



ORGANISATION DU TRAITE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

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To: Permanent Representatives
From: Secretary General

NATO STRATEGY AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

References: TYP/UK(61)1
TYP(61)6
TYP(61)14
TYP/IE(61)1

In view of the Council's discussion arranged for Wednesday, 26th April, at Annex will be found a note prepared by the International Staff which resumes the last discussions of the Council on this subject.

(Signed) D.U. STRIKKER

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COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS ON NATO STRATEGY AND
NUCLEAR WEAPONS

1. The Council has already devoted several meetings to the discussion of NATO strategy and nuclear arms. This question has also been the subject of declarations or messages by leading personalities of some countries of the Alliance. Recently, during the restricted session of the Council on the 18th April, 1961, the majority of Ambassadors had the opportunity of expressing their personal views on this question in general, and, in particular, on the British memorandum on the same subject. (1)

2. It thus seems useful to sum up these discussions, by recalling the principal problems which have been raised, and by attempting to define directions in which the Council might seek solutions to these problems.

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3. The main problems touched on during the discussion on NATO strategy can be placed in two categories: questions concerning the role of the shield forces, their armament and their organizations; and questions concerning political control of the use of atomic weapons.

4. When the first category of problems was discussed, emphasis was particularly laid on the following three ideas:

- the idea of "raising the threshold" of the use of atomic weapons, presupposes that the conventional armament of the shield forces should be improved, and thus perhaps implies changes in the organization of the present forces of the Alliance. The following question has therefore been put to the military authorities: starting from the idea that land and air forces of the Alliance are equipped and organized in such a way as to use conventional and atomic weapons together, would it be necessary to modify the organization of these forces, insofar as possible, in order to have two types of forces, one for conventional war and the other for atomic war? At the same time, it must be asked that targets are to be assigned to the shield forces and how the countries of the Alliance could support the considerable financial burden that a reinforcement of the conventional equipment of their present forces - and possibly also the introduction of new weapons such as MRBM - might involve.

(1) TYP/UK(61)1

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- the idea of the "pause", thought dangerous by some though valid to others, on condition that the pause does not mean that the enemy gains a geographical advantage, and that it does not last too long.

- the idea of "limited war" which, as the British memorandum has already emphasised, does not seem to exist in the strategic concepts of the Alliance, as at present formulated in MC 14/2 and MC 48/2. This idea, therefore, still remains to be defined.

5. In the second category of problems raised during the Council discussions - those concerning the control of the use of atomic arms - the idea of establishing "rules of engagement" of the atomic weapons of the Alliance was particularly mentioned. The Council will no doubt remember that this question was notably dealt with by General Norstad in his exposé before the Council on the 26th January, 1961. M. Spaak had moreover emphasised its importance in document TYP(61)2 of the 3rd February, 1961, when he recalled that the Council would have to attempt a definition of the general principles and the particular instances when the atomic power of the Alliance should be used in particular, in the case of a war starting with conventional weapons alone.

6. During these recent discussions, several Ambassadors have indicated their concern with this problem and have put forward suggestions. It seemed to most, that while a definition of these rules was relatively easy to establish a priori in the case of a Soviet atomic attack or of a massive conventional attack, the difficulty was greater in cases intermediate between the two.

7. These discussions have been extremely useful and have enabled the most important problems, for which a solution should be found, to be outlined. The Council has decided to continue its discussions on this subject. It may thus be useful to attempt to define the directions in which the Council might look for solutions.

8. First of all, it seems accepted that the present situation of "nuclear plenty" may imply that the Soviets believe that the Alliance would be deterred from employing nuclear weapons except in retaliation to a Soviet nuclear attack. Consequently, there is a danger of the Soviets either launching massive general attacks against NATO with conventional weapons or starting limited aggression against NATO inside or outside the NATO area. These possibilities are certainly foreseen in the Political Directive(1) and in the military documents defining the strategic concept and its implementation(2). But a strict interpretation of these documents seems to exclude the concept of limited war

(1) C-M(56)138(Final), part II, paragraph 4 and 5

(2) MC 14/2, paragraph 9, MC 48/2, paragraph 6(m)

with the Soviets. It appears, nevertheless, that such an interpretation is too rigid and that the wording of these documents, in the paragraphs referred to and elsewhere, is sufficiently flexible to be interpreted in the light of present problems.

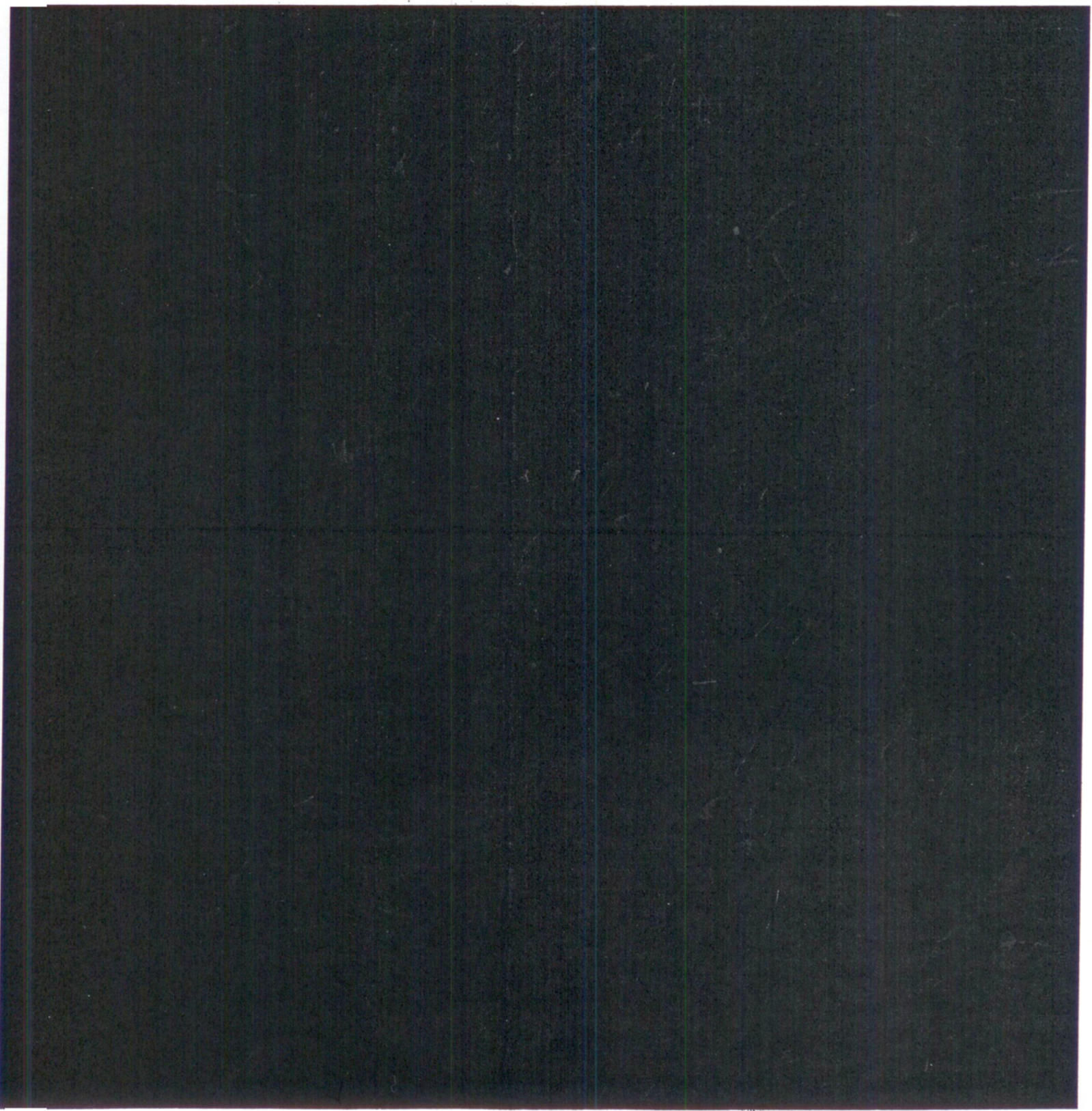
9. If this principle is accepted, it may be necessary to study how the questions which the Council has been concerned with - the role of the shield forces, their armament and organization - can be answered. It has generally been recognised, during earlier discussions, that the role of these forces should be in the first place, to dissuade the Soviets from committing acts of limited aggression and subsequently to prevent them from pursuing them once they have been started. To do this, in the present state of armament in East and West, it seems accepted that the shield forces should be strengthened, in conventional if not also in nuclear armament. The military consequences of this principle fall in the province of the NATO Military Authorities, who might be called upon to study them for the Council. This study could be made at the same time as the definition of force requirements of the Alliance for the period 1962-66, which the Council has decided will serve as the basis for the 1963 Triennial Review(1). Following the military studies, the problem of the additional financial burden resulting from a reinforcement of the shield forces, and what means of financing might be employed, could be taken up by the Council.

(1) C-M(61)24

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15. The foregoing considerations do not cover all the aspects of the problems raised by the Council during its discussions on NATO strategy. They nevertheless show that these discussions, though mostly confined to generalities, have brought out the essential ideas and their main implications. It may thus be asked whether the moment has not come for the Council to undertake in the near future a systematic and a point by point discussion of these ideas, with a view to establishing a doctrine acceptable to all, which would enable a common interpretation of the political directive and the basic document on the strategic concept (MC 14/2 and MC 48/2). If the Council should so wish, the suggestions which have been put forward, quite tentatively, in the second part of this note may serve to facilitate this task.