

Extract from minutes of the 108th meeting of the WEU Council (12 February 1958)

Caption: At its meeting on 12 February 1958, the Council of Western European Union (WEU) analyses the cooperation between France, Germany and Italy in the field of arms production, which could be extended to all types of armaments and weapons systems covered by the policy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The WEU and NATO Armaments Committees will be informed of the armaments selected by the three countries so that other states can be involved in this cooperation.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of the 108th meeting of WEU Council held on 12 February 1958. Co-operation between France, Germany and Italy in the production of armaments. CR (58) 6. Final. pp. [s.p]; 4-7; [s.p] Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Subjects dealt with by various WEU organs. Year: 1958, 01/06/1957-30/04/1958. File 442.00. Volume 1/4.

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SECRET

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EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF 108th MEETING

OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON 12 Febr. 1958

(CR(58) 6) MIN. FIRM

I. CO-OPERATION BETWEEN FRANCE, GERMANY AND ITALY IN THE PRODUCTION OF ARMAMENTS

M. ZOPPI made the following statement on behalf of the French, Italian and German Governments:

"In view of the similarity of certain arms requirements, arrangements have been made for close co-operation between France, Germany and Italy for arms research, study and production, in accordance with the principles of co-ordination laid down by the conference of heads of N.A.T.O. Governments held from 16th to 19th December 1957.

The Ministers of Defence met in Bonn on 21st January, to define the principles of such co-operation and practical methods of putting them into effect.

They decided to set up a three-power steering committee to select types of weapons for the armed forces of the three countries, in respect of which they are prepared to undertake joint study, research and production. This committee will be assisted by ad hoc sub-committees.

The co-operation envisaged will extend to all types of armaments covered by N.A.T.O. policy and weapons systems recommended by that Organisation. Scientific research into the military use of nuclear energy is not excluded, but no decision has yet been taken in this respect. Any subsequent decision would, of course, take due account of the Paris Agreements.

The steering committee held its first meeting in Rome on 6th February.

The Armaments Committees of W.E.U. and N.A.T.O. will be informed of the types of equipment selected by the three countries, in the hope that others will participate in the relevant programme of study, research and manufacture."

M. CHAUVEL said that his Government had made an advance statement at the N.A.T.O. ministerial meeting in December 1957. This statement concerned the matters now under discussion, dealing as it did with the European contribution to Atlantic co-operation in the field of armaments. In response to requests for information made in the Council, he was authorised to communicate the text, which was as follows:

/"The implementation ...

W.E.U. SECRET

"The implementation of defence programmes raises increasingly difficult problems for all members of N.A.T.O., particularly in the case of new weapons.

For both economic and financial reasons, the countries of Europe cannot accept a situation in which they would be compelled to import most of the weapons they require. On the other hand, the creation of weapons systems at national level involves technical, industrial and financial problems which cannot be solved satisfactorily by each country separately.

From the military point of view, it is of the utmost importance that the European countries should adopt unified, or at least mutually compatible, weapons systems, in order to speed up the equipment of forces in the European theatre with the necessary weapons.

From the industrial point of view, the similarity of the standards applied by certain countries is conducive to closer co-operation between them.

Taking into account general and special agreements at present in force between the N.A.T.O. countries and in the interests of common defence, the French Government therefore propose to introduce a joint regional programme, the aims of which will be:

- to harmonise, in accordance with N.A.T.O. directives, military concepts concerning the organisation, use and equipment of the armed forces and to produce the necessary combat material to give effect to these concepts, particularly in the case of air weapons systems and missile systems;
- to organise immediate joint studies of military equipment complying with agreed general specifications, and undertake technical research in sectors recognised as being of joint interest for the development of new equipment or the improvement of equipment already in existence in other countries; to this end, the following action will be taken:
 - survey of studies and equipment projects of common interest,
 - joint selection of studies to be undertaken,
 - fair distribution of studies;

the necessary agreements giving effect to this programme will then be concluded;

/- to promote ...

- to promote an agreed programme for the selection and manufacture of armaments, aiming at standardisation and the effective joint use of technical and industrial resources; to this end, the following action will be taken:
 - survey of existing equipment,
 - agreed selection of equipment for mass production,
 - fair distribution of production work between the countries concerned;
- the necessary agreements giving effect to this programme will then be concluded;
- to work out suitable arrangements for the preparation, placing and execution of research and production contracts;
 - to consider arrangements for the establishment of joint funds to finance each project jointly carried out by a number of countries.

The French Government will provide a technical testing centre for the proposed organisation and a missile training centre for the Alliance.

It should be stressed that this regional programme can only succeed in its aims with the active support and assistance of all the other members of N.A.T.O. and particularly of the United States, the effectiveness of whose aid would thereby be increased.

The French Government would like to know whether the other countries wish to take part in this programme, and suggest that representatives of the countries concerned should meet during the second half of January 1958 to agree on principles, procedure and working arrangements."

M. CHAUVEL went on to say, with reference to the declaration made by M. Zoppi, that the organisation of their proposed co-operation was similar to that set up in the bilateral context by several of the member Governments. The results would be communicated to W.E.U. and N.A.T.O. whose members would be invited to take part.

Mr. von HERWARTH had nothing to add to the declaration made by the Italian Ambassador.

/The other ...

The other delegations joined Sir Anthony RUMBOLD in expressing their appreciation of this communication.

Sir Anthony Rumbold would like to put three questions.

1. Was the arrangement between the three Governments based on a formal agreement or on a memorandum of understanding? The Anglo-German and Anglo-French arrangements were based on such memoranda, and one would probably be drawn up for the Anglo-Netherlands agreement; he thought these documents should be put at the disposal of the Council and it was the intention of his Government to propose to their partners in the bilateral agreements to communicate these basic texts to the Council. He enquired whether the same would be done for the tripartite arrangement.

The FRENCH, GERMAN and ITALIAN Ambassadors undertook to convey this enquiry to their Governments.

2. Sir Anthony recalled that the tripartite co-operation could cover all types of armaments: he asked what types it was intended to deal with in the first instance.

Mr. von HERWARTH understood that co-operation between the three countries would cover rockets, guided missiles, aircraft, conventional army requirements and naval requirements. As regards the agreement concerning atomic energy, the Federal Government was interested mainly in research on propulsion of submarines and other ships.

M. CHAUVEL added that the list could, in fact, be taken as a definition of the framework of tripartite co-operation. This did not mean that all the weapons enumerated would be dealt with at once; it was the intention to consider which were the most suitable ones for joint study.

Mr. von HERWARTH agreed; the Anglo-German arrangement, for instance, covered the whole field of armaments from which certain items were being picked out for study. The tripartite arrangement, therefore, corresponded to the bilateral agreements.

3. With reference to the concluding paragraph of M. Zoppi's statement, regarding a possible extension of the tripartite co-operation, Sir Anthony recalled M. Cristofini's remarks at the last meeting on the difficulty of extending the results of bilateral co-operation to other member countries. Had the three Governments any procedure in mind for an extension of tripartite co-operation and any ideas as to the stage at which this should be carried out?

/M. ZOPPI ...

M. ZOPPI did not think the three Governments had anything definite in mind yet. However, the tripartite arrangement was already an advance on the bilateral arrangements in that, as soon as agreement had been reached on the types of weapons in which the three Governments were interested, W.E.U. and N.A.T.O. would be informed with a view to other countries joining in.

Mr. STIKKER felt sure his Government would study the statement with great interest. Recalling M. Cristofini's account, at the recent Council meeting, of the difficulties in the way of joint production of armaments, Mr. Stikker said he had always held that arrangements of this kind should be as flexible as possible. It had however been intended from the start that bilateral co-operation should take place within the framework of W.E.U. and N.A.T.O. The Ministers had specifically stated that the Anglo-Netherlands arrangement - which incidentally did not cover all types of armament - would be "developed within the framework of W.E.U. and N.A.T.O.". He very much hoped that the tripartite arrangement would, in accordance with the spirit of the W.E.U. agreement, as set out in the mandate of the Standing Armaments Committee, be developed on those lines. If this were the case, and the S.A.C. were duly informed of any progress made, a significant step would have been taken towards enabling other countries to participate, at a suitable stage, in the work of the three Governments. He regarded this as a matter of principle of the highest importance and would appreciate any clarification on it.

Mr. von HERWARTH thought he could answer this query by referring to his instructions concerning information to the Press, namely that, in reply to questions, it should be stated that the tripartite arrangement came within the framework of the W.E.U. and N.A.T.O. agreements.

M. CHAMPENOIS said that most of the points he had wished to raise had been covered during the discussion. News of the tripartite agreement had been received by his Government with great interest, albeit with some perplexity, and he had been instructed to enquire whether the text of the agreement could be made available. He understood now that there was no formal text but he, like Sir Anthony, thought it would be most useful if any memoranda of understanding were communicated to the Council. His Government was particularly interested in the question of bringing the tripartite agreement within the framework of W.E.U. and N.A.T.O., and in the categories of armaments which would form the subject of co-operation. M. Champenois recalled his remarks at the last meeting concerning the difficulty experienced by certain countries in making any useful contribution to an extension of bilateral co-operation, owing to their lack of information on the field covered.

The COUNCIL:

TOOK NOTE of the declaration made on behalf of the French, German and Italian Governments.

/II. ...

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF 106th MEETING

OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON 29 Jan. 1958

(CR (58) 4)

III. LETTER TO THE CHAIRMAN IN OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL
FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY (See file 202.411.0)

concerning suggestion made at joint meeting of 15th
December 1957, that the services of the S.A.C. should be
offered to NATO for the purposes of research and production
A draft reply was now submitted for consideration.

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In this connection, Sir Anthony RUMBOLD enquired
whether the French, German or Italian delegations were
likely to inform the Council in the near future about the
agreement between their Governments on joint development
and production of weapons and equipment. He felt it would
be suitable for the Council to hear of this arrangement.