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27 OCT 1960

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SUBJECT: The Scope of NATO Action in the Event of Soviet or WP Military Intervention in Poland

INTRODUCTION

1. (NR) The serious political implications of recent unrest in Poland for the Soviets give rise to the possibility of Soviet or WP military intervention particularly should the position further deteriorate. The position remains potentially explosive, as Poland's underlying political and social problems cannot be easily solved. Furthermore, it is clear from the lessons of Hungary and Czechoslovakia that the USSR will take any measures considered necessary to maintain control over Polish political developments in the interests of stability of the Eastern Bloc as a whole. It is assumed that any Soviet or WP intervention in Poland would follow an "invitation" to intercede on behalf of the Polish Government and that any such intervention would involve other WP forces. Any intervention may be resisted by the Polish people and could be of invasion proportions. The danger of expansion cannot be excluded and NATO, particularly SHAPE, must monitor the situation closely to be prepared to take appropriate actions should the need arise.

AIM

2. (NR) The aim of this paper, which follows a COFS tasker, is to:

a. Analyse those actions, if any, which SACEUR could recommend that the nations take in the event of USSR occupying Poland.

b. Establish the guidance, if any, which SACEUR should request from the MAC, should the USSR occupy Poland.

3. (NR) The background to the present situation in Poland is at Annex A.

4. (NR) A record of the action taken by NATO and SACEUR during Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956, Cuba in 1962, and Czechoslovakia in 1968 is at Annex B.

SOVIET OPTIONS

5. (NR) The following options which are available to USSR may be preceded by an invitation to intervene by the Polish Government:

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a. To take unilateral military action now, or in the event of further unrest, to discipline the Poles and discourage further unrest in Poland or elsewhere within the WP.

b. To take military action now, or in the event of further unrest, in conjunction with other WP forces.

c. To place Polish forces and Soviet forces in Poland on a formal alert state of operational readiness to exert military pressure on the Polish people. This action could be extended to adjacent Soviet and GDR Divisions. (This option is related to the aim of this paper as a possible forerunner of military intervention).

ANALYSIS OF SOVIET OPTIONS

6. (NC) Soviet military intervention would be a drastic step at this stage, even with WP military assistance. Not only would this destroy Soviet prestige at any forthcoming negotiations but would reawaken the free world to the seriousness of the threat stemming from the invasion of Afghanistan. This could nullify any progress made towards detente and change the negotiating atmosphere to a 'Cold War' situation for a decade. Furthermore, such intervention would impose considerable risks. The underlying hatred of a large section of the Polish population for the Russians and Germans alike, combined with uncertainty over the loyalty of Poland's 15 Divisions to the Soviet cause, would require any intervention or invasion to be in considerable strength (probably 30+ Divisions). Even a force of this strength could be destined to remain in Poland for some time if effective control is to be maintained. In view of this and the need for the Soviets to retain some vestige of face, there seems little doubt that other WP forces would be involved at an early stage of intervention. (Option 5b). Soviet forces could be redeployed from GDR and USSR and might be supported by GDR, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian and Bulgarian forces. In view of the serious, political implications of Options 5a and b, the Soviets might be inclined to test the effect of Option 5c before resorting to actual intervention.

THE THREAT TO NATO

7. (NS) While any Soviet or WP military intervention in Poland is not directly a NATO case, within the terms of the Alliance Charter and the tacit acknowledgement of the Soviet sphere of influence by the West at Helsinki in 1975, it is necessary to consider the implications of any such intervention on the threat to NATO.

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Short Term

a. Initially, there would be no fundamental change in the components of the main threat to NATO but the emphasis and perspective of the threat would change as follows:

(1) Soviet Intervention. Soviet forces could be redeployed from USSR and GDR to Poland, which would not affect the balance of Soviet forces facing NATO in terms of time and distance. However, all such forces would be in an operational state of readiness and although fully committed in Poland could be redeployed quickly.

(2) WP Intervention. Forces from GDR, Czechoslovakia and the Balkans would reduce the adverse balance of WP forces immediately facing NATO. Again these forces would be in an operational state of readiness and available for quick redeployment.

(3) Formal Alert of WP Forces. If the Soviets employed this option as a preliminary to intervention the risk to NATO would increase from the uncertainty stemming from a large number of uncommitted but operationally ready forces in present location.

(4) Other Forces.

(a) Diplomatic action and media coverage by the West would escalate public interest in the situation and would increase the perspective of the threat.

(b) Any accompanying redeployment of Soviet forces to safeguard their interest in other WP territories would increase the level of threat to NATO.

(c) Military intervention would create an opportunity for discontented military units and civilians to defect to the West. While this would not affect the threat as such, it could pose a problem for NATO forces.

Assessment. It is considered that the formal alerting of WP forces without intervention would pose the biggest problem for NATO. The uncertainty stemming from such a move would place NATO at risk.

Longer Term

b. Implications on the threat to NATO in the longer term would depend on the success of intervention in Poland and the stabilising effect of this on other WP nations. Reaction of the West and of the uncommitted nations of the world would also have some bearing on the longer term threat. The following possibilities are worthy of consideration:

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(1) Opposed Intervention. If military intervention was strongly opposed with Polish Army support and a blood-bath ensued, the Soviets would be committed to a long occupation of Poland and the WP would lose the support of the Polish Armed Forces.

(2) Other Deployments. The continued deployment of any additional Soviet forces to other WP countries would maintain the increased degree of the threat to NATO.

(3) Soviet Failure. Any failure by the Soviets to impose stability within the WP through the use of force, while leading towards the eventual collapse of the WP would at the same time increase the uncertainty over future Russian intentions. This would in effect increase both the risk and the degree of threat to NATO.

Assessment. Whether or not the Soviets/WP forces are successful in achieving Eastern Bloc stability through military intervention in Poland, a period of uncertainty is bound to follow. The threat to NATO during this time will increase.

POSSIBLE NATO OBJECTIVES

8.(N) Any NATO actions following WP intervention in Poland could be considered on the basis of the following objectives:

a. To Deter WP. The Soviet/WP decision to intervene would have been taken only as a desperate measure to secure the stability of the WP. It is doubtful, therefore, if any actions by NATO, short of strong military intervention, would deter the Soviets from completing their mission. Furthermore, having accepted that WP nations are in the Soviet sphere of influence, it would be difficult to devise justification for such a level of intervention. It is possible, however, in the event of opposed WP intervention, that strong NATO political and diplomatic initiatives, possibly combined with economic sanctions, might encourage a limitation on the level of military force to be used.

b. To Assist the Poles. If the Poles strongly resisted WP intervention the temptation would exist to assist the Polish people in any way possible. Western acceptance of the status quo and the territorial position of Poland would, however, make military action difficult. Furthermore, NATO forces are not authorised, organised or of sufficient strength to take on this role, even with the possible support of an unknown number of WP dissident forces. If it is accepted that NATO military action is impractical then NATO must take great care to ensure that nothing is

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done to encourage the Poles to believe that NATO military assistance will be forthcoming. The possibility of some assistance by individual nations in the evacuation of refugees cannot be ignored but it is to be hoped that this would be left to civilian organisations.

c. To Prevent Inadvertent NATO Involvement.

Assuming that NATO military intervention at any level is rejected then NATO/SHAPE will wish to monitor developments closely to be prepared for any emergency. Such monitoring action and the possible movement of Polish refugees and other WP dissidents to the West will increase the risk of inadvertent involvement. The Soviets will seek every opportunity to blame the West for the situation in Poland and NATO will need to exercise caution in this respect. Clear instructions will need to be issued to MSC's on the handling of WP refugees (SACEUR OPLAN 10001).

d. Improve the Posture of NATO.

It is important for NATO to use every opportunity to improve its defence posture. No scope will exist in this situation for any redefinition of NATO/WP boundaries but in view of the closeness to 'home' of Poland and the goodwill that exists in the West for the Polish people, some opportunities may exist for the strengthening of NATO posture.

9. (NS) No military intervention is practical to deter the WP from executing their mission in Poland or to assist the Poles but political initiatives etc. might reduce the level of action. The need to be prepared by monitoring developments closely, encouraging political initiatives and at the same time to prevent inadvertent involvement should be the NATO objective.

SACEUR'S CONSIDERATIONS

WITHIN ACE

10. (NS) In previous emergencies in Hungary, Cuba and Czechoslovakia the action taken by NATO was of a low level and the few measures implemented were at the instigation of SACEUR (Annex B). If the NATO objective at paragraph 9 is accepted then SACEUR could consider the following action within ACE without consultation. Such action could be taken without the risk of escalation or inadvertent involvement:

a. Order the activation of SHAPE WHO with skeleton manning on a 24-hour basis to maintain a close watch of developments.

b. Order MSC's to man situation centres on a 24-hour basis.

c. Order the review of contingency plans and the testing of ACE communications.

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d. Advise MNC's to take all possible covert action short of formal state of Military Vigilance to ensure that ACE forces are fully up to their peacetime state of operational readiness.

e. Increase the readiness of ACE air defence by doubling the aircraft on standby to four per squadron and by doubling the number of SAM site missiles ready for use within 20 minutes.

Assessment. The possible action at sub-paragraphs a, b and c above is related to Military Vigilance measures. The action at sub-paragraphs d and e is not included in formal measures but could be described as a logical precautionary step for a Commander to take in view of the uncertainty of the situation. The state of readiness of air defence, which is under the command of SACEUR, could be executed as a routine exercise and SACEUR may wish to review this as the overall military situation becomes more stable.

REQUESTS TO NATIONS

11.(NS) In addition to the domestic action noted above, SACEUR could consider seeking the following assistance from nations which is within his authority as a MNC:

a. A request to the nations to provide the maximum intelligence on the situation.

b. A request for deployment of USAWACS aircraft to ACE to assist in intelligence collection and provide an additional air defence command and control facility. This deployment could be made under the guise of an exercise.

POSSIBLE ADVICE TO NATIONS

12.(NS) SACEUR may consider advising nations, in consultation with the MC and the DPC, of the serious military implications which could stem from WP intervention in Poland and suggest action which should be taken to ensure the readiness of ACE to respond in an emergency. Such action could include:

a. Ensuring that their committed NATO forces are up to peacetime strength in personnel and equipment.

b. Ensuring that contingency plans for the mustering of reinforcements are dusted-off and reviewed if necessary.

c. Giving urgent consideration to any expedients which could be used to make good any of the current deficiencies against force goals or LTDP measures.

d. Encouraging the nations to take well orchestrated political and diplomatic action with a view to restricting the level of military force to be employed in Poland and to consider the viability of economic sanctions.

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Assessment. The possible courses of action at sub-paragraphs a, b and c above are believed to be non-controversial prior to any formal declaration of Military Vigilance. The course at sub-paragraph d is outside SACEUR's military sphere of influence but seems a natural extension of possible action to be considered. Other measures e.g. preparation for improved availability and readiness of forces are considered later under Military Vigilance Measures (Paragraph 14).

POSSIBLE GUIDANCE FROM NAC

13.(NS) SACEUR may consider the need to maintain close contact with CMC and SYG to discuss the developments and prepare the ground for political measures. SACEUR may require the following guidance from NAC during such discussions:

- a. A coordinated view of the reaction of NATO nations to WP intervention in Poland.
- b. Details of any political, diplomatic and economic initiatives which are under consideration by NATO nations.
- c. Any additional military alert measures required to conform with the political reaction to the problem.
- d. Whether consideration has been given to the activation of the NATO Refugee Agency.
- e. Whether any humanitarian assistance might be possible to Polish refugees without risking inadvertent involvement.

OTHER MILITARY VIGILANCE MEASURES

14.(NS) The option of declaring a state of Military Vigilance, which is within SACEUR's authority, cannot be ignored but the justification for so doing might prove difficult. The immediate threat to NATO by WP intervention in Poland does not significantly change and the Soviet sphere of influence is accepted. Justification would need to be based on the need to improve the NATO posture and to enable NATO to cope with any overflow from Poland or elsewhere from within the WP nations. A state of Military Vigilance would be difficult to achieve without publicity and both the Soviets and the media would take full advantage of this to escalate NATO involvement. Furthermore, the alert measures within the state of Military Vigilance can be taken without a formal declaration of Military Vigilance. On this basis, a declaration of Military Vigilance at the initial stage of WP intervention might be resisted by national authorities. Some individual measures, not provocative in nature, could be advantageous since they put us in a better posture but are

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not open to misinterpretation. Although SACEUR has authority to implement these measures, it is for consideration whether consultation might nevertheless be advisable in certain cases in view of the fundamentally political nature of the crisis. It is, of course, possible that such a declaration might be entirely justified at a later stage following further Soviet military deployments or any deterioration of the situation.

15.(NS) The deployment of Central NATO forces to GDP position has been considered but rejected on the basis of the risk of inadvertent involvement. This may, however, require reconsideration in the event of any mass exodus of refugees either from or through GDR.

16.(NS) The only additional relevant measure which could be implemented under the authority of SACEUR, namely, the use of naval/amphibious contingency/standing forces, might prove controversial. This measure if related to naval deployment in the Baltic might risk escalation. The Soviets would wish to discourage mass exodus of refugees and secure their supply lines and the presence of NATO ships could easily lead to incidents. This danger would outweigh the value of marginally enhancing our intelligence collecting capacity.

ACTION FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF SACEUR

17.(NS) The actions that SACEUR might consider prior to any consultation with MC or DPC (paragraphs 10 and 11) were not taken during the crises in Hungary, Cuba or Czechoslovakia by SACEUR. Such actions should, however, be non-controversial in the political arena and are well within the remit of SACEUR. They are of a domestic nature, are neither provocative nor open to misinterpretation, and they could be justified by the need for sensible preparedness.

2 Annexes:

- A - Background to the Current Situation in Poland (NS) (Tab A)
- B - Historical Precedents (NS) (Tab B)

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