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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
NET EVALUATION SUBCOMMITTEE

15 OCT 1964

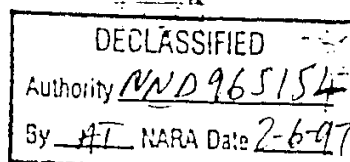
Dear Mr. Bundy:

The 1964 report of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee (NESC) of the National Security Council has been completed and is forwarded herewith. This year's analysis differs in major respects from the reports of previous years, which were devoted primarily to assessing the effects on the US and USSR of massive nuclear exchanges between the two countries. The objective of the 1964 task was, in effect, an assessment of US "crisis management" capabilities in the event of hostilities at various scales of intensity between the US and the USSR. Specifically, the NESC was asked to consider: (1) the manner in which a war between the US and USSR might be initiated, (2) the factors -- political, military and economic -- affecting decisions at critical points in the war, particularly during the early phases of hostilities, and (3) the effects on the US, its allies, and the USSR of actions resulting from such decisions. The report's over-all purpose was to evaluate the validity and feasibility of this type of analysis as a basis for providing guidance for political-military planning and to assist in identifying and evaluating the risks inherent in various alternative courses of action in presently approved operational war plans.

The NESC staff, to complete the report within the time allotted, chose to narrow the scope of analysis. It discussed methods of assuring more complete guidance to the military planner; however, it concentrated on an appraisal of the suitability and adequacy of existing NATO war plans, command/control processes, and military capabilities to respond to USSR-initiated conventional and limited nuclear attacks against the Alliance; and it explored the military aspects of such situations more fully than the diplomatic ones. Finally, it focused on the identification and examination of elements influencing military decisions rather than on the timing and possible consequences of critical decisions. Even so circumscribed, the NESC task nonetheless addressed one of the most complex -- if not the most complex -- of all the areas of Free World political-military planning. Military technology, geography, population distribution, and alliance politics have all combined to make the decisions on going to war, and on the early type and scale of combat, the most difficult and fundamental ones the NATO member governments must take.

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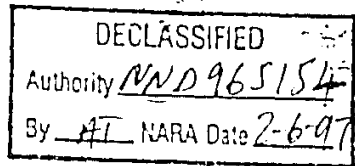
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The evaluation brought out clearly that because of the complexity and the changing nature of the NATO defense posture some significant problems remain unresolved. Specifically, the report underscores the risks and dilemmas to the Alliance due, in part, to the restricted flexibility of SACEUR's forces, resulting from peacetime maldeployments, uncertain reinforcement capacity, the requirement to maintain a general war posture, and logistics limitations. Current ability to hold the conflict to a relatively low level of intensity, without the sacrifice of a major portion of the homelands of our allies, for a period sufficient to permit diplomacy even minimal opportunity to forestall irreversible escalation, must be assessed as limited and uncertain.

That the problems not yet solved are formidable and vital is well recognized by this Administration. As the report suggests, this is in fact an area which is being subjected to the most intensive military planning; in a number of major current projects, the requirements for effective and flexible military action of limited scope, responsive to direction from the highest levels of government, are being closely studied in the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The impediments and limitations that have been identified, both in the NESC reports and in other studies, result principally from unresolved divergencies on the current NATO Strategic Concept, difficulties inherent in the military situation, in alliance operations, and in military technology.

Thus, the NESC's report this year serves both as an evaluation of existing NATO capabilities to conduct a defense against limited aggression in Europe and as a useful reminder of some unfinished tasks and current realities. Continued improvement is called for to see that the processes for the higher control of possible military action in Europe are quick-acting, flexible, and survivable, particularly during the early phases of any hostilities. This period will be marked by obscurity of enemy intentions and actions and great peril to our forces, yet it will be a time when an inadvertent signal to the enemy, or an unwanted escalation, could frustrate diplomatic negotiations for an acceptable settlement. It must be remembered, too, that the type of enemy attack in Europe -- its location, intensity, and objectives -- will be essential determinants of the NATO military response, and hence of the amount of time diplomacy may have to operate before hostilities intensify. Under certain circumstances, NATO could respond to a limited Soviet thrust with conventional means alone, and the better the preparations made, the more effective the defense would be. In other circumstances,



limited nuclear operations could be required. For both of these modes of warfare, much preparatory work remains to be done. As a third possibility, governed strongly by the nature of the enemy attack, NATO could quickly be faced with the necessity of going at once to general war or failing to defend the territory of one or more of its members -- drastically foreshortening the time available for diplomatic negotiations. The decisions as to scale and tempo will not be made by NATO unilaterally; the Soviet Union, as noted will also be vitally involved. But NATO, by maintaining and strengthening its arms and its manifest readiness and determination to meet attack of any scale, can take major strides toward assuring that the Alliance can make an effective response to aggression, and can thereby strengthen the deterrent it poses to Soviet aggression. The NESC report reaffirms that such deterrence remains the capstone of NATO viability.

In summary, the 1964 NESC report provides a useful evaluation of our current capabilities to meet various forms of limited aggression in Europe, together with a contribution toward further identification of some specific areas for additional study and analysis. It would seem appropriate that you furnish the report to the Secretary of Defense for use by his Department as he deems appropriate. In this way the study results may be considered expeditiously in connection with related actions now under way within the Department of Defense.

For the Net Evaluation Subcommittee:

(sgd) EARLE G. WHEELER

EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman

The Honorable McGeorge Bundy
Special Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
The White House