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Summary of Dutch Position on TNF Modernization for a Meeting Between US Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and Dutch Defense Minister Willem Scholten

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Summary:

An outline of the Dutch position on the modernization of Theater Nuclear Forces (TNF) in Europe as of late 1979. It includes extensive discussion of Dutch domestic political challenges associated with supporting TNF modernization, the proposed connection between TNF modernization and the fate of SALT II as well as an enumeration of military/technical conditions under which TNF modernization would be viewed as more palatable by the Dutch government.

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Contents:

- English Translation

draft memorandum¹
Archive of A.A.M. van Agt, box 41, TNF file, Catholic Documentation Center,
University Nijmegen
translation from the Dutch and footnotes: Ruud van Dijk, University of Amsterdam

SUMMARY DUTCH POSITION REGARDING TNF-MODERNIZATION FOR
MEETING BROWN² – SCHOLTEN³

1. Matter has not yet been discussed in plenary meeting of Dutch cabinet, in light of the required strict secrecy. The following is the opinion of the Prime-Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defense. These officials expect that the cabinet will follow their lead.
2. The report of the HLWG⁴ and the Special Group are expert reports. No matter how valuable this judgment of experts, now the time comes for the political evaluation. The primacy of politics in a matter as important as this is clear.
3. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and of Defense have agreed with the permanent parliamentary committees⁵ for foreign affairs and defense that prior to a final decision by the Dutch cabinet there will be consultations with both committees, before and after the November NPG meeting in the Hague. These consultations have since been scheduled for November 1 and December 4. The final decision by the Dutch cabinet, therefore, cannot take place before the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers of December 7.
4. It follows from this that any kind of *commitment*⁶ from the Dutch side can only be made in the week of December 10 in Brussels. What needs to be noted is that the committees of Foreign Affairs and Defense do not have the authority to commit parliament as a whole. Therefore, there will still be a plenary debate, expected the third week of December, prior to the Christmas recess.⁷
An earlier decision – in some reports there was talk of a “Vorentscheidung”—is therefore not possible. During the NPG meeting in the Hague – incidentally only

¹ At the end of the paper there is a handwritten date and time: 2/10/79 [October 2, 1979] 11.10 hours, and there are the signatures of Prime-Minister Van Agt, Foreign Minister Van der Klaauw, and Defense Minister Scholten.

² U.S. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown.

³ The meeting took place on October 5.

⁴ Term used here for NATO's High Level Group is: High Level Working Group.

⁵ Specified here: committees in the Second Chamber, or lower house of parliament.

⁶ In English—other italicized words in the text also in English in the original document.

⁷ There are some handwritten edits at this point in the document, with the three signatories to the entire document signing off on them. All handwritten notes on the documents appear to be in Minister Scholten's hand.

attended by the defense ministers – a decision of any kind will not be possible. The NPG meeting is nothing more, but nothing less either, than a first meeting where after the completion of the HLWG and Special Group reports this can be discussed at a political level.

5. The decision in Brussels in December will have to occur in a meeting attended by both the defense and the foreign ministers. The Secretary-General of NATO should be asked in a timely way to consider the formal structure of such a decisionmaking gathering.

6. In the view of the Dutch government, the decision about TNF-modernization cannot be separated from the ratification of SALT-II. This has emphatically been noted by the Minister of Defense in Miami.⁸ In the current concrete situation – where it is not certain that SALT-II ratification will have been completed before the decision on TNF-modernization will be on the agenda, the second week of December – this means that in the view of the Dutch government the decision on TNF-modernization will have to be tied to both a condition and a time-period.

As regards the condition, this means that the decision about TNF-modernization will be considered as not having been made if and as soon as the American Senate decides not to ratify SALT-II (abrogating clause).

As far as the condition of a time-period, this means that a possible positive decision regarding modernization can only come into force when SALT-II has been ratified.⁹

7. The proposed number of warheads of 572 from the HLWG-report is politically unacceptable for the Dutch government. Political consultations have shown that acceptance of this number will lead to a political (cabinet) crisis. For the following, these points also need to be kept in mind:

a. that with the number of 572 the possible replacement of the British Vulcans has not been processed;

b. that neither has been taken into account the required approx. 90 so-called *reloads*;

c. that originally there was talk of (this has become public) 200 to 600 extra warheads resulting from modernization.

8. The Dutch officials named earlier are willing to defend in the Dutch cabinet that, recognizing the other conditions mentioned by me, in December there is a decision to produce half (50%) of the numbers mentioned in the HLWG-report. The 50% reduction to be applied to the proposals of the HLWG will be applied proportionally on all proposed weapons systems and proposed *deployment* locations. Put differently: the reduction cannot lead to a shift in the proposed burden sharing. The *deployment* will take place in the countries proposed by the HLWG, including the Netherlands. The production of 286 (half of 572) is, however, not an absolute minimum that will always be produced and introduced, regardless of the arms control talks. The decision will

⁸ At the ministerial NPG meeting in late April 1979.

⁹ There are several handwritten edits here, essentially to regroup some of the language. The three signatories have signed off on them.

have to be formulated in such a way that it remains possible, depending on the arms control talks, to introduce a smaller number (down to zero) and to stop production at a given moment. The decision will on the other hand have to leave open the possibility that if the arms control talks with the Soviet Union do not lead to a (sufficiently) satisfactory result, the full 572 warheads will be produced and introduced. The Dutch government is willing to tie the evaluation of whether the arms control talks have yielded sufficient results to a time period, so that the Soviet Union does not get the opportunity for delaying tactics.

9. A positive decision regarding TNF-modernization will also have to contain a decision to study the so-called shift-idea. In this study the question will have to be considered if, and to what extent the filling of the “gap” for the long-distance weapons can be paired with a diminished emphasis on the short-distance weapons, particularly artillery.¹⁰ This study will have to be tied to a time-period, for example a moment (e.g. October 1, 1980) making it possible to make decisions about this study in the DPC-meeting¹¹ of December 1980. The total number of warheads present in Europe will also have to be included with this study. The decision this coming December will have to state explicitly that in any case modernization TNF cannot lead to an increase in the number of warheads currently present. In addition, the so-called 3rd option in the context of MBFR¹² remains relevant.

10. An eventual positive decision by the Netherlands regarding TNF-modernization will – in light of what has been included with the political program of the Van Agt cabinet, namely a commitment to the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons, or put differently the commitment to reduce the dependence on nuclear weapons – go hand in hand with an adjustment of the current Dutch nuclear tasks, in the following way:

- Also in the future the Netherlands will give the Lance-missiles a nuclear task in support of the First Army Corps;
- After the so-called shift-study as indicated under item 8, the Netherlands will decide if, and if so in what form, artillery meant to support the First Army Corps will be given a dual capacity;
- The Netherlands will end its nuclear tasks in connection with the A.D.M.s¹³ and the Neptune/Orion aircraft;
- The Netherlands will not assign nuclear capability to the successor of the Nike-missile;

¹⁰ Some handwritten notes inserted, approved by all three signatories.

¹¹ NATO's Defense Planning Committee.

¹² Mutual Balanced Force Reduction talks between East and West in Europe. Option III was a NATO offer to the Warsaw Pact to trade some of its longer-range nuclear weapons in Europe for a reduction in the number of Soviet tanks. In 1979 it was in the process of being overtaken by events, particularly TNF-modernization.

¹³ Atomic Demolition Munitions.

- After the *deployment* on Dutch territory in the context of the modernization TNF of GLCMs¹⁴, the nuclear tasks of the Dutch fighting planes of the Royal Dutch Air Force will end. In the transition period just one single squadron of F-16 planes will get a nuclear task, against two squadrons F-104 now.

This change in the Dutch nuclear tasks will be included in the decisionmaking this coming December, so that there can be no talk of unilateral Dutch steps.

¹⁴ Ground Launched Cruise Missiles.