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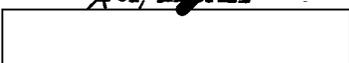
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SNIE 100-10-59
10 November 1959

TS #141977-e

SPECIAL
NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE
NUMBER 100 - 10 - 59

SPECIAL ASPECTS OF THE NATO SITUATION

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.

Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

on 10 November 1959. Concurring were the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Intelligence, Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB, and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

10 November 1959

SUBJECT: SNIE 100-10-59: SPECIAL ASPECTS OF THE NATO SITUATION

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the probable impact of a substantial unilateral reduction, within the near future, of US NATO forces in the European area on: (a) the political attitudes and defense policies of European NATO members, and (b) the over-all Western negotiating position on Berlin, Germany, and disarmament.

THE ESTIMATE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. For some years, the NATO members have been agreed on a strategic concept and a phased buildup of forces to support that strategy. As recently as October, in its NATO Annual Review presentation, the US stated its intention of fulfilling its MC-70 commitments for the next year. The US as leader of the alliance, and

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General Norstad as SACEUR, have consistently urged that attainment of agreed NATO force goals is essential to the military effectiveness of the alliance. Although many other NATO members have fallen short of compliance with NATO force goals and standards, the US has with minor exceptions consistently fulfilled its own commitments. Consequently any substantial unilateral reduction of US NATO forces in Europe within the next few months would be regarded as an abrupt withdrawal from firm commitments to NATO.

2. The reduction would come at a time of considerable European concern over Soviet missile and space advances and the unresolved Berlin situation -- with new East-West negotiations immediately in prospect or already underway. It would also come during a period marked not only by French efforts to assert a special role in NATO and a continuing desire by the British and others to reduce their own defense expenditures, but also by growing European concern about the future role of the US in world affairs. This has been particularly true since the Khrushchev visit to the US. These developments have already led to some public controversy over the future direction of the alliance.

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II. REACTIONS WITHIN NATO

Political Attitudes

3. Although the impact in Europe of an early reduction of US forces would depend primarily on the magnitude and nature of the reduction, it would be conditioned to some degree by the manner in which it became known to our European allies. The adverse reaction toward the US would be increased if the US appeared to be reticent about acquainting its allies with the facts, or if the reduction was announced abruptly without prior diplomatic preparations. Any substantial reduction at this time, would, however, lend substance to fears that have long prevailed in some European quarters that the US would ultimately abandon its basic commitments to Europe. The adverse impact on the morale of the West Berlin people would be particularly great. The reduction would

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also encourage the fear that the US was preparing to settle outstanding issues directly with the USSR over the heads of its allies.^{1/}

4. Diplomatic preparation and explanation could mitigate the worst effects of a unilateral US reduction. Since the military reduction is assumed to be substantial, however, it would be very difficult to convince our allies that NATO had not been weakened. We do not believe that the earmarking for NATO of forces elsewhere would be regarded as an equivalent for forces actually in Europe. Explanations of the US action in terms of the US financial position and the needs of other US defense programs, (e.g., space and missiles) might have some weight, but would not be sympathetically received.

^{1/} The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF considers that this sentence places undue emphasis upon "fears" that the US, as a consequence of its NATO force reductions, would be preparing to settle outstanding issues on a bilateral basis with the USSR. Such "fears" per se do not now appear prevalent in Europe. This has been due principally to the fact that the US has, over the past several months, consistently assured Western European leaders that critical issues would not be settled "over the heads of the allies." So long as such assurances continue, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF believes that US NATO forces structure reductions thus far proposed will not, of themselves, arouse Western Europe to the point of reviving such "fears."

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5. In any event, a US decision to make a substantial reduction of its forces in Europe would be widely interpreted as reflecting a growing US preoccupation with economic and other domestic concerns and a decreased sense of urgency about European security.^{2/} There would be a decline in confidence in the US and a growth in neutralist sentiment and of efforts for accommodation with the Bloc. There would be a feeling among Western Europeans that the US was taking the first step in a progressive reduction of US forces in Europe. Similar adverse reactions would almost certainly arise in varying degrees among the other allies of the US in other parts of the world.

2/

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF would delete the words "and a decreased sense of urgency about European security." As noted elsewhere in the estimate the principal deterrent to Soviet military adventures in Western Europe remains the US strategic capability. In evaluating the US decision to make certain force reductions in its NATO commitments, most Western Europeans would be unlikely to view the contemplated cuts as touching the principal US contribution to deterring the Soviets. In fact a convincing case might be made for the argument that Western Europeans would regard the proposed cuts as an indication of a more realistic assessment of the current Soviet threat, and that the reduction implied US acknowledgement that certain NATO commitments required reassessment, especially in the light of weapons development, and did not represent a "decreased" sense of urgency.

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Effect on Defense Policies

6. The willingness of NATO countries to support NATO programs has already fallen behind the generally rapid economic progress of NATO members. At the present time the public in these countries is uncertain as to current trends in East-West relations and the danger of hostilities in Europe. In this atmosphere, a substantial unilateral reduction in US forces would almost certainly operate, at least in the short run, to reduce popular willingness to support contributions to NATO at their present level. Present and planned defense contributions of most NATO countries would be forced downward by political pressures.

Reactions of Particular Governments

7. West Germany. The Federal Republic would probably be the NATO Government most seriously concerned over the direct military and political effects of the reduction. The West German military buildup is premised heavily on the validity of the forward strategy and the presence of US forces. Great military significance would be attached to the cut. It would be most difficult to persuade the Germans that this was not the first in a series of US cuts gradually reducing the US presence in Europe.

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It would reawaken Adenauer's fear, most strikingly demonstrated by his reaction during the 1956 scare created by allegations that the US contemplated withdrawal from Europe. While Adenauer himself would endeavor to maintain his close association with the US, he would, however, feel that West German security was diminished. Therefore he would consider ways to increase West German military strength and influence. At the same time he would move forward toward closer cooperation with the French on military and other matters involving the creation of closer Franco-German ties within NATO. On the other hand encouragement would also be given to those neutralist and other forces in the Federal Republic which seek a reorientation of current West German foreign policy. At the least, Adenauer's basic policy would come under heavy fire and questioning, both from other parties and from some elements of his own party.

8. France. The French military leaders would be concerned by the weakening of shield forces. However, the unilateral character of the US reduction would probably be used by de Gaulle to support his arguments for individual determination by the NATO countries of their defense

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arrangements and needs. Thus, the effect would be to encourage de Gaulle in his efforts to take the lead in a continental grouping to match the US-UK partnership, and at the same time permit him to cite the US reduction as a reason for requiring closer political and military coordination among the major NATO partners before major strategic decisions are made.

9. The UK. British leaders, already on record as favoring the "tripwire" concept, would seize on the US reduction to justify completing the planned reductions in the British ground forces stationed in West Germany. These reductions have been delayed primarily because of US objections. Further reductions might also take place. The British would renew their pressure within NATO to re-examine NATO plans or at least to construe present NATO force goals as maximum targets rather than as minimum requirements. More broadly, the US reductions would further stimulate the tendency of British leaders in both parties to seek a compromise with the Soviets on specific issues such as Berlin and Germany, and to advocate a zone of disarmament in Europe.

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Effect on NATO

10. The NATO forward strategy would have decreasing plausibility as a concept on which NATO military planning could be realistically based. In light of the above appraisals, notably the divergent reactions of West Germany and the UK, it seems clear that NATO cohesion would also be adversely affected. While the reduction would probably not lead to a major split within NATO, it would intensify the underlying strains within the alliance.

III. EFFECTS ON THE WESTERN BARGAINING POSITION

11. In the light of the foregoing, a substantial unilateral reduction of US forces in Europe at this time would weaken the Western bargaining position on Berlin, Germany, and disarmament. The Western delegates would be confronting the Soviets in an atmosphere of greatly increased misgivings about the military program on which NATO is based and about NATO's ability to maintain its position vis-a-vis the Bloc. Existing strains between West Germany and the UK over the degree of firmness which the West could effectively maintain on Berlin and the

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German problem would probably be increased. Even those Europeans who basically favored a reduction of armaments would believe that the US, by its substantial unilateral reduction, had thrown away assets which might have been used to extract concessions from the USSR. The divisions arising in NATO as a result of the reduction of forces would not only complicate the formulation of agreed Western positions for East-West talks but would also be subject to Soviet exploitation.

12. The Soviet leaders would probably regard a unilateral reduction of forces as an indication that the US was less able or willing to maintain a strong military position in Europe. An attempt by the US to represent the action as a gesture toward relaxation of tensions would be unlikely to elicit a more forthcoming Soviet position in East-West negotiations. The Soviets would probably believe that the US move had been a divisive force in NATO and that, as a result, the Soviet bargaining position on Berlin and Germany had been greatly strengthened. In disarmament talks, Moscow would probably be encouraged to believe that the chances had been improved of reaching agreement on a Soviet sponsored European security plan providing for a disengagement of forces in isolation from the question of German unity.

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13. In a larger sense, the Soviet estimate of the NATO bargaining position would depend upon the total military and political posture of the West. The principal deterrent to Soviet military adventures in Europe remains the US strategic capability. Nevertheless the Soviet leaders know that there is much controversy in the US and in Europe over current Western security concepts, and they have already seen NATO declining in unity because of a series of unilateral decisions taken by its principal members. They would probably believe that a substantial reduction of US forces in Europe would reinforce these tendencies.

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