)~~ The form of an initiative at this time may, however, be more important than its substance or its direct impact on the Soviets. The President told Schmidt that he would look to the Germans to make a move, since they were in the "front lines." The fact that the FRG is willing to take the lead in showing some degree of flexibility on MBFR may be of sufficient political significance to cause the Soviets to react. The risk is that if they don't, we may have missed an opportunity to move MBFR in directions supportive of U.S. objectives.

~~(S)~~ When the SCC meets, it will be briefed on the history of our intelligence estimates of Warsaw Pact forces and receive a report on the progress of the bilateral discussions with the FRG. Further guidance can then be developed for next steps with the British--and alternatives, especially the question of U.S. and Soviet withdrawals, including the tank army question, can be discussed.

(U) On Tuesday, 13 September, we plan to forward you a report on the results of the meeting with the Germans and our recommendations with respect to the SCC meeting.



David E. McGiffert
Assistant Secretary of Defense
International Security Affairs

Attachments:

- Tab A - Basic Issues Raised by the FRG Working Paper
- Tab B - Comparison Chart of Alternative Approaches
- Tab C - Discussion of Alternative Approaches
- Tab D - Discussion of FRG Working Paper

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DOD MBFR Task Force
7 September 1977

TAB A

BASIC ISSUES RAISED BY THE FRG WORKING PAPER

1. Should the US Government objective be to work for significant Soviet reductions as the first priority, or should it seek to have the East acknowledge and agree to reduce the large overall disparity between East and West as the first priority?
2. What should be the NATO position on the Tank Army proposal? Should it be modified to make the common ceiling objective more negotiable?
3. How can NATO develop a practical negotiating position to work for the overall asymmetrical Eastern manpower reduction required to reach the common ceiling?
4. Should armaments be included in the negotiations, as the mixed package of Option III is, or in the context of a general weapons reduction proposal, or not at all?
5. Should NATO produce an initiative at this time, and if so, to what end? To break the deadlock on data or to bypass the deadlock to achieve an interim solution? If an interim solution, should it include reductions or focus on Vladivostok-type agreements in principle, stabilizing measures, or other?
6. Should the East be given fairly specific guarantees on the size and timing of reductions by non-US direct participants at the time of an agreement on US-Soviet reductions?

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September 10, 1977

Memo For Secretary of Defense

Harold:

Even though it is informational only, you probably ought to scan the attached MBFR memorandum prepared by my staff in case you get any calls in the next few days. I see no need to examine the attachments since a more definitive paper will be prepared for next week's SCC meeting in light of the discussion with the Germans earlier in the week.

Since the ~~paper~~^{memo} was prepared, the British have come in with comments on the German proposal; these will be dealt with in next week's memorandum.

I continue to have a difference of view with my staff with respect to the importance of the Tank Army withdrawal demand, since I am unable to attach very much importance to a withdrawal not accompanied by a limitation.

D.E.M.

David E. McGiffert

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