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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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January 25, 1997

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

1-27-97

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: SAMUEL BERGER

SUBJECT: Report on Talbott/Fuerth Mission and Berger-Levitte Talks



Looks better than...

Talbott/Fuerth Mission

Strobe and Leon returned from Moscow cautiously optimistic that Russia may finally be prepared to make progress in bilateral and NATO-Russia relations in the run-up to the Madrid NATO Summit in July.

The Russians did not use the talks to derail or delay NATO enlargement, which they now appear to accept as inevitable. This reflects, in large measure, Yeltsin's support for Chernomyrdin's firm control of the policy process, although Yeltsin's continued absence is troublesome. Far more than others in the Russian government (notably Primakov and Rodionov), they are focused on ways to reassure their own public in the face of NATO's eastward expansion.

In particular, the Russians are looking for "deliverables" on the security and diplomatic fronts that they can use at home to declare victory. In the security area, Strobe and Leon outlined our ideas on crafting a meaningful NATO-Russia consultative relationship, on modifying the CFE agreement and in other areas - ideas that may meet the Russians' domestic needs but which still protect and advance our interests and those of our allies and friends. On the diplomatic front, the Russians need to be seen playing a central, decisive role in shaping Europe's future. The Russians place primary importance on your summit with Yeltsin in March, where a final NATO-Russia deal, if there is one to be had, will be shaped. However, the Russians repeated their need for a "Big Five" meeting in Europe before Madrid; Strobe and Leon agreed only to revisit the question following your March meeting.

On the bilateral side, our team returned with a sense there may be steps we can take to encourage Moscow to push for START II ratification and commence START III discussions. At the same

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cc: Vice President
Chief of Staff

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time, Strobe and Leon were concerned that Russia's improved control over inflation has not been matched by progress in promoting growth and investment. This will be at the top of the agenda in the upcoming Gore-Chernomyrdin discussions.

In order to keep up the momentum, we will be holding a Principals meeting this Tuesday to refine the ideas that Strobe and Leon tested on their trip. I will follow that up with a memo to you with any recommendations or decisions that are appropriate. In addition, we all believe it would be useful for you to call Chirac and Kohl this week to share the results of the trip and our current thinking. This will be especially useful with Chirac, who is to visit Moscow at the end of the week.

Berger-Levitte Talks

Shali and I held constructive talks last Friday with my French counterpart, Jean-David Levitte. The talks went a long way to establish an effective, respectful and warm channel of communication between Levitte and me. On one hand, there appeared to be greater convergence in our views about not postponing the Madrid Summit (contrasting with Strobe's recent encounter with Chirac on this subject).

On the other hand, there was no real movement in the French approach to their reintegration into NATO. They continue to define the "solution" in terms of AFSOUTH, rather than respond to a number of broader ideas that we put forward to highlight increased European (and French) leadership within NATO. I will continue to maintain my dialogue with Levitte, who is probably best positioned to move Chirac on this subject.

Attachment

Tab A Trip Report from Strobe Talbott and Leon Fuerth

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