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Record of Decision

Revised January 16, 1968

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: NATO Strategy and Force Structure (U)

My continuing review of NATO strategy and forces has led me to the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. Our strategic nuclear forces are the main deterrent to Soviet nuclear attack on the U.S. and are a major deterrent to Soviet aggression in Europe.

2. Our theater nuclear capabilities add to the deterrence of aggression in Europe, including a nonnuclear attack, but our ability to control a limited nuclear war is uncertain.

3. NATO needs conventional forces: first, to help deter a deliberate nonnuclear attack by denying the Soviets any confidence of success unless they use a very large force that clearly threatens NATO's most vital interests; second, to deal successfully with a conflict arising through miscalculation; and third, to show determination by reinforcing in time of crisis. Our programmed forces are adequate for these purposes, but we will continue to urge improvements in the quality of our Allies' forces.

4. We plan to return to CONUS from Germany 33,281 men in two brigade forces and four squadrons, and to rotate them periodically back to Germany. This will not significantly affect our ability to meet our objectives in Europe.

5. We should continue to program large land reinforcements for NATO,

6. The tactical air wings committed to NATO in the Central Region and the attack carriers (CVAs) and Air Force squadrons deployed in the Southern Region are adequate to meet our objectives in these areas. Nevertheless, we will continue to make provision to use in Europe any additional forces which are available.

7. We should continue to provide equipment, ammunition, and supplies for NATO-oriented forces

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8. Many of our Allies' naval forces are excessive compared to their other defense needs;* we will continue to study NATO naval requirements and to persuade our Allies to make more efficient use of their resources.

I. NATO STRATEGY AND FORCE OBJECTIVES

The United States' overall military objective in NATO is to make any kind of aggression grossly unprofitable for the Warsaw Pact.

This year's tripartite talks by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the United Kingdom, and the U.S. concerning future NATO strategy and forces and their economic implications are an important event in our continuous review of how best to achieve this objective. New force planning studies have also been done by SACEUR and the NATO Defense Planning Committee. The latter has issued new political guidance which the NATO Military Committee used for revising the official NATO strategy (MC 14/3) for approval by the Defense Ministers in December. This new strategy should be closer to the U.S. view than formerly and will provide a better basis for NATO and U.S. force planning.

Our strategic nuclear, theater nuclear, and nonnuclear capabilities each play an important and interrelated role in this strategy.

A. Strategic Nuclear Capabilities

The Assured Destruction capability provided by our strategic missiles and bombers is the principal deterrent to Soviet nuclear attack on the U.S. Our unmistakable ability to destroy Soviet society even after a surprise attack is designed to deter nuclear attack over a wide range of situations, including not only a massive surprise attack, but also Soviet escalation to general nuclear war from local war. It is designed to deter the Soviets from a nuclear attack even in crisis situations when the Soviets might otherwise go to war.

U.S. strategic forces have an important relationship to NATO. They not only deter the Soviet Union from undertaking general nuclear war, but also help deter aggression limited to the European theater. In view of our visible political and military commitment to Europe, the Soviets can never be sure that we will not use some strategic nuclear forces in the event of a large-scale attack on Europe, even at the risk of a Soviet attack on CONUS. Our strategic forces would permit us to inflict great damage on Soviet military forces while we continued to hold Soviet cities hostage. Our strategic forces also enhance the deterrent value of our theater nuclear capabilities by making a theater nuclear response to a Soviet attack in Europe a more believable threat.

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* The Navy disagrees.

Although strategic nuclear capabilities strongly deter Soviet aggression, in any conflict involving strategic forces there is grave risk of escalation to attacks on cities. In a nuclear exchange of this kind, there seems to be no way to prevent unacceptable damage to the West. To minimize this possibility, we need theater nuclear and nonnuclear capabilities, both to increase deterrence to limited attacks and to provide options for dealing with conflicts in the theater if deterrence fails.

B. Theater Nuclear Capabilities

NATO's theater nuclear capabilities are provided by nuclear weapons and delivery systems ranging from 155mm howitzers to tactical aircraft and PERSHING missiles.

These weapons increase the deterrence of a Soviet nuclear attack on Europe.

They provide a strong deterrent to a deliberate nonnuclear attack. Should a nonnuclear conflict begin through miscalculation, they provide a strong incentive for ending it. In planning a large nonnuclear attack, the Soviets would know that their actions unmistakedly threatened NATO's most vital interests, and if NATO were to execute a limited nuclear response, the deterrent to a retaliatory strike on CONUS would still be very high. If NATO did respond to a large nonnuclear attack with theater nuclear weapons, it would have the advantage of a first strike against Soviet theater nuclear delivery systems. Moreover, Pact land forces, when concentrated for nonnuclear attack, would be excellent targets.

While the deterrent value of our theater nuclear capabilities is high, there are great uncertainties concerning the actual conduct and results of a limited nuclear war. The steady pressure to strike deeper targets, the rapidly increasing civilian and military casualties, and the vulnerability of logistics make it likely that the conflict would either end, de-escalate, or escalate quickly. These uncertainties caution against spending great sums to prepare for fighting a prolonged nuclear war in Europe. They are also an important reason for maintaining enough nonnuclear forces to avoid escalation except under extreme circumstances.

C. Nonnuclear Capabilities

For the reasons stated above, the U.S. has held since 1961 that the strategy of a nuclear response to nearly any form of Soviet attack was obsolete. The real problem has been to define precisely the objectives for nonnuclear capabilities in a way which is militarily and economically feasible, and politically acceptable.

During the course of NATO discussions and studies over the past year, specific objectives for NATO nonnuclear capabilities have emerged which appear to be mutually acceptable and feasible within the resources likely to be available. These objectives are the basis for the new political guidance agreed to by the NATO Ministers, and I believe they should be used in evaluating our nonnuclear capabilities. These objectives may be summarized as follows:

1. NATO nonnuclear capabilities should help deter a deliberate nonnuclear attack by denying the Warsaw Pact any confidence of success except by using a force so large that it clearly threatens NATO's most vital interests. In the absence of adequate NATO nonnuclear capabilities, the Soviets could be tempted to launch a deliberate, limited nonnuclear attack. At the most massive level of attack, however, both the credibility of the nuclear deterrent and the potential Soviet loss greatly increase. Such a deliberate nonnuclear attack would then be no more rational than a deliberate nuclear attack and we are willing to take the risk of having to use nuclear weapons if such a nonnuclear attack occurred. In fact, the military situation in Europe has been quite stable for at least five years, largely because both sides realize that a state of mutual deterrence exists.

2. NATO should have the capability to deal successfully with a conflict arising out of some unexpected event or miscalculation of intentions during a period of tension or political crisis. NATO's goal in any such conflict would be to end it rapidly without giving up territory. The same dangers which deter each side from deliberate attack in peacetime would operate even more strongly to force rapid termination in wartime. For this reason, where there is a choice, capabilities which contribute immediately to meeting the adversary's attack -- such as close air support and combat troops -- are far more valuable than those which would make their main contribution later in the war, such as interdiction and sustaining logistics support.

Moreover, since a war in Europe is likely only in the event of a change in a fundamentally stable situation, this kind of conflict is very likely to be preceded by a period of tension or crisis. This political warning of possible impending conflict is likely to be measured in weeks or months rather than days. Thus, while we must maintain some forces in place to deal with the Pact's immediately available forces, NATO's mobilization and reinforcement capabilities are also important.

3. NATO should have the ability to build up its forces rapidly and substantially in a crisis. We and the Warsaw Pact might again become locked in a test of wills such as the 1961 Berlin crisis. Despite the adequacy of the deterrent, the risk of war would increase in such a crisis because of the increased incentives for each side to test the intentions and will of the other and the consequent risk of miscalculation. In such a situation, NATO should be able to reinforce, both as a show of determination and to prevent the Pact from substantially changing the normal balance of forces.

These objectives stop short of providing for a capability to deal successfully with any kind of nonnuclear attack without using nuclear weapons ourselves. Thus, there are some situations (which are highly unlikely) where if deterrence failed we would have to initiate use of nuclear weapons. After years of effort, this is the most ambitious strategy we have been able to convince our Allies to accept.

Therefore, we would have to pay all the additional large cost of a full-scale nonnuclear option ourselves, even if it were feasible for the U.S. to fill the gap. Nevertheless, we are not opposed in principle to a more ambitious nonnuclear strategy, and if our Allies' attitudes and the international political situation were to change, we would be willing to revise these objectives.

II. THE BALANCE OF NATO AND WARSAW PACT CAPABILITIES

My Memorandums on Strategic Offensive and Defensive Forces and Theater Nuclear Forces describe in detail NATO and Warsaw Pact nuclear capabilities and the requirements to meet our objectives for strategic and theater nuclear forces. This memorandum analyzes NATO's nonnuclear capabilities.

The main problems in evaluating NATO's capabilities relative to the Pact arise from differences in the mix, structure, and location of forces. As shown below, NATO commits more men and money to general purpose forces than the Pact, particularly to tactical air forces.

A. Forces Deployed in Europe

As shown in the table on the next page, NATO's deployed land and air forces are roughly the same size as the Pact's in all regions except Northern Norway. There are, however, important differences in composition, structure, and quality.

In the Central Region, these differences in land forces probably do not change the relative capability of each side from that indicated by the number of combat troops. NATO's forces have a slightly higher ratio of support to combat troops, primarily because the U.S. land forces' ratio is nearly double that of any other force in Europe. NATO land forces have an advantage in training during part of the year because the Pact sends recruits straight to M-Day units and has a large proportion of draftees. Until these draftees are trained, large parts of the Pact forces would be considered unusable in combat by U.S. standards.

On the other hand, because of greater emphasis on tank units relative to mechanized infantry, the Pact has nearly double NATO's proportion of tanks to combat troops. Although most NATO tanks are slightly better than most Pact tanks in a duel, this does not offset the numerical inferiority. Instead, the NATO armies have generally organized themselves with relatively more infantry, counting on anti-tank weapons, mines, and tactical air to stop the Pact's tanks. In the U.S. Army in Europe, for example, 36% of the maneuver battalions are tank battalions, compared to 56% in the Soviet forces in East Germany. This difference is largely a matter of choice and could be changed if we felt it were desirable to do so.* It is not clear how much, if anything, the Pact gains from its greater proportion of tanks, and this is a major uncertainty.

We know less about the relative capabilities of land forces on the flanks. In general, the forces of both sides (except the Soviet forces) are poorly trained and equipped compared to those in the Center. Greek and Turkish land forces are now receiving through the Military Assistance Program a large quantity of modern land armaments, which should in the near future make them at least as well-equipped as non-Soviet Pact forces.

There are also uncertainties regarding the political reliability of various allies both in NATO and in the Warsaw Pact. France remains a NATO ally, but has withdrawn from the integrated command structure.

NATO has a major tactical air advantage over the Pact. Pact aircraft are mostly interceptors with short range, low payload, and limited loiter capability. Very low flying-hour programs by U.S. standards indicate low

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* In the case of some allied forces, the low tank ratio reflects not choice, but inadequate funding. The remedy for this is more equipment, not more forces.

pilot training in peacetime and low sortie rates in wartime. In contrast, NATO aircraft are mostly multi-purpose, with adequate range, payload, and loiter time for nonnuclear operations, and air-to-air capability equal or superior to the Pact's. Although our Allies' offensive air forces are mainly oriented toward nuclear operations, they do have enough nonnuclear ordnance to operate for a limited time, and on the average their pilots are better trained than the Pact's. Furthermore, with the trend in NATO toward nonnuclear missions for aircraft, our Allies will probably buy more modern nonnuclear ordnance and improve their ability to conduct nonnuclear operations.

B. Reinforcement and Mobilization

NATO and Warsaw Pact ability to reinforce depends not only on transportation time, which can be easily calculated, but also, for example, on time required for mobilizing fillers, loading equipment, marrying up troops with equipment in the forward area, and assembling and organizing in the battle area. These times in turn depend on the peacetime readiness of the units, which vary from fully-manned active units to nearly unmanned

We estimate deployment times for U.S. forces conservatively, reflecting our intimate knowledge of the problems involved in large scale deployments; by contrast, intelligence estimates of deployment time for Warsaw Pact forces are based mainly on transportation time.

NATO's mobilization capability on the flanks is better than in the Center Region, primarily because the flank countries have large numbers of reserve units. After full mobilization, NATO forces would match or exceed in size the Pact's in all regions, though the Pact would have qualitative advantages, especially in Norway.

Our Allies' forces in all regions could generally be improved by more efficient use of resources. Small expenditures to increase the training and equipment of reserves, to balance stocks of ammunition and supplies, and to fill out existing division forces could increase capability substantially. The Germans, for example, should increase the mechanization of their divisions, add artillery, and provide more racks and modern ordnance for their aircraft. Reductions in less essential areas, such as certain naval forces, would permit most of these improvements within planned total budget levels. Tripartite talks and NATO studies have raised these issues, and we will continue to urge our Allies to improve their forces along these lines.

C. Capability to Meet Strategic Objectives

The above survey of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces shows, in my view, that NATO has the ability to meet the three objectives for nonnuclear capabilities in Europe discussed above.*

With regard to deterrence of a deliberate nonnuclear attack, it is clear that in every region of NATO except North Norway, the Soviets would have to launch a huge attack involving large reinforcements from the USSR to have confidence of success at a nonnuclear level. As discussed above, such an attack is powerfully deterred by our theater nuclear forces.

and probably not even if the conflict were to continue beyond the initial clash. Because of the great danger of escalation, the mutual pressures to end such a conflict would be great. Furthermore, NATO's ability to reinforce enables it to maintain a NATO/Pact force ratio during a buildup which is not very different from that in peacetime. For these reasons, I believe our planned forces provide reasonable confidence of meeting this contingency.

III. THE FUTURE U.S. PROGRAM FOR NATO

A. Forces Deployed in Europe

After extensive discussions with our Allies, we have decided to return to CONUS two brigades of the 24th Infantry Division and four squadrons with 96 aircraft from Germany (a total of 33,281 military personnel) and to rotate them periodically to their forward locations. This will reduce our foreign exchange expenditures in Europe and provide an opportunity to exercise our rapid deployment capability. In addition, during the past year we have completed relocation from France. This move cuts U.S. personnel in Europe by 18,000 (plus 21,000 dependents), and our employment of foreign nationals by 11,000. These two actions will save over $170 million per year in gold flow.

I do not believe these changes will significantly affect NATO's ability to meet its military objectives. The most likely conflict in NATO is one beginning through miscalculation in a time of political crisis. In this case, we would be able to return our forces to Europe during the crisis. In the event of a deliberate nonnuclear attack, the size of the required Soviet force and the risks they would run are already so great that any change in the Soviet calculation of odds resulting from these redeployments is insignificant.

Even after these actions, the U.S. still has double the ratio of support of any other army in Europe (even excluding the 60,000 civilians we employ in Germany). With the excellent transportation capacity in the Benelux, the improved capability of the German territorial forces to perform such wartime tasks as rear area security and repair of war damage, and our improved ability to deploy troops back to Europe, we may be able to effect further consolidations of our logistics system. I intend to continue to review this subject carefully over the coming year.

B. Land Reinforcement for NATO

As shown in the table on page 9 we normally have large active and reserve land forces in CONUS which can be used to reinforce Europe, including two Marine Division/Wing teams committed to NATO. Most of these divisions are required for and can be used in other areas. (Some are in Vietnam now.)

Thus, there is little extra cost in planning to use them in Europe if necessary.

All of these division forces are armored or mechanized and are provided logistics based on NATO employment.* These forces, when taken together with allied force expansion capabilities, would permit NATO to build up a land force to attain a nearly equal balance of NATO and Pact forces in all regions.

C. Tactical Air Reinforcements for NATO

The U.S. maintains large tactical air forces capable of reinforcing NATO,

Many of these reinforcing aircraft are needed outside Europe. The additional cost of providing bases and stocks for their possible use in Europe is small and we should continue to do so. We are now establishing additional bases in the United Kingdom and the FRG to accommodate aircraft that were to be based in France. Our base structure will then permit rapid

*One division force is now provided logistics for indefinite combat to improve multi-mission capability, but I intend to review this decision next year.

deployment of about Air Force augmentation fighter/attack/reconnaissance aircraft. In evaluating our world-wide force structure, however, it is important to estimate the minimum number of aircraft that would be required to achieve our objectives in Europe.

I believe that in the Center Region, the fighter/attack wings we have committed to NATO are adequate to meet our strategic objectives. On the Southern Flank, the aircraft carrier wings aircraft and Air Force squadrons normally deployed there should be adequate. For Norway, some additional U.S. reinforcements may well be appropriate, but no detailed analysis is yet available on which to base an estimate. I believe that this minimum force will provide NATO with substantially more air capability than the Pact,* so the case for more U.S. tactical air forces rests mainly on the ability of air forces to substitute for U.S. land forces. This case has not yet been made. Therefore, until we have much better estimates of how an air advantage affects land force requirements in Europe, I believe we must plan our land forces against the Soviet land threat, and treat our air advantage as a safety factor. My reasons for these conclusions are summarized below.

We should buy tactical air forces mainly for their contribution in nonnuclear war. Their vulnerability to nuclear attack sharply limits their effectiveness in nuclear war. In the nonnuclear role, tactical air and air defense forces contribute to our overall objectives in two ways: first, they reduce damage by Pact air forces to NATO land forces and logistics systems; and second, they permit NATO to inflict damage on Pact land forces and logistics systems. There is no need to destroy the Pact air forces themselves except to the extent that doing so would contribute to these objectives.

The NATO air forces, especially the U.S. forces, are well-suited for these objectives. The Pact air forces are not, since they are largely designed to shoot down nuclear bombers. The U.S. and some allied air forces have much bigger payloads; more support to sustain sortie rates; and more modern, effectiv and costly nonnuclear munitions. Also, our pilots are better trained and hence more accurate. When all these factors are combined, it is not surprising that our overall target destruction capability turns out to be far greater than the Pact's.

Moreover, although we estimate that the Pact's offensive capability is low, both absolutely and relative to our own, we still plan massive countermeasures to reduce it further, as a hedge against an underestimate. These countermeasures include offensive air strikes against Pact airfields; F-4E interceptors; NIKE, HAWK, CHAPARRAL, and REDEYE surface-to-air missiles; VULCAN anti-aircraft guns; and vehicle-mounted machine guns.

We estimate that our countermeasures would reduce the Pact's gross offensive capability immediately This reduction results from the Pact's need to use part of its force defensively to protect against NATO aircraft, from reduced sortie rates because of the need to disperse and protect their aircraft from NATO airfield strikes, and from NATO defensive intercept screens.

Just the U.S. defensive systems in Europe (F-4E interceptors, SAMs, and guns) will cost us $1.5 to $2.0 billion over the next five years. As discussed above, this provides a hedge even if our estimates of Pact capability are too low. Furthermore, these defensive systems will provide a defense for special high value targets like our airfields and Army depots, should the Pact attempt to concentrate its tactical effort on them or use long-range bombers against them.*

As for NATO's offensive air requirements, I indicated above that the gross capability of the NATO force is much greater than the Pact's. I further believe NATO could convert this to an even bigger advantage in the net support of the land forces, provided that NATO does not attempt a massive and costly deep interdiction campaign.

The Pact's air-to-air defensive capability in the front lines is limited because their planes cannot loiter long enough to have a high chance of intercepting NATO planes doing close support. By contrast, Pact defensive capabilities increase sharply thirty to fifty miles back from the front lines. At this depth their interceptors have time to "scramble" on alert. Their surface-to-air missiles would require us to fly very low, sharply reducing the payload of penetrating aircraft. And the attrition from anti-aircraft artillery would increase because of the higher number and heavier caliber of weapons encountered.

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* As I have recommended in prior years, aircraft shelters are an essential component of this defense. Without them, our aircraft will be so easy to kill that the Pact force, while far weaker than the NATO force, could destroy hundreds of airplanes in the first few days of a war as the Israelis did to the Arabs. Aircraft shelters are also an inexpensive item. For example, we can shelter our whole force in Germany for about $20 million.

capability. Even if it could be reduced by 90% (the maximum feasible reduction), the remaining capacity would be enough to reinforce and resupply an eighty-division Pact force. Furthermore, an effort of this type would require at least hundreds, and in my view probably thousands, of aircraft. Moreover, whatever supply limitations and disruptions were caused would not immediately affect the Pact's forward land forces, since they would at first be using stocks already in the forward area. A smaller interdiction campaign would have even less identifiable effects. For these reasons, I do not share the Air Force view that we should maintain tactical air forces for conducting a massive deep interdiction campaign in Central Europe. Rather, we need to do enough interdiction and airfield attacks to force the Pact: (1) to devote a major effort to air defense; (2) to disperse its aircraft and move them to the rear; and (3) to have their land forces take precautionary measures.

Thus, I believe that about of the NATO air forces would remain after providing for defensive needs and limited interdiction, and most of these could be used to attack the Warsaw Pact ground forces in the forward areas.

The net result is that we can be confident that the NATO land forces will have much more effective air support than the Pact land forces. We do not have any confident estimates of how much this air advantage improves our land capability. Very rough comparisons of the damage capability of air forces with historical casualty rates required to stop an attacking division suggest that air forces may be a relatively expensive way of defending against Soviet divisions in Europe (at least with current aircraft types). Therefore, we cannot count on needing any fewer land forces if we add more air forces. Instead we must plan our land forces to meet the land threat, and treat the air advantage as a bonus safety factor. Under these conditions, I see no reason to increase our air advantage still more by providing for a bigger force than that recommended above.

In the Southeast Flank, the offensive air threat is even more limited than in the Center Region. It consists of Bulgarian and Rumanian tactical aircraft, potentially augmented by about Soviet tactical aircraft, plus naval bombers from the Black Sea Fleet. NATO has available over aircraft, including U.S. aircraft from the Sixth Fleet and from U.S. Air Force rotational squadrons. This would provide roughly the same ratio of NATO to Pact capability as in the Central Region, which we have already shown is adequate.

D. Naval Forces

I stated last year my belief that our Allies' naval forces programmed for the Baltic, Black, and Mediterranean Seas were excessive compared with their need for better land forces. Germany alone, for example, could save $700 to $900 million over the next five years by cutting plans for naval forces Yet she claims that budget limits may cause reductions n her land forces. Although political considerations

limit our ability to influence our Allies' allocation of funds, I noted that SACEUR's study of NATO Defense in 1972 contained the statement: "In this study, the German naval resources planned for 1972 are considered to be excessive to requirements and reductions have therefore been made to provide increased capability for land and air forces." We will continue to encourage our Allies to use their resources more efficiently.

IV. U.S. FORCE COMMITMENTS TO NATO

This year, after a detailed review, the U.S. made what I believe is a realistic and appropriate commitment of forces to NATO. (Commitment of forces is not required by the North Atlantic Treaty, but was provided for by subsequent agreement.) Our U.S. commitments indicate two degrees of availability to the NATO Commanders.* Assigned forces are under the operational command or control of NATO Commanders during peacetime. Forces Earmarked for Assignment come under NATO Commanders' operational command or control at a time specified by each country. These times usually relate to a particular state or stage of the NATO Alert System. Generally, NATO (and U.S.) land and air forces in Europe are earmarked for assignment at M-Day, which is normally assumed to be the time at which a nation agrees to a declaration of NATO Reinforced Alert. Naval forces are committed by category, depending on how long it is after Reinforced Alert before thev are available to the NATO Commander: Category A, within 48 hours; Category B, within thirty days; Category C, longer than thirty days. Related to the time of assignment is the question of availability; our committed Marine Corps forces and our in-place and dual-based Army and Air Force forces (except for a few assigned forces) are earmarked for assignment at M-Day, although some are not available to the NATO Commanders at M-Day. Army M-Day Strategic Reserve forces are normally earmarked for assignment by M+30 days; availability depends upon arrival date in the theater.

This year we committed the following major forces for 1968.

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*Definitions are those found in MC 57/2. It is a frequent practice, although imprecise usage, to refer to M-Day "Earmarked" forces in Europe as being assigned.