UNCLASSIFIED
~~SECRET~~

PRINCIPAL REMARKS BY
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE-DESIGNATE JAMES R. SCHLESINGER
AT
NATO DEFENSE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINISTERIAL MEETING,
BRUSSELS, 7 JUNE 1973

It is a privilege for me to come before you and address this distinguished committee for the first time. I particularly appreciate having had the opportunity to hear General Steinhoff's considered treatment of the critical issues affecting the Alliance. Let me say that I heartily endorse these comments. They underscored the trends which inevitably affect the balance. These trends must be fixed if we are to restore confidence in the Alliance.

As the newest member I shall not pretend to have acquired a detailed familiarity with all sides of these issues. But it must be evident to all of us that NATO is entering a new era that joins opportunity with risk.

In the past, we could concentrate on strategy, forces and budgets in an environment characterized by relatively sharp hostility from the Warsaw Pact, well identified military threats, and strong domestic support for our efforts. Now, however, we face a future of much greater complexity. The hostility of the Pact seems diminished as the atmosphere of detente envelops us and a variety of talks between the two Alliances get under way. Cohesion within NATO appears weaker as we enter negotiations among ourselves -- on issues of money and trade as well as security. At the same time, domestic support for strong and unified defenses may well be on the wane.

Despite such trends, continuation of the NATO enterprise is essential. The people, the economics and the civilization of the North Atlantic area remain vital to us all. While the prevailing winds from the East seem fair, we know that they can turn foul with great speed and little warning. In these uncertain conditions, our defenses -- so long in building -- must be maintained and fortified. Whatever the current atmosphere, the specific military threats -- nuclear and non-nuclear -- continue to loom over us. We cannot ignore them, neither can we negotiate about them from weakness. For all these reasons, President Nixon reaffirmed last December that: Quote --

> In light of the present strategic balance and of similar efforts by our Allies, we will not only maintain but improve our forces in Europe and will not reduce them unless there is reciprocal action by our adversaries. (End Quote).

UNCLASSIFIED
~~SECRET~~

#330

Classified by Director, European Region/ISA
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO YEAR INTERVALS. DECLASSIFIED ON 12-31-83

This is a major commitment of the United States, but it does not resolve all issues. Its continuation depends on the sustained cohesion, momentum, and coherence of NATO. The fact of the matter is that we stand at another crossroads in the history of this Alliance.

As we look out to the next ten years, a new set of shared objectives is increasingly necessary. President Nixon has made it clear that for his administration this is the "year of Europe". It is a year in which all of us represented at this table should dedicate ourselves to a new look at how well we have performed on the undertakings jointly accepted by us. It is a year in which we should review the assumptions on which these undertakings have been made. We should do all this in our bilateral talks with one another, in such multilateral discussions as we may set up for that specific purpose, and here in NATO.

In the realm of mutual security, we must resolve four major issues: the appropriate strategy and defense posture for NATO, allied force improvements, burden-sharing, and MBFR.

I realize that we are here primarily to discuss the last three issues. But precisely how we deal with them depends critically on our interpretation of NATO strategy and on the force posture that we adopt as an Alliance. Only with a common understanding of this first issue can we sensibly and systematically establish objectives and programs in the other three areas of concern.

I. STRATEGY AND DEFENSE POSTURE

Let me underscore at the outset that the US has no desire to alter the basic principles of NATO strategy, namely flexible response, forward defense and deterrence based on a spectrum of conventional and nuclear capabilities. We in the United States believe that the current NATO strategy is sound and that it continues to serve the Alliance well, and we believe our Allies share this view. But, notwithstanding our agreement in principle, there is wide variance among us when it comes to giving full force and effect to the strategy. The result of this variance is that our interpretation of MC 14/3 has become a great deal more flexible than our ability to respond to an attack.

Some of us talk about and program for a conventional defense lasting a few days, followed by the tactical use of nuclear weapons. Others plan for only a slightly longer non-nuclear phase, but reject the use of nuclear weapons except for very limited purposes of demonstration. Still others are short-war theorists on land and in the air, but allocate scarce resources to a long war at sea. The US, for its part, prepares to fight conventionally for at least 90 days, and programs some capabilities for an even longer non-nuclear war.

With all the pressures on our budgets, we cannot continue to disperse resources in this disjointed fashion. Basically, our concept of defense is sound. We have developed and maintained a triad of NATO deterrents in the form of our strategic nuclear, tactical nuclear, and non-nuclear forces. But we have still to recognize that the emphasis on each component, and the way each underpins and supports the other, must necessarily change with time.

1. Deterrence. Confidence in our NATO triad of deterrents requires first of all that we have real capabilities to resist aggression. But confidence in our deterrents also requires that our proposed responses appear credible to our potential foes. Deterrence works only so long as there is no serious doubt about our willingness to use available forces.

2. The Strategic Forces. I need not review for you the nature of the US and the Soviet strategic offensive forces. Totals of missiles and bombers show the two sides currently about even, although under SALT, the USSR is permitted to acquire a numerical advantage in missiles during the five-year period of the interim offensive agreement. In numbers of independently targeted warheads, the US leads the USSR by a very considerable margin. In throw-weight and total megatonnage, on the other hand, the Soviets hold an advantage. By the more exotic measure of one-megaton equivalents, the US may again have the lead, but what does all of this mean?

Our analyses indicate that were the Soviets to strike first against US strategic forces, major portions of our missiles and alert bombers would survive and be capable of inflicting mortal wounds on the USSR. Retaliation against Russian cities would produce up to 40 percent prompt fatalities and around 75 percent of industry destroyed.

However, as President Nixon has insisted on several occasions, this awesome reprisal is not the only plan of action that the United States should have available. And, as matters now stand, that is no longer our only recourse. The US has developed other strategic options along with survivable command-and-control to implement them.

With these options not only do we gain the ability to conduct discriminating campaigns against targets other than cities and people, we can also prevent the Soviets from achieving any meaningful objectives with their strategic forces. The USSR, if it wishes, can eventually develop a somewhat similar capability against the United States. In that sense, we will be entering an era of strategic stalemate.

In such an era, the risk of mortal damage to all parties (including Eastern and Western Europe), would remain extremely high in the event that nuclear deterrence should fail. These circumstances ensure that strategic forces will reliably deter a narrowing range of contingencies. Their role will remain vital both for the deterrence of strategic attack and for the reinforcement that they give to the other components of the NATO triad. But a major part of the burden of deterrence will fall increasingly on other forces.

3. The Tactical Nuclear Forces. How much of that burden can be assumed by our tactical nuclear capabilities continues to be a matter of controversy. The Alliance has led the way in developing a sophisticated armory of nuclear weapons for tactical purposes. Despite the acquisition of a substantial theater nuclear capability by the USSR, the Allies continue to excel them in our ability to conduct selective and discriminating campaigns.

In such circumstances, it remains to be seen whether we can develop any comparative advantage with these forces and make them more controllable. Meanwhile, we should not neglect them. Indeed, much work on this leg of the NATO triad remains to be done. We still need improved doctrines for the tactical use of nuclear weapons. We should strive to reduce the vulnerability of the systems we already deploy. And, if we can deal with these problems, we should consider whether, in the future, there are serious possibilities of replacing the existing stockpile with nuclear weapons and systems more appropriate to the environment of Eastern and Western Europe. Steps of this order should ensure that the tactical nuclear forces will serve both as a direct deterrent to a nuclear attack by the Pact and as a serious hedge against a major breakdown in our conventional defenses.

4. The Non-Nuclear Forces. That still leaves us with the issue of how much non-nuclear capability this Alliance should maintain. We have heard the argument in the past that NATO did not need a direct counter to the conventional forces of the Pact because of its tactical and strategic nuclear superiority. We are also familiar with the contention that NATO, in any event, could not provide a conventional counterweight to the Pact at anything like acceptable peacetime costs.

Now, however, we have to face the fact that our nuclear forces no longer carry a dominant weight in the balance. But does that mean, at the same time, that we have to accept the premise of continuing Pact conventional superiority with all the risk that the Soviets might be tempted to exploit their possible advantage?

There is no inherent reason why the Pact should have conventional superiority over NATO. Nor is there any reason to believe that such advantages as the Pact presently poses are insurmountable. We already program most of what is required to counter the Pact. What is at issue is the relatively small remaining margin.

NATO outweighs the Pact by a considerable margin in basic assets. The population of the Alliance is greater (by 54 percent). Our combined gross national product is greater by more than a factor of 3. Even our military expenditures are larger (by 35 percent) and despite the concern about Pact manpower, we have more men under arms (18 percent more). In other words, if NATO is inferior to the Pact in non-nuclear forces, it is not for lack of resources, manpower, or men in uniform. To the extent that the Alliance is weaker, it must be for other reasons.

A second measure of relative strength comes from counting the various components of the deployed forces as they confront one another on the Northern Flank, in the Center Region, and on the Southern Flank.

Since the MBFR negotiations will focus on the Center Region, our Allies in Norway, Italy, Greece and Turkey will forgive me if, on this occasion, I stress the ratio of forces in the Center. At subsequent meetings, we should give equal attention to the balance of the flanks.

Although we may question the effectiveness of NATO's defense in the Center Region, the ratio of forces deployed there does not put us at any great disadvantage. The Pact Order of Battle contains 58 stationed and indigenous divisions in the Center Region west of the USSR (not including Hungary), compared with only 29 1/3 divisions and 12 brigades in a comparable area on the NATO side (including Denmark and France). However, Pact divisions, even at full strength, are substantially smaller than their NATO counterparts. When we count men in combat and support units instead of adding up divisions, we find that the Pact deploys about 730,000 men, while NATO fields around 685,000 in a comparable area.

Depending upon what is being counted, the Pact has numerical superiority in tanks (14,500 to 6,100) and total aircraft (2,800 to 2,750), but NATO possesses important quantitative and qualitative advantages in tank destroyers, anti-tank weapons, armored personnel carriers, trucks, logistic support, and -- most important of all -- modern offensive aircraft.

It is worth noting, moreover, that NATO pays more for its deployed forces than the Pact, quite independently of manpower costs. If we are not obtaining a level of combat effectiveness at least commensurate with that of the Pact, we should certainly find out why. The resources for a powerful non-nuclear defense at M-Day have been for the most part made available.

This situation of rough parity at M-Day does not change significantly even if Pact mobilization begins a week before that of NATO and what we consider the full Pact threat is deployed to the Center Region. We estimate that on that date (NATO M-Plus-23) the Pact could muster ground forces totaling about 1.3 million men in 90 division forces, along with about 23,000 tanks and 3,700 aircraft, of which a large percentage would consist of short-range, low-payload interceptors.

By M-Plus-23, NATO could deploy ground forces of 1.8 million men in 36 division and 30 brigade forces (including 6 French divisions), as well as 7,900 tanks (with more in storage) and about 3,600 aircraft containing a preponderance of fighter bombers. After M-Plus-23 the strength of the Alliance would increase still further relative to the Pact as additional reinforcements and supplies arrived from the United States.

I do not want to pretend that these quite aggregate comparisons reliably forecast the outcome of a non-nuclear conflict in the Center Region. Other factors in addition to the numerical force balance will heavily influence the result. In fact, it is precisely in these less visible areas that NATO's weaknesses are greatest. We continue to have problems with our command-and-control. Many of our high-cost aircraft remain vulnerable on the ground. We lack sufficient war reserve stocks to outlast the Pact. We still suffer from maldeployments and excessive redundancy in our logistical systems. Our tactics appear to stem more from internal doctrines than external threats.

But in the course of recognizing our own weaknesses (as we must) we should not overlook the many problems faced by the USSR and its possibly reluctant Allies. If they attack, they must cross a more difficult terrain than we generally concede. They suffer from serious logistic deficiencies and vulnerabilities of their own. Their conventional airpower is critical to, but inadequate for, the kind of campaign the Soviet marshals seem to prefer. The success of their strategy -- to the extent that we understand it -- also turns on a second echelon of ground forces drawn from the USSR, the bulk of which would have to depend on reserve call-ups to reach combat strength. And the Soviets themselves must entertain serious doubts about the reliability of their Allies and the security of their lines of communication from internal threats.

The result of our analysis must, in these circumstances, be somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand SACEUR, quite understandably, cannot assure us of being able to withstand a heavy fast-moving Pact assault on his central front. On the other hand, a prudent Soviet calculator cannot assure his leaders of the Pact's ability to break through NATO's forward defenses.

5. Summary. To sum up, despite important asymmetries between the forces of NATO and the Pact, it does not appear as though NATO need labor under any serious disadvantages on M-Day or M-Plus-23 with approximately its existing non-nuclear force structure -- provided always that a number of its less visible weaknesses are removed. Nor is it clear why the deficiencies that do exist cannot be remedied at relatively modest incremental cost.

The real issues, in other words, have little to do with whether we can design an effective conventional defense. We already possess the ingredients of such a defense and are paying a considerable price for them. How we now deal with the resulting posture rests primarily in your hands. The United States simply cannot go it alone in supporting the conventional deterrent; Europe must want it and strive for it too. Indeed, and I am sorry to say this, I doubt that our Congress will long continue to appropriate the funds for large conventional forces in Europe if the US remains the only consistently serious advocate of non-nuclear deterrence. Change, in short, is pressing very hard on us all.

One response to the pressure could be to abandon the concept of a full-scale conventional deterrent in favor of a genuine tripwire posture, smaller forces, and a much lower nuclear threshold. But to this administration, such an approach is clearly unacceptable.

Nothing precludes us from having an effective conventional deterrent and a high nuclear threshold; both are well within our means. Accordingly, the US wishes very much to see the full non-nuclear option more wholeheartedly supported and the posture of the Alliance tailored to suit it.

When all is said and done, we certainly regard the Red Armies as a major deterrent force on the side of the Pact. It stands to reason that we should treat our own non-nuclear defenses in the same way. If we do so, we can give our citizens increasing confidence in these most crucial barriers to conflict. If we do so, we can also set worthwhile objectives to inspire the Alliance and look forward more hopefully to a decade and more of peace.

II. FORCE IMPROVEMENTS

I related earlier this morning the position of my government on the need for qualitative improvements and I expressed my government's confidence in the NATO strategy and its concern that that strategy has not been fully implemented. I said that we in the United States want to see the non-nuclear option more wholeheartedly supported and the posture of our Alliance tailored to suit it. I stated in this connection that we view

with concern the oft-heard expressions to the effect that the conventional deterrent is beyond our reach and I cited at some length reasons why we in NATO should have abundant confidence that we have the basic ingredients of a successful non-nuclear defense -- that a careful analysis of the deficiencies and assets of both sides should not lead us to conclude that an effective conventional capability is hopeless and beyond our reach. On the contrary, given certain badly needed actions, it is within the capability of this Alliance to build an effective conventional force. We must all bear in mind that, however impressive our basic ingredients may be, we have not realized their full potential. It's time that we move to do this.

Completion of the AD-70 program is obviously a step in the right direction. As we do so, however, we must decide on the list of critical items needed during the early phases of the conflict and set our goals for successive years. There are many candidates for the list: I will only mention four of them.

1. Shelters. My first candidate is aircraft shelters. All of us appreciate the leadership of the EuroGroup in getting this program under way. Now we must build shelters for all European-based aircraft and all US aircraft scheduled for deployment by M-Plus-30. These shelters cost only a tenth of the aircraft they are designed to protect. In the circumstances, it hardly makes sense to add to the inventory of aircraft until we can reduce the vulnerability of those we already have.

2. Aircraft Utilization. Second, we must assure the most effective utilization of our aircraft during the early days of a war. If we are to believe Soviet doctrine, we will face a series of fast-moving armored thrusts by the Pact during the opening phases of the attack. Our tactical air can play a critical role in containing these threats, provided that we exercise centralized command-and-control over our assets and practice serious economy of force. Clearly we must continue to improve the utilization of the combined air forces and acquire both the facilities and the doctrine to ensure their allocation to where the offensive pressure is greatest.

3. Anti-Tank Weapons. Third, we need to take comparable measures on the ground to blunt the enemy tank columns. Primarily this means increasing the density of our one-man and two-man anti-tank weapons. But it also means clarifying the plans and doctrines for their use.

4. War Reserves Stocks. Finally, we must continue to build balanced stocks of war reserves munitions and other consumables, adding by increments to the number of days of supply that we will maintain at agreed rates of consumption. It is pointless to keep active and reserve forces sufficient for a conventional defense, yet deny them the ordnance necessary

to conduct it. War reserve stocks, particularly of the newer non-nuclear munitions, must be increased to levels higher than the holding of the Pact, which we estimate at about 30 days of supply. We simply cannot permit our own forces to run out of ammunition and other essential consumables before their enemies do.

III. BURDEN-SHARING

Force improvements are an important ingredient of high confidence in NATO's non-nuclear deterrent. US tactical air and ground forces -- both those deployed and those maintained in the US for reinforcement -- are still another. It is true, of course, that the deployed US forces amount to no more than 25 percent of the total allied capability currently in the Center Region. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. After M-Plus-23, as increased US reinforcements come on line, our contribution rises to nearly 50 percent of the Center Region total.

The annual budgetary costs of this contribution are substantial, but we accept them. What is troublesome, however, is that we suffer an additional penalty for stationing a part of our contribution on the front line of Europe. If we were to bring our deployed forces home, we would save around $400 million a year in budgetary costs and reduce our balance-of-payments deficit by over $1.5 billion.

Do not misunderstand me: The US regards its presence in Europe and its continuing support of NATO as an essential investment in deterrence and peace. We do not begrudge the price we pay for the contribution we make. But many of our people no longer see why they should suffer an additional burden for stationing a part of the US contribution in Europe. Even more urgently, our Congress has grown impatient with an incremental cost that has no apparent justification in the current interpretation of NATO strategy or the contributions of our Allies.

In these circumstances, NATO must focus on the added costs of our forces in Europe. All of us here need to explore -- and soon -- how, on a multilateral basis, we can share these costs. Otherwise the President's pledge will become increasingly difficult to fulfill.

I realize that we cannot resolve the burden-sharing issue here and now. But I do ask the Ministers to decide how they will reaffirm the principles of burden-sharing and consider how they will develop a multilateral program to compensate for the additional burden on the US occasioned by the stationing of our troops in Europe.

There is another aspect of burden-sharing that I should call to your attention. Spain, as you know, has been willing to make major base and supporting facilities available to the U.S. on a bilateral basis. This arrangement, which substantially benefits the Alliance as a whole, cannot be taken for granted. Indefinite access to Spain's military facilities is becoming increasingly doubtful. I therefore urge that NATO give serious consideration to finding ways to increase military planning and cooperation with Spain.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.