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C.O.S. (58)96

2ND APRIL, 1958

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

NATO MILITARY PLANNING - WARNING OF SOVIET ATTACK

Note by the Secretary

At their meeting+ on 1st April, 1958, the Chiefs of Staff approved the report at annex as an expression of their views.

2. In accordance with the instructions of the Chiefs of Staff, the report is being forwarded to the Minister of Defence.

(Signed) D.J.P. LEE

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, S.W. 1.

2ND APRIL, 1958

+ C.O.S.(58)29th Meeting, Minute 3

TOP SECRET

ANNEX TO C.O.S.(58)96NATO MILITARY PLANNING - WARNING OF SOVIET ATTACKINTRODUCTION

1. At a meeting⁺ held in the Ministry of Defence on 4th March, 1958 the courses open to the Government for handling MC 70 in the North Atlantic Council were discussed. Since the United Kingdom would have to put forward concrete proposals for discussion at the Council meeting, it was agreed that Defence Ministers might consider, inter alia, the possibility of assuming a minimum warning period of Soviet attack for military planning. Such a warning period, if accepted, might result in a reduction in the requirements for forces-in-being in MC 70.

AIM

2. The aim of this report is to examine whether it is acceptable to assume a minimum warning period of Soviet attack for military planning in NATO and, if so, the extent to which this might reduce the requirement for forces-in-being.

EXISTING ASSUMPTIONS ON WARNING PERIODSThe NATO View

3. The NATO Political Directive^o recognizes that an attack by Russia might be preceded by a period of acute political tension and heralded by obvious indications but no specific warning period is laid down. Notwithstanding the possibility of some warning, those NATO forces and facilities directly related to early warning and nuclear retaliatory action, are required to be kept in constant readiness at all times. All other forces must be maintained at "the appropriate NATO standard of readiness".

4. The theme of no specific warning period is reflected in the "Overall Strategic Concept" and "Measures to Complement the Strategic Concept". Both these documents imply that NATO forces must be ready to retaliate instantly and that, in a military sense, a surprise attack with nuclear weapons constitutes the most dangerous threat the West has to face. It is asserted that the Russians, if deliberately resorting to war, could be expected to avoid prejudicing surprise by any major pre-deployment of their forces.

The United Kingdom View

5. Our views^x have been expressed in the following terms and in accordance with the NATO directives:-

(a) The Russians might launch a surprise attack.

+ F130/1(5) 30.

% C.O.S.(58)133 (final)

4 L.S. 11/2

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* J.C.G. (7) 30 (final) (Revise) approved at C.O.S.(57) 30th Mt. Jan. 2.

- (b) In the case of a surprise attack they are unlikely to make other than covert preparations.
- (c) There is no certainty that an attack would be preceded by a rise in political tension.
- (d) We can not expect to learn of the actual time of attack much in advance, e.g. the first warning might be detection of Soviet aircraft on Allied radar screens.

For planning purposes, we have, however, accepted that "planning should continue to move in line with other Government Departments in assuming a warning period of seven days".

WARNING FACTOR IN THE CALCULATION OF MINIMUM FORCE REQUIREMENTS BY NATO SUPREME COMMANDERS

We examine below the way in which NATO Supreme Commanders have taken warning periods into account when calculating the minimum force requirements which led to M² 70.

SACEUR

SACEUR, in his Minimum Force Study^X, assumes that Russia will seek maximum strategic surprise and for this reason states that forces connected with nuclear retaliatory action, as well as air defence systems, must be maintained at 'utmost readiness'. He concedes, however, that Russia would find it extremely difficult and probably impossible, to achieve absolute strategic surprise even in deployment of long-range striking forces well back in the Soviet interior. Moreover, because any considerable movement of troops, air units and ships would almost certainly be detected, a gamble on strategic surprise would necessarily be at the expense of Russian preponderance in land and submarine forces on D-day and immediately thereafter.

SACEUR has accepted, therefore, that part of the Shield forces can be maintained without serious risk at lower readiness. Such forces are being maintained in the expectation that they would have at least several days to get ready in position. In calculating his force requirements SACEUR has emphasised that an expectation of some warning justifies a degree of "graduated readiness" and that the degree of readiness of any particular formation or unit in the Strike or Shield forces varies according to assigned tasks and particular deployment. Relaxation of readiness is compensated by the NATO system for military alerts.

% COS(57)65th Mtg, Min.3.
 X SHAPE/154/57 Volume I.
 Chapters II and III

SACLANT and ACCHAN

10. SACLANT considers⁺ that, should the Soviets decide to embark upon an all-out nuclear war on the NATO Alliance, they are unlikely to prejudice their chance of surprise by any major pre-deployment of their D-day forces. Nevertheless, they will undertake the maximum pre-D-day deployment of submarines consistent with maintaining surprise.
11. SACLANT states that he must complete his deployments for war tasks at the earliest possible time; in MC 70 practically all his requirements are phased for Category A, i.e. D-day to D+2. Defensively, this will permit reduction of the submarine threat in the shortest possible time, keep Allied losses to a minimum and permit the arrival of the large volume of shipping required to reinforce and resupply Europe. Offensive naval forces should be maintained in peacetime in a high state of readiness and positioned so that they will survive the enemy's initial attack. They would be deployed immediately upon the declaration of an alert or as soon after D-day as practicable.
12. ACCHAN also states⁺ that emphasis must be placed on D-day availability of forces. All ACCHAN forces are required to be available for operations in Phase I.

MC 70The Warning Period

13. MC 70 endorses the conclusion of SACEUR that political and military factors could give some (unspecified) general warning of attack. Nevertheless the centralization of control within the USSR is such that these factors could not serve as a basis as to time of attack. Because of the tremendous advantages a surprise attack would give the Soviets, it is concluded that there may be no warning of attack other than that provided by early warning systems.

Forces-in-Being

14. The definition of forces-in-being in MC 70 is "Forces that are trained, equipped and available for service." In addition, it is laid down that they should be "properly deployed for a forward strategy and unmistakably ready".

OUR VIEWS

15. In general SACEUR is more optimistic than the United Kingdom in assessing the chances that Russian attempts to conceal warning of the moment of attack and to achieve strategic surprise could be detected. This variation is, however, insignificant in the context of requirements for forces-in-being.
16. We consider that SACEUR has taken a realistic line in

+ SER 1070 dated 17th Aug 57

^ Ch 001053/6 MCH 15175 dated 31st July 57

his appreciation of the warning to be expected. We agree that forces connected with nuclear retaliatory action as well as air defence systems must be maintained at "utmost readiness". Although he has proposed no precise period, he has already accepted some degree of risk in the readiness of his shield forces. Even if an assumption was agreed in the NATO Council of a precise warning period of a number of days, we do not consider that this would have any effect on SACEUR's assessment of his requirement for forces-in-being to meet the NATO strategic directives. Indeed, depending upon the period of warning agreed it might perhaps lead to an increase in his total bill in order to meet the increased Soviet threat built up during such a warning period. This would also apply to SACLANT and ACCHAN.

17. SACLANT's minimum requirement for forces-in-being is calculated according to tasks, allowing minimum deployment time for arrival on station following surprise attack or the declaration of an alert. The only warning period which would assist nations in meeting this requirement would be one of sufficient length to permit ships to be deployed from their peace-time tasks to their war stations and for ships in operational reserve to be brought forward in time to meet Category A availability. For planning purposes this would need to be much longer than could be accepted according to NATO or United Kingdom estimates of Russian capabilities. Although ACCHAN implies acceptance of an unspecified percentage of progressive availability, the same argument applies.

18. It is not clear whether force requirements as stated by Supreme Commanders in MC 70 have made any allowance for possible warning of Russian attack. Although MC 70 now uses M-Day forces, their state of readiness is required to be the same as D-Day under the previous definition. This will not, therefore, lead to any reduction in forces in being as defined in MC 70 nor will it bring the UK position on readiness into line with MC 70.

19. We consider that the definition of forces in being, with which we agree, excludes all army and air force non-regular units and, in the case of the navy, all units of the Reserve fleet and ships refitting.

20. The United Kingdom D-Day land forces in BAOR, even though qualifying as "forces-in-being" do not strictly conform to the accepted definition since a planning assumption^x to make use of up to 28 days (including a 7 days warning period) has been adopted by the Army to bring BAOR to its required strength for war. Any introduction of a warning period which aims to include reserve land forces within the term "forces-in-being", would have to be of the order of 60 days in order to allow for mobilisation, training and movement. Such a period is, in our view, unrealistic and would be unacceptable to NATO.

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CONCLUSIONS

21. We conclude that:-

- (a) It follows from paragraph 5 above that there is no single period of warning which can be assumed as valid to cover the different possible methods of attack with which NATO may be faced and which would be applicable to all types of force throughout the NATO commands.
- (b) NATO Supreme Commanders, particularly SACEUR, have already accepted a reasonable degree of risk in assessing requirements for readiness of their forces.
- (c) Even if an assumption were agreed in the NATO Council about a precise period of warning, we consider that it would not reduce the Supreme Commanders' assessment of their force requirements and it might in fact lead to an increase in them.

22. We further conclude that it would be inadvisable and unprofitable for the Minister of Defence to recommend acceptance of a long warning period for planning purposes at the NATO Council meeting in April, 1958.
