

Extract from minutes of the 326th meeting of the WEU Council (20 July 1967)

Caption: The meeting of the Council of Western European Union (WEU), held on 20 July 1967, continues the discussions held in previous meetings (documents CR (67) 6 and CR (67) 16) on relations between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and WEU. British representative Lord Hood notes that, for his government, the withdrawal of French forces from the NATO integrated command arrangements has weakened NATO and, indirectly, the resources available to WEU to fulfil its obligations. It has also revealed a difference of philosophy that challenges the utility of an integrated military organisation in guaranteeing mutual defence in peacetime. Lord Hood also refers to the impact that France's withdrawal will have on reviewing force levels, on documentary controls and on the joint inspections performed by the Agency for the Control of Armaments (ACA). French Ambassador Geoffroy de Courcel replies that France's decision means that the aims of Article V of the Brussels Treaty can no longer be applied through a body to which France does not belong without calling into question the commitments entered into under Article V. He says that France is happy to agree to the continuance of existing limitations on levels of forces, as well as those laid down for levels of armaments of forces for common defence, and to the procedures for inspection by the ACA of French installations, with the exception of atomic weapons.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of the 326th meeting of WEU Council held on 20 July 1967. II. Note on NATO/WEU relations. CR (67) 17. pp. 3-7; 9-11. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Interpretation of Brussels Treaty & Paris Protocols. Year: 1967, 01/03/1967-14/06/1968. File 113.2. Volume 2/2.

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URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/extract_from_minutes_of_the_326th_meeting_of_the_weu_council_20_july_1967-en-5cedd41b-afaa-46e0-997a-1a808d207506.html



Last updated: 13/10/2016

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF 326th CR (67) 17
MEETING
OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON 20th Sep 1967

II. NOTE ON NATO-W.E.U. RELATIONS

(CR (67) 16, II, 2, c; CM (67) 2).

The CHAIRMAN recalled that at their last meeting the Council had agreed to continue at the present meeting their exchange of views on this question.

Lord HOOD wished to explain his delegation's views on the consequences for W.E.U. of the changes which had taken place in NATO.

- The first point to consider related to the former Article IV, now Article V of the modified Brussels Treaty. In 1950, it had been agreed that the mutual assistance undertaking provided for in that article should be implemented through NATO. This decision had been repeated and confirmed in 1957.

The withdrawal of French forces from the NATO integrated command arrangements, which in the British Government's view had weakened the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, had lessened the resources indirectly available to W.E.U. for fulfilling its obligations. Possibly of more fundamental importance was the difference of philosophy which had thus appeared between the allies in the sense that one of them believed, in present circumstances, that no integrated military organisation was required in peace-time to fulfil member countries' mutual defence obligations.

- Lord Hood had raised the second point at the previous meeting. It was the question whether, despite the withdrawal of French forces from NATO, the Council should nevertheless continue to check that they, like the forces of other member countries, were not in excess of the ceilings laid down in Article I of Protocol No. II. If this were felt desirable, the Council must consider how this duty could be discharged because France would not take part in the NATO annual review, during which, in accordance with Article III of Protocol No. II and the Resolution of 15th September 1956, the permanent representatives to NATO of the W.E.U. member countries checked the level of forces and studied any proposal the effect of which would be to increase levels above the specified limits.

Lord Hood therefore thought that some methods should be evolved whereby the figures for French forces could be appropriately examined.

- The third point referred to documentary controls, which were one of the Agency's main tasks. It was now accepted that operational French forces were from now on classified as forces for the common defence. The French Ambassador had also stated that his Government intended to continue supplying strength returns for such forces, through NATO, for transmission each year to the Council of W.E.U. In accordance with the Agreement of 14th December 1957, the Council were required to accept these figures without discussion, for the simple reason that NATO had examined them beforehand.

As things now stood, however, this examination could no longer be carried out in NATO and should therefore take place in the Council of W.E.U. The British delegation thought that practical arrangements for doing so should be discussed.

- The fourth point related to another of the Agency's duties, namely field controls and more particularly joint Agency-SHAPE inspections. These could obviously not be continued and the Agency would have to perform the duty alone. The Director of the Agency seemed to have concluded that this change did not call for the recruitment of additional staff. Lord Hood therefore thought that the position was satisfactory in existing circumstances.

/- His fifth ...

- His fifth and last point concerned the effect on the Agency and the S.A.C. of the transfer of NATO military and civilian headquarters out of France. The W.E.U. offices in Paris had been located there precisely so that they would be close to NATO. Lord Hood felt that this point at least merited attention.

Mr. VAN ROIJEN observed that Lord Hood had formulated very clearly a number of questions which arose in this context. He recalled that he himself had, on two occasions, put the point of view of his Government to the Council. He thought that the questions he had formulated were now covered by what Lord Hood had said. The Council would have to have the reactions of the French Government to these points before being able to finalise their report for the Ministers and in reply to the Assembly's enquiries.

M. de COURCEL said that the French Government's position on the first point, already raised by Lord Hood at the last meeting of the Council, was that the allies' obligations to assist each other originated from two separate Treaties which differed in both duration and content, and involved distinct commitments for the Allies. Having stated this principle, there was the practical problem of how the commitments entered into were to be implemented. A form of co-operation with NATO had been introduced after the signature of the North Atlantic Treaty when the Seven were all agreed on integration. Following France's withdrawal from the NATO integrated command arrangements, Article V of the Brussels Treaty could no longer be applied through a body to which France did not belong. However, in the French Government's view this was no obstacle to implementation of the commitments entered into under Article V of the Brussels Treaty as France's forces for the common defence were available precisely for that purpose; furthermore France was willing to agree that the new procedures for implementing Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty, now being negotiated between the French and allied Chiefs-of-Staff, should be used, by agreement between the Seven, to implement Article V of the Brussels Treaty.

/On the ...

On the second point, concerning maximum strengths, M. de Courcel had already given his Government's views which he now confirmed. He would simply like to add that in applying the Brussels Treaty and its Protocols, a distinction had hitherto always been made between forces allocated to NATO and other forces recognised by the Treaty as appropriate for retention under national command, stationed either on national territory or overseas, for the defence of overseas territories and for the common defence. The level of these forces was dealt with by the annual table for forces under national command. They had, however, never been subject to the ceilings which had been laid down by the special agreement annexed to the draft E.D.C. Treaty and, by the terms of Article I of Protocol No. II, affected only forces under NATO command. The French Government failed to see how the existing arrangement could be changed. They had therefore withdrawn their reserves regarding the Belgian amendments to the note on NATO-W.E.U. relations. They could, however, accept the limits hitherto applied to their former integrated forces under the terms of Article I of Protocol No. II, but could give no fresh undertakings. In practice, therefore, they could agree, without changing the Protocols in any way, to the application of the ceilings laid down in Article I of Protocol No. II to the strengths of their forces stationed in Germany, which were essentially those concerned with co-operating with the allied forces. The French Government were prepared to make a unilateral declaration on the whole of that point. The strengths of other forces under national command would continue to be communicated in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Treaty.

/As regards ...

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As regards the third point raised by Lord Hood, which concerned the control of appropriate levels of armaments of forces intended for common defence, the French Government would not be in favour of any new procedure for their discussion in the Council. For one thing, M. de Courcel did not quite see what form this could take; furthermore, the existing texts - Articles XVI and XVII of Protocol No. IV - were, in his view, entirely sufficient. After all, the levels of armaments depended on the levels of forces and, so far as these were concerned, France had agreed to the continuance of existing limitations. It would therefore be preferable to keep to the provisions already in force.

Turning lastly to points 4 and 5, M. de Courcel was under the impression that the Council had already reached agreement. So far as joint inspections were concerned, it had been acknowledged during discussions on the NATO-W.E.U. Note that this procedure, which had been adopted at one stage for practical reasons and had never been written into any treaty, could no longer be applied once France had withdrawn from SHAPE. On the other hand, the French Government had expressly agreed that the Agency, which would continue to receive every facility, should carry out inspections of French units and depots with correspondingly greater zeal, with the exception, however, of forces equipped with atomic weapons.

Concerning the possibility of moving the W.E.U. services out of France, delegations did not appear to welcome the idea, owing to its financial implications, amongst others. Although the French Government would not object in principle to a transfer, they were not prepared to incur fresh expenditure for the purpose.

/M. GUIDOTTI ...

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As regards the question of combined Agency-SHAPE inspections raised by Lord Hood, the CHAIRMAN confirmed that the Agency foresaw neither too much work nor a need for additional staff.

Referring to his French colleague's statement, in particular that part dealing with Article V of the Brussels Treaty, Lord HOOD declared that the repercussions of France's withdrawal from the NATO integrated command on the practical implementation of commitments entered into by virtue of both Treaties, led him to consider highly desirable that arrangements should be worked out between the inter-allied and French high commands.

With reference to Articles 4 and 5 of the Agreement of 1957 concluded in implementation of Article V of Protocol No. II, he pointed out that the provisions obliging the Council to accept the levels thus declared without discussion - in particular where the armaments of forces were concerned - had been drafted to take account of the review carried out within NATO. In view of France's new position with regard to NATO, he did not consider that the Council of W.E.U. should be precluded from commenting on force levels in future.

M. GROOTHAERT agreed with Lord Hood that the allies now had very different views, particularly as regards the principle of the integration of forces.

He did not believe, however, that this fact should prevent the Council from discharging their duties. Practical ways and means would therefore have to be sought. Lord Hood had clearly defined a number of questions while M. de Courcel, replying to the second British point, had said that France was prepared to make a unilateral declaration without any change being required to the existing Protocols. The Belgian Government, in common with those of other member countries, would like an opportunity to study the text of this declaration on a point which met the Council's main concern. In order to advance the discussions and meet the Ministers' request for early conclusions, the Permanent Council might perhaps agree to the suggestion of a unilateral French declaration on the subject of maximum strengths.

/Some members ...

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Some members of the Council might feel, however, that certain questions of procedure still had to be resolved. The Belgian representative wondered whether it might not be possible to adapt the procedure only, without modifying the Protocols, by amending the Resolution adopted by the Council of W.E.U. on 15th September 1956. For example, some form of words might be added, whereby France would be associated in W.E.U. with the preparation of the Annual Review.

: To avoid prolonging the discussion unduly and
: enable practical conclusions to be achieved, he asked
: whether any delegation intended to propose modifying the
: texts or amending the protocols now in force.

: If not, there should be nothing to prevent the
: Council from reaching agreement on the conclusions of
: the report to be laid before the ministerial meeting in
: October.

Referring to earlier discussions on the 1956 Resolution, M. de COURCEL recalled that his Government favoured retaining the texts in their present form.

M. GUIDOTTI agreed that this was an important point. His delegation favoured leaving the texts as they were, and believed that a pragmatic approach would best serve the interests of the Organisation.

Mr. BLANKENHORN was of the same opinion. But it might be useful to come to some common conclusions which could be inserted in the report for the Ministers.

To help towards a solution, Lord HOOD indicated that his delegation would be prepared to consider amending the Resolution of 15th September 1956 on the level of forces under NATO command, or producing a new Resolution of a purely procedural nature, if that was the general wish. On the other hand, he was also agreeable to the present Resolution being applied in the light of current circumstances. With regard to a follow-up to their discussions, he considered the report in its present form too long and detailed. The Ministers should be presented with the conclusions of the permanent Council. In an attempt to go some way towards giving satisfaction to the Assembly also, could they not prepare a short report for the Assembly which would be first approved by the Ministers at their next meeting? This report might contain certain broad conclusions arrived at by the Council.

/M. de COURCEL ...

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: M. de COURCEL would have no objection to pre-
: paring another report for the Ministers which could then,
: with their approval, serve as a basis for a report to
: the Assembly, as he had previously suggested. But he did
: not think that they could prepare one for the latter
: before reporting first to their Ministers. For their
: part, the French delegation felt that the Council could
: inform the Assembly of NATO-W.E.U. relations, which were
: within their competence, particularly as they were not
: in a position to say anything about the changes that had
: taken place in NATO itself. This would help Council/
: Assembly relations, but would have to be approved before-
hand by the Ministers themselves.

The CHAIRMAN having asked the Council whether
this discussion should be continued the following week
or resumed after the holiday period, M. GUIDOTTI
remarked that, if they all agreed that the French
unilateral declaration could be inserted in the
ministerial report, they could continue their dis-
cussions after the holiday.

M. de COURCEL noted the Italian proposal.

It was agreed that this discussion would be
resumed on 13th September when the Council would meet
again.