

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

Belgians
Doc#33
26 MAY 1978
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: NATO Summit--Weakening of Belgian Defense Efforts

I am greatly concerned that Belgium, formerly one of the most forthcoming members of NATO, is becoming one of the most serious laggards under its new coalition government. The addition of the Socialist party (including Foreign Minister Simonet) to the Tindemans coalition has seriously eroded Belgian defense efforts. While paying lip service to Alliance solidarity, they have vetoed Vanden Boeynants' decision to participate in the improved HAWK program, which means there will be a 60 km gap in the HAWK belt. They have also refused to allow us to proceed with a hardened war headquarters for EUCOM as an adjunct to SHAPE, and have become much weaker in their support for NATO AWACS. Worse yet, they have reduced planned defense spending from 4% to 2% real increase per year, just when most other sizable Allies are coming up to the 3% level.

Hence the Summit is an excellent opportunity to convince P.M. Tindemans that Belgium is weakening the Alliance. As I reported from Brussels, MOD Vanden Boeynants told us that we must register our dismay strongly with Tindemans if we hope to reverse this downward trend in Belgian defense efforts. He urged that you ask Tindemans how he can reconcile his support for NATO solidarity with Belgium's behavior as described above. He asked that Cy confront Simonet similarly. He asked also that Tindemans and Simonet be confronted in the presence of other Allies. Plainly, the latter suggestion involves a most delicate -- perhaps too delicate -- process, but it would enhance the impact of any approach you might make.

I attach possible talking points, which I have also provided to Cy along with a copy of this memorandum.

Harold Brown

Attachment
a/s

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
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BILATERAL PAPER

BELGIUM

Should the President hold a bilateral discussion with Prime Minister Tindemans he may wish to make the following points, listed below in priority order:

- Welcome Tindemans whom the President last saw in Brussels in January.
- Because of the importance of the Long-Term Defense Program, we hope Belgium will be able to meet the NATO-agreed annual three percent real increase in defense spending. Why is Belgium going down to 2% when most others are coming up to 3%?
- We know that Belgium strongly supports NATO solidarity, but we fear that this and other trends in Belgium defense policy will weaken the Alliance.
- Improved HAWK. We are very concerned that Belgium is the only country which has failed to go for improved HAWK. This threatens to produce a 60 km gap in the HAWK belt, which would be a severe blow to Alliance air defense.
- AWACS. Despite NATO acceptance of the Belgian cost sharing formula, the GOB has been weak in its support of AWACS. This program is critical to maintaining adequate Alliance defenses. There is no defense against new low altitude Soviet attack aircraft without AWACS.
- SHAPE/EUCOM Collocation. The GOB has informally refused our request to collocate the USEUCOM wartime headquarters at SHAPE. Unless the GOB position is reversed, the SHAPE wartime headquarters (Project 85) will proceed without a US cell thereby impeding US wartime support capability and greatly increasing the cost if we go ahead later.
- Zaire. Our joint rescue efforts in the Shaba province went well. The longer term future of Zaire looks gloomy, however. It appears that external assistance in organizing adequate security arrangements and providing economic support may be required. We propose a meeting of Belgium, France and the United States to see if such assistance is feasible.

Office of the Secretary of Defense **5 U.S. 552**
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