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 25 November 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing for Chancellor Adenauer at the White House,
 21 November 1961

Present

Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)

- Chancellor Adenauer
- Foreign Minister Schroeder
- Defense Minister Strauss
- General Schnez

United States

- Secretary Rusk
- Secretary Kohler
- Secretary McNamara
- Secretary Nitze
- General Lemnitzer
- General Taylor
- Mr. Allen Dulles
- Mr. McCone
- General Clay

The presentation began at 1600 and was made in German by Major General Heintges, USA.

President Kennedy entered the Cabinet Room for the last ten minutes of the briefing and participated in the entire discussion period.

Shortly before the discussion period additional personnel entered the Cabinet Room to include: Ambassador Grewe, Ambassador Dowling and Mr. Bohlen.

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Secretary Rusk opened the conference by explaining the program and purpose. Secretary McNamara expanded on the introduction and introduced General Heintges.

General Heintges made the complete presentation (copy attached) without interruption.

Following General Heintges' presentation the President invited comments from the Chancellor.

Chancellor Adenauer thanked the President for the briefing which he found intensely interesting particularly as it dealt with nuclear strength of the U.S. In discussing general military situation confronting NATO he said he did not believe that effective up-risings in the satellites was at all likely.

The Chancellor stated that the FRG estimates of available Russian and East German Forces which could be employed in the Central Europe area quickly, included 20 Soviet divisions in East Germany, 9 East German divisions and 70 Soviet divisions. In addition, he felt that the Soviet-satellite forces had available a total of 40,000 tanks and armored vehicles while NATO only had from 4,000 to 5,000. He stated that NATO had only 24 divisions available to meet a Russian attack of Central Europe.

The Chancellor then asked General Schnez for his comments. General Schnez expressed satisfaction with the information on U.S. nuclear strength which was, he considered, superior to that of the Soviet Union and also felt that command and control capabilities of the U.S. was superior to that of the Soviet Union. He confirmed the strength figures which were previously quoted by the Chancellor. He emphasized that the Soviets could deploy forces to the Central European front far more quickly than NATO. He estimated that satellite divisional strength to be about 33 divisions but considered their fighting value was much inferior to Soviet divisions. He also felt that there was little or no possibility of mass satellite defection.

With respect to the 70 Soviet divisions in the satellites and Russian areas he felt they could be brought into East Germany in nine days by road and rail. He was convinced that under our present concept of defense of the NATO area substantial areas of FRG would quickly fall into the enemy's hands. For that reason the FRG is deeply interested in increasing NATO shield strength so that an effective defense could be made as far east as possible.

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Secretary McNamara commented on the differences between German estimates of enemy strength and those given in the briefings and indicated that he felt that the German estimates were too high.

Minister Strauss then reviewed the intelligence figures and indicated it was quite obvious the total enemy capability far exceeded those given in the presentation. For example, he indicated the FRG intelligence gave the Russians a total capability of 180 divisions whereas the presentation placed the strength at 147 active Russian divisions. He stated that the U. S. had never cast any doubt on the 180 division FRG estimate and felt that this was a very wide difference that should be corrected. Minister Strauss said this should be a matter which could be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the NATO Military Committee for he felt the figures should be reviewed and a better agreement reached thereon. He noted also that our figures only credited the Russians with 9,000 tanks and armored vehicles against Berlin estimate of 40,000. He felt that the figures needed correcting. (Note: It was obvious that the estimates given in the briefing and those presented by the German representative were based on entirely different criteria for prompt deployment in Central Europe.)

President Kennedy raised the question regarding the size of Russian and NATO divisions.

Minister Strauss said that the Russian divisions average from 9,000 to 10,000 each while NATO divisions are larger, some going as high as 15,000. He emphasized however that the tank and artillery strength of Soviet forces was greater than in NATO. He indicated that he did not believe in general that the Soviet divisions were any stronger than NATO divisions.

Minister Strauss said there appeared to be a different military philosophy among the various NATO nations as to military concepts.

President Kennedy then commented on the fact that for some reason not clear to him, Europeans seem to have gained the impression that we are downgrading our nuclear capabilities when we recently stressed the buildup of conventional forces.

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Minister Strauss stressed that he was a firm believer in balanced force and he felt they should have both a conventional and nuclear capability. He emphasized the FRG is not upset over relative nuclear strength because he felt that sufficient nuclear power was available if it was used at the proper time. He said that he felt that a large scale conventional war in Europe would be disastrous to NATO. He stressed that our nuclear capability must not only be established beyond any doubt and that we must make it clear that we have it but we will use it when the situation requires such use.

Minister Strauss said that within the German government they had recently had a debate regarding the pros and cons of removing all nuclear weapons from the territory of FRG. He said that the government strongly disagreed with any such proposal. He felt that we must of course leave the aggressor in uncertainty as to exactly when we would employ nuclear weapons.

President Kennedy asked if Minister Strauss felt it was possible for NATO to defend the FRG without nuclear weapons. Minister Strauss replied that he felt the minimum number of divisions needed to defend the Central Sector would be 30 divisions as proposed by General Norstad. He stated, however, that he believed the prompt employment of nuclear weapons would be necessary if this defense was to be effective.

Minister Strauss then mentioned some of the measures recently taken by the FRG to improve its military capability to include extension of service from 12 to 18 months. He was convinced that the FRG would reach the goal of 11 to 12 divisions next year.

General Lemnitzer reviewed the differences in intelligence figures which had been discussed and stated that he felt that the U.S. estimate of 147 Soviet divisions was much more realistic of the Berlin estimate of 180 divisions.

He stated that many of these reductions had been made during the past year. He defended the U.S. estimate of 55 enemy divisions deployable in the Central Europe area within a period of several weeks.

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General Lemnitzer mentioned some of the problems which would be faced by advancing Soviet forces particularly if they meet strong NATO resistance. Among other things he mentioned the vulnerability of Soviet lines of communication through Poland, East Germany, etc., to sabotage and Allied bombing.

General Lemnitzer pointed out that Intelligence Appreciation was one of the items on the agenda of the forthcoming Military Committee Meeting in Paris of which he is presently Chairman. He stated that he considered that the figures presented in the briefing would approximate those in the NATO intelligence estimate. However, if there were differences of opinion along the lines indicated above they could be further discussed at that meeting.

Minister Strauss welcomed the buildup of NATO military strength and felt NATO was on the right track. However, he reiterated his view that it would be very risky for NATO to attempt to fight a large scale conventional war in Europe. He mentioned the fact that the Russians were very wasteful in their expenditure of human life in battle and it was therefore necessary for the West to make clear to the USSR that nuclear weapons would be employed if more than one NATO division is required to oppose a Russian attack. Strauss said that he believed that Khrushchev considers that he has the mission of completing the Communist conquest of the world during his lifetime. He felt that if he considered this mission to be in jeopardy, because of NATO power, he would be successfully deterred. He felt that it was absolutely essential that we make our nuclear power credible but that he (Strauss) believes that this credibility had deteriorated recently.

Chancellor Adenauer commented that he believed that it will not be possible to reach an agreement on Berlin in NATO. He said that he felt that the Russians will take West Berlin and felt that they could reach Hamburg in one hour and Munich in two hours. He reiterated his deep concern regarding the likelihood of our use of nuclear weapons.

President Kennedy questioned this deep concern and pointed out that under the circumstances cited by the Chancellor (Russian capture of West Berlin, Hamburg and Munich) it would most certainly mean that we would be involved in a nuclear war. He stated that the seizure

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of Berlin alone would trigger off such a war. He also questioned whether the Soviets would take the trouble to give us one or two hours' notice if they intended to take such action without resorting to nuclear weapons.

Chancellor Adenauer summed up his view of the situation and characterized the NATO position in Europe today as weak and shaky. He asked the President if he thought if the Russians took Berlin, Italy, France and the Benelux countries would be willing to fight for it. President Kennedy replied he did not know but there was no doubt in his mind regarding what the U.S. would do. He repeated his view that he did not think if the Russians launched a major attack on Europe that they would not give two hours' notice. He felt if nuclear attack on Europe came it would come about in some other way.

Chancellor Adenauer responded that the main nuclear strength of the USSR today is directed against Europe.

Minister Strauss stated that there is general agreement among NATO planners regarding the action to be taken to defend Western Europe. He said that the FRG fully accepted the concept of probes to determine Soviet intention if our land and air access to Berlin was denied by the USSR or East Germans. He said that the FRG agreed also to the concept of sea and naval blockades but he felt it would be difficult to gain and maintain control of situation by these actions alone. He then reiterated his view that if the Soviets undertook any operations against Western Europe which required more than one NATO division to deal with, nuclear weapons must be used. He then completed his remarks by stating that no serious issue must be permitted to arise between the United States and FRG. Chancellor Adenauer said that he subscribed to what Minister Strauss had indicated in this regard.

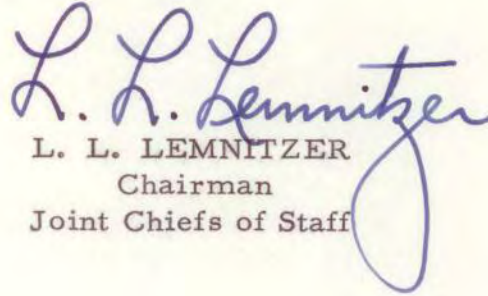
At this time the President was handed a UPI press notice which indicated that baffles had been constructed on the autobahn leading to West Berlin which required vehicles to zigzag to get through them. At the request of the Secretary of State, General Lemnitzer checked the Joint War Room and Headquarters, CINCEUR, to determine the validity of the UPI statement. Headquarters CINCEUR reported that the UPI release had been noted but had no confirmation of the construction of baffles on the autobahn had yet been obtained. Headquarters, CINCEUR stated that patrols would be dispatched from West Berlin

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and Helmstedt to confirm or deny the report. Several hours later, Headquarters, CINCEUR, as a result of reconnaissance by patrols, confirmed that baffles (steel girders) had been placed on the autobahn near the Russian-West Berlin checkpoint (Babelsburg) which required vehicles to zigzag in order to get through them.

The conference adjourned at 1820 hours.


L. L. LEMNITZER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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