

NATO SECRET

To: Secretary General
 c.c. Deputy Secretary General
 DSG/ASG for Economics and Finance
 ASG for Political Affairs

From: Executive Secretary

Summary Record of a Private Meeting of the Council
 held on 5th March, 1962, at 3.30 p.m.

RECOMMENDATION BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF FRANCE, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND
 THE UNITED STATES CONCERNING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN NATO AND THE
 THREE POWERS IN THE PLANNING AND CONTROL OF BERLIN CONTINGENCY
 OPERATIONS

The CHAIRMAN, introducing the Recommendation submitted by the governments of France, the United Kingdom and the United States, said that it set out the views of these three powers on the relationship which should exist in the planning and control of Berlin contingency operations between Tripartite and NATO planning. As pointed out in paragraph 4 of the document, the essence of the problem was to achieve a solution representing the best balance between two in a sense competing factors. On the one hand, the security interests, common objectives and force of all the NATO nations would be threatened if the Soviet bloc seriously challenged the continued freedom of Berlin, while on the other hand, the special and direct responsibility of the three powers for Berlin implied that the planning and execution of possible initial military operations should remain a Tripartite responsibility. The practical consequence of this duality yet separation of responsibility was that NATO as a whole might become involved in hostilities as a result of operations initiated by the three powers responsible for Berlin, in the planning and conduct of which NATO as such had not participated. While there appeared to be no way of avoiding this situation, he thought that the Council would wish, firstly, to be satisfied that Tripartite and NATO planning in the Berlin context was fully coordinated, and secondly, to be quite clear about the circumstances in which control of any military operations would pass from Tripartite to NATO responsibility.

2. On the first point - coordination - he believed that the Council's understanding of the problem had greatly increased after hearing General Norsted's detailed description on 23rd February of

various LIVE OAK and BEECHON contingency plans. His briefing showed that the closest coordination existed between the two sets of planning and between the staffs responsible for them under SACUR in his dual capacity.

3. On the second point, he thought that the Council might seek some additional clarification from the representatives of the three powers. As he saw it, the three powers were generally responsible for the planning and execution of probe or air escort operations, but NATO might be involved in the support and control of such operations depending upon the reactions of the Soviet forces, which were not really predictable. In certain cases, the point at which responsibility would be transferred was defined; for example, in paragraph 5b(3)(a), which stated that "when Tripartite forces of battalion or greater size have been subjected to armed attack by Soviet or GDR forces and require reinforcements". Similarly, in the case of air operations, paragraph 5b(3)(b) specified that control would be passed to NATO "at the point when an escorted flight had been unmistakably engaged in combat by Soviet or GDR aircraft or ground defences, and immediate Tripartite response had not caused the Soviets to desist". However, it was also recognized in both instances that other possible conditions might arise in which transfer of responsibility to NATO would occur, this being "a matter for political decision at the time". He thought that the Council might like to know a little more about the "other conditions" mentioned in this context.

4. The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, in explanation of paragraph 5b(3)(a), said that the Soviet forces might conceivably allow quite a large probe to proceed before deciding to attack it. However, should it be necessary to send in a force larger than a battalion, for example, a division, the mere commitment of a force of this size would necessitate the transfer of control to NATO mechanisms. With regard to paragraph 5b(3)(b), he explained that Soviet forces might, for example, allow Tripartite air escort operations to succeed within the limits of the air corridors. However, if it were felt that they were preparing for a large-scale air battle in the corridors, necessitating a massive sweeping operation by the Western forces, such a situation would involve the responsibility of NATO as a whole and call for NATO-wide preparedness to be implemented by political decision at the time.

5. The ITALIAN REPRESENTATIVE thought that the problem should be solved not so much in the light of situations which might arise, as on the basis of the principle of consultation. His authorities were, for example, very pleased with the statement in paragraph 2 of the document to the effect that: "It is moreover clearly understood that all plans prepared are subject to governmental approval, and that the execution of approved plans will be the subject of still additional decisions by governments at the time". However, they would like clarification of the apparent lack of consistency between this statement and the second sentence of paragraph 5b(2)(b), reading "However, should operations be required outside of the air corridors to maintain air superiority, NATO command and control systems should become involved". With regard to paragraphs 5b(3)(a) and (b), he thought that ground and air access operations should in any case be covered by the process of political decision outlined in paragraph 2 of the document. He thought that if the various provisions of the document were logically based on the principle outlined in paragraph 2, all doubt arising from the apparent automation of certain

proposals might be eliminated. His authorities, like others who would not be initially involved in any eventual Berlin operations, did not wish to support the principle of any subsequent automatic engagement which had not been thoroughly clarified beforehand.

6. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE said that his authorities had studied the document with great interest but desired clarification on certain points. Firstly, they wished to know what was meant by the term "mechanism" in paragraph 5b(3), and whether the term "control" in the same context meant operational command or something less. They also wished to know whether the Council was in effect being asked to decide that transfer of control should take place if either of the two situations mentioned in paragraphs 5b(3)(a) and (b) should arise. They also sought clarification of the term "governments" in paragraph 5a(1)(c), since they understood that the execution of NATO plans was the subject of decision by the Council. In conclusion, he stated that his authorities did not agree with the opinion expressed by General Norstad, in the course of his last briefing to the Council, that maritime measures were less dangerous in their effects than air or ground measures. In their view, a decision to mine the Baltic Straits, for example, would create an imminent danger of war.

7. The BELGIAN REPRESENTATIVE expressed the gratitude of his authorities to General Norstad for providing such a generously detailed account of the views of the NATO military authorities in his last briefing to the Council, but added that they had indicated their concern at certain of the measures envisaged, for example the so-called "nuclear annexes" the application of which must be a matter for the Council. He went on to say that, with regard to the document under discussion, it was the understanding of his authorities that, so far as NATO was concerned, the execution of plans should be subject to decision by the Council. The Council would be unacceptably deprived of this prerogative if the document envisaged situations where the execution of plans would be automatic. He therefore wished to know whether automatic execution of plans was a principle of the document or not, especially in view of the fact that paragraph 5b(1) stated that "NATO forces should be put in an appropriate alert condition prior to tripartite operations", while it had already been agreed that the simple alert would normally be declared by the Major NATO Commanders only after obtaining approval of the governments through their Permanent Representatives on the NATO Council. Such intervention by the Council would rule out automatic execution of plans. He thought, moreover, that the document should be made more precise when mentioning governmental approval of plans as to when and whether only the tripartite governments were concerned or all the governments of the Alliance.

8. The CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE said that he had no instructions from his authorities with regard to the document. He thought, however, that the issue raised by the Belgian Representative was fundamental, and that if a satisfactory answer could be given to it many other questions of detail would be settled in consequence.

9. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the problem of which should be the political authority to take decisions had been touched upon in the discussion concerning the instructions to be issued to the NATO military authorities. He had raised the matter for clarification in document PO/61/809, with reference to the principles laid down in Articles 5 and 9 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The question had still to be settled whether all matters must be decided unanimously.

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For example, under Article 5, each member had the right of individual self-defence; if Denmark, say, in a certain situation, decided that the Baltic Straits should be mined, it was difficult to say at present whether the other countries could disagree.

10. The UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE thought that the question of how the Council should reach its decisions was broader than the question raised in the document under discussion, which concerned the extent to which the Council would have the opportunity to take a decision. In this respect, paragraphs 7 and 10(a) of C-2(61)104 assured that the Council would be fully apprised before tripartite operations were launched. In answer to one of the questions asked by the Danish Representative, he said that the term "mechanism" should, he thought, be regarded as equivalent to "operational control".

11. The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE proposed that the representatives of the three powers should consult together before replying to the various questions which had been raised to ensure that the answers would be definitive and commonly supported by their respective authorities. However, he personally agreed with the views expressed by the United Kingdom Representative, and, with regard to the question raised earlier by the Italian Representative, did not think that there was any inconsistency between paragraph 2 of the document and paragraphs 5b(3) (a) and (b).

12. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE thought that the answer supplied by the United Kingdom Representative as to the meaning of "mechanism" still left the sense of "control" undefined. In general, it seemed to him that the document could be envisaged from one of two angles. Its aim was either to establish NATO responsibility firmly or to raise the threshold of NATO engagement. He thought that, in the light of Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the latter aim was the more correct. All the proposals in the document should be interpreted as an attempt to avoid involving NATO in minor incidents.

13. The CHAIRMAN commented that this again illustrated the basic problem constituted by the fact that the three powers had definite responsibility for Berlin and were alone capable of launching the initial action which might be required, while their partners in the Alliance must be consulted in time for them to agree to the engagement of forces under NATO command which might be necessary in a subsequent phase.

14. The FRENCH REPRESENTATIVE supported the proposal of the United States Representative that the representatives of the three powers consult among themselves and with their authorities before replying to the questions raised by the other members.

15. The CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE said that the situations envisaged in paragraphs 5b(5)(a) and (b), especially in view of the size of the probe indicated, presupposed armed opposition, which would involve NATO as a whole. He therefore suggested that the NATO and LIVE OAK plans should be synchronized at an earlier stage. With regard to paragraph 5b(3)(a), he requested further information as to what was meant by tripartite forces of "greater size" than a battalion. With regard to paragraph 5b(2)(c), he personally thought that the object of all plans should be to apply the minimum of force required to maintain Western access rights to Berlin. In view of the Soviet concern about the intentions of the Federal Republic, he

wondered whether it was advisable to regard West German forces as first-line reserves. Though not wishing to exclude this possibility in practice, he thought that no prior decision should be taken to this effect, feeling it wiser to restrict responsibility to the three powers as long as possible and to decide on the nature of NATO reinforcements as and when they might be required.

16. The NETHERLANDS REPRESENTATIVE said that although his authorities had not instructed him to ask any questions concerning the document, he felt that they would be very interested in the points raised by other members of the Council. They had studied the document and thought that it represented considerable progress in comparison with the situation of a few months previously when there had been no contingency plans in existence. They had moreover been very impressed by General Horsted's recent briefing to the Council. As the problem was studied in greater detail the maximum degree of consultation in the Council became necessary at all stages. The Council should continue to proceed to consultation as early as possible on all occasions without thereby impairing the ability to respond to emergencies with the maximum necessary speed and force.

17. The TURKISH REPRESENTATIVE was of the opinion that, with the principle established that each government should be kept informed at every stage, the problem under discussion was reduced to one of agreement on technicalities. He thought that if the document submitted by the three powers were examined in the light of General Horsted's briefing, many difficulties would be clarified.

18. The CHAIRMAN, in reply to a question by the Danish Representative, said that the document should be taken to refer to action by member countries of NATO only.

19. The ITALIAN REPRESENTATIVE, raising a final question, asked what was meant by the term "maximum flexibility" in paragraph 5c(2) of the document.

20. The UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE, commenting on an earlier remark by the Danish Representative, said that his interpretation of the basic aim of the document was borne out by the position of the United Kingdom authorities, who wished to avoid the danger of "political escalation" involved in a premature engagement of NATO forces.

21. The CHAIRMAN, in conclusion, requested the Representatives of France, the United Kingdom and the United States to consult together and with their authorities with a view to providing answers at one of the next meetings of the Council to the various questions raised in the discussion. He hoped that, in the light of the discussion which it would have on these replies, the Council would be able to take the decision called for by paragraph 5 of the document.