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The Reykjavik Ministerial Meeting of NATO

A. Background

The North Atlantic Council, in Ministerial session of Foreign Ministers will meet in Reykjavik, Iceland, June 24-25. This will be the first time that Iceland, a small but strategically located country of 200,000 people, has been the host for a NATO meeting.

This session takes place less than one year before the 20th anniversary of the creation of NATO as a defense Alliance to deter aggression against Western Europe.

As the Soviet Union emerged from Stalinist influence, the nature of the threat changed. Today, the polycentric tendencies within the Communist world, the evolution of Soviet society, plus affluence in the West, obscure the fact that mounting Soviet capabilities still pose a danger to Western European security.

Europe, long ago recovered from the effects of World War II, now faces problems common to affluent societies. Stable, prosperous and slightly smug, Western Europe has suddenly broken out in a rash of political and social crises.

Among NATO members, France and Canada will have elections at the time of the NATO meeting. Italy and Belgium are trying to form governments. The US is in the process of preparing for Presidential elections. Greece is confronted with a junta looking for a nationally approved constitution. The faltering British pound has created heavy pressure on the international monetary system. Despite all this, most of Europe has ample foreign exchange reserves and remains confident and firm. The economic structure is essentially sound.

In this atmosphere, NATO's continued functioning on a broad front - military and political - constitutes a welcome element of stability, despite some strains within the Alliance.

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B. Principal Issues at Reykjavik

1. EAST-WEST RELATIONS

The Ministers will discuss the general question of East-West relations. Views will be exchanged on recent developments in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Berlin. It is expected that the German Foreign Minister will report on the Federal Republic's relations with Eastern European countries in furtherance of its Ost-Politik. The improvement of relations between East and West, and such matters as European security, will also be discussed.

2. MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY

Security developments in the Mediterranean will be an important issue in the meeting. The Ministers will address particularly the impact on NATO, and the NATO area, of increasing Soviet penetration into the Mediterranean. Ways and means of countering this growing military power in the Mediterranean will also be examined and recommendations considered on increased surveillance by NATO countries of USSR fleet movements, and the adoption of a watching brief for Brosio.

3. MUTUAL FORCE REDUCTIONS

The Foreign Ministers will also take up mutual force reductions. In February President Johnson indicated to NATO Secretary Brosio that "maintenance of NATO's strength, including the US commitment, is necessary to continuing stability and security in the North Atlantic area. This stability and security provides the basis for exploring with the USSR the possibility of mutual force reductions." This question is under intensive study within NATO. The US has proposed for consideration at Reykjavik a resolution (declaration) on this issue which indicates NATO is studying the problem, expresses the hope that the USSR and other countries of Eastern Europe will also study it and be prepared at the proper time to explore such reductions together. The overall military capability of the Alliance should not be reduced except as a part of a pattern of mutual force reductions balanced in scope and timing.

4. NPT

The negotiations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty have been the subject of intensive consultations in NATO. The Germans and others wish to discuss some of the implications of this Treaty at Reykjavik. The non-nuclear NATO powers have been concerned that their signing the Treaty would impair their security, especially in the nuclear field, particularly should the NPT duration outlast NATO. We have tried to meet their legitimate concerns and persuade them to support the NPT, and are prepared to make a supporting statement at Reykjavik on our continued commitment to NATO as an instrument for peace and stability in Europe.

5. OTHER MATTERS

General tour d'horizon - the meeting will permit each Foreign Minister to give his views of the overall international situation. Secretary Rusk plans to meet in restricted session to discuss Vietnam and the European views on what they would like to see develop in Southeast Asia after peace is achieved.

C. Long Range Problems and Outlook for the Future

Above and beyond the issues on the official agenda at Reykjavik, certain general problems confront NATO:

1. FUTURE VIABILITY OF NATO

Foremost among these is the question of the future of the Alliance. French withdrawal from the integrated military aspects of NATO in 1966 caused many skeptics to doubt at that time whether the Alliance would have continued viability. The work of the organization since then has demonstrated that it can adjust to new conditions and continue as the keystone of Western collective security, even without French participation in its military aspects.

We anticipate that there will be continued support for NATO by the member governments. The governments participating in its military structure continue to recognize that collective security is the most effective way to ensure national security. The French attitude notwithstanding, we do not anticipate any members will take advantage of

Article XIII of the North Atlantic Treaty and give notice of withdrawal after its anniversary date (20 years) in 1969.

2. GREECE

Developments in Greece with the take-over of the government by a military junta have strained the bonds of the Alliance. Many NATO governments, notably in Scandinavia, the Low Countries and the UK have been sharply critical of the Greek regime. Pressures have been exerted in these countries to isolate Greece within the Alliance, if not to expel it, pending a return to constitutionality. While Greece remains a full, interested and essential participant in the Alliance, the Greek problem remains as a divisive factor.

3. BURDEN SHARING

We keep trying to persuade the Europeans to increase their own defense efforts in various ways, but this effort has met with little positive response to date. Nevertheless, we have negotiated successfully with some of our Allies on a bilateral basis in order to neutralize the balance of payments impact of our military expenditures. Arrangements for substantial neutralization have been concluded with the Germans and the Belgians. Similar arrangements are well on the way to completion with the Danes, the Dutch and the Italians.

D. Reykjavik and the Continued Importance of NATO to US

NATO remains essential to US security:

1. In view of the current pattern of Soviet activity and current developments affecting Western and Eastern political stability, it is even more essential that the US maintain a consistent policy of support for a strong NATO.

2. While maintaining this support, we must also be flexible enough to ensure that the Alliance is responsive to opportunities for easing tensions in Europe. NATO can become an increasingly effective instrument of detente.

3. We shall continue to study within NATO the possibilities for exploring, with the Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe, mutual force reductions. Concentration will be primarily on the Central Region of NATO in light of the heavy confrontation there of forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Meanwhile, consistent with the President's discussion with Brosio last February, we should strive to maintain overall NATO military strength. Unilateral troop reductions could undermine current efforts toward a balanced mutual reduction of forces.

4. In the Mediterranean area, we see the Soviet threat as being primarily political, and we are recommending a set of modest, non-provocative political-military responses by NATO to this threat.

5. Through the mechanism of the Nuclear Planning Group, we are studying ways for increased national participation -- and thereby understanding -- in military nuclear planning and for developing a sounder basis for NATO military planning with respect to the use of tactical nuclear weapons.

6. We shall continue to try to work out arrangements to neutralize the effects of our military presence in Europe upon our balance of payments.

7. We are committed through CY 1968 on US force levels in NATO. These US forces in Europe contribute to both the nuclear and conventional defense of the North Atlantic area. The US forces in Europe are a part of NATO's conventional defenses as well as acting as custodians for the tactical nuclear weapons that we maintain there. They also provide an essential institutional link between NATO's conventional forces, largely supplied by the Europeans, and the strategic nuclear weapons which are almost wholly American. In addition, these units are an earnest of American leadership in the Alliance.

8. For the future we must examine means for getting greater European participation in the defense of Europe, such as a European Defense Organization, or capitalizing on the U.K. interest in the Continent as the result of its withdrawals East of Suez.