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SPECIAL CIRCULATION

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

JOINT PLANNING STAFF

CAPABILITIES STUDY - ALLIED COMMAND EUROPE, 1957

Report by the Joint Planning Staff

SACEUR has recently submitted his Capabilities Study to the Standing Group², based on those resources which it is anticipated will be made available in 1957.

2. A draft^x of the Standing Group Report to the Military Committee on SACEUR's Study has now been forwarded to the Chiefs of Staff of Standing Group countries for their approval. In accordance with instructions we have examined this draft and our Report is at Annex.

3. It is intended that the Standing Group Report on SACEUR's Study, and on similar studies prepared by SACLANT and the Channel Committee will not go further than the Military Committee. An appropriate memorandum to SACEUR giving the Military Committee's views on his Study is attached at Enclosure to the Draft Report.

4. An overall paper⁵ has also been prepared by the Standing Group covering the general conclusions arising from the Studies of the Supreme Commanders and the Channel Committee, and indicating the future pattern of NATO military strength in the next few years. This paper is to be forwarded to the Council after approval by the Military Committee and we have examined⁶ this paper separately.

x SHAPE/350/54
SHAPE/384/54
SHAPE/385/54

x S.G. 241
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STANDING GROUP REPORT TO THE MILITARY COMMITTEE ON
SACEUR'S CAPABILITY STUDY, 1957

INTRODUCTION

SACEUR's Capabilities Study⁺, based on the resources which it is anticipated will be made available in 1957, were received by the Standing Group in July, 1954.

2. The Standing Group have now prepared a draft report^x to the Military Committee on SACEUR's Study and this has been forwarded to the Chiefs of Staff of Standing Group countries for their approval.

AIM

3. The aim of this paper is to examine the Standing Group Draft and give the United Kingdom representative on the Standing Group the views of the Chiefs of Staff.

SACEUR'S CAPABILITY STUDY

4. We had examined SACEUR's Study prior to the arrival of the Standing Group Draft and concluded that SACEUR's concept, strategy and programme of recommendations are reasonably sound as a basis for further planning.

Our only major doubt is whether the land and air forces which SACEUR assumes to be available could carry out the forward strategy with the high degree of probability which SACEUR estimates. SACEUR was directed to base his capability study substantially on resources which nations are able to make available now. This rules out any major increases in SACEUR's forces. The many measures which SACEUR recommends should be carried out to improve the effectiveness and readiness of NATO forces raises the question as to whether the present size of nations' contributions can even be maintained.

5. However, with the available resources it is difficult to see how SACEUR can greatly improve his actual ability to hold the Russians on the ground in Europe. Also the scale of nuclear weapons envisaged by SACEUR might cause such destruction as to make the operation of large land forces impracticable. In view of these considerations and because politically it is essential to maintain confidence in NATO, we consider that SACEUR's general conclusion on his capability to carry out a forward strategy can be accepted.

6. In examining SACEUR's Study we considered that there were certain points which should be included in Standing Group guidance to SACEUR. These points are:-

(a) Authority to use nuclear weapons immediately.

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Annex (continued)

- (b) Tactical concept for land/air/atomic warfare.
- (c) Operational control and line of communication in Schleswig-Holstein.
- (d) SACEUR's tactical air capabilities.
- (e) Co-ordination of maritime mining measures.

THE STANDING GROUP DRAFT

General

7. We have examined the Standing Group Draft and the Memorandum to SACEUR in the light of our views on SACEUR's Study above.

The Main Paper

8. The major conclusion reached on the paper, which it is recommended that the Military Committee should accept, is that the Standing Group concur with SACEUR's concept of operations and general strategy and agree to take note of SACEUR's Programme of Recommendations as the basis for further actions. This conclusion is in line with that reached in our examination of SACEUR's Study.

9. Certain major points are raised in the paper with which we do not disagree in general but are of such importance that we have commented on them briefly below.

Authority to Use Nuclear Weapons in Immediate Retaliation

10. SACEUR's plan is based on Allied forces being organised and deployed for atomic warfare. As a final result of his studies he concludes that if this atomic posture is attained he could by mid-1957 carry out his main mission, and probably avoid defeat. He stresses, however, that in order to accomplish this "his authority to implement the planned use of atomic weapons must be such as to ensure that no delay whatsoever will occur in countering a surprise attack."

11. The Draft concurs with the necessity for using atomic weapons immediately on the outset of hostilities and proposes that "the commitment to action by NATO countries under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty should encompass full authority for the employment of atomic and thermo-nuclear weapons in their defense of these forces". It is suggested that this authority should be written into the General Alerts.

12. Under Article 5 of the Treaty each signatory retains the right to take such action as it deems necessary at that time. The general alert signifies the outbreak of hostilities and the consent of nations concerned would be obtained before the general alert was introduced. The proposed measures under the general alert do, however, include provisions for commanders of national forces attacked or menaced to conduct operations in accordance with the emergency plans. The implications of the proposal in the Draft appear to be that nations should agree in peacetime that the assignment of their forces under the general alert should automatically accept atomic warfare.

Annex (continued)

13. Politically the implications of initiating atomic warfare are so grave that there would be the greatest objection to delegating the decision to use atomic weapons to SACEUR. Militarily there is no question now as to the importance of instant atomic retaliation to any major attack whether with or without the use of atomic weapons; this will be of even greater importance by 1957 since SACEUR's forces will be committed to atomic warfare strategy. We agree that where there is time for SACEUR to consult national authorities their consent should be obtained before he takes action which would include atomic attack. In the case of surprise, however, when the first intimation of attack might be a report of numerous enemy aircraft crossing the NATO frontiers, the result of the whole war might depend on SACEUR retaliating immediately with atomic weapons.

14. The proposal in the Standing Group Draft goes some way towards meeting SACEUR's requirement but still leaves open the question of what will happen in the event of there not being time for SACEUR to obtain the Council's consent to a General Alert. Militarily it is desirable to give SACEUR discretion in this event, politically this is probably impossible. It is therefore very likely that no agreed NATO decision on this question can be reached now, but it is desirable that a United Kingdom/United States private agreement should be arranged.

The Yardstick for Land/Air/Atomic Warfare (paragraph 28 of Standing Group Report)

15. The Standing Group Draft concurs in the concept of SACEUR's yardstick but indicates that considerable further study of the problem will be required, particularly the problem of holding wide frontages in the face of mass infiltration.

16. SACEUR intends to use his concept as a basis for further studies and we consider that the Military Committee should withhold judgement until these studies have been completed. We agree that there is a need for re-examination of the strengths of the forces proposed by SACEUR for holding such a small obstacle as the WESER. In addition we are very doubtful whether the forces envisaged for a counter-attack role would be sufficient to deal successfully with what the Russians can be expected to get across the obstacle.

The Cost of Implementing SACEUR's Recommendations (paragraph 33)

17. We consider that the treatment of the problem of cost in this section of the Report is somewhat over-optimistic. We agree with the final sentence that the cost factor does not invalidate the basic strategy and concept of operations. We feel that the second sentence of paragraph 33 is somewhat too definite at the present stage. We suggest that the cost problem should be plainly stated, but that any comment on the possibility of paying for SACEUR's Programme of Recommendations should be non-committal.

Implications on Future Warfare (paragraphs 34 to 36)

18. We agree with the implications set out in the Standing Group Draft and with the possible pattern of a future war indicated. We suggest that as the stockpiles of nuclear weapons held by each side increase it will become more likely that no second phase will occur. This view would tend to reinforce the necessity of giving priority to first phase forces. However, in view of the speculative nature of this problem we consider this section of the Draft is acceptable.

Future NATO Force Patterns

19. The object of this section is to draw from SACEUR's Study a general pattern of NATO forces for the next few years, which is subsequently used as the basis for the Military Committee's Report to the Council on this subject. The Draft emphasizes the primary importance of the deterrent and of giving priority in our peacetime preparations to the forces required in the first phase. This is in line with the Chiefs of Staff latest views on Global Strategy.

The Memorandum to SACEUR (Enclosure to Draft)

20. We feel that every effort should be made to give specific guidance to SACEUR, and we have suggested at Appendix possible ways by which the Standing Group Memorandum might be improved.

CONCLUSION

21. We conclude that the Standing Group Draft Report to the Military Committee is acceptable subject to our comments in paragraphs 16-18 above and at Appendix.

UNITED KINGDOM COMMENTS ON STANDING GROUP
MEMORANDUM TO SACEUR

Authority to Use Nuclear Weapons Immediately

1. No mention of this subject is at present made in the memorandum, although it is one of the major problems to which SACEUR has drawn attention. While we agree that this question must be referred to the Council before any precise information can be given to SACEUR, we suggest that some reference to the solution proposed by the Standing Group for the approval of the Council should be made. We further consider that SACEUR should be informed specifically that the Standing Group approve the immediate use by SACEUR of atomic weapons in retaliation, as a basis for further planning.

Cost of Implementing SACEUR's Recommendations (paragraph 4 of Enclosure)

2. Again this problem must be submitted to the Council before firm guidance can be given to SACEUR. However, the last sentence of paragraph 4 as at present worded is not very helpful and we feel that it would be possible to indicate, even at this stage, that priority must be given to measures applicable in the first phase.

Land/Air/Atomic Yardstick (paragraph 5(d))

3. We agree with this paragraph provided that judgement is reserved on the land/air yardstick, but consider that a reference should also be included on the need to re-examine the size of the counter-attack forces, in addition to the two subjects to which attention is already drawn.

Operational Control in Schleswig-Holstein (paragraph 5(c))

4. We strongly support the directions given in this paragraph that SACEUR should re-examine his proposals for the boundaries between North and Central Sectors and Control of the forces in Schleswig-Holstein.

SACEUR's Tactical Air Capabilities

5. We consider that there is a possible major weakness in the tactical air operations proposed by SACEUR in Enclosure A to his Plan due to the following:-

- (a) The Soviets may, equally with SACEUR, realise the importance of a correct atomic posture. The measures they take to effect this might conceivably result in considerably reduced vulnerability particularly during the first few days, while the Allied nuclear stockpile is being expended.

Appendix (concluded)

- (b) Approximately 70% of the whole weight of SACEUR's atomic attack between D-Day and D plus 4 is scheduled to be delivered by fighter bombers. We are doubtful of the consistent ability of fighter bombers to find and attack targets involving deep penetration, particularly as meteorological conditions in Central Europe may be expected on 50% of occasions, to make the task of map reading and finding the target extremely difficult. SACEUR has assumed that two sorties by fighter bombers will be required to deliver one nuclear weapon. We feel a truer ratio might be in the order of two, three, or four to one.

We feel that SACEUR's attention should be drawn to these points.

Co-ordination of Maritime Mining Measures

6. In SACEUR's Programme of Recommendations he makes certain proposals with regard to the mining of the Mediterranean, Black Sea and Baltic. We consider that there is a major requirement for the co-ordination of mining in all these areas.