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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

6 JUL 1976

In reply, refer to:
I-22907/76

INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: MBFR: The French issue - INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 13 JUL 1976

~~(S)~~ The French have raised an issue in MBFR over the inclusion of their forces (60,000 in the FRG) in NATO data and in computation of the MBFR "common ceiling." Until the Warsaw Pact recently tabled data in Vienna on Eastern forces in the NGA, the French did not object to the inclusion of their troops in MBFR computations, as long as it was understood that France would not participate in MBFR. They have, however, consistently made known their opposition to MBFR on security and political grounds, and by this specific action they are resurrecting a general problem that has been with us since the beginning of MBFR.

Nato 32812

~~(S)~~ While the US MBFR Delegation has reported concern in the Allied negotiating councils in Vienna that the conceptual basis of the "common ceiling" could be undermined if French forces are not included, the immediate practical effect of the French action is to delay formulation of NATO guidance for providing the East updated NATO data. Draft NATO guidance would authorize Allied negotiators to release to the East total figures for NATO and Pact ground and ground plus air manpower in the MBFR reduction area.: USG guidance to USDEL MBFR directs that data on NATO forces be provided in formal plenary session and data on Pact forces be subsequently provided only in informal sessions because we have uncertainties about Eastern data and want to avoid confrontation on data while focusing on counting rules for deriving the data.

~~(C)~~ The USG does not know the reason for this French move at this time. But the French may have seen the Eastern tabling of data as a step toward making MBFR a "real negotiation" and therefore took the occasion to register again their opposition to MBFR. reduce any implied French involvement, or -- impede progress toward an agreement. We may be able to discern more clearly their reasons and the strength of their convictions as Allied consultations proceed. (See TAB A for background).

~~(S)~~ The US, UK and FRG have made demarches to the French, and the Allies in Brussels have called upon the French to continue to permit inclusion of their forces in both the data and the common ceiling. The French are holding firm. The USG now plans to let the other Allies take the lead in pressing the French, while we examine alternative solutions to the problems.

July 76

~~(C)~~ The French may agree to a disclaimer that would inform the East that inclusion of French forces in the data in no way obligates the French

Classified by Dir, DOD MBFR TF
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED
AT TWO YEAR INTERVALS. DECLASSIFIED ON 31 Dec 84



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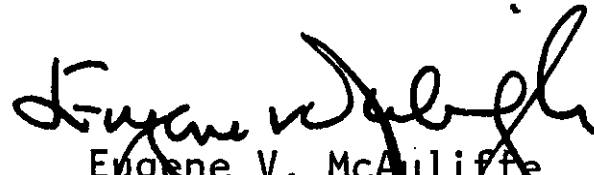
or affects their freedom of action. Another approach would exclude the French from MBFR data but still allow NATO to propose 700,000 ground and 900,000 ground/air "common ceilings" which included French forces for purposes of computation. NATO could also construct a lower ceiling excluding the French.

(S) If the French do not compromise on this issue in one way or another, some disruptive consequences could result for the MBFR negotiations. However, this is not certain, and such a development could also provide us with new options and opportunities. The current "common ceiling" construct in effect would require the U.S. and essentially the FRG to guarantee that the residual level of NATO forces was not increased under an MBFR agreement through French action. If the French were removed from the calculus, NATO could construct new formulations which retained the principle of approximate parity of outcome, but which did not require the U.S. to assume the same degree of responsibility for MBFR compliance by our Allies. We could also develop reduction packages designed to lower the price NATO would pay for out-basic MBFR objectives.

(S) On the other hand, NATO could suffer from this challenge to cohesion and consistency in the Allied negotiating position. For this reason, we may wish to consider increased pressure on the French. Before recommending such a course, I propose awaiting developments in NATO and study of options in the USG.

(S) Finally, I want to inform you that the interagency community has, since the East tabled data, initiated a "close hold" fundamental review of MBFR and possible future courses of action.

Coordination: None required.


Eugene V. McAuliffe
Assistant Secretary of Defense

Attachment
TAB A

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BACKGROUND ON FRENCH VIEWS ON MBFR

- The French have consistently opposed MBFR, largely on the grounds that it
 - Would be detrimental or destabilizing for Western security.
 - Discriminates against the states in Central Europe by imposing a zone of limitation on their total forces while affecting the two super-powers only to the extent of their deployments in the area.
 - Invites Soviet influence in the Western area of reductions, partly through Soviet monitoring of the agreement.
- Nevertheless, the French have generally acquiesced as NATO has developed and elaborated its MBFR position in the negotiations.
 - The French have added footnote disclaimers to various NATO positions stating that MBFR measures would not apply to French forces, the French would not be obligated by any MBFR provisions, and the French did not directly provide information on French forces for inclusion in Alliance studies and positions.
 - But they permitted the Allies to table with the East a figure of 777,000 ground forces for NATO in the area of reduction, which included some 60,000 French forces. They also acquiesced in development of the position that NATO would reduce its forces down to a common ceiling of about 700,000 ground forces and 900,000 ground/air forces as the level for a common ceiling, again with the ceilings including French forces in the FRG.
- The French have stated that their proposal in the 17 June NATO Senior Political Committee meeting to exclude French forces from MBFR data and common ceilings was coordinated at a very high level, at least with Foreign Minister Sauvagnargues.
 - French officials have stated that the French Minister views MBFR as bad for the Alliance and regards it as destabilizing.
- While we are not certain of the reasons behind the French position or the degree of their conviction, some of the following points may bear on their position:
 - The French may foresee the Eastern tabling of data as opening a door to progress in MBFR and thus believe they should once again reiterate their opposition, reduce any implied commitment in MBFR on their part, and perhaps even impede progress toward an agreement.
 - President Giscard and Army Chief of Staff Mery are pressing to improve French conventional forces. Mery has published an article rejecting a total sanctuary for France and calling for an extended sanctuary, which would permit participation by France in "forward combat" in the FRG.

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- The French may want to increase or decrease their forces in the FRG. However, a French official recently told a US NATO official in the context of MBFR that French forces in the FRG could be viewed as a constant.
- Giscard and Mery have both stated that French forces should be maintained on a level about equal with FRG forces. The French might be seeking to have MBFR constrain the West Germans more closely by eliminating the French from the MBFR common ceiling and thereby denying the Germans the ability to increase their forces in the post-MBFR period under a NATO ceiling in case French forces were withdrawn from the FRG. The French more likely are simply trying to ensure that France remains unconstrained.
- State Department high level officials have initiated action to keep USG officials in the field from pressing the French on the MBFR data issue and have stated a desire not to complicate our dealings with the French on other issues.

