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Circulated for consideration by the Chiefs of Staff

J.P. (54)77(Final)

3rd September, 1954

SPECIAL CIRCULATION

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

JOINT PLANNING STAFF

THE MOST EFFECTIVE PATTERN OF NATO MILITARY STRENGTH
FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS

Report by the Joint Planning Staff

1. At the Annual Review Meeting of Ministers in December, 1953 the NATO Council instructed^s the Military Committee to go ahead with their re-assessment of the pattern of military forces which would be required in the next few years within the resources it was anticipated would be made available.
2. As a result Supreme Commanders and the Channel Committee were instructed^s to undertake Capabilities Studies based on mid-1957 to be completed by July, 1954. These studies have now been examined by the Standing Group who generally agree⁺ with the concept of operations and strategy proposed by SACEUR, but in the case of SACLANT's and the Channel Committee's Studies have instructed them to carry out additional Studies with the object of bringing them into line with SACEUR's concept of a future war.
3. Based on the major conclusions of the Supreme Commanders' Studies the Standing Group has now prepared a paper^x for the Military Committee, setting out the most effective pattern of NATO military strength for the next few years; this will eventually be forwarded to the Council. This paper is in effect a statement of NATO Defence Policy for the next few years.
4. In anticipation of instructions we have examined the paper by the Military Committee and our Report is at Annex "A".

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Conclusion

5. We conclude that the Report by the Military Committee to the NATO Council is acceptable subject to our comments in paragraphs 7 to 21 of Annex "A".

Implications on United Kingdom

6. Attached as an enclosure to the Report by the Military Committee is a list of certain minimum measures which it is considered must be implemented in order to enable Allied Command Europe to fight effectively in a nuclear war. By accepting the Report we are accepting the requirement for implementing these measures in the near future. We have therefore set out at Annex "B" some major implications of the measures and have suggested that preliminary studies on certain of the major problems should be set in motion by the appropriate Departments.

Recommendations

7. We recommend that:-

- (a) our Report at Annex "A" be sent to the United Kingdom Representative on the Standing Group, as the expression of the views of the Chiefs of Staff;
- (b) the Chiefs of Staff take note of the implications, set out at Annex "B", of accepting the minimum measures necessary to enable Allied Command Europe to fight effectively in a nuclear war;
- (c) the appropriate Departments be invited to carry out preliminary studies as suggested in Annex "B".

(Signed) H. C. D. MACLEAN
J. R. C. HAMILTON
J. D. MILLER

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, S.W.1.

3rd September, 1954.

REPORT BY THE MILITARY COMMITTEE ON THE MOST EFFECTIVE PATTERN
OF NATO MILITARY STRENGTH FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS

INTRODUCTION

The paper⁺ setting out the most effective pattern of NATO military strength for the next few years has been prepared by the Standing Group on behalf of the Military Committee for submission to the NATO Council, in accordance with the Council's instructions at the Annual Review Meeting in Paris in December, 1953.

2. The paper is based on certain broad conclusions stemming from consideration of the Capabilities Studies recently carried out by the Supreme Commanders and the Channel Committee.

THE MILITARY COMMITTEE REPORT

General

3. The paper has been prepared by the International Staff of the Standing Group and every effort has been made by the United Kingdom members of the Staff to ensure that, as far as possible, the recent views of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff on global strategy were incorporated.

4. We consider that in general the paper follows the United Kingdom views on the pattern of forces required for the next few years, as far as these can be applied to war in the NATO area.

5. We have commented below on certain portions of the Report of major importance.

Probable Nature and Duration of a
Future War involving NATO

6. The ideas contained in this section are in general derived from the concepts of a future war arising out of SACEUR's Capabilities Study. These ideas and the reasoning behind them are set out at some length.

7. In considering the circumstances in which a war might break out the Report refers to the impossibility of a preventive war (paragraph 6). We are in agreement that there is no likelihood that such a war would be started by NATO but we consider that the term "preventive war" is a misleading phrase. We assume that what is meant is a war deliberately begun by NATO to prevent the Russians from developing the capability to wage war. If this is the meaning "a forestalling war" might be more descriptive and less likely to be misinterpreted.

8. In referring to a preventive war the statement is made that "war can only come as a result of Soviet military aggression". As we have pointed out below we consider that the most likely way in which war might arise would be as a result of a miscalculation during a period of tension. Such a miscalculation might not be

confined to a result of Soviet actions and might occur as a result of Communist action elsewhere in the world. We would therefore prefer to see "Communist" substituted for "Soviet".

9. The paper shows the primary consideration is that, in any future war against Russia, both sides will possess an appreciable number of atomic and thermo-nuclear weapons. This is bound to revolutionise the concept of war and the conclusion is reached that any future war against Russia may be either of short duration or be characterised by two phases, viz. a short intense atomic exchange followed by an indeterminate period of less intensity. It is possible that the first phase will be decisive, or will produce a stalemate, and even that there may be no second phase at all. We agree, however, that at present NATO must plan on the possibility of a two-phase nuclear war.

10. The Report concludes that the primary aim of NATO must be to prevent war. Should war come however, our ability to defeat the enemy will depend on whether we can survive and gain a decisive superiority in the first phase. The peacetime forces of NATO must therefore be primarily designed so as to ensure success in this phase. This is in line with United Kingdom views and this conclusion is particularly applicable to the United Kingdom in that, in the face of nuclear attack expected on this country, it is probable that our contribution to a second phase, if it occurs, would be negligible. This must not however be interpreted in too literal or narrow a sense.

Examination of Soviet Capabilities and Probable Strategy

11. The report makes certain assumptions as to Soviet Capabilities and probable strategy. The major assumption is made that in order to gain superiority in the vital air/atomic field their strategy would be based on surprise.

12. It has been appreciated[@] that during the next few years an indeterminate period of increasing tension is likely to precede any future war; further, that it is unlikely that the Soviets will deliberately resort to war until they can effectively carry out a decisive nuclear attack against North America, and we do not think they will possess this capability in the immediate future. Therefore the likelihood of war has receded for the moment. However, NATO plans must be based on the possibility of war, which could occur at any time through a miscalculation.

13. As regards surprise attack it appears possible that in order to gain the all important superiority in the initial atomic exchange, the Soviets would be prepared to make sacrifices in force deployments during a period of tension and open hostilities with an atomic attack without our being able to detect their military preparations. We agree with the Report therefore that NATO plans must be such as to be able to counter a surprise atomic attack, but we do not think that this would be a "bolt from the blue". We therefore suggest that the Report should include some mention of the probability of a period of political tension preceding a surprise attack.

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The Task of the NATO Land/Air Forces in Europe

General Presentation

14. The Report emphasises that the main role of the NATO land/air forces is as a deterrent to war; these forces must therefore be forces in being. The Report then goes on to define the three tasks of these forces:-

- (a) Surviving the initial surprise attack.
- (b) Participating effectively in the battle for air/atomic superiority.
- (c) Arresting the advance of the Soviet land forces into Europe.

15. We consider that the wording of the section (paragraph 21(c)) on arresting the advance of the Soviet land forces into Europe is misleading. As it stands it gives the impression that the task of arresting the Soviet advance is comparatively simple. In fact the ability of the NATO forces to carry out this task in the first intensive phase is dependent upon the three major provisions in paragraph 22:-

- (a) The ability to make immediate use of nuclear weapons.
- (b) The provision of a German contribution.
- (c) The provision of certain essential measures necessary to enable our forces to fight effectively in a nuclear war.

16. Even if these provisions are wholeheartedly implemented by the NATO countries we consider that there is no more than a reasonable chance of preventing a Soviet land advance in Europe. To sum up therefore, we consider that the general tone of paragraph 21(c) is too optimistic and greater emphasis should be placed on the major provisions in paragraph 22.

Ability to Make Use of Nuclear Weapons Immediately

17. A major proviso of successful defence against the Soviets is the ability of SACEUR to use nuclear weapons immediately he is attacked. It is proposed that "in the event of a war involving NATO, the commitment to action of forces by countries under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty should encompass full authority for the employment of nuclear weapons in defence of those forces; this authority should be written into the terms of the General Alert."

18. We consider that this point is of fundamental importance and in our examination of the paper relating to SACEUR's Capability Study we have given our detailed reasons for supporting this proposal.

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Essential Measures for our Forces to Fight Effectively in Nuclear War

19. The essential measures necessary for our forces to fight in a nuclear war are set out at Enclosure to the Report. These are derived from SACEUR's Capability Study, and while we agree that all the measures are necessary we have set out at Annex "B" some implications on the United Kingdom if they are adopted. There may well be other measures arising out of SACLANF's and CHANCOM's revised studies. We consider this should be made clear in the Military Committee Report.

20. In our examination of the implications of these measures on the United Kingdom we were led to the conclusion that there might be some compensating savings due to reorganisation of the forces. We considered, however, it was inevitable that there would be a major financial expenditure to implement the measures. To avoid such an increase in defence costs it would be necessary to take some major steps such as considerably reducing the reserve forces, or even slightly reducing the active forces.

21. We feel that the references to "costs" in paragraph 22(c) of the Report are over-optimistic and to that extent misleading. While we would not wish to over-emphasise the problems of cost we feel that this will be a major problem and should be squarely stated; this could then be qualified by a reference to the possible means of reducing the problem. A reference might be made in this respect to the means in paragraph 20 above and the possible savings which might be obtained by the re-assessment of Allied shipping needs in a future war (paragraph 27 of the Report).

The Task of NATO Naval Forces

22. Whilst we agree with the conclusion of the Report that at this stage it is not possible for any conclusions of sound value to be made with respect to the present Capabilities Studies of the NATO Naval Commanders, we must be careful not to neglect the importance to the campaign in Europe of keeping the sea lanes and ports open, certainly after the first intensive phase.

CONCLUSION

23. We conclude that the Military Committee Report to the Council is acceptable subject to our comments in paragraphs 7 to 21 above.

Annex "B" to
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IMPLICATIONS ON THE UNITED KINGDOM OF ACCEPTING SACEUR'S
RECOMMENDED MINIMUM MEASURES AT ENCLOSURE
TO THE MILITARY COMMITTEE REPORT

1. We have examined the measures at Enclosure to the Military Committee Report and have set out below the major implications of each measure.

Atomic Capability

2. SACEUR must be provided with an integrated atomic capability for use immediately in order for his plans to be effective.

3. Whilst the major part of the atomic capability must obviously be provided by the United States, the United Kingdom must provide nothing less than a worthwhile contribution in order to have an effective voice in the planning and conduct of these operations. In addition, it would clearly be unsatisfactory for the United Kingdom land forces in Northern Army Group to be entirely dependent on United States nuclear support.

Authority to Use Nuclear Weapons

4. Governmental approval will be required to obtain the Authority requested. We understand that the Foreign Office intend to submit this problem to Ministers in due course in order that a decision can be reached before the Annual Review Meeting in December.

Alert System

5. In view of the requirement for instant retaliation, and for adopting passive defence measures in the face of attack, a fully effective Alert System is required. In SACEUR's Capabilities Study various proposals are made towards reaching this objective, among them the superimposing of a military Alert System on the present political Alert System. We visualise that the only major difficulties which might arise out of this would be political ones connected with the problem in paragraph 4 above.

Earning of Attack

6. Implications of these proposals are:-

- (a) Extension of radar coverage and increased manpower for the extended radar system to enable a continuous watch to be kept.
- (b) Increased resources towards the Allied Intelligence system.

Forces in Being

7. The implications of this section are numerous and complex. The major ones are:-

Annex "B" (continued)

- (a) Priority must be given to forces in being in peace who must be able to fight without reinforcement. This will affect the manpower for our active forces, our mobilisation policy and the plans for our reserve forces.
- (b) Our forces will require to be reorganised to survive in nuclear war. Further study of the land/air/atomic 'yardstick' will greatly affect this reorganisation.
- (c) Intensive training will be required to practice the new technique of nuclear warfare.
- (d) The adoption of a Weser Strategy may affect our present peacetime deployment in Germany and will certainly affect our logistic and maintenance plans.

Measures to Enable Allied Command Europe to Survive Soviet Atomic Attack

8. The principal effects of these measures will be on the tactical air forces, and to make the measures effective it is likely that these airforces will have to be made more mobile, have more alternative airfields provided with reserves of essential war materials, and take various other steps, all of which will be expensive in money, material and manpower.

9. For the land forces some technique will have to be devised to enable the initial deployment from peace to war stations to be carried out swiftly without providing good targets for nuclear attack.

10. For naval forces there will be a requirement for the dispersal of ships, both active and reserve, dispersal of reserve stocks, and the provision of alternative headquarters. Merchant shipping must be at sea or dispersed to escape the initial attack. Naval forces must be provided with dispersed bases, and must be at sea as soon as possible to seize the initiative from the outset.

Summary of Implications

11. While it is possible that some compensating savings may be obtained by the changed balance of forces which will be necessary in nuclear war, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the general implication of the measures, particularly those discussed in paragraphs 7 to 10 above, is increased expenditure. If this proves to be so it would seem that there may be only two ways in which additional expenditure can be avoided:-

- (a) Some reduction in the active forces in order to enable the remaining forces to be properly equipped for nuclear war. This course will be extremely unpalatable to the Supreme Commanders.

or,

- (b) Drastic reduction of the reserve forces.

Action Required

12. It is proposed that the Military Committee should take note of SACEUR's Programme of Recommendations, in which these minimum measures are set out. In these Recommendations SACEUR indicates that he will wish to consult national authorities on them. We suggest that the appropriate military authorities in the United Kingdom should begin to examine concurrently with SACEUR certain of the major measures. These studies might cover:-

- (a) The land/air/atomic yardstick.
- (b) The organisation, training and equipment of our land and air forces in nuclear war.
- (c) Measures to enable our forces to survive Soviet atomic attack.
- (d) The implications of the Weser strategy and nuclear warfare on our logistic system.