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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Refer to: I-25431/62

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION, THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 1962

Participants:

UK

Lord Hood
Sir George Mills
Adm. Gregg
Mr. Thomson

US

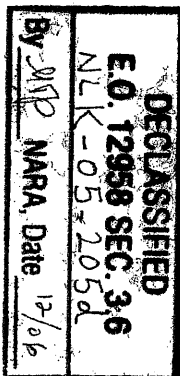
Mr. Nitze
Gen. Emrick
Gen. Gray
Gen. Eaton
Adm. Lee
Mr. McQuade

Lord Hood began by observing that London is confused about, and does not have a clear conception of, U.S. strategic policies. He had been asked by London to pursue several points and to seek clarity of the U.S. view on them. He then produced a paper (Annex A hereto) from which he made his initial presentation. He said the divergencies between the U.S. and the U.K. center around two things: (1) the extent to which the credibility of the deterrent is improved by substantial increases of conventional forces, and (2) the period of time during which NATO should be prepared to fight a conventional Soviet attack before resort to discriminate use of nuclear weapons.

London thinks the U.S. is urging NATO to create a large enough non-nuclear force to hold the Soviets indefinitely, yet they cannot reconcile this with Durbrow's March 21st statement to the NAC. Lord Hood said that he himself appreciated that Durbrow's statement is not at odds with the U.S. strategic view, but that London professes a need for clarification.

Nitze said he was not aware that any responsible U.S. source had made any statement suggesting that NATO build sufficient non-nuclear forces to hold the full conventional power of the Communists indefinitely.

Hood said that he understands the U.S. to believe that the present East-West balance does deter the Soviets from actions which



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they think might cause the U.S. to use nuclear weapons. Because of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war for both sides, the Soviets may feel they can undertake a sudden grab or a limited aggression not big enough to cause the U.S. to use nuclear weapons. Therefore, the U.S. believes that NATO needs more conventional strength to meet such possible challenges.

Hood said that this raises a series of questions. He asked what the U.S. means by the foregoing in terms of manpower: Parity of forces? Less than parity? If so, how much less? What are the U.S. views about modernization of weapons and increases in mobility? What are the U.S. views on deployment? Should troops be permanently near the front or simply mobile enough to get there quickly in time of crisis?

Hood said it is axiomatic that deterrence must be convincing to both the Soviets and ourselves if it is to succeed. Therefore, the West needs to know how it would fight if the deterrent should fail. He said he understood the U.S. to believe that, more or less, present NATO forces can carry out a forward strategy if the attack should be made only by the Communist forces presently stationed in East Germany. NATO non-nuclear forces should hold such a Communist attack if possible and hope for a cease fire. If the Soviets should use nuclear weapons, NATO would have to do so. If the Soviets persist in their attack, then NATO should bring up reinforcements and contain the attack as long as possible with conventional forces, but resort to nuclears if the Communists seriously threaten the integrity of NATO forces or territory.

He said that a second situation arises if the initial Communist attack penetrates NATO. In such case, we should try to restore the situation by conventional means, but if the Soviet attack continues to advance, then nuclear weapons should be used.

A third possibility, he suggested, is that the Soviets start a huge build-up prior to any attack. In this case, we would presumably start a similar build-up in the hope of offsetting the Soviet action. Thereafter, NATO strategy should be similar to that outlined above.

Hood said that in all cases we might need to resort to nuclear weapons. He would like to know what type of weapons might be used and what targets they might hit as well as the meaning of "discriminate use of nuclear weapons on the battlefield".

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Nitze said that UK answers to all of these questions would be very helpful to us.

Hood said that everyone contemplated the use of strategic nuclear weapons in an all-out war. Does the U.S. believe they should be used in lesser situations? Does the U.S. see its proposed strategy as also applicable to the NATO flanks, to the Middle East and to the Far East? If so, what increased non-nuclear forces would be required for these areas? He said that a big part of these questions is, of course, political in nature. If we adopt such a strategy, what will the Soviets do?

Nitze asked whether Hood was referring to what the Communists would do in battle or what they would do in peacetime circumstances.

Hood said his reference was to peacetime circumstances. For example, would they build up their conventional strength? What does Nitze believe the Allies will do? Hood said he wished to define U.S. views and then assess the divergencies between the two countries.

Nitze said that since the UK had propounded all of these extremely interesting questions, perhaps the UK should provide answers to them for us to review. Do they have all the answers?

Lord Hood said "Lord, no!"

Sir George Mills interjected that the UK can provide its views on some of the questions.

Nitze said that the list of questions is a rather big order. Perhaps we should first consider an appropriate procedure with respect to them. There is not much time before the Prime Minister's visit to Washington and McNamara's visit to England in which to provide answers. How definitive did London want the answers to be?

Mills said that the main objective is to rid London of the notion that the U.S. concept involves a major conventional battle over a long period of time over a large area. This fallacy is extant in London and needs killing.

Nitze said that it is important to be very clear about the time period which one is talking about. The situation today will be different from the situation at the end of the year and markedly different from the desirable position for 5 years from now. One should be hesitant about giving a general formulation. The first time period in which there can be a meaningful change from the

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present is about the end of the year. The extent of this change will depend in large measure on events in Algeria. Nitze said he takes a fairly optimistic view. He thinks the French might have 6 or 7 divisions in Europe (3 committed to NATO and the rest in support, though not formally committed). The main variables on the central front will be what France, Germany and the U.S. do in terms of manpower and equipment.

Emrick said that there is no clear relationship between the size of forces and the length of engagement. The purpose of NATO's non-nuclear strength is not related as much to the length of time during which NATO might expect to engage the Communist forces as it is to the size of forces NATO might be able to take on. He compared 2 divisions facing 30 divisions as contrasted with 30 divisions facing 30 divisions to illustrate his point.

Mills said it depends on what the enemy does. London and Stikker seem to interpret the Durbrow pronouncement of March 21st as requiring an enormous increase in conventional forces.

Nitze replied that he thought the Durbrow statement had specified the MC 26/4 goals as a minimum, i.e., 30 or 50 divisions. This is not an impossible goal.

Lee said that an appropriate increase in support forces might mean a somewhat greater non-nuclear buildup, but this surely would not involve an order of magnitude change from MC 26/4.

Gray pointed out that Norstad had never said that 30 divisions would be sufficient for a non-nuclear war. Norstad's point was that we need 30 divisions before attempting a forward strategy. His new EDP allows for a certain period of conventional warfare. It is less inflexible than the old EDP.

Nitze said that more precise terms are needed. "Forward strategy", in particular, may mean different things to different people. It might mean moving forces up front so they can protect Hamburg by fighting seriously at the border itself. The term has also been used to mean use of nuclear weapons promptly upon any penetration of the frontier. The correct interpretation of the term "forward strategy", as Nitze sees it, is the forward deployment of forces so that they can maintain a continuous line along the frontier in sufficient strength so that the Soviets would need large scale forces in order to breach it. Heretofore, NATO strategy has been that the troops along the border fall back to positions behind the frontier upon being attacked. Under this strategy, Hamburg might be quickly seized and NATO forced almost directly into full general war. If NATO can get the 30 division

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minimum objective set by Norstad, the Soviets would face a much more difficult prospect than they do now. Obviously, all of these questions are interrelated, and all sorts of things can be done to improve our posture by the end of the year and over other longer time periods.

Mills said that NATO has already asked Norstad for his views on such a strategy.

Hood cautioned that there are certain political forces bearing on the question of a non-nuclear buildup.

Emrick said that there were indeed such political pressures; but they include a certain political appeal, particularly to the Germans whose country would thereby be better protected against invasion.

Mills said that one side of the problem is our ability to engage the Communists all along the central front. If we should engage them at the border instead of falling back to a prepared position behind it, then we could stop the sudden coup de main. If the Communists then push through anyway, we would automatically go nuclear.

Emrick said that a handful of Communist divisions could not succeed in a quick grab of territory.

Thomson referred to an International Staff study, of which he had heard, which estimated the required defense budget increases of the various NATO countries for the proposed non-nuclear buildup. He understood that the study indicated that such an increase would average about 30%. He asked if the U.S. was studying this problem.

Nitze said that he could not recall whether the base year for the study was 1960 or 1961. This obviously makes a difference in the meaning of the percentage figure. A great deal of the problem had already been solved by the increases to date in the FRG, French and U.S. non-nuclear forces. Nitze said he could foresee, in rough terms, some 12 German, 8 or 9 U.S., 7 French, 2 Belgium, 2 Dutch, 2 U.K., and one Danish, divisions within the reasonable future. At that rate there would be some 34 divisions available without any major contributions from anyone but the U.S., France and the FRG. The FRG may already have increased its contribution by 30%, and France may get the equivalent effect through resolution of the Algerian problem. U.S. combat troops have already increased by close to 25%. For NATO as a whole, the economic feasibility of

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the requested non-nuclear buildup is not as serious as Thomson's view of the International Staff report suggests.

Thomson asked what the impact might be in other NATO countries. He had been led to believe that the official document suggests that a very large increase would be needed in their defense budgets.

Nitze said yes, but already much of the suggested increase in effort had been accomplished. Norway is already seeking an increase in its defense budget and Nitze thought that the Danes might do so as well.

Hood asked what the reaction of the FRG had been to the U.S. views on the need for a conventional buildup.

Nitze said that Schnetz agreed entirely with the views he had expressed in his Hamburg speech. War of any kind is, for obvious reasons, unacceptable to the Germans. The important thing for them is that NATO do what will have the best deterring effect on the Soviets; this depends in large part on a complementary combination of non-nuclear and nuclear forces.

Mills said that the choice of methods for achieving deterrence depends on our assessment of Soviet thinking. This is hard to do.

Nitze said yes, but we have got to try.

Hood noted that London feels that the deterrent is weakened by excessive increases in conventional forces.

Nitze said that during his recent visit in London, they had regarded this as a possible problem. Scott had told him that it was better to keep the Soviets in doubt as to whether and when we would use nuclear weapons. Nitze said he told Scott that it was preferable, in our view, that the Soviets be absolutely certain both of the fact that we would use nuclear weapons and of the circumstances in which we would do so. We want the Soviets to understand that a small attack would be thrown back and a large one would result in nuclear war.

Mills agreed that the objective was to make it clear to the Soviets that they really have no options. He noted that we would need 70 to 80 to 90 divisions to beat the Soviets in conventional combat.

Nitze said the FRG feels we undervalue the satellite divisions. The FRG would give the East German and Czech divisions more importance

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In an assessment of Communist capability for a full-scale conventional battle.

Mills said that it was totally unreasonable to think that we would get as much as 70-100 NATO divisions and fight a solely conventional war.

Gray said that 100 divisions might be the requirement for winning a conventional war; but not for merely holding the line. The lowest figure with which we might fight a large-scale war limited to non-nuclear weapons is 55 or 60 divisions, but we would need a 3 : 2 ratio of forces to be sure of winning.

Emrick said that a more dangerous way to undermine Soviet belief in our will would be to loosen our grip on our strategic power.

Nitze said that, in fact, we have probably doubled our nuclear power since the beginning of last year.

Lee noted that U.S. thinking is not geared simply to MC 26/4.

Nitze said we need to look at the full range of available forces including those which NATO can mobilize and also the reinforcements which might be brought against us from the USSR. In such event, a great big battle would certainly be in prospect and, therefore, there should be no doubt in the Soviet mind as to the likelihood of nuclear war.

Mills asked whether the U.S. applied this strategy to other areas.

Nitze said that we expect the Norwegians to put up a real fight against any attempt at a quick thrust by the Soviets, and face the Soviets with the clear fact that Norway genuinely plans to defend its own territory. NATO would help Norway and force a "respectable fight" and thus face the USSR with prospect of nuclear war if she persisted. The problems of Greece and Turkey are more serious because of the shortages of trained technicians, proper logistics and other military needs. These shortages are largely attributable to cost factors.

Mills interjected that the U.S. idea is, then, that in each area, including Iran, it is necessary to be in a position to put up a respectable fight. Emrick confirmed this.

Nitze said that in Iran they already have more men than they need in relation to their equipment, training

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and logistic backup. Iran's requirements lie more in the realm of better balanced forces, equipment and training.

In response to questions about the Far East, Nitze confirmed that our objective would be to arrest any attack by non-nuclear means if we can. The prospects are not too good but we should do our best.

Hood asked if the U.S. considered it important to have major reinforcements of conventional strength in the areas other than NATO.

Nitze said we are attacking this problem, at least in part, through increased mobility and a stronger strategic reserve.

Mills asked if the U.S. was asking all of its allies to increase their conventional strength in these "other areas".

Nitze said the U.S. would like this. The U.S. is pleased that the British White Paper confirmed the policy of maintaining forces East of Aden. The U.S., in this respect, is trying to separate two factors: the possibilities and the desirabilities.

Mills asked if there were any danger that Europe might feel that the U.S. wished to build up European forces so we could withdraw ours.

Nitze said that such a thesis would be divisive in any Alliance. He referred to Gallois' theory, which, in effect, said it was not rational, in the nuclear age, for any member of the Alliance to contribute to the defense of the other members. The U.S. believes firmly that the success of the Alliance depends upon the old adage "one for all; all for one".

Everyone took their leave with the promise of further conversations, perhaps next week when Shuckburgh is to be here.