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FROM : Department of State

DATE: DEC 23 2 49 PM '64

SUBJECT : Secretary McNamara's Remarks to NATO Ministerial Meeting, December 15-17, Paris

REF :

Attached for the information of addressees is the text of Secretary McNamara's remarks at the NATO Ministerial Meeting, Paris, December 16, under Agenda item 11, "Military Questions," substantially as they appear in the verbatim records. There have been a few minor corrections for the sake of accuracy. It should be noted that a considerable portion of these remarks appeared in the press at the time of the Meeting.

RUSK

Attachment
As stated

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Thank you Mr. Chairman. Good morning gentlemen. My comments this morning are designed to support the conclusion of my Government that the work of the Defence Planning Committee and the Defence Planning Working Group to date has been most constructive and our strong recommendation that the activities of these two groups be both continued and expanded.

The November 27th progress report of the Defence Planning Committee focuses on many of NATO's most urgent problems of strategy, of force structure and of resource allocation and I think it offers us an immediate opportunity, therefore, to explore some of the main questions facing our Alliance.

These questions arise out of three major facts of life that are ever present before us.

First, the fact that the Soviet Union and its satellites confronts us with a wide range of threats, both nuclear and conventional and secondly, the fact that there are competing demands on our scarce resources and we must make difficult choices therefore among various military postures. And thirdly, the fact that we must make decisions now on how we will actually respond to attacks on our vital interests should they occur.

Of course, our greatest desire is to deter such attacks. But I think we all realise that deterrence is no more than a shadow cast by the actions that we are prepared to take, and we may have to take, should deterrence fail. We don't believe that we can create a credible deterrent out of a set of incredible actions.

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Mr. McNAMARA (Contd)

Because of nuclear weapons the problems of our Alliance are fundamentally different from those faced by any previous alliance. They require more systematic thought, more co-operative work, more economy of effort than nations in the past have been investing in their peacetime planning. I think if we had to face these questions raised by nuclear weapons suddenly, without a great deal of prior preparation, without a history of major accomplishments, we might be in doubt about our prospects.

But the facts are that we have done a great deal of work and that we have achieved much to date and therefore it is against this background of accomplishments that I would like to accept the Chairman's invitation and the invitation of the Defence Planning Committee, as outlined in their progress report, and to comment on seven of the major issues presented in that progress report.

Paragraph 23 of the report lists those major issues and paragraph 1 of Annex No. III enumerates the questions raised in connection with the tentative force goals. We're asked in the first main issue to give our views on the implications of nuclear war in Europe, whether that war be a massive attack or an attack directed towards selective destruction.

Now this is obviously an unpleasant question but a most important one. The answers will vary with the assumptions which we make. Let's first assume a large Soviet surprise attack made with missiles and bombers and directed against military targets, including airfields, military command centres and major ports. And let's assume that all the weapons are air burst in contrast to ground burst.

In one case that we have studied involving such an attack there would result more than 60 million deaths in Western Europe alone. The principal sufferers would be the United Kingdom with 16 million fatalities, the Federal Republic with 12 million and France with 10 million. Should the Soviets ground burst their nuclear weapons, instead of air bursting them, but still direct and target those weapons to avoid cities, the deaths in Western Europe, we estimate, would approximate 200 million, largely from radioactive fallout.

Or take a different case, suppose a large, well executed NATO nuclear first strike in response to a Soviet conventional attack. The Soviet nuclear response to such a NATO nuclear strike would kill over 70 million people in Western Europe and I think it's important to recognise that this result could not be prevented or materially changed no matter what strategic force NATO had.

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Mr. McNAMARA (Contd)

We work very hard and we are spending a great deal of money to find some way of reducing the damage that would occur in strategic nuclear war, but I can assure you that additional investment in strategic forces above currently planned levels would not change materially either the probability of such a war, or the outcome of such a war. Even very large additional investments in strategic forces would bring only very small additional returns in effectiveness.

We are already doing and we are already planning, in one way or another including the multilateral force, what is needed and what is productive in this area. The implications of a general war in Europe then, for anyone with access to the facts, are very grim indeed.

Of course, in a strategic exchange, the Soviet Union would suffer on a comparable scale and damage to the United States would be equally severe; we estimate perhaps 100 million mortalities in both the Soviet Union and the United States. The Soviets know all of this, and of course they know that you and I know it.

A closely related issue is referred to in paragraph 1(g) of Annex III: the rôle external strategic forces can be expected to play relative to Allied Command Europe forces, first in meeting SACEUR's targeting requirements in general war and secondly in meeting the broader target requirements for general war. This is a specially sensitive subject, but I think I can address it very generally in this meeting this morning.

In addressing the rôle of Allied Command Europe strike forces, one must first be aware of the size of the base on top of which these forces are added, as well as of the doctrine for the use of these forces. At the service of NATO, the United States today has 900 intercontinental ballistic missiles and 350 Polaris missiles in operational submarines. In addition, we have 630 B52 bombers and 500 medium bombers, plus 1,000 tankers, all capable of intercontinental operations. These forces are targeted with equal priority - and I want to emphasize this - these forces are targeted with equal priority against targets which threaten Europe alone, and targets which threaten the United States, and in the United States catalogue of operational plans, operational options, there is no strike option which addresses the problem in any other way.

That is the base to which Allied Command Europe's forces are added. Looking at Allied Command Europe's forces, and the plans for their use in relation to those of the United States forces, the ACE forces on a retaliatory mission would add the following incremental expenditures or expectancies of

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Mr. MCNAMARA (Contd)

damage to the nuclear threat to Europe: against missile sites 2%, against dispersed airfields 16%, against other airfields 10%, against other critical targets 5%, and I think the contribution of the ACE nuclear forces, if launched first, would not be substantially higher. Therefore, the answer to the question posed by the report, I think, is that the rôle played by the ACE nuclear strike forces is marginal in meeting targeting requirements in a general war. And, this raises the question whether it is enough to justify the degradation in non-nuclear capability caused in some instances by the commitment of ACE forces to the nuclear strike rôle.

I come now to the second main issue raised by the Defence Planning Committee's report - what the report refers to as the main dangers in the future - first the danger of large-scale attack on which the force goals were necessarily predicated and secondly, unpremeditated military conflict that could grow out of political crises. In order to deal with this issue, I want to take inventory of what I consider to be the main and striking accomplishments of our Alliance. The first major accomplishment, of course, is the greatly reduced danger of all-out nuclear attack. The Soviet Union, as has been stated previously, knows that the Alliance could destroy its residual strategic force, and if necessary we could devastate its society were it to launch an attack. The Soviet Union is aware that we have, and would use, a powerful, a balanced, and a well-protected strategic capability. In short, I believe that this threat is effectively deterred.

A second major accomplishment is the deterrence of a limited nuclear attack against Western Europe, whether it be alone or against any single nation. I have never believed that this threat warranted preparations, apart from those tailored to the needs of the whole Alliance. First because there are the bonds of the Alliance, secondly because the United States cannot under any circumstances permit the loss of Western Europe to the Soviet Union, and finally because it would be difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish a nuclear attack on Europe from a strike against the whole Alliance.

Our third major accomplishment is a reduced probability of a deliberate, massive, Soviet conventional attack. Although that threat is a substantial one, and although, as General de Cunant has stated, there are great weaknesses in many of our forces - weaknesses which should be remedied, weaknesses which I believe we can remedy - I think we have exaggerated the dimensions of this problem. Such an attack would not only face strong NATO non-nuclear forces backed up by our strategic forces, but it would immediately confront a major tactical nuclear capability on the ground.

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At the present time, about 40% of the total United States tactical nuclear stockpile is either located in, or allocated for use in, the European and the Atlantic areas. The aggregate yield of the nuclear weapons stored on the soil of West Germany alone is more than 5,000 times the power of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Of the nuclear weapons immediately available to SACEUR, more than 1,000 are intended for air delivery, more than 1,000 for air defence and guided missile delivery, and more than 2,000 for ground delivery. In addition, there are also hundreds of atomic demolition charges, and this is obviously a versatile and highly destructive capability. To my mind, its existence adds tremendously to our assurance that a deliberate massive invasion of Europe will not take place.

To cite the accomplishments in these three important areas, however, is not to suggest that our tasks are completed. By our efforts certain threats have been reduced, and reduced to the point where they need not absorb our undivided attention. While we have sealed off the main routes of the enemy's strategic nuclear attack and deliberate massive assault, we have not ruled out all actions dangerous to our interests. We can now work towards a more balanced posture, I think, and we can make sure we have plugged all of the gaps in our defences. And, that is how I see our Agenda for the forthcoming months. At the top of the Agenda then, I would not put what the Defence Planning Committee has called large-scale attacks on which the force goals were predicated, but I would place the item that the Committee has called unpremeditated military conflict that could grow out of political crises. In this connection, we have in mind a number of contingencies, for example, probes and excursions against the flanks of the Alliance; repression followed by a revolt in Eastern Europe; harsh demands against friendly neutrals; renewed challenges to Western rights in Berlin or increased Soviet military intrusion into the Mediterranean area and so on. And these, I think, are the most probable causes of conflict and the causes of potentially dangerous military confrontation. Some of these are troubles which it may be difficult if not impossible to deter. In many instances, they arise from circumstances and events outside the direct control of either NATO or the Warsaw Pact. Both our greatest problems and, I think, our greatest opportunities are related to this set of contingencies. The opportunity is to adjust our force structure and our contingency plans so as to be able to respond to troubles of this kind, and respond promptly and decisively, and to do so without having to escalate to an inappropriate level of force. The patentability to do this, to make this response, very much reduces the likelihood of having to do so.

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In this connection, I note that the Defence Planning Committee, as one of its main issues, enquires about the possibilities and the implications of improving NATO capability for deterring and defeating local and limited enemy military actions, especially on the flanks. The best way to improve the NATO capability for this purpose is, I think, with non-nuclear forces. It is our view that we can develop a suitable non-nuclear option, just as the Soviets have maintained theirs and apparently plan to continue to maintain it, and that we can do this without in any way reducing the deterrent to a massive Soviet conventional attack. The need for this option arises mainly because such a force is an essential pre-requisite for dealing with lesser contingencies while keeping down the risks of escalation.

The United States Joint Chiefs of Staff endorse the desirability of having such an option backed up by an adequate tactical nuclear capability. There is, of course, some disagreement amongst us, amongst the members of the Alliance, on how much non-nuclear capability we actually should have. There is also a widespread feeling, I think, that large increases in defence budgets are both unnecessary and politically unfeasible in a number of our countries. As to what is needed in general terms, I believe that the present force structure is broadly adequate. I believe that, except for a few countries, large increases in defence budgets are not needed, and I believe that the pay-off in increased effectiveness from certain specific force improvements would be high.

The Defence Planning Committee, in one of the Annexes to its report, raises an issue precisely related to this question of effectiveness. It asks about the effectiveness of forces for dealing with situations less than general war, with particular reference to the versatility of the ground and air forces and their mobility for dealing with situations on the flanks. I can perhaps best deal with this issue by indicating the criteria which seem applicable and the measures which we believe must be taken to meet them. NATO forces should be designed, we think, to cope with the situations to which the Defence Planning Committee referred, and to cope with them before they get out of hand. Organic mobility is clearly important, so is transportability, high readiness; rapid reactions are essential. The exploitation of tactical air power, with its ability to concentrate great fire-power over long distances and to do so in short periods of time, is equally crucial.

I stress these standards because we need fire brigades and what we want from them is the ability to focus great power rapidly and to focus it on local sources of conflict. If we can do that, we should be able to contain and to put out those fires.

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The most immediate implication of this objective is that we should concentrate on H-day and well-equipped reserve conditions rather than poorly equipped and poorly trained reserve units which are not ready for combat and which are worth very little. Quick-reacting non-nuclear power therefore, is a major requirement. In this connection, I think there is a strong case, as Pershing missiles come into SACMUR's inventory for putting them on quick-reaction alert and for making the nuclear-strike aircraft which they replace available for these contingency operations, while retaining a capability for their reconversion to the nuclear rôle. Little is lost on the nuclear side where these vulnerable aircraft make only a small contribution to the damage that Soviet forces would suffer, while their availability for limited contingencies could make a decisive difference in those contingencies.

Many of the recent actions which we have taken in the United States to strengthen our forces have been directed at getting a greater degree of mobility, a greater degree of effectiveness in the fire-fighting rôle. For example, on mobility, our capacity to air-lift tonnage to any part of Europe has almost doubled since 1961 and on top of this increase, between today and 1970, the capacity will triple. In order to increase the effectiveness of this lift, we are tailoring our ground forces to make them easier to move. With the lift available to our forces in 1970 we will be able to add to the military forces in Europe, anywhere in Europe, something in the order of 11 divisions in 30 days. Our ability to move tactical aircraft to Europe is also improving. It would have taken two weeks to move several hundred aircraft to this continent in the 1950's: by 1968 we expect to be able to move such a force to Europe in three days, and we hope to test that capability in the near future. Once these forces reach their designated area, both now and in the future, they could give a good account of themselves. The ground forces are, and will continue to be, combat-ready. NATO has and will continue to have an edge in the numbers and quality of the deployable tactical aircraft. Our anti-submarine capability has undergone and will undergo major improvements and we have made this latter effort, the increase in our anti-submarine capability, not because we see any point in trying to get cargoes from the United States to Europe in an environment of a general war but because this capability would be vital in responding to the more limited contingencies that I have outlined.

Our strategic mobility, the increasing readiness of our high-priority reserve divisions and the very substantial ground and air forces that we can and will make available to the Alliance in the event of major crises constitute what I believe will be a useful contribution toward meeting the principal remaining threats to NATO. And I very much hope that other members of the Alliance will agree that it is necessary for all of us to think and plan and to allocate resources in similar fashion.

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Mr. McNAMARA (Contd)

It may seem a far cry from the contingencies I have been discussing and the responses I have been suggesting, to discuss battlefield nuclear weapons. However, I think there is a connection between battlefield nuclear weapons and the situations that we may face.

The Defence Planning Committee has included, as an issue, the rôle of smaller tactical weapons, smaller tactical nuclear weapons, including nuclear mines and anti-aircraft missiles in deterring or containing aggression and the possibilities for their selective use. This question I know is under study by several nations of the Alliance and it would be premature for me to express any final views on the subject today. But there are some points I think which are worth making about the possibility of a battlefield nuclear option for NATO. There's no doubt that the strategic nuclear weapons, tactical nuclear weapons, and non-nuclear forces of the Alliance would strongly discourage attempts by our opponents to gain an advantage by widening a local conflict. But if the fighting has begun, and if we are in a serious confrontation, the danger of a decision to widen the conflict does exist and this possibility must be taken into account.

As I see it there are two intermediate types of military operations that we should be capable of carrying out. Both of these options are short of the use of strategic nuclear weapons and of the longer range tactical nuclear forces. The first is the ability to execute a major non-nuclear option, the option we have been discussing so far, and the second is the option to use nuclear weapons; either one or a few of such weapons for demonstrative purposes, or a larger number of such nuclear weapons for the purpose of blocking an enemy advance on the battlefield. In either instance, use of the nuclear weapons would be confined to the forward edge of the battlefield. I believe this way of using some of the existing nuclear forces should continue to be analysed by the Commanders and definite plans for such use should be prepared and approved.

In suggesting this latter option I must state my lack of confidence that it will necessarily make the enemy back down or that a general nuclear war could be avoided in such circumstances. This is an area where we are surrounded by great and menacing uncertainties. A demonstrative use of nuclear weapons might cause the enemy to halt, it might cause the enemy to retreat, but I think there's an equal possibility that, if he has nuclear weapons as he certainly does, he will reply in kind or possibly even with greater severity and once this process has begun, there can be no certainty where it will end.

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Mr. McNANARA (Contd)

It has been fashionable, I know, to argue that a nuclear engagement is no more likely to escalate than a non-nuclear conflict, but it seems understandable that no one is eager to test this hypothesis, and I think the reasons are very clear. The line between non-nuclear war and nuclear war is distinct and observable. However, once the momentous decision has been made to cross that line, everything becomes much more confused, including such matters as the origin and the yield of the nuclear detonations. In the circumstances we should not delude ourselves that nuclear war would be easy to keep within bounds.

But, leaving aside the problem of escalation, civilian damage levels would inevitably be high, even though limited geographically, and losses of military manpower would be severe. Casualties might range as high as 20% per day and that, as you probably recall, compares with World War II casualties, approaching something of the order of 6% per month. In these circumstances we might be in even greater need of troops than in non-nuclear combat and, moreover, many of the types of tactical nuclear systems are highly vulnerable. Low yield, short range nuclear weapons on the battlefield invite blanket nuclear attacks by the enemy. There would be a temptation, because of the notorious vulnerability of strike aircraft, to use them to avoid their loss from pre-emptive attack, and this would pose a major problem to the Commanders and the national authorities.

Finally, the Soviets do not seem to have a doctrine which includes the restrained use of nuclear weapons. The Soviet forces do not appear to be designed to fight with nuclear weapons in a limited and discreet manner. In sum, although I believe the battlefield nuclear option should be considered, it should not be regarded as a substitute for the major non-nuclear option. Rather, it should be regarded as an insurance policy against the failure of that option.

I want to be certain that there is no misunderstanding of our position on this point. In advocating consideration of a battlefield nuclear option, I am not advocating preparations for a large scale war in Western Europe in which the United States and the Soviet Union would be sanctuaries. The United States has no plan for such a war. We do not believe any feasible plan could ever be developed for such a war. Rather, I am talking about the need to study the issues posed in the Defence Planning Committee's report, to explore alternatives and in particular to do contingency planning.

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