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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, November 12, 1981

TIME AND PLACE: 4:00-5:00 p.m.
The Cabinet Room

SUBJECT: Theater Nuclear Forces

PARTICIPANTS:

President Ronald Reagan

Vice President George Bush

State

Secretary Alexander Haig
Deputy Secretary William Clark

Defense

Secretary Caspar Weinberger
Deputy Secretary Frank Carlucci

CIA

Director William Casey

USUN

Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick

JCS

Admiral Thomas Hayward (Acting Chairman)
Lt General Paul Gorman

ACDA

Director Eugene Rostow

White House

Mr. Edwin Meese III
Mr. Richard V. Allen
Admiral James W. Nance
Ms. Janet Colson

Office of the Vice President

Admiral Daniel J. Murphy

OMB

Associate Director William Schneider

NSC

Mr. Sven Kraemer

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MINUTES OF MEETING

Mr. Allen: Mr. President, we have one agenda item today. It is on the Theater Nuclear Forces (TNF) negotiations which will begin on November 30. The paper before us was prepared by the Interagency Group. It includes discussion of two decisions we will make today or shortly thereafter concerning the initial US position in the negotiations: (1) the "zero" level; and (2) the Soviet SS-12/22 missiles.

On the "zero" level issue, the first option (Option A) is that we should propose reductions in specified land-based TNF missiles to zero at the opening round of negotiations, stand on this position for a significant period of time, and not indicate during this period a willingness to agree to ceilings above zero.

With the second option (Option B), the US would propose reductions to the lowest possible equal level with zero as our preferred outcome, but also indicating from the outset a willingness to consider equal ceilings greater than zero.

The President: I read the paper and those options. Negotiating history and my experience tell me that we should be choosing something between these two options. We should not be saying "zero" or nothing, and we should not be proposing two positions at once. We should, instead, simply go in and say that we are negotiating in good faith for the removal of these systems on both sides. We should ask the Soviet Union to share in this effort. We should not say this is what we would like to have, but we will settle for less. One should ask for the moon, and when the other fellow offers green cheese, one can settle for something in between.

Secretary Haig: I agree, but asking for the moon, for zero, could be turned against us and to our disadvantage. Maybe, you, Gene (Rostow), wish to comment.

Mr. Rostow: The two options are not so far apart. There is really little difference between them, in spite of the argumentation in the discussion paper on pages 4 and 5. The difference is largely presentational.

I would state things differently. Our primary objective is the unity of our Alliance, not getting an agreement. In an intelligence item we got today, the Soviets' view of the negotiations indicates that the first year will be

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spent on data issues and the second year on developing positions. It is, therefore, important that we take a position and stick with it. Our Allies are happy with our position on lowest possible levels to zero. We are drafting a treaty text now that will be based on zero. It will conform to language in Alliance documents.

The President: What documents? Are there agreed Alliance documents on this?

Secretary Weinberger: There are none. I haven't seen any. There is more involved here than a presentational difference between the options. There is more than phraseology involved. With our option, we would take the high ground and stay with it for a significant period of time. Otherwise, we would be doing what Carter and Vance did in 1977 -- offering two proposals at once. My meetings with the NATO Defense Ministers indicated that they would receive this "zero" option proposal with nothing but joy. At the Ministerials in October, I had to make a real effort to keep the "zero" option out of the Communique. If we propose it, our position will be infinitely improved with our Allies. I think that this is also State's position -- that our Allies favor the "zero" option.

Secretary Haig: We will face a lengthy period of negotiations, and will be having Allied consultations, as in the SCG. Meanwhile, as the IG paper points out, we have to assure a solid position for deployment of our programs. The "zero only" option will not do this.

The Soviets will say "wonderful" to a US "zero only" position. They ultimately will drive us into zero on other systems, including aircraft, that we don't want to include. Dobrynin has already raised the aircraft issue with me last week. We will then have to pull back from our own "zero" option proposal.

Can you, Mr. President, be in the position of having to reject a Soviet proposal for significant reductions in comparable systems? For a year, you have been talking about the goal of reaching significant reductions. One cannot bridge this gap with a "zero only" approach.

I see two outcomes from the "zero only" approach: (1) the Soviets will accept and extend the approach unacceptably until we oppose and withdraw from it, and the Allies will

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consider it as a propaganda ploy, not a serious position; and (2) in asking the Soviets to give up vast quantities of weapons against systems we have not deployed, we will later be seen as an obstacle for rejecting zero levels for aircraft, etc.

The President: I would describe the SS-20 system as being deployed at the rate of one per week and capable of destroying every population center in Europe. On our side, we are countering these with deployment of missiles able to reach deep into Russia. It is my belief that we can begin negotiations with the hope that we can eliminate all of these missiles totally, verifiably, and globally. Then in good faith, we can with regard to other nuclear weapons, look to a realistic reduction. This is not an all or nothing approach. It is a hope in good faith negotiations; and we would be willing to match Soviet reductions.

Secretary Haig: Within 24 hours after you announced this, the real question you would be asked in Europe is whether that is your only position. Would the US accept significant reductions?

Secretary Weinberger: We'd lose any negotiations by answering such questions. We should not be laying out our negotiation strategy publicly. We already know roughly what the Soviets will offer: a moratorium, probably, and moving missiles East of the Urals. As for the Europeans, the Defense Ministers would be absolutely delighted with a tough US "zero" proposal. It would solve their political problems.

Secretary Haig: Cap, we're just talking around each other. We both agree we want "zero."

Secretary Weinberger: The we should say so.

Mr. Rostow: Mr. President, you would bridge the gap. It is a good offer, and we will be negotiating in good faith.

On answering detailed questions about our position, this is not our problem. On whether we will settle for less, for example, we can answer that the President said we will negotiate in good faith on limits for other systems.

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The President: Right. We'll ask for dismantling and destruction of the specified land-missile systems, and we would be offering the negotiations in good faith on the other systems.

Secretary Haig: There will be no end of questions.

Mr. Rostow: We can say we'll negotiate however long it takes.

The President: We're not issuing a ultimatum, but are expressing a hope. We are not saying we would ask for more or settle for less. We are naming their and our missile systems and we are hopeful on the rest.

Secretary Weinberger: I think we are all saying so.

Secretary Haig: I hope so. But we are risking the collapse of our position of its own weight. We must keep in mind Western unity. We must keep the consensus for deployment.

Mr. Rostow: But the Europeans want us to propose the "zero" option. Why should they now reject it?

Secretary Haig: I know what they want. I have talked to Genscher and Schmidt and the rest.

The President: We should know here what figures we could accept if the Soviets make a counteroffer.

Secretary Weinberger: The High Level Group is working on that.

The President: Then, if the Soviets storm against our position, we can ask them: Well, what do you think? What is your number? If we know the minimum number we can live with, we can answer them.

Secretary Haig: There has already been a ten-month discussion of a "zero" option in Europe. The Allies will immediately ask us about numbers and other things we have discussed with them earlier during our consultations. They will want to know about numbers and systems. In a short time, our minimum numbers would be out of the bag.

Mr. Allen: What Europeans would be asking this? Don't they all agree on the "zero" option?

Secretary Haig: If we propose an exchange of the Soviets' SS-20's, 4's, and 5's for our not-yet-deployed Pershing II's and GLCMs, the Europeans will recognize this as a very tough position for the West to take, and as probably one that is not going to be accepted by the Soviets.

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The President: No, we will say we intend to negotiate in good faith, but we will start at the outset with our offer.

Secretary Haig: This interagency paper before us does not say that. In it, Defense wants an all-or-nothing approach. That's what my staff told me about Cap's position, and I am sure Cap's people characterize my position in comparable all-or-nothing ways. This paper isn't right; we, here, should be able to work this difference.

The President: We need to have figures beyond that we will not go. We need to know what we can live with and when. We need to know what we can bring back to our people as an accomplishment.

Secretary Weinberger: We need to ask the Soviets to dismantle and destroy their systems. We do not need to answer details about our negotiating position. We must go on the offensive. We should not say that we will stay until December 18 and then change course from our position. We should not signal that less is acceptable.

The President: Once we propose this, the ball's in the Soviets' court.

Mr. Rostow: We cannot fix our minimum number now. We have to hold this in abeyance. We have to discuss the issue of areas to be covered by sea-based systems, etc., with our Allies too. We can say to our Allies that in the first phase, we'll stick to these three or four points, then we'll see what happens.

The President: We'll start with our position, then we'll see what the Soviets offer. Then we'll check that against our number and with the Allies.

Secretary Haig: How long will we stick to our position before we give new instructions? At least to the end of the year?

Secretary Weinberger: If we give up before Christmas, there is no chance of ever getting back to our position. If you take the high ground, you will carry everybody with you on our side.

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Secretary Haig: It's too early to say that. If we appear too rigid, our Allies will depart from our side.

The Vice President: It is the general position in Europe that Ronald Reagan does not want to negotiate. There is a similar perception in the US Senate that the President does not want to negotiate any where at any time. With this position, the President would do a lot for public opinion in Europe and the United States.

Secretary Haig: That's why we proposed the speech for you. We are all behind "zero" level. I was the first to use it. It was in Bonn, in September. But, "zero," carried to extremes, is a brittle position. It will be seen as a propaganda ploy for quick victory. Skepticism in Europe is great. This is clear from my discussions with foreign ministers.

The President: They may be expecting slogans. But properly worded, our position can be convincing and can persuade.

Secretary Haig: The Germans want the "zero" option under ideal circumstances. They want a package that is manageable. But if we say "zero only," the Soviets will say "fine, let's define the 'zero' option." And then the Soviets will include aircraft and forward-based systems, etc., and we'll have to say "No." We all want enough air in our opening position to be able to fall off it to keep our Allies with us and the Soviets at bay.

Secretary Weinberger: The likelihood of the Soviets offering "zero" is remote. Our proposal on the SS-20's, 4's, and 5's in exchange for our Pershing II's and GLCMs will set them on their heels. Our position has the support of our Allies, people around the world can understand it, and the President can communicate it.

Mr. Allen: If the Europeans have proposed it, wouldn't they now be pleased if the President communicated it? Is it qualitatively new if the President says it?

Secretary Weinberger: The Presidential statement and proposal will be new.

The President: If the Soviets storm us, we'll ask them what their counteroffer is, and if their counteroffer really reduces their systems. Then we'll compare their position and our position and work toward a compromise.

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Secretary Haig: The real question is what will we tell our Allies as we consult with them.

The President: We'll tell them what we just said.

Secretary Haig: We must tell them before your speech. Otherwise, we have a disaster on our hands.

Mr. Rostow: The Soviets won't buy our position on only SS-20's, 4's, and 5's and Pershing II's and GLCMs.

Secretary Weinberger: We'll be facing that anyway.

Secretary Haig: I'll be a pain in the butt. There is no way we can consult with the Allies on this position without trouble. They will insist on our accepting reductions, rather than just "zero." They'll want to know what reductions we'll accept.

Secretary Weinberger: But anyone who asks such questions is not serious about negotiations, and about our opening position.

Secretary Haig: But, Cap, you've already agreed to fall back from the opening position anyway.

Secretary Weinberger: No. If it's seriously presented and has the sanction of the President, it can persuade. I did not say we should fall off it.

The President: Al, we're not delivering an ultimatum. We'll tell our Allies we're seeking the "zero" and that we're negotiating for as long as it takes in good faith; and we'll ask for their support.

Secretary Weinberger: Why would the Allies reject such a bold, dramatic proposal?

Secretary Haig: It's not bold and it's not dramatic. It's been discussed in Europe for the last 12 months.

Mr. Rostow: We should stay with the language we used in our Alliance consultations, lowest possible level, including or, preferably, "zero." We also need to remember that any ceiling must be "global."

Secretary Haig: But "global" is bad in some other contexts [i.e., Cancun].

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Secretary Weinberger: "Global" is not half as dramatic as "zero."

Secretary Haig: "Global" is good here. On the "zero," we must avoid an Allied repudiation of your speech, Mr. President. This (NSC discussion) paper is brittle. It was prepared by our staffs. Our staffs tell us Al's and Cap's positions are frozen and are all or nothing. Our staffs, in the paper, painted very sharp contradictions. But actually, the "lowest possible" formula, which includes "zero," does not weaken the position.

Secretary Weinberger: We could never get the "zero" if we formulate our position that way.

Mr. Meese: We could stay with an initial insistence on "zero." Then we can see what happens next.

The President: If the Allies ask us is that final, we'll say no. And we'll wait for the Soviets' counteroffer, and we'll enumerate the systems we want to eliminate.

Secretary Haig: We need to look at the whole panorama of other systems like shorter-range missiles.

Mr. Allen: We're running short of time. We should address the issue of shorter-range Soviet SS-12/22 missiles.

The President: Why don't we keep Option A in our initial negotiating package so we can fall off it later; so we would keep it in the same ceiling? What shall I say about it in my speech?

Mr. Rostow: It's a serious issue to include these systems in the same ceiling with the others. They have different ranges and different systems of command and control. The Allies, especially the Germans and British, want them in different ceilings. There's great concern about the initial package.

The President: If technically they don't belong there, into the other ceilings, then when the Soviets try to throw in aircraft, etc., we can offer to take out these shorter-range missiles for the ceiling. But I don't think we need to include these in my speech now.

Secretary Haig: But Cap wants to include them in the speech.

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Secretary Weinberger: Yes, I would think so.

Secretary Haig: I would strenuously oppose that. It's not credible to put it in as a demand.

The President: Why clutter up the speech then? Its first affect with the Allies and Soviets is what counts. Let's leave it to the Soviets' SS-20's, 4's, and 5's against our Pershing II's and GLCMs.

Mr. Meese: We may want to hold our Pershing I's, rather than proposing to withdraw them for future Pershing II's.

Secretary Haig: That's not an insignificant choice.

Mr. Meese: We should not do away with our Pershing I; we should not announce any planned withdrawal until we hear the Soviets' response to our "zero" proposal.

Secretary Haig: That's fine, but not if we keep the Pershing II's as well. We just cannot add more weapons to the 572.

Mr. Meese: In the first round, we'll talk only about SS-20's, 4's, and 5's, and GLCMs and Pershing II's; and we'll be silent on Pershing I's.

Secretary Haig: We need an agreed statement from the President by noon tomorrow for consultations with the Allies. We need to get a telegram to our Allies on this out tomorrow. The language will be hard to come by. Gene (Rostow), have you changed your mind on the language?

Mr. Rostow: I am comfortable with the President's language.

Secretary Weinberger: The President's language embodies the right position. But I strongly question whether we should be peddling this all over Europe now. If it is sent out, it will get out and will greatly reduce the impact of the President's speech. It will be printed all over Europe right away.

Secretary Haig: It will be a disaster if we do not consult with our Allies before the speech.

Secretary Weinberger: How about two hours before the speech?

Mr. Meese: What schedule do you propose, Al?

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Secretary Haig: On the 16th, I would send senior emissaries to our Allies to brief them personally on our TNF position and on the President's speech. And on the 20th, we would have an SCG meeting.

Mr. Meese: Why not send an orientation team over for the SCG to talk about the negotiations for the 30th? Later, they could add comments on the President's speech.

Mr. Rostow: Won't this briefing team be an invitation to the Allies to give us advice on our text? Why don't we send a telegram to our Ambassadors to deliver?

Secretary Haig: Gene, I beg to differ with you. This is my department, and I believe I have to decide how we conduct our diplomacy with our Allies. We cannot do this with pieces of paper. They expect a personal contact. We have to send special emissaries.

Mr. Meese: Network time for the speech now has been cleared for the 18th.

Mr. Allen: We will have an NSC meeting on the Caribbean next Monday at 2:00 p.m. and an NSPG meeting next Thursday at 3:00 p.m. on a subject that will be announced by memo.

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