

Extract from minutes of the 330th meeting of the WEU Council (2 November 1967)

Caption: On 2 November 1967, the Council of Western European Union (WEU) meets to discuss the level of forces of WEU Member States placed under the command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The problem lies in the definition of new procedures for examining the level of forces after France's withdrawal from the NATO integrated military command. British representative Lord Samuel Hood affirms that it is vital for the WEU Member States to continue to carry out their duties. French Ambassador Geoffroy Chodron de Courcel is largely in agreement with the proposals made by Dutch Ambassador Herman van Roijen. He says that the assurance given by the six other Member States regarding force levels is sufficient, but a report must be submitted to the WEU Council and any final decision must be taken unanimously by the Seven. With regard to the practical arrangements for the procedure, Lord Hood suggests that a meeting between France and the Six should be held in Brussels, and the real discussion would then take place in the WEU Council, where questions could be put to France. The French Ambassador is not opposed to this idea. After securing the agreement of the other representatives, Lord Hood says that he will ask his NATO representative to implement the procedure so that a report can be prepared by the end of the quarter.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of the 330th meeting of WEU Council held on 2nd November 1967. CR (67)21. pp. [s.p.]; 6-9. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of Western European Union. Year: 1968, 01/09/1960-31/03/1968. File 113.2. Volume 2/5.

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EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF 330th MEETING CR (67) 21
OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON 2nd Nov. 1967

III. LEVEL OF FORCES OF W.E.U. MEMBER STATES PLACED
UNDER NATO COMMAND

(CR (66) 24, III, 2; C (67) 128)

The CHAIRMAN referred the Council to their Resolution of 15th September 1956, whereby they recommended member States to instruct their permanent representatives on the North Atlantic Council to meet once a year during the preparation of the Annual Review, to examine whether the level of forces of the seven member States came within the limits specified in Articles I and II of Protocol No. II, due account being taken of the increases authorised by the Council of W.E.U. on 21st January 1959, for the naval and naval air forces of the Federal Republic of Germany (CR (59) 1; C (58) 180).

The Resolution also requested Governments to instruct their representatives to submit recommendations on any proposals likely to increase the level of forces beyond the prescribed limits and to report to the Council of W.E.U., which would take any necessary decision by unanimous vote.

This meeting of permanent NATO representatives usually took place during the last quarter of the year.

The chairmanship of the Council being held by the United Kingdom for the current quarter, it was suggested that the latter's permanent NATO representative be requested, in accordance with the procedure followed since 1956, to convene the said meeting in order to report to the Council for the year 1967, as set out in document C (67) 128.

The Chairman therefore asked the Council whether they could agree to this procedure and whether the British delegation would undertake to convene the meeting envisaged in the Resolution of 15th September 1956.

Lord HOOD undertook to inform his Government of any arrangements the Council might agree. He considered it absolutely essential that member States of W.E.U. should continue to carry out their duties in this matter.

Mr. van ROIJEN was also of the opinion that they should continue to make certain that the level of forces did not exceed the prescribed limits; in this connection, the Netherlands Government, whilst adhering to the position of principle previously defined(*), were desirous of solving certain current difficulties and therefore wished to put forward a practical and provisional procedure which would not necessarily constitute a precedent.

Mr. van Roijen then made the following statement:

"Since the French Government decided to withdraw all its forces from NATO command, certain problems have arisen with regard to the implementation of the procedure laid down in the Council's Resolution of 15th September 1956. As France has decided not to take part in the NATO Annual Review, she will not receive the Annual Review figures concerning the other W.E.U. countries. This implies that France cannot usefully participate in the annual meeting of the permanent representatives on the North Atlantic Council where the level of forces under NATO command is examined.

A provisional arrangement might be found along the following lines:

- a) The six permanent representatives of the W.E.U. countries, with the exception of France, examine, during the Annual Review, whether the level of forces of the six countries concerned fall within the limits specified in Articles I and II of Protocol No. II. Having reached a positive conclusion, they state this fact. The French Government thereupon declare that they accept their assurance to this effect.
- b) The other six W.E.U. countries accept that the figures supplied by the French Government with regard to its forces under national command for the common defence indicate that these forces do not exceed the specified limits."

/M. de COURCEL ...

(*) CR (67) 6

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M. de COURCEL said he would inform his Government of Mr. van Roijen's statement. For his part, while he would be interested to hear the views of his colleagues, he thought that the proposal might well provide the basis for a suitable arrangement. As he had already had occasion to point out in the Council, France was not asking to take part in the Annual Review nor in the meeting held by her six allies to ascertain that the level of their forces came within the limits laid down in Articles I and II of Protocol No. II. Should the procedure suggested by the Netherlands Government be followed, the French Government would be prepared to accept the assurances given by the six other countries on condition, needless to say, that a report was submitted to the Council of W.E.U., where any final decision would be taken unanimously by all seven countries after an exchange of views, in accordance with paragraph c) of the Resolution of 15th September 1956. With regard to the second part of the Netherlands proposal, M. de Courcel wished to be certain that the forces in question, to which the limitations would apply, were those mentioned in the French unilateral declaration - namely, the French units stationed in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Lord HOOD wondered how the suggested procedure would work out in practice. He assumed that after the meeting of the six representatives in Brussels, a discussion would take place between themselves and the French representative during which the assurances conveyed by France and her partners respectively would simply be exchanged and accepted as given. A report would then be submitted on behalf of all seven countries, at the end of this quarter, by the representative of the delegation in the Chair - in this case, the British. The real discussion would then take place in the Council of W.E.U., where questions could be put to the French delegation regarding the figures supplied for their country.

Referring to the comments of Lord Hood and M. de Courcel, Mr. van ROIJEN wished to make it clear that, as regards the first point, his Government also considered the Council of W.E.U. to be the proper place for any decisions. On the second point, the Netherlands desired that the figures produced by France should cover not only forces stationed in Germany, but all those French forces at present under national command which were assigned for the common defence.

/ M. de COURCEL ...

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M. de COURCEL, dealing with the first point, could agree that the French representative should join the six others after their meeting in order to take note of their statements, on the understanding that the report would be sent to the Council of W.E.U. where any final decision would be taken.

As to the second point, considered in the light of the Netherlands Ambassador's subsequent comments, he would remind the meeting that the French Government had already had occasion to state that it was not in their intention to make any change in commitments undertaken in 1954. In their unilateral declaration of 13th September last⁽¹⁾, they had confirmed that they would continue to accept the limitations prescribed in Article I of Protocol No. II as applying to their forces previously integrated in the NATO command and henceforth placed under national command; that is to say, to units stationed in Germany, which were essentially those concerned with co-operating with the allied forces. The only new factor concerned the air forces, certain units of which had already returned to France. The French Government could not undertake any new commitments. Therefore they could not accept, if this were indeed the meaning of the Netherlands proposal, that the ceilings should apply to forces which had never previously been subjected to them. But they might be able to make a counter-proposal on this point after due consideration.

M. de Courcel went on to point out that the term "forces assigned for the common defence" had not been clearly explained in the Treaty and was not easy to define; nearly all French forces, apart from internal defence and police forces and those assigned to the defence of overseas territories, were shown in the tables within the category of forces available for the common defence. Furthermore, as they had already stated⁽²⁾, the French Government had decided that in order to enable the Council of W.E.U. to review the level of forces for common defence they would continue to supply the North Atlantic Council with figures concerning their own forces.

/Baron van den BOSCH ...

(1) CR (67) 19

(2) CR (67) 6

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Baron van den BOSCH said he would willingly subscribe to the provisional procedure suggested by the Netherlands Government to implement the Resolution of 15th September 1956. Until such time as the report on NATO-W.E.U. relations had been completed and a final procedure worked out, it would seem most convenient that the Six should examine the files in Brussels and communicate their findings to the French representative, the actual decision being subsequently taken by the Council of W.E.U.

M. GUIDOTTI undertook to inform his Government of the Netherlands proposal and of the extremely interesting exchange of views that had taken place.

Mr. BLANKENHORN said that, having regard to the views expressed during the present meeting, he would recommend his Government to agree to the solution put forward by the Netherlands delegation, both parts of which appeared to meet the case. He would, moreover, be glad if the French delegation could supply details on the point raised regarding those of their forces assigned for the common defence.

M. CLASEN joined with Mr. Blankenhorn in considering that the procedure suggested by the Netherlands would supply a suitable provisional solution to their immediate difficulties. He hoped, furthermore, that agreement could soon be reached on the interpretation of the second paragraph of the proposal concerned.

Following this exchange of views, the CHAIRMAN asked whether, subject to the agreement of delegations, the United Kingdom Government could agree to convene the meeting envisaged in the Resolution of 15th September 1956.

Lord HOOD undertook to ask the British representative in NATO to get in touch with his colleagues and carry out the procedure required for the preparation of a report before the end of the quarter. They would, of course, have to await the outcome of the Annual Review.

M. de COURCEL could agree to Lord Hood's proposals without reservation, since his Government could have no objection to any procedure undertaken by the Six. Since the problem of seven-power discussions would not arise in the immediate future, he suggested that the question be placed on the Council's agenda after there had been time to study the Netherlands proposal in Paris.

It was so decided.

M. de COURCEL ...