



ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

#83

4 DEC 1974

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WH:
Date: NOV 08 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: ~~SecDef 6 December Meeting with Belgian Ambassador van Cauwenberg~~

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Belgium 091/112

~~Belgium~~ will be seeking NATO approval at the DPC meeting in Brussels for reducing its conscript service. The reduction in service to six months by 1979 has strong political support and could be brought to a vote in Parliament this month. Personnel conscripted would be used in non-NATO committed forces, and Belgium would meet its NATO commitments with volunteer forces. The volunteer program has had a slow start, but is being pushed vigorously.

In November the NATO Defense Review Committee praised Belgium's renewed pledge of four percent real increase in defense spending. It further noted with approval the Belgian plans to fund the added expense of volunteers ("professionalization") outside the four percent increase and to raise the share of the defense budget allocated to major equipment.

~~Belgium~~ HONEST JOHN with LANCE, introduce modern anti-tank and acquire the EXOCET surface-to-surface missile. On the minus side is the low level of manning of Army combat units and the decision not to participate in the HAWK improvement program.

~~Belgium~~ reaction to the US proposed Ministerial Guidance indicates likely support for expanded format, but doubts that NATO can obtain a stalwart conventional capability. Belgium agrees on the need for greater cooperation, but is unlikely to support rationalization.

An important concern in current US-Belgian military relations is the F-104 replacement issue. The existence of the four-nation Consortium (Belgium, Netherlands, Norway and Denmark) has been helpful to US contenders. However, French pressures on the Belgians and on MOD Vanden Boeynants have been strong. When Vanden Boeynants was in the US in September with the other Consortium MODs, he probed to discover any weaknesses in the US commitment on a lightweight fighter. He failed, and perhaps somewhat reluctantly, is going along with the Consortium's willingness to await the USAF selection in early January. The US decision this year to procure 650 lightweight fighters and to deploy 250 of them to Europe has had a powerful effect on his apparent earlier decision to procure a French aircraft. That, coupled with US production offset offers for the Belgian airframe and engine industry, may result in a Belgian decision favorable to the USAF-selected aircraft.

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See Def Has Seen

(U) Attached at Tab A is a biography of Ambassador van Cauwenberg.

6 DEC 1974

18-J-2097

Robert Ellsworth
Assistant Secretary of Defense
International Security Affairs

Attachment

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F-104G REPLACEMENT

Ambassador Strausz-Hupe has reported that MOD VANDEN BOEYNANTS indicated that the recently delivered USG message supporting U.S. candidate aircraft (Tab A) will be a very important element in Belgian decision making.

It is clearly established that European selection decision between France's Super Mirage F-1 and the three U.S. contenders (Northrop P-530 COBRA, General Dynamics International 402 and Lockheed's LANCER) will turn more on political and economic considerations than on the purely technical merits of the competing aircraft--provided that all aircraft meet minimum performance requirements.

Belgium, Netherlands and Norway currently are considering merits of seeking "a common solution." Oslo and the Hague indicate that decision of Belgian Government will be crucial if not decisive. We believe Netherlands is unlikely to take the lead and will await formation of a new Belgian Government and subsequent Belgian selection. It appears that Belgian selection decision is unlikely before September 1974.

MOD VANDEN BOEYNANTS has informed Ambassador Strausz-Hupe that "only the Northrop P-530 COBRA and the Dassault Super Mirage are in contention insofar as Belgium is concerned." As you know, our industrial interests have vigorously argued within the Washington context that there are three U.S. contenders. Embassy Brussels and the Hague have stated that there is only one remaining U.S. contender.

Since there cannot be three U.S. winners, USG must at some point conclude that national interest vis-a-vis the French is best served by supporting the only Belgian declared U.S. entry left in competition. Recommend that you seek Ambassador Strauss-Hupe's views on validity of this point and solicit his recommendation concerning next appropriate thrust for USG intervention.

Embassy Brussels' preliminary evaluation of recent election outcome suggests that if Tindemans succeeds to Premiership, U.S. has gained on balance. This supported by initial Embassy evaluation of election results. You should press the Ambassador for his views on a Tindemans Premiership.

We understand that Ambassador Strausz-Hupe feels strongly that Belgian decision is key. Hence, he has consistently stressed importance of USG providing basis for pro-American faction within Belgian Government "to carry the day." At minimum, this entails

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Washington acceptance of: (a) full support within March-September timeframe of the only U.S. candidate acceptable to Belgium; (b) recognition that Belgian decision will almost certainly pull Netherlands and probably Norway and Denmark along with it; (c) need to orchestrate a favorable decision by "filling in details" on those items of USG assistance already enunciated in State's message (Tab A). In this connection, the Ambassador believes it would be helpful if, under auspices of Embassy Brussels, U.S. elements met to explore strategy and tactics of "U.S. quid-pro-quoing." On basis of this exploration, a recommended course of action for Washington inter-agency evaluation will be provided.

You should know that Embassy Hague has underscored importance of Brussels role in this selection by confirming apparent reluctance of MOD Vredeling to take the lead in pushing for a U.S. decision. (Tab B)

Enclosures
as stated

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Michael G. Macdonald
Director, European Division
Sales Negotiations, DSAA
13 March 1974

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