

Extract from minutes of the 460th meeting of the WEU Council (24 June 1973)

Caption: On 24 June 1973, the extract from minutes of the 460th meeting of the Council of Western European Union (WEU) contains an examination of the activities of the Standing Armaments Committee (SAC) and sets out the issues relating to the standardisation of armaments in Europe. The French Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Jacques Delarue Caron de Beaumarchais, states his government's position on the SAC, confirming the proposal made at the last ministerial meeting (CR(73)3) to call a meeting of the national armaments directors of the WEU Member States for September. The meeting should define the part the SAC could play in strengthening European cooperation in the field of armaments and cooperation with other bodies. British Ambassador Thomas Brimelow takes note of the French proposal and undertakes to report it to his government, pointing out that any such meeting would have to be well prepared if it is to be fruitful.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of the 460th meeting of WEU Council held on 28 June 1973. CR (73)10. pp.26-29 Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of the Western European Union. Year: 1967, 16/03/1956-30/04/1967. File 250.10. Volume 2/2.

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http://www.cvce.eu/obj/extract_from_minutes_of_the_460th_meeting_of_the_weu_council_24_june_1973-en-68c0548a-f115-457e-ba82-34f1656e2ddf.html

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EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF ⁴460 MEETING
OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON 28 June 473

FILE No.
CR (73)10

V. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Examination of the activities of the Standing Armaments Committee, and problems of the standardisation of armaments in Europe

(CR (73) 3, III; CR (73) 4, II, 1; C (73) 60)

M. de BEAUMARCHAIS said he was now in a position to inform the Council of his Government's views with regard to the Standing Armaments Committee. He recalled that, at the ministerial meeting in Luxembourg on 15th February, the Head of the French delegation had raised the possibility of calling a meeting of the national armaments directors of the member countries of W.E.U. Today, he was able to confirm this proposal to convene an extraordinary meeting of the national armaments directors.

The French Government suggested that this meeting should be held as soon as possible after the holiday period, for example in September. They envisaged this meeting as following the same lines as in 1958, when similar meetings had been held. This meant that the meeting would take place in Paris, at the offices of the Standing Armaments Committee, and would follow the same procedure as on that occasion, namely that the country holding the chairmanship of the S.A.C. at the time the meeting was held would be responsible for convening it and providing a chairman. See 442

The purpose of this meeting, as M. Bettencourt had suggested on 15th February, would be to define the part the Standing Armaments Committee could play in strengthening European co-operation in the field of armaments. To this end and as a first objective, the meeting of armaments directors of the seven countries would consider what further measures could be entrusted to the Standing Armaments Committee in addition to the co-operation already developing within other bodies. They might subsequently be given broader responsibilities. M. de Beaumarchais emphasised that, in the view of the French Government, this agenda was not exhaustive; indeed, they would be glad to consider the possibility of including any problems or proposals which other delegations might wish to have discussed.

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At this extraordinary meeting, the French Government would be represented by M. Blancard, ministerial delegate for armaments in France.

Following this meeting, a report could be submitted to the Permanent Council, and thereafter, to the Ministerial Council of W.E.U. Referring to a comment made by the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany at a recent meeting, M. de Beaumarchais stressed that, in his Government's view, the Council was indeed the only body empowered to take decisions concerning the Standing Armaments Committee.

M. MANZINI said he had followed the French Ambassador's statement with great interest. While hoping to be able later to give a more specific reply to the French proposal, he made the following statement:

"I wish to begin by stressing once again what importance my Government attaches to the development, standardisation and procurement of armaments in the framework of European military co-operation.

We consider that developments in this sector would enable us to advance along the path of European unity.

The Italian Government is of the opinion that the time has come to make a joint effort in this field, towards the rationalisation of existing structures.

This is why my Government has welcomed and taken a lively interest in the French proposal to study problems relating to the S.A.C. and to consider the possibilities of drawing up a timetable for this body.

As Under-Secretary of State Bemporad stated at the W.E.U. Ministerial Council on 15th February last in Luxembourg, our preference for the S.A.C. is based mainly on the conviction that the S.A.C. itself, more than other European or Atlantic agencies active in the military field, can offer us concrete opportunities for joint action - provided, of course, that all member states have a positive wish for this.

/We have welcomed ...

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We have welcomed the decision to keep the operational research and obstacles and barriers sub-groups in existence for, it should be noted, the activities they carry out are different from those of other similar bodies, so that there is no danger of overlapping.

We can also support the suggestion to extend the field of responsibility of the S.A.C. to include naval and air force armaments.

We also agree with the proposal to raise the level of national representatives to the S.A.C. and we favour the proposal to promote meetings of national armaments directors under the auspices of the S.A.C.

Consideration should also be given to the possibility of achieving greater coordination between the activities of FINABEL - with perhaps an extension to cover all three armed forces - and those of the S.A.C., which might even carry out the duties of the present FINABEL Secretariat.

For the success of these initiatives, aimed at infusing new life into the S.A.C., even though their scope may appear limited, we are well aware that the sincere will to co-operate which I mentioned just now is essential.

This sincere will to co-operate will not be lacking on Italy's side. My Government is convinced that, if the attitude of the other member states is the same, future developments in this field can be of great value for our countries."

Mr. von HASE had listened with great interest to the proposal made by M. de Beaumarchais. He would inform his Government accordingly and ask for instructions as to the precise proposal to convene a special meeting of national armaments directors.

/He then recalled ...

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He then recalled his comments at the Council meeting of 5th April last when, after pointing to the fact that, in general, his Government were very interested in an examination of the role of the Standing Armaments Committee, he had added that they would nevertheless first of all like to have from the S.A.C. itself specific proposals for its future work. When that had been done, he had said it might also be useful, after appropriate preparation, to hold a meeting of national armaments directors to obtain their proposals for the new tasks of the S.A.C.

Sir Thomas BRIMELOW took note of the French Ambassador's proposal and undertook to report it to his Government. He pointed out that the British view had always been that any such meeting would have to be very well prepared, if it were to be fruitful.

Baron GEVERS shared Sir Thomas's opinion.

In conclusion, it was agreed to place this item on the agenda for the next meeting of the Council.