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SECT 68 OF 00481

ACTION DDRE (01)  
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TAGS: NATO, MPOL, GW, FR, AWACS  
SUBJ: PARTICIPATION IN NATO AWACS PROGRAM

REF: A. EMBASSY BONN 18770 DTG 172047Z NOV 75  
B. STATE 268529 DTG 122335Z NOV 75  
C. STATE 248678 DTG 201055Z OCT 75

SUMMARY: US POSITION ON NATO AWACS SEEMS TO STRESS IMPORTANCE OF FRG AND UK SUPPORT FOR NEAR TERM WHILE ALLOWING AMBIGUITY IN WHETHER AND HOW FRANCE AND SMALLER NATIONS WILL PARTICIPATE. HOWEVER, FRG SUPPORT MAY DEPEND UPON MORE PARTICIPATION BY SMALLER COUNTRIES. RESOLUTION OF THIS PROBLEM, IN TURN, MAY REQUIRE HIGH LEVEL US BILATERAL DEMARCHES WITH INDIVIDUAL SMALLER NATIONS TO SECURE COMMITMENT TO SOME KIND OF PARTICIPATION. END SUMMARY.

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Office of the Secretary of Defense 5 U.S.C. 552  
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS  
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1. KEY NATO NATIONS SEEM TO BE PURSUING DIVERGENT APPROACHES TO AWACS. UNLESS THESE DIFFERING APPROACHES ARE RECONCILED, IT WILL BE INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN SUFFICIENT CONSENSUS ON AWACS TO PERMIT PARTICIPATION ON A BASIS DOMESTICALLY ACCEPTABLE TO MAJOR NATIONS. WE THINK THAT ADEQUATE BASIS FOR RECONCILIATION EXISTS, BUT THAT PASSAGE OF TIME WILL WORK AGAINST SUCH RESOLUTION.

2. WE INFER THAT WASHINGTON REGARDS FRG PARTICIPATION AS A NECESSARY AND, ALONG WITH THE UK, PERHAPS A SUFFICIENT CONDITION TO AWACS VIABILITY -- BOTH IN TERMS OF ADEQUATE FUNDING AND THE CREATION OF SUFFICIENT "NATO PARTICIPATION" TO MAKE AWACS ACCEPTABLE TO CONGRESS. BUT WE SEE INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT THE FRG BELIEVES THAT AWACS MUST BE MORE TRULY A "NATO PROGRAM" AS A PRIOR CONDITION FOR FRG DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATION. IF WE REGARD UK PARTICIPATION AS REASONABLY ASSURED IN EITHER A TRILATERAL (US-UK-FRG) OR BROADER MULTILATERAL EFFORT, AND IF WE ACCEPT CONTINUED AMBIGUITY ON THE PART OF FRANCE, AS IT APPEARS WE MUST, IT THEN SEEMS PROBABLY THAT FRG ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NECESSITY FOR PARTICIPATION BY SOME NUMBER OF SMALL COUNTRIES WILL BECOME THE PACING FACTOR IN DEVELOPMENT OF A VIABLE PROGRA.

3. ALTHOUGH THE MILITARY COMMITTEE (MC) HAS ENDORSED AWACS IN STRONG TERMS AS A MILITARY REQUIREMENT, AND ALTHOUGH THE ALLIES ARE GRADUALLY BUT SATISFACTORILY DIGESTING THE BROADER TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES OF THE SYSTEM, THE MC HAS UNDERSTANDABLY BEEN RELUCTANT TO SPECIFY WHICH ON-GOING OR PLANNED MILITARY PROGRAMS MIGHT APPROPRIATELY BE DEFERRED OR CANCELLED IN FAVOR OF AWACS. GIVEN THE HIGH COST OF AWACS AT ANY PROCUREMENT AND OPERATING LEVEL UNDER CURRENT DISCUSSION, THIS IS A KEY FACTOR TO NATO'S SMALLER NATIONS. SIX OF THEM HAVE ALREADY DECLARED THAT THEY WILL NOT PARTICIPATE BECAUSE THEY CANNOT DO SO WITHOUT DELAYING OR CANCELLING HIGH PRIORITY PROGRAMS FOR WHICH AT LEAST SOME DEGREE OF INTERNAL CONSENSUS ALREADY EXISTS. THEY ARE: BELGIUM, DENMARK, THE NETHERLANDS, PORTUGAL, ITALY, AND NORWAY.

4. ASSUMING THAT AWACS DISCUSSION AT FORTHCOMING DPC MINISTERIALS CONTINUES THIS "HOLDING PATTERN" WITHOUT FURTHER NEGATIVE INDICATIONS OF INTENT, WE BELIEVE IT WILL THEN BE NECESSARY TO ASK OURSELVES WHAT KIND OR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION BY SMALLER NATIONS IS FEASIBLE AND WHAT KIND OF APPROACH AND

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