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FM UKDEL NATO 151540Z MAY 79
TO PRIORITY FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE
TELEGRAM NUMBER 66 OF 15 MAY 1979,
AND TO PRIORITY MODUK,
INFO PRIORITY ALL NATO POSTS.

Gene Minister

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16/11

MIPT: EUROGROUP MINISTERIAL MEETING.

THEATRE NUCLEAR FORCE

(TNF) MODERNISATION/GREY AREAS.

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15/11

1. AKMANDOR (TURKEY), FROM THE CHAIR, REVIEWED THE GROUND COVERED AT THE NPG. APEL (FRG) SAID THAT THE MEETING HAD BEEN AN IMPORTANT ONE. THE U S HAD SHOWN ITSELF READY TO ACCEPT ITS ROLE AS ALLIANCE LEADER AND NUCLEAR SUPER-POWER. BUT THE DECISION TO PRODUCE WOULD ONLY BE TAKEN IF THE ALLIANCE WAS READY AND ABLE TO ACCEPT THE WEAPONS AS A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. PARTICIPATION AND DEPLOYMENT MUST BE AS BROADLY BASED AS POSSIBLE. THIS MEANT THAT THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP (HLG) MUST CONSIDER SEA-LAUNCHED AS WELL AS GROUND-LAUNCHED SYSTEMS.

2. TNF MODERNISATION WAS IMPORTANT BOTH FOR MILITARY REASONS, AS THE PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT FOR SS20 AND BACKFIRE CONTINUED, AND FOR POLITICAL REASONS. NATO MUST PROVE THAT IT COULD TAKE COMMON DECISIONS: UNLESS IT COULD DO THIS, IT COULD NOT PRESENT ITSELF AS A CREDIBLE PARTICIPANT FOR THE SOVIET UNION IN ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS. IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THERE BE A DIRECT AND CLOSE LINKAGE BETWEEN DECISIONS ON TNF MODERNISATION AND ON THE ARMS CONTROL ASPECTS. THE ARMS CONTROL DIMENSION WAS NECESSARY NOT ONLY TO MAKE MODERNISATION ACCEPTABLE TO PUBLIC OPINION, BUT AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF NATO'S APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM FROM THE OUTSET. THE HLG SHOULD NOW PROCEED WITH THE ELABORATION OF A LIMITED NUMBER OF OPTIONS, AND AFTER THE SUMMER RECESS SHOULD COMBINE ITS SESSIONS WITH THE SPECIAL GROUP (SG) SO THAT THE REPORTS OF THE TWO GROUPS WOULD BE SO ALIGNED AS TO LEAD TO A COORDINATED SET OF DECISIONS. GREY AREA NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN SALT III. IT WOULD BE WRONG TO ADD THEM TO THE SUBJECT MATTER OF MBFR, AND A NEW FORUM WAS UNDESIRABLE.

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3. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE BEING ATTACHED TO DEFENCE, AND THEIR INCREASING ANXIETY AT RECENT TRENDS IN THE BALANCE OF FORCES BETWEEN NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT. IT WAS VITAL TO MAINTAIN AN ADEQUATE DEGREE OF PREPAREDNESS. NATO'S NEXT 30 YEARS LOOKED LIKE BEING MUCH MORE DIFFICULT THAN THE LAST 30. HE ENDORSED WHAT APEL HAD SAID OF THE NEED FOR A COLLECTIVE APPROACH AND COMMON RESPONSIBILITY. TNF MODERNISATION WAS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT IMMEDIATE PROBLEM THAT NATO FACED. THE WORK OF THE HLG MUST GO HAND IN HAND WITH THAT OF THE SG: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NATO'S DECISIONS ON TNF MODERNISATION WOULD CONDITION THE ALLIANCE'S ABILITY TO MOVE ON ARMS CONTROL. THE UK WOULD PLAY ITS FULL PART IN THE WORK AHEAD, AND IN THE SEARCH FOR DECISIONS. HE LOOKED FOR PROGRESS IN THE CRUCIAL AREA BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

4. SCHOLTEN (NETHERLANDS) THEN MADE FOUR POINTS:

(A) HE RE-EMPHASISED THAT THE NETHERLANDS ATTACHED THE SAME IMPORTANCE TO TNF MODERNISATION AS TO ARMS CONTROL:

(B) SALT WOULD HAVE TO BE "A REALITY" BEFORE ANY TNF DECISIONS COULD BE TAKEN:

(C) IT WOULD BE DISASTROUS IF DECISIONS HAD TO BE TAKEN ON TNF MODERNISATION AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF A U S DECISION TO DEPLOY ERW:

(D) TNF MODERNISATION SHOULD ENABLE LESS EMPHASIS TO BE PLACED ON SHORTER RANGE SYSTEMS.

5. LAGACOS (GREECE) POINTED OUT THAT IT WOULD BE SOME YEARS BEFORE THE WEST COULD DEPLOY NEW SYSTEMS ONCE DECISIONS HAD BEEN TAKEN: HE POINTED TO THE PROBLEMS IN ARMS CONTROL TERMS OF TRADING PLANNED WESTERN SYSTEMS AGAINST EXISTING EASTERN ONES. APEL SAID THAT THE FIRST REQUIREMENT WAS A DECISION ON MODERNISATION. A FIRM WILL TO GO AHEAD WITH PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT WAS THE PRECONDITION OF SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS. SUCH NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD NOT AIM AT A PARTIAL OR EUROSTRATEGIC PARITY, BUT AT OVERALL PARITY. THE RUSSIANS MUST BE CERTAIN THAT ONLY SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS COULD PREVENT NATO FROM DEPLOYING NEW SYSTEMS. HE AGREED WITH SCHOLTEN THAT THIS WAS THE WRONG TIME TO REVIVE THE ERW DEBATE: THE ERW WAS A BATTLE-FIELD WEAPON, AND WAS NOT NEEDED TO FILL ANY GAP IN THE CONTINUUM OF DETERRENCE.

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6. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE ASKED HOW HE SHOULD UNDERSTAND SCHOLTEN'S REMARKS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A SALT II AGREEMENT AND TNF MODERNISATION. SALT II RATIFICATION MIGHT TAKE SOME TIME. SCHOLTEN SAID THAT HE HAD SAID AT THE NPG THAT HE COULD NOT COMMIT HIS GOVERNMENT ON THE TIMESCALE FOR DECISIONS. THE DUTCH HOPE THAT PROGRESS MIGHT BE POSSIBLE THIS YEAR HAD BEEN RELATED TO EXPECTATIONS ON SALT II. THE SIGNATURE OF A SALT II AGREEMENT WAS NOW IMMINENT, BUT THIS WAS NOT NECESSARILY THE SAME THING AS RATIFICATION.

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