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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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13 November 1964

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Secretary McNamara's Meeting with FRG MOD von Hassel,
12-13 November, Doctrine and Strategy

Participants:

German Side

Minister of Defense Kai-Uwe von Hassel
General Inspector of the Armed Forces, General Heinz Trettner
Permanent deputy to the State Secretary of Defense, Dr. Werner Knieper
Chief, German Delegation to Nato Military Committee, Maj. Gen. Gerhard Wessel
FRG Military Attache, Brig. Gen. Heinz Huekelheim
Chief Operations Division, Armed Forces Staff, Brig. Gen. Freytag von
Loringhoven
FRG Military Attache Designate Brig. Gen. Werner Boie
Military Assistant to Defense Minister Captain Rolf Thomsen
Press Officer Colonel Hasso Viebig
Staff Assistant to General Trettner, Lt. Col. Fritz Birnstiel
Operations Staff Assistant, Lt. Col. Martin Steiff
FRG Foreign Office Representative Mr. Wolfgang Behrends
Interpreter, Mr. Ferdi Schneider

United States Side

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara
Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle Wheeler
Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) Mr. John T. McNaughton
State Representative Mr. David Popper
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Policy Plans and North Atlantic
Affairs Henry S. Rowen
Chief MAAG Germany, Maj. General Victor R. Haugen
Deputy ACSFOR Maj. General Ralph Haines
OASD Comptroller Representative Colonel Frank Camm (Part-time participant)
Assistant for Central Europe Colonel Kurt G. Radtke (Recorder)

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Note: Secretary McNamara, Minister von Hassel, Mr. Vance and
General Trettner met privately in Secretary McNamara's office from
0915 until 1000.

Time: 1000 - 1230, 12 November 1964; 0900 - 0915, 13 November

Place: Secretary McNamara's Dining Room, 3E 912, The Pentagon

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Introduction

Secretary McNamara welcomed the delegation, commented that the semi-annual US/FRG Defense discussions had been extremely valuable and stated he expected comparable results from the current discussion. He asked Gen. Wheeler to summarize the discussions held with Gen. Trettner.

1. Forward Strategy

Gen. Wheeler stated that the discussions with Gen. Trettner and the German briefing on the forward defense were most interesting and the clearest explanation of German views that he had heard. The discussions had revealed many areas of common agreement and other areas which required further study. He suggested that Gen. Freytag von Loringhoven present the same briefing he had given to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a common basis for comment.

2. German Presentation, "Strategy-Forward Defense of NATO"

The FRG considers NATO to be the guarantor of its national security and the security of its allies. The loss of essential FRG territory and population would lead to the disruption of law and order and the breakdown of the entire economic structure within the Federal Republic. The forward defense is essential to the national interest of Germany.

3. Flexible Response

The graduated deterrence and the flexible response resulting therefrom are the main pillars of a strategic concept for the entire NATO area. The threat of a massive retaliation by means of the automatic employment of nuclear weapons in any aggression is no longer credible.

The Secretary said the US fully agrees that the West cannot make a credible deterrent out of an incredible action, i.e., the inevitable destruction of Central Europe, the US and the Soviet Union. Massive retaliation is not a credible response to a small enemy action in Central Europe.

Gen. Wheeler commented that he and Gen. Trettner were in full agreement on this point.

The Secretary said the political and strategic directives of NATO must be changed. However, other national views are not consistent with those of the US and FRG. Min. von Hassel agreed that the political directive must be changed. The Secretary added that timing of the change presented a problem.

Gen. Wheeler commented that Paragraph 19 of MC 14/2 requires change; however this change did not have to be made in December. It was his view that NATO was already moving toward change and the timing of this move was most important.

Continuing, Gen. von Freytag explained that he was speaking of aggressions other than a nuclear surprise attack or an unmistakable major conventional attack. As improbable as these types of aggression are, the requirement to counter them with massive nuclear retaliation remains unchanged.

4. FRG Categories of Nuclear Weapons

Gen. von Freytag described the following FRG categories for atomic weapons:

- Air defense and denial weapons (NIKE HERCULES, ADM and ASW)
- Battlefield weapons (175 mm gun, 8-in. gun, HONEST JOHN)
- Tactical and Strategic weapons (strike aircraft, SERGEANT, PERSHING, POLARIS, MINUTEMAN and B-52s)

Denial and battlefield weapons must be organic to the major formations of the land forces. Nuclear air defense weapons, tactical and strategic nuclear weapons systems, require a higher level of command and control.

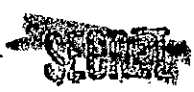
The Soviets enjoy superiority in ground divisions. The availability of ADMs gives the West a means to stop ground divisions; however, the Soviets have superiority in supporting missiles.

The Secretary asked whether this superiority referred to missiles of the MRBM type. The General stated he referred to battlefield missiles comparable to the HONEST JOHN and larger. The Secretary stated that he questioned the comparison of division capabilities and particularly the Soviet superiority in battlefield missiles.

Continuing the briefing General von Freytag stated the West has strategic nuclear superiority; however, the Germans believe there is a requirement for the West to have MRBMs, which is the reason that the FRG supports the MLF.

5. Tailored Flexible Response

Von Freytag next explained that the flexible response must be tailored to the requirements prevailing within the areas of conflict. The NATO response to aggression in the Mediterranean area or the Atlantic region would differ from the response in Central Europe. Central Europe offers limited strategic freedom of action because the entire territory of the FRG forms the combat zone and the bulk of the population of Western Europe as well as its economic capability lie in a zone having a width of about 625 miles. Densely populated areas, major industrial centers and the high population density in general will restrict the operational freedom of action of the NATO forces in war.



6. First Phase

In the event of aggression in the North German area, conventional forces of the Army and the Air Force would immediately engage the enemy in the delaying zone. ADMs must be positioned in peacetime along the forward edge of the battle area and must be fired without delay as soon as the enemy crosses the line of demarcation.

The Secretary asked whether the ADMs were now in place. Gen. Wheeler responded some, but not all, were available, the principal problem being that the non-American military forces in Europe are not adequately trained in their use. There are additional problems involving the large numbers of ADMs required, shortages of engineer troops and ADMs must be drawn from special ammunition storage sites.

7. ADM Study

Secretary McNamara inquired whether it would not be profitable to have a US/FRG study on ADMs to seek solutions to such questions as the number required, where they should be emplaced, security safeguards and under what circumstances they would be fired. The Minister stated he would be anxious to have such a study. Gen. Trettner commented that the small number of ADMs available requires that they must be reserved for use at the point of the greatest threat. Consequently, ADMs could not be provided to all divisions.

Secretary McNamara suggested the study be based on x number available or 2x or 3x. Gen. Trettner added that when he was a corps commander in the German Army he had 7 ADMs allocated to his corps sector. The Minister requested the study begin soon. Secretary McNamara suggested that Gen. Wheeler and Gen. Trettner arrange the details.

Continuing with the briefing, Gen. von Freytag pointed out that if the early firing of ADMs did not force the aggressor to cease his offensive operations the West would have to continue the conventional battle in the defense area. In view of the numerical superiority of aggressor forces, the West must expect heavy losses.

8. Second Stage

If the defending forces are in danger of destruction, nuclear battlefield weapons must be selectively employed immediately. If selected employment of nuclear weapons does not stop the aggression, it will no longer be possible to avoid escalation.

The Secretary asked how the Soviets would respond to the employment of tactical nuclear weapons. Gen. Trettner stated that he believed the Soviets would have decided in advance whether or not to risk general war. The German concept envisaged employment of nuclear weapons only

in West Germany and not on the Soviet line of communications. Consequently, the use of battlefield nuclear weapons at this stage of the battle would give the Soviets stern warning.

The Secretary inquired whether the Germans thought the Soviets would employ tactical nuclear weapons only in the battlefield area.

The Defense Minister summarized the German concept, stating that in the delaying zone the Germans would use only ADMs. The FRG believes this will not lead to escalation because these would be employed on West German soil. This would also be a clear demonstration to the aggressor that continuation of the attack would result in a higher level of response. Continuing, he pointed out that the employment of battlefield weapons by NATO in the battle zone was again on German soil. If this did not convince the Soviets, then general war would result.

General Wheeler said he understood that the first stage of the Phase I battle would continue conventionally supported by selective use of ADMs as long as the NATO forces could contain the threat. He also understood that the second stage would commence should the defense stand in danger of being disrupted at the end of the first stage or should areas of vital interest be exposed to imminent seizure by the aggressor. General Wheeler also understood that in the second stage, there would be selective use of nuclear battlefield weapons.

9. Strategic Main Effort

General von Freytag then stated that the strategical main effort must be undertaken where the threat is most severe and where the value of NATO resources and capabilities requires an all-out defense effort. In commenting on this principle, he added that the NATO area is an indivisible whole; however, the main effort can only be Central Europe, which is the area which faces the most severe threat. SACEUR must have some strategic weapons available in order to carry out his mission. This would have to include the MIF.

10. Threat to Entire Alliance

Another German principle states aggression threatens the Alliance in its entirety. The NATO political authorities may charge the military commanders with only one mission, i.e., to preserve the integrity of the NATO area in peace and in war. Any enemy aggression will be cause to invoke the NATO Treaty pursuant to its Article 5.

11. Political and Military Countermeasures

The next German principle requires resolute and adequate political and military countermeasures launched at the very outset of an aggression to insure the integrity of the NATO territory. In commenting on this principle, von Freytag pointed out that the graduated deterrent and flexible response will be credible and effective only if countermeasures against an attack are taken immediately and with all firmness. The basic criterion is the timing of the employment of nuclear weapons. Suitable plans and procedures for the release of nuclear weapons must

be prepared in peacetime to include the immediate employment of nuclear defensive and denial weapons as well as the early selective release of nuclear battlefield weapons. The Federal Republic accepts the principle that the President of the US shall retain the responsibility for the political release of nuclear weapons. However, the NATO member countries must become partners to a reliable and effective political release procedure on the basis of the Athens guidelines.

12. Adequate Balanced Forces

The next German principle states that adequate and balanced forces with high operational capability are the precondition for a strategy effective in any contingency. Only existing NATO assigned forces meet this criterion. For the purpose of forward defense the forces must be assigned, deployed at a high operational readiness, equipped with nuclear and conventional weapons and possess a strong second-strike capability.

13. Distinction between Nuclear Weapons

In the German view there is no distinction between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. However there is a dividing line between battlefield and tactical nuclear weapons. Through the employment of ADMs, nuclear air defense weapons at an early stage and battlefield weapons with the utmost selectivity, the aggressor may for the last time be given a definite and conclusive warning which would not necessarily lead to escalation.

14. Employment of Tactical Aircraft

The Secretary asked how the Germans would employ their F104G aircraft in that phase of the battle during which ADMs are employed. Gen. Trettner said with conventional armament. The Secretary commented that this would require a drastic change in the employment of NATO tactical aircraft. Gen. Trettner elaborated, stating that perhaps half of the NATO tactical aircraft should be based far to the rear, perhaps in Spain or the UK, in order that their atomic strike capability might be maintained. The remainder, perhaps one-half, would be equipped to employ conventional weapons.

Secretary McNamara replied that if half of NATO's tactical aircraft were not used in the first phase the aircraft faced possible destruction. Moreover, all aircraft should be employed to stop the aggression in the first phase. The Soviets would be attempting to destroy air bases in the West and NATO forces would be doing the same.

15. Aircraft Study

The Secretary then asked if it might not be useful to conduct a US/FRG study on the role of tactical aircraft. He felt that the Chief of Staff of the US Air Force would not agree to holding out about half of the tactical aircraft at bases in Spain or England. Mr. Vance stated he understood that in the German concept, NATO aircraft would not be used outside of the delaying zone or the battle zone unless the Soviets attacked Western air bases. Gen. Trettner replied in the affirmative except that reconnaissance aircraft would operate beyond this zone.

The Secretary then pointed out that SACEUR's tactical air capability is greater than the USSR's. He believed SACEUR would want to use this capability without danger of nuclear escalation. The Soviets would try to destroy the Western air bases; hence the West should destroy the bases in the satellites and the Soviet Union. Tactical aircraft were also useful to prevent the buildup of additional ground forces.

Gen. Trettner said he did not agree. The risk would be too great if the Russians did the same. Although conventional bombs only were used, German towns and cities would nevertheless be destroyed. The Secretary commented that he understood it was the FRG objective to limit the war geographically even with respect to conventional operations.

Min. von Hassel stated he was in full agreement with a joint US/FRG Air Force study. The study should examine the role of NATO tactical aircraft in the event the Russians initiated conventional bombing of air fields in West Germany, the Low Countries and France. He agreed with Gen. Trettner's statement that it was the FRG objective to limit the war to conventional weapons and to the 30-40 kilometer battle zone along the Iron Curtain. However, if the Russians initiated indiscriminate bombing, the FRG would face a different situation.

The Secretary said he was agreeable to a special study on the conventional role of aircraft. Gen. Trettner commented that he believed the German Air Force staff felt it was less able to fight a conventional war than a nuclear war. Secretary McNamara added that if the West has tactical air superiority, it should win the war. Gen. Trettner responded that the German Air Force says it cannot fight without air superiority; however, attacking enemy bases to gain air superiority would result in retaliation and probable escalation into a nuclear war.

The Secretary replied that SACEUR's aircraft had only a limited capability in a general nuclear war. "General nuclear war" meant that SAC and the MIF would already have been employed. The Secretary pointed out that US studies show that tactical aircraft can do only 1% damage to Soviet missiles, 28% damage to air fields and 14% damage to other targets.