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FM THE HAGUE 101500Z MAY 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 114 OF 10 MAY

INFO PRIORITY UKDEL NATO, WASHINGTON AND BONN

INFO SAVING BRUSSELS AND COPENHAGEN

MY TELNO 109: NETHERLANDS DEFENCE POLICY

1. MR HURD MET DE RUITER, MINISTER OF DEFENCE, OVER LUNCH AT MY HOUSE ON 9 MAY SEMI COLON DE VRIES, LEADER OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT PARLIAMENTARY PARTY, GENERAL HUIJSER, CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF DESIGNATE AND VAN EEKELN WERE ALSO PRESENT. HE TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO UNDERLINE FORCEFULLY THE DANGERS OF BRINGING THE BRITISH DETERRENT INTO THE CURRENT GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS AND TO URGE THAT THE NETHERLANDS SHOULD DO NOTHING TO PREEMPT A JOINT NATO DECISION ON SHORT RANGE NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THE LIGHT OF THE OUTCOME OF THE HLG STUDY.

2. DE RUITER MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

(A) HE EXPECTED TO INFORM PARLIAMENT IN SEPTEMBER OF THE CHOICE OF BASE FOR INF DEPLOYMENT.

(B) THE DEFENCE WHITE PAPER DUE TO ISSUE IN SEPTEMBER WOULD SUSPEND JUDGEMENT ON INF, LEAVING THE DECISION TO BE TAKEN LATER, PERHAPS IN MARCH 1984.

(C) HE COULD NOT IGNORE THE STRONG CRITICISM FROM WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY OVER NUCLEAR TASKS: IT WAS IMPERATIVE THAT THE WHITE PAPER SHOULD TAKE A POSITION ON THESE TASKS, AND THAT HE SHOULD BE ABLE AT THE VERY LEAST TO SHOW THAT IN CONSULTATIONS WITH NATO HE HAD PRESSED THE DUTCH CASE FOR A REDUCTION IN THE PRESENT NUMBER OF TASKS.

(D) HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE "AT SOME STAGE" TO BRING THE BRITISH AND FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCES INTO THE ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS.

(E) HE EXPLAINED THAT THE NETHERLANDS GOVERNMENT FELT UNABLE, EVEN THOUGH THIS MEANT LEAVING THE ENTIRE FIELD OF PUBLIC DEBATE TO THE PEACE MOVEMENT, TO ARGUE THE CASE IN PUBLIC FOR INF DEPLOYMENT, SINCE THEIR POSITION ON THE ISSUE WAS UNDECIDED (THE UNDERLYING REASON FOR THIS BEING OF COURSE, THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS - DE RUITERS OWN PARTY - ARE SPLIT OVER NUCLEAR WEAPONS).

3. NOT SURPRISINGLY, MR HURD WAS I BELIEVE DEPRESSED BY THIS ENCOUNTER, AND INCLINED TO CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT OF DE RUITER BEING PERSUADED TO ADOPT ANY MORE FORCEFUL LINE. IT IS HOWEVER IMPORTANT TO BEAR IN MIND THAT DE RUITER IS IN A MINORITY IN THE CABINET HERE IN HIS SCEPTICISM OVER INF, AND OPPOSED MUCH OF THE WAY ON THESE ISSUES BY VAN DEN BROEK (WITH WHOM WE BELIEVE LUBBERS HAS A CONSIDERABLE SYMPATHY).

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4. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE MFA SOURCES (PLEASE PROTECT) THE DUTCH ARE AIMING TO SET OUT IN A LETTER FROM THEIR NATO PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO LUNS, TO BE SENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER 18 MAY, THE MAIN THRUST OF THE PROPOSALS ON NUCLEAR TASKS TO BE CONTAINED IN THE PLANNED WHITE PAPER. DE RUITER IS PRESSING FOR THE RELINQUISHMENT OF NIKE, THE ADM, ORION AND THE NUCLEAR ARTILLERY - ALONG WITH A STATEMENT OF INTENT TO PRESS FOR ABANDONMENT OF THE F-16 TASK IN THE EVENT OF INF DEPLOYMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS . VAN DEN BROEK IS FIGHTING TO PRESERVE THE NUCLEAR ARTILLERY AND THE ORION, ARGUING ON THE FORMER THAT THE NETHERLANDS CORPS IN THE FRG CANNOT BE LEFT INADEQUATELY PROTECTED AND ON THE LATTER THAT THE DUTCH CANNOT LIGHTLY TAKE ACTION WHICH WOULD SIMPLY INCREASE THE BURDEN ON OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ALLIANCE.

5. AS SEEN FROM HERE IT WILL BE MOST IMPORTANT TO ENSURE THAT THE NATO RESPONSE TO ANY DUTCH DEMARCHE ON THE ABOVE LINES IS BOTH FIRM AND EFFECTIVE, AND COUCHED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AID THE PRO-NATO LOBBY HERE. TO BE EFFECTIVE IT WILL NEED INTER ALIA:

(A) TO AVOID THE SORT OF BRUSQUE TONE WHICH WOULD GO DOWN BADLY IN THE HAGUE AND TO SHOW SOME UNDERSTANDING OF THE DUTCH INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION.

(B) TO PAY TRIBUTE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE TO THE DUTCH CONTRIBUTION TO THE ALLIANCE IN GENERAL AND THINKING ON ARMS CONTROL IN PARTICULAR.

(C) TO REMIND THE DUTCH THAT HAVING THEMSELVES ASKED FOR THE HLG STUDY IN THE FIRST PLACE THEY CANNOT DEFENSIBLY NOW PREEMPT ITS CONCLUSIONS BUT, IF POSSIBLE, TO INCLUDE SOME REFERENCE TO COMPLETING THE STUDY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

(D) TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE THAT IF THE NETHERLANDS WANTS TO INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKING IN NATO IT MUST CONTINUE TO CARRY ITS AGREED SHARE OF THE BURDENS.

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