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Honorable William P. Rogers
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: DEC 21 2018

Dear Bill:

As you know, the MBFR community is now developing an approach to be submitted to NATO in mid-April. In my view, this submission should include:

- The broad approach the USG proposes to take on MBFR.
- Some of the six MBFR options now being developed, together with the relevant analyses.
- An indication of which of these options the USG could support, consistent with our broad approach, as the framework for development of a common Allied negotiating position.

In indicating a preferred option, we should make clear that it is only conceived of as a framework, and that the specifics such as the precise numerical limits on constraints and the units or manpower to be withdrawn are subject to further examination, development, and discussion.

If NATO is to be adequately prepared for negotiations this fall, it is essential that our Allies have, as soon as possible, US proposals along these lines. Allied anxieties about our MBFR policy can only be allayed by a clear statement of our direction. Looking beyond April, our target in the June NATO Ministerial should be Alliance agreement on a broad approach and on the framework option or options, with a recognition that the option will need to be further developed here and in NATO between June and the opening of negotiations later in the year.

As for the broad approach we should propose to NATO, I have reviewed the MBFR work done in DCD and endorse the following:

- First, MBFR should be a long-term, phased, process.
- Second, we should aim for a limited first-stage agreement to permit us to test the effects of MBFR and Soviet intentions, and lay the groundwork for possible future, more comprehensive, steps.

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-- Third, an acceptable limited first stage agreement should include: provision for a force limitation or ceiling for the duration of MBFR talks, collateral constraints, adequate verification provisions, and a modest (10%) NATO stationed ground force reduction combined with the maximum possible Soviet reduction.

In my view, any option that we propose to the Allies as a framework for developing a common negotiating position should be consistent with this approach.

If you agree with the foregoing, I would propose that our Departments collaborate along these lines. It might be useful to focus this collaboration on preparation of a Joint State-Defense memorandum to the President immediately before the NSC meeting now tentatively set for early April to decide the US MBFR position.

Sincerely,

ELLIOT

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