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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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 Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS  
 Date: NOV 19 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: MBFR

In response to your directive, the JCS and I have devised a means of offering the East substantial flexibility on the data issue without endangering key security interests and without setting a harmful precedent for other arms control negotiations. Our new proposal, which entails even greater flexibility than our proposal at the recent NSC meeting, is authentically forthcoming and defensible as a response to recent Soviet moves and to pressures from certain allies. The concessions advocated by State and ACDA entail unjustifiable military and diplomatic risks.

Recent Soviet "moves" on verification cannot properly be called concessions. The Soviets have tendered words that sound accomodating but are so heavily qualified as to give away nothing. For example, the Soviets now hint at granting us rights to conduct on-site inspections, but the fine print says we would have only the right to request such inspections and Moscow would retain the right to refuse. Some right, some concession. All in all, a treaty based on the Soviet proposals would be flatly unverifiable.

The allies are by no means unanimous in urging us to make concessions along the lines proposed by State and ACDA. While the FRG favors such concessions, the UK, joined by Italy and Belgium, strongly opposes them. The January 31 UK paper on MBFR delivered to State and the White House makes clear the irony that the USG, if it were to endorse the State/ACDA proposal, would be shifting the Alliance's center of gravity away from insistence on rigorous arms control verification. Lest the irony escape us, the British invoke your report on Soviet treaty violations to support their criticism of the FRG (and State/ACDA) position.

Nevertheless, there might be benefit if we offer a new proposal to break the impasse over data. Whether you choose the State/ACDA proposal or the OSD/JCS proposal for showing flexibility on data, the issue of what constitutes adequate Soviet flexibility on verification remains to be worked out. The Western verification proposals now on the table are sketchy, as all USG agencies agree. Though your recent MBFR NSDD reflects appreciation of the point, it bears reiterating that the first step toward tabling a new Western position on data must be careful technical work on elaborating

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our verification requirements. This should, in any event, be the centerpiece of the US-UK-FRG MBFR meeting now scheduled for February 13-14.

Moreover, even if the Soviets were to accept a verification package enhanced as we are now contemplating, there would remain enormous impediments to our ever responding to a Soviet violation, given the difficulty of producing unassailable, "smoking gun"-type evidence on such matters as excessive troop numbers.

If we announce that we are willing to effect initial reductions and a freeze without prior agreement on force level data, as State and ACDA propose, and justify it on the grounds that we shall get Soviet concessions on verification in return, we can anticipate that we shall quickly come under pressure to drop our demands for truly significant Soviet concessions on verification. If we are unwilling to say no to the FRG now, shall we be willing to say no later after we have raised their expectations and intensified their desire for token withdrawals?

OSD and JCS propose we show flexibility on data by (1) dropping our demand for data on service support units (which we cannot verify with a reasonable degree of confidence in any event) and (2) dropping our demand for actual agreement on data and requiring only that Eastern data fall within a specified range of our figures we believe to be accurate. We think this would show ample flexibility on the USG's part. While these proposals are not controversial within the USG, State and ACDA argue that they are not grand enough. They propose dropping altogether our demand for force level figures until after US and USSR forces have made token reductions and a NATO-WTO freeze has come into effect.

There is only one major issue in this interagency controversy: Whether the USG, in the name of flexibility on data, should split the MBFR process into two stages and consent (as State and ACDA propose) to enter into an initial token reductions/freeze agreement with the Soviets without agreed-upon current force level figures and without assurance that the initial agreement will lead to a treaty which requires major asymmetrical reductions to parity.

If the State/ACDA proposal is tabled in Vienna, the USG will have abandoned a weighty principle relevant to all arms control negotiations, viz., agreement on what is to be limited or reduced is an indispensable precondition for reductions.

The report on Soviet noncompliance with arms control agreements requires us to recognize that a mutually-agreed standard for measuring compliance is absolutely essential. In MBFR, the force-level data provide the standard. An interim agreement without such a standard is unverifiable.

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(S) The State/ACDA option is a rush to an unverifiable freeze, with all the dangers associated with other arms control freeze proposals. The JCS and I share apprehension of the dangers of an interim agreement as proposed by the FRG, State and ACDA. The JCS, in an annex to the IG paper, have outlined the military requirements that must be accounted for in any freeze agreement if undue military risk is to be avoided. Those requirements include: major Eastern asymmetrical reductions, free movement of US transit forces, the conduct of peacetime exercises such as Reforger, and flexibility for modernization, including GLCM deployments. The State/ACDA option does not meet the sensible minimum military requirements identified by the Chiefs; it is inconsistent in particular with the requirement for a Soviet commitment (before any freeze) to major (as opposed to token) asymmetrical reductions. And it would be unverifiable.

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