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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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PLACE: Ministry of Defense, Bonn  
TIME: July 31, 1963, 3:15 P.M.  
SUBJECT: Secretary McNamara's Meeting with Defense Minister von Hassel on Strategic Subjects

PARTICIPANTS:

United States

Ambassador George C. McGhee  
Secretary Robert S. McNamara  
General Maxwell D. Taylor  
Mr. Paul H. Nitze  
Mr. Arthur Sylvester  
Maj Gen Victor R. Haugen  
Colonel Ernest C. Hardin  
Colonel Elmer H. Almquist  
Mr. Thomas Dunnigan

Federal Republic of Germany

Minister Kai-Uwe von Hassel  
Secretary Karl Carstens  
General Friedrich Foertsch  
Mr. Karl Gumbel  
Vice Admiral Karl A. Zenker  
Lt Gen Werner Panitzki  
Maj Gen Gustav Kuntzen  
Brig Gen Johannes Mueller  
Brig Gen Hellmut Bertram  
Brig Gen Ernst Ferber  
Brig Gen Heinz Huekelheim  
Capt Rolf Steinhaus (Recorder)  
Lt Col Hasso Viebig (Press)

Minister von Hassel welcomed Secretary McNamara, General Taylor and Ambassador McGhee, and their colleagues, and said that he was glad that the Chancellor would be meeting with the Secretary. He warned that the Chancellor would ask some "tricky" questions.

Mr. McNamara replied that the American group was pleased to be here. This was a particularly timely meeting coming as it did after the initialing of the test ban agreement. In that connection, he said he believed the agreement may be misinterpreted. It is not a disarmament agreement and it is not a cause for a reduction of the military strength of the west. It was fortunate to have a chance now to exchange views on future developments.

Mr. McNamara and Minister von Hassel agreed that it was "nonsense" to think that one could reduce military strength because of the test ban. It should have no effect on NATO. Mr. McNamara summed up this part of the discussion by saying that the moral of the test ban agreement is that one can only make progress with the Soviets when dealing from military power. Minister von Hassel agreed.

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1. Strategy and Forces

At Minister von Hassel's request, briefings on these subjects were given by General Ferber (J-2 of the Bundeswehr) and General Bertram (J-3 of the Bundeswehr). Copies of their briefings are attached. (Inclosures 1 and 2)

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Attached 11 12

In his briefing, General Ferber made the following principal points. Nuclear weapons will play a decisive role in any future war. Three factors seem to stand out at present. (1) The Soviets are striving for a good second strike capability. (2) The Soviets have a great MRBM capability in Europe. (3) The Soviets are continuing to maintain large conventional forces.

In connection with the latter point, the Soviets will probably have to reduce their commitments in other areas. It appears that the Soviet tactical Air Forces in Europe are somewhat inferior to the NATO tactical Air Forces.

In response to a question from Mr. McNamara, General Ferber said that the Soviets have an estimated 1,000 planes ready for conventional use. The Germans assume that the Soviets do not want to trigger a general nuclear war, but the Germans realize that accidents can happen. In the German view, it was "extremely unlikely" that the Soviets would go to general war if tactical nuclear weapons were used by the NATO powers. There might well be a nuclear response by the Soviets in the same measure, with the inherent danger of escalation. It was also the German view that the use of tactical nuclear weapons by the NATO forces would force the Soviets to the realization that they have misjudged the situation and would cause them to stop their aggression.

In his briefing, General Bertram said that the new emergency defense plan (EDP) will permit 90 to 95% of the Federal Republic to be defended, in contrast to the 50% of the previous plan. Defense against a major conventional aggression will quickly require the use of nuclear weapons. A prolonged war is not tenable for Central Europe. There must be a quick political decision on the use of nuclear weapons after the opening of any aggression. In the case of a limited aggression, there must be selective use of battlefield nuclear weapons. In the case of a major aggression one might have to proceed from battlefield nuclear weapons to tactical nuclear weapons to strategic nuclear weapons. The defense of Western Europe requires forces in being, mobility, fire power, the ability to react promptly, survivability and a stock level of 30 SHAPE days. The land forces should have battlefield nuclear weapons with a maximum range of 40 kilometers. There must be no prolonged war, and every attempt must be made to get a quick decision. The force in being and the potential force may be decisive at the outset.

At the invitation of Secretary McNamara, General Taylor commented that he found little in the overall context of the two presentations which did not accord with the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He personally did not agree with those who said that it was impossible for NATO to be equal to the Soviets in conventional forces; he recalled clearly the capability of the Western European countries to raise forces in the past. He realized, however, that it was not realistic at present to expect much larger conventional force contributions.

General Taylor continued: "We will defend Western Europe as far forward as necessary, as long as necessary, and with the weapons required." But what does this mean? It requires strength up forward to check minor aggressions, and probably 40 to 50 ready divisions altogether. General Taylor agreed that small battlefield nuclear weapons have great value but warned that one should not embark lightly on the use of these weapons. He said that he knew of no present counter to the Soviet MRBM's. The West must be able to react equally with the enemy in battlefield nuclear weapons. Then one comes to the interdiction type (tactical nuclear) weapons for use behind the battlefield. Beyond that there is the use of the larger weapons. Even if both sides rule out strategic nuclear war, which General Taylor believes to be the case, there is still an attenuating effect on the scale of operations with other weapon systems. It is an interlocking effect. If the West is weakest at the lowest level (conventional forces), then it is all the more important that it match or surpass the Soviets at the next higher level (battlefield nuclear weapons).

General Taylor said that the U.S. understood the vital character of the forward strategy concept to Germany. He believes it should be the strategy of NATO, but it does require ready forces. What the Germans had said today seemed to imply a maximum dependence on reserve forces. This could be a critical weakness of the forward strategy.

Minister von Hassel thanked General Taylor for his agreement to the forward strategy and the general German strategic concept. He said it was not the German view that one can replace conventional forces by nuclear weapons. The Germans want balanced forces equipped for both types of warfare. He explained that the Germans favor 30 divisions in the front lines in Europe, backed up by 10 reserve units. It was, however, not possible for the Federal Republic to raise more forces than the figure now set, for personnel, financial, real estate and other reasons. Minister von Hassel said any weakening of the present economic situation would be rapidly exploited by the estimated 16,000 Soviet agents in the Federal Republic. The Germans wanted to fulfill their NATO commitments which they have always taken seriously. He noted that when the other NATO partners do not fulfill their commitments, the burden seems to fall on the Federal Republic, and added that German influence is not sufficient to get these countries to raise their force commitments. They were very glad to have brought the French to the acceptance of the forward strategy concept, although he added that the number of divisions the French were planning to place in the forward area was not sufficient.

Mr. McNamara asked whether the Germans suggested a reduction of the logistical standard from 90 to 30 days (90 is the SHAPE requirement).

General Foertsch replied that 30 SHAPE days were the equivalent to 63 to 65 national German days. He noted there were also differences with national U.S. days. As an example, he said, the German requirement for 155 mm artillery ammunition is 2 1/2 times the U.S. daily requirement. Again, the SHAPE requirement for hand grenades is 10 times the German daily rate of usage in the latter part of World War II.

Minister von Hassel expressed agreement with an observation by General Taylor that this was a pragmatic difference and had no relation to how long one expected to fight or to the length of the logistic chain.

General Foertsch said that he believed that the Germans could fight for quite a long time with 30 SHAPE days of supply. A prerequisite for a comparison with the U.S. levels would be German knowledge of the supply levels of the 7th Army.

Mr. McNamara said that if that were the case, the U.S. would be ready to join in a study with the Germans and suggested that a 7th Army officer be assigned for this purpose.

General Foertsch said that it was more important to obtain a clarification of the SHAPE requirement. Perhaps the Germans and Americans could jointly review and try to change the SHAPE days.

General Taylor replied that he would be glad to join with General Foertsch in this exercise, and Mr. McNamara said that this could be taken as one action resulting from the meeting.

Mr. McNamara then inquired when the Germans expected to achieve 30 SHAPE days of supply.

Minister von Hassel said that the Germans have made a detailed breakdown of their supply situation which has revealed that in certain instances they have 30 SHAPE days, e.g., in infantry ammunition, but in others they have only 3 to 6 days. There has also been a problem in the establishment of depots, particularly as the result of the great buildup which occurred after August 13, 1961. Efforts are being made to solve this problem in various ways, inter alia, by joint depots with the U.S.

Mr. McNamara then asked whether the German concept of tactical nuclear warfare envisions aircraft strikes against scheduled SACEUR targets.

Minister von Hassel said that the MOD has been studying the draft of MC 100/1 and would be giving German views on it at the next meeting of the military committee. Various points seem to stand out. (1) Whether an aggression is major or limited will depend on the enemy's political aims. (2) Since any aggression by the Soviet Union is predicated on political objectives, they will have to calculate the risk of escalation. (3) NATO use of conventional weapons only in accordance with MC 100/1 would not alter Soviet objectives. The aggressor can only be stopped or forced to a decision on escalation by the use of nuclear weapons. The Germans believe that battlefield nuclear weapons should be used as soon as the enemy comes across the Iron Curtain - if only to show that the West is seriously prepared to defend itself.

Answering a question by General Taylor, Minister von Hassel said that he was not speaking of a penetration by a small group of Communist forces, such as a patrol.

General Foertsch said there were a number of reasons why it was not possible to set up 40 to 50 M-Day divisions. Every combat unit that was established required more back-up support in the form of base organization, depots, etc. The manpower problem was particularly critical - the Bundeswehr is short 9,000 officers and 35,000 NCO's, not to mention specialists and technicians. Consequently, they see no point in setting up new units without the trained personnel to lead them. To help out they plan to set up "time of tension" units. Calling these units up could add to the deterrent or, on the other hand, increase the danger of war.

General Foertsch noted that von Hassel has decided to set up a Territorial Reserve army of 50,000 (as a first step). These men will receive about 30 days of active duty training each year. There are now only 27 divisions for the central front (two Dutch, three British, two Belgian, six American, two French and twelve German). Where will the balance come from? Perhaps the "time of tension" units provide one answer, but this problem, General Foertsch concluded, must be discussed in a different form.

General Taylor said he wished to correct himself. He believed that he had said 40 to 50 divisions when he had meant to say 30 to 40 divisions, each of which represented a group of about 30 to 40,000 men.

Returning to the subject of tactical nuclear war, Mr. McNamara said that he understood that the German concept, envisioned two stages. The first would be the use of low yield weapons following a hostile move across the border. The second would be use of larger weapons against targets deeper than the 40 kilometer battlefield zone.

Reading from a text, (see Inclosure 3), Minister von Hassel said that any use of tactical weapons implied the risk of escalation. There were four types: battlefield weapons, tactical weapons, MRBM's, and strategic weapons. When tactical defeat or an important loss of territory appears imminent, battlefield nuclear weapons must be used. The use of these weapons could stop the first attack echelon of a numerically superior aggressor, forcing him to change his plan or to maintain his political-military objectives. The use of battlefield nuclear weapons marks the transition to a mixed conventional-nuclear defense. There would, in this phase, be no strikes against the vital installations of the aggressor, such as his missile sites or communications junctions.

Mr. McNamara inquired whether this concept assumed that the aggressor does not use his own battlefield nuclear weapons.

Minister von Hassel replied that the Germans presumed the enemy would make a probing attack to find out whether the West was prepared to defend itself. That is why the Germans insist that battlefield nuclear weapons be employed from the outset. The Germans do not believe the aggressor would use nuclear weapons at the beginning of his probe.

Minister von Hassel said he agreed with General Taylor that a tactical nuclear war would be superimposed on a conventional war in certain isolated spots. This would not happen all along the front, but only in the area specifically attacked.

General Foertsch indicated his agreement.

Mr. McNamara asked how the air war would be taking place during the stage that the ground war is going on.

Minister von Hassel replied that the Germans would concentrate their attacks only in the battlefield area but would conduct reconnaissance over the remainder of the enemy's area. They did agree that conventional bombs could be used against the enemy's airports if the enemy is using airplanes.

General Panitzki noted that conventional bomb strikes would be limited because the Germans could not afford to endanger their nuclear capability by exposing their aircraft to destruction during conventional operations.

Mr. McNamara then asked if this was not a great weakness. Nuclear loaded planes on airfields would be sitting ducks against a Soviet attack by conventional planes. Surely they would attack Western airfields if the West used battlefield nuclear weapons.

General Foertsch replied that the Germans believed that in this phase they will have dispersed their strike units. It was for this first phase of the battle that the Germans had established their G-91 wings.

Mr. McNamara reported that under these circumstances the NATO air forces would be at a serious disadvantage.

In reply, Minister von Hassel said that it might be better to set forth the remainder of the German views on nuclear warfare, - he had been speaking only of an attack by land. When this increases, the Germans move to Phase B (the use of tactical nuclear weapons). They have estimated that there would not be a great loss of civilian population in the immediate battlefield zone when low yield nuclear

weapons are used. First, there are not many people living in the area immediately adjacent to the border. Second, many would flee; and, third, others would be evacuated. The limited zone (for use of battlefield nuclear weapons) will have to correspond to the depth of a divisional area. If there was a deep penetration by an aggressor, there would be heavy civilian losses. The use too late of battlefield nuclear weapons will not aid the civilian population. He concluded that tactical nuclear weapons must be used quickly.

Mr. McNamara asked how many warheads would be necessary for this type of conflict. (General Taylor suggested that SHAPE should do this type of analysis.)

Minister von Hassel and General Foertsch replied that they could not answer this question precisely, because they do not have exact data on the means of delivery in the hands of their allies. Minister von Hassel added that he agreed that SHAPE should study this problem. He did know that CINCNORTH, General Pyman, wanted more ADM's. SHAPE should study what is needed, how many, and in what area. The ADM question should also be studied by the Germans and Americans.

Mr. McNamara said that he found the German concept of nuclear strategy very interesting. Is it the same as SACEUR's concept?

Minister von Hassel replied that the Germans believed that it was the same, but they did not know whether it was the same as the Pentagon concept.

Mr. McNamara said that he believed there should be more work on this problem by SHAPE because of its importance to the NATO war plans.

General Foertsch and General Taylor noted that much depended on the responses to MC 100/1.

Mr. McNamara and General Taylor indicated that the important German point is the rapidity with which battlefield nuclear weapons are used after an attack is identified.

Summing up, General Taylor said he believed there was very little difference between the German and American concepts, but there might be a question of how much conventional fighting is necessary before an attack is identified as serious.

(Minister von Hassel offered copies of the German paper on nuclear strategy to Mr. McNamara.) (Inclosure 4)

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Secretary McNamara, Minister von Hassel, Ambassador McGhee and State Secretary Carstens departed at this point for a call on Chancellor Adenauer.

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In response to a request from General Foertsch, General Taylor promised that the information the Germans had provided would be closely held.

General Foertsch said the Germans were in the process of building up six G-91 wings as a contribution to make limited war possible in Europe. They would like to have the Americans join in urging the other European NATO countries to maintain a similar airplane in their inventory. The Germans believe it could be decisive in the early days of an attack.

General Taylor promised to discuss this matter with General Lemnitzer.

## II. French Force Contribution to NATO and French Strategic Concepts.

General Ferber made a presentation of the German information on this subject (copy of presentation attached - Inclosure 5). He said the French accept the forward strategy but will only make a small contribution in front line forces. They have the equivalent of two divisions in Germany and are placing the logistic support for another division east of the Rhine. They have 312 aircraft committed to NATO and by January 1, 1964 will have only five submarines committed. Twelve per cent of French military personnel strength is assigned to NATO; under present plans this could rise to a maximum of 24 1/2 per cent in wartime.

General Taylor then asked how the Germans regarded the attitude of the French toward NATO. He said that he saw no means for the French to carry on a forward defense, despite their lip service to this concept. He also thinks the modernization of the French Army is a very long term process, with defense spending being diverted to the force de frappe. Although he was convinced that in a crisis the French would support NATO, he fears they would be too late and certainly their plans would not be coordinated with the others. Is there any way in which the Germans, who are friends and neighbors of the French, could influence a change in their attitude?

General Foertsch explained that there are plans to bring the French first army units closer to the Iron Curtain. One plan calls for a replacement of the U.S. 24th Division by a French Division, but



this awaits construction of barracks, etc. He referred to the French intent to put logistic support for a third division on the east side of the Rhine. The Germans hope that step-by-step they can encourage the French to strengthen their participation in the forward defense. He said that he had had frank discussions on this subject with General Ailleret and had made clear that the Germans were not satisfied with the percentage of French participation in the forward area. They would also like to see the introduction of close support aircraft by the French. General Foertsch said that this was, of course, a highly political problem. He wanted to assure the Americans that the Germans will try everything on the military side (and Minister von Hassel will try everything on the political side with Minister Messmer) to get the French to participate more in the forward strategy.

On the modernization of the French Army, General Foertsch said again this was a political decision. It was extremely difficult to get an answer on this subject from any French soldier. He completely agreed with General Taylor that SHAPE cannot plan effectively without knowing the forces it will have at its disposal in an emergency. General Demitzer is aware of the German views on this matter.

General Taylor said he was not unaware of the difficulty of getting the French to move forward and of the problems this presented to us. He noted that the French contribution to forward strategy could conceivably be fulfilled by the contribution of several divisions as reserves behind the front, if these divisions were, in fact, committed to NATO.

General Foertsch said he entirely agreed. He had discussed this subject with General Ailleret, who said that French divisions would come to Germany in an emergency, but General Foertsch asked, "What will De Gaulle say?" He assured General Taylor that in the Franco-German Friendship Treaty the Germans will urge the French toward NATO and toward a forward defense strategy. This, he commented, was one of the purposes of the treaty.

(State Secretary Hopf entered the meeting at this point.)

General Taylor asked if the French could not make a greater contribution in the logistics field. Perhaps, he suggested, they could be jointly approached on this.

General Foertsch said he fully agreed as the Germans have the same interests as the Americans. France is Germany's hinterland.

State Secretary Hopf said that he had yesterday had a visit from representatives of the NATO pipeline organization. He had gathered the impression from this conversation that it might be a good idea if the U.S. kept a close eye on that organization. The pipelines begin at the French ports, and hence France holds a special position in the organization. There is reason to believe that the French would like to change the present situation. For smooth functioning, it is necessary that such an organization be controlled by a supranational group. He promised to let the U.S. know if he heard anything more on this subject.

Mr. Nitze noted that De Gaulle says he is for NATO but against its organization. Do the Germans have any idea what this means?

General Foertsch replied that the Germans did not know in detail what De Gaulle meant. They did know that the French were unhappy about the NATO command structure arrangements, particularly SACLANT. They had especially wanted the IB ERLANT Command. It was his opinion that the U.S. and Germany should persuade NATO to give in somewhat to the French on this. It might help to bring them closer to NATO. It was true that the proportion of commands held by the French was far below the proportion held by the British.

General Taylor said he thought the U.S. could support this if it would do any good and would not appear to be an appeasing step.

General Foertsch said it would at least show good will. The SACLANT command structure has been discussed for years without any progress being made.

General Taylor asked whether the Germans thought the time was ripe to come forward with a really fundamental look at the problems of the NATO organization. In other words, should one go at it basically rather than in small pieces.

General Foertsch replied that he could only speak of the purely military organization. The Germans believe, as do the smaller members, that the Standing Group needs revamping. Along with others, they believe it is timely to take a look at the NATO organization.

Mr. Nitze inquired whether the Germans thought there should be a Political Standing Group or an enlargement of the present Standing Group.

General Foertsch said that the Germans believe the Standing Group does not have the same reason for existence it had five to eight years ago and, in response to a further question from General Taylor, he said that he would personally favor eliminating the Standing Group altogether.

### III. U. S. Army Support to the II and III German Corps.

Explaining the problem, Mr. Nitze said that CENTAG was working out a new EDP line which would involve the shift of one German Corps. This would substantially change the support problem as it existed at the time of Mr. McNamara's March letter, reducing the number of U.S. forces involved from 5,600 to 1,800. Most of these would be in an artillery support group. The 7th Army, however, still wants this artillery support group returned.

After General Foertsch and Hopf had explained why the Germans did not believe in the principle of demanding strict financial payment for support rendered others, it was agreed that in view of the changed situation there would be no German reply to Mr. McNamara's letter.

Both Mr. Nitze and General Taylor emphasized, however, that the U.S. would like our artillery men back as soon as possible.

State Secretary Hopf nodded agreement.

General Foertsch added that as soon as the Germans have the new guns they are buying from the U.S. and the Sergeant battalions, more will be returned. "It is just a question of time."

### IV. US/FRG Comparative Army Study

General Foertsch said that when the first phase of the so-called Stromberg-Guderian study on comparative standards had been completed, it may be discovered that a second phase is not needed. If, however, the U.S. believes a second phase is necessary, the Germans would ask that it not commence until November 1 because of various personnel problems.

Mr. Nitze inquired whether one or two officers might not in the meantime work out terms of reference for possible use in any second phase.

General Foertsch said this might be possible. He personally has read extracts from the large volume already prepared and believes that it covers everything which might be done in a second phase.

General Taylor promised to discuss with General Stromberg whether a second phase was necessary in order that both he and General Foertsch could present this problem to the Ministers.

General Foertsch agreed with this procedure.

INCLOSURES TO TAB C:

1. Presentation on Estimate of the Enemy Situation
2. Presentation on the Strategic Concept
3. Concept of Employment for Tactical Nuclear Weapons
4. German Comments on MC 100/1
5. French Strategic Concepts and Force Contribution to NATO

} Not attached  
hereto.