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

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N A T O S E C R E T

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To : Secretary General
c.c. : Deputy Secretary General
ASG, Political Affairs -
From : Executive Secretary

Summary Record of Private Meetings of the Council on
Monday, 8th December, 1980 at 12.15 a.m.
and 4.45 p.m.

I. IMPLICATIONS FOR ALLIANCE DEFENCE OF THE SITUATION IN
POLAND

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This document consists of : 10 pages

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ATTENDANCE

:

Ambassadors + Chiefs of Defence
Staff + 1

plus

Deputy Secretary General
ASG, Political Affairs
Directeur du Cabinet
Executive Secretary

plus

Chairman, Military Committee
SACEUR
SACLANT
CINCHAN
Deputy Chairman, Military Ctee

AGENDA

:

No

MEETING PLACE

:

Secretary General's Conference
Room

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(MEETING AT 12.15 A.M.)

I. IMPLICATIONS FOR ALLIANCE DEFENCE OF THE SITUATION IN POLAND

The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE upon whose request the meeting was convened, informed the Council that extensive and major Warsaw Pact military activity was taking place around Poland involving East German, Czechoslovak and Soviet Forces apparently in preparation for an exercise. It was possible that the activities were designed by Moscow to exert the maximum amount of pressure on Polish workers and leadership. Although the exercise could be postponed at the last minute, it was evident that the Warsaw Pact forces had reached the necessary readiness to invade Poland if Moscow were so to decide. The invasion could also be carried out under the guise of an exercise. Since 26th November no further strikes took place in Poland. The US authorities understood that President Ceausescu was satisfied with the outcome of the recent Moscow meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders. Furthermore, Mr. Brezhnev had left Moscow for his visit to India as planned. Nonetheless, these indications against an invasion were not preclusive. Indeed, Warsaw Pact military activity around Poland had not diminished since the Moscow Summit. Intensive military build-up continued in the Western USSR, East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Command posts were also established.

In East Germany no major exercise activity was observed, only joint service operations were taking place and normal flight activity seemed to be under way.

In Czechoslovakia, elements of several divisions were deployed out of barracks. Leaves were cancelled and mobilization of reservists was initiated. Some Soviet divisions were also being strengthened.

In Western USSR, mobilization and exercises were under way. Military activity was confined to in-garrison operations. The readiness of Soviet forces in the three military districts bordering Poland were being increased.

In Byelorussia, elements of Soviet divisions might be deployed near Poland. Polish forces had not been deployed out of their garrisons. US authorities could not confirm reports about the existence of Soviet officers wearing Polish military uniforms in Poland. It has also been reported that dependents of Soviet military personnel had been evacuated from Poland.

2. The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE continued his statement by saying that he had received an urgent message from President Carter asking him to request the members of the Council to agree immediately to undertake prudent measures in view of the foregoing circumstances with a view to increasing the readiness and vigilance of Allied forces as previously requested by SACEUR.

3. The CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE informed the Council that the Military Committee met on various occasions during the past week, including a session that morning at Chiefs of Defence Staff level, to discuss military precautionary measures in general and SACEUR's requests in particular in view of the situation in and around Poland. A consensus was developing for requesting the deployment to Europe immediately of US AWACS aircraft. These were good arguments for requesting that deployment even before a Soviet intervention in Poland, since considerable electronic jamming should be expected to accompany and to cover Soviet operations ; AWACS was probably the only vehicle to overcome that obstacle for reliable intelligence gathering and monitoring of military moves on the Warsaw Pact side. Although the deployment of those aircraft would constitute an overt action, it was amongst the least provocative of options available to the Alliance.

As for STANAVFORLANT, the Military Committee was also close to a consensus that the force should not be dispersed and be kept in a sufficient state of readiness to enable them to be off SKAGERRAK within 72 hours of receiving orders to proceed and that its dispersal would give the wrong impression to the other side. STANAVFORLANT could also have a role to play in view of the expected refugee spill into the Baltic after a possible invasion of Poland.

4. The CHAIRMAN explained to the Council that President Carter's appeal meant that SACEUR would have to be accorded pre-delegated authority to take the measures he had previously requested and discussed by the Council at a time which General Rogers would consider appropriate (including the period before a possible Warsaw Pact intervention in Poland) whereas his initial request was for the implementation of those measures after a possible intervention. It was on this basis that the delegations should consult their Governments and endeavour to get instructions in time for a meeting that afternoon at 5 p.m.

5. The UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE observed that while the serious situation around Poland continued to develop, the Warsaw Pact leaders' meeting that weekend in Moscow showed that the Soviet Union was inclined to solving the crisis through a maximum amount of political pressure on Poland. In other words, Poland was being put on short term probation. On the other hand, the Moscow communique did not altogether remove the threat of an invasion.

He agreed with the seriousness of the warning from the US and NATO Military Authorities, but insisted that no overt action should be taken on the part of the Alliance at the present stage. In this connection, leave of military personnel should not be cancelled nor should any personnel be recalled from leave. The UK Authorities agreed to leave the timing of the request for the deployment of US AWACS aircraft to Europe to SACEUR's discretion, but required that the Defence Ministers should take a decision the following day on the disposition of STANAVFORLANT. The GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE also supported the latter requirement.

6. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE informed the Council about the latest assessment of his intelligence authorities on Warsaw Pact military moves around Poland. According to this assessment there were new signs of further build-up of Warsaw Pact forces, although the weekend had also brought indications regarding a cessation of certain individual measures. The Danish Authorities did not consider that an intervention in Poland was imminent. In response to a question he asked, he was informed by the US Representative that the AWACS aircraft would operate from RAMSTEIN air force base in Southern Germany if and when deployed to Europe.

7. The TURKISH REPRESENTATIVE informed the Council that his authorities were prepared to pre-delegate authority to SACEUR on AWACS deployment.

8. The CHAIRMAN of the Military reconfirmed that the Warsaw Pact forces around had reached a very high level of readiness and that an invasion of Poland could be accomplished on very short notice. The Military Committee agreed that NATO forces' vigilance had to be increased through covert measures to the extent possible.

9. The GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE observed that the political military situation remained precarious and risky. However, his Authorities continued to believe that the Soviet leaders had not yet taken the political decision to intervene in Poland. Kania still maintained a limited control of his country and was supported by the Soviet hierarchy. As he had emphasized in the past, military measures on the part of the Alliance would not stop the Soviets from invading Poland, but could serve to give them pretexts. Statements by Warsaw Pact leaders after their Moscow Summit indicated that they still considered an intervention as a last resort.

His authorities agreed that SACEUR's measures 1 to 3 could be implemented even before an intervention. On measures 4 and 5 they withheld their approval. AWACS deployment was left to SACEUR's discretion, provided that the aircraft would be operated under the cover of an exercise.

10. Responding to a question by the NETHERLANDS REPRESENTATIVE, the CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE informed the Council that SACEUR had provided him the following clarifications on measure No. 4 :

"As far as item (4) is concerned, the actions that I foresee could include ensuring that equipments are serviceable, plans are up to date and valid, and adequate measures are available for the timely recall of personnel. I anticipate that the following specific measures from within Military Vigilance, may be appropriate :

- VCA - Preparation for Communication Support (war communication centres, excluding alternate and emergency centres)
- VCC - Preparation for Implementation of Communication Security
- VCD - Preparation and Initial Implementation of Circuit Activities
- VIA - Intensification of Collection and Reporting of Intelligence
- VOA - Operation of WHQ with Skeleton Staffs
- VOJ - Preparation of Alert Plans/Check Mobilisation Plans
- VYA - Preparation for Control of Military Electromagnetic Radiations
- VYB - Implementation of EW Support Measures

NOTE : I would where necessary issue specific guidance in the declaration messages, in order to avoid exceeding the covert level of implementation which is my intention.

I would also consider increasing the security measures in all assigned units, and conducting tactical communications and logistics tasks with the object of improving readiness."

11. The UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE said that the existing precarious situation could continue for a few weeks to come.

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On the other hand, a large number of British soldiers would shortly go on their Christmas holidays. While he hoped that the crisis may have been defused by the time they went on leave, he wondered how they could be allowed to go if the crisis continued and how could some of the measures requested by SACEUR be considered to have been implemented if that personnel were given the permission to go on leave. Therefore, giving SACEUR pre-delegated authority for an indefinite duration could create problems.

12. The ITALIAN REPRESENTATIVE asked if the eight (1) measures under consideration constituted a package and whether SACEUR intended to keep the Council informed regarding the implementation of measures if he were given the pre-delegated authority under consideration.

13. The CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE confirmed that the eight measures formed a package and that SACEUR would implement the measures as and when he would see fit and then report through him to the Council/DPC.

14. The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE said that no decreases in the high state of preparedness of Warsaw Pact forces was discerned after the Moscow summit. Everything necessary for an intervention was in place and Warsaw Pact forces could move on short notice. Although the build-up was not directed against ACE, the Alliance had to take the necessary precautionary measures. Otherwise a wrong signal would have been sent to the other side.

15. The CHAIRMAN adjourned the meeting until late afternoon that same day and requested delegations to seek the approval of their authorities to the measures under consideration and to their timing for implementation.

(MEETING AT 4.45 P.M.)

16. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the Council to an article which had appeared in that morning's "Daily Telegraph" as well as to reports in various news agencies referring in detail to arrangements made for STANAVFORLANT. He had given instructions that the press could be told that ships comprising the STANAVFORLANT would make use of the opportunities for additional training and that the force would conduct exercises and port visits as deemed appropriate until further notice.

(1) See PR(80)70 dated 5th December, 1980, paras. 4 and 5. The 8th measure is postponement of STANAVFORLANT's dispersal.

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17. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE endorsed the advisability of taking this line.

18. The CHAIRMAN deeply regretted the breach of security which had led to the publication of this article ; he recalled that attendance at the meeting in question had been only one plus one, and he was therefore most disappointed.

19. The CHAIRMAN hoped that all delegations had had an opportunity of contacting their capitals on the issue which was the main reason for the organisation of this meeting. He had had the impression that the measures under discussion were subject to broad agreement.

20. The UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE, pointing out that his view could not be interpreted as a final decision in view of his inability to contact his Prime Minister, who was travelling at the time between London and Dublin, said that he would recommend to her that SACEUR be given full discretion on all five of the measures. With regard to measure 4, which partly concerned leave arrangements, the United Kingdom much preferred covert to overt action, and would welcome further elucidation of the views of SACEUR. In any event, his Authorities were against stopping the leave of military personnel or their recall from leave. As to measure 5 on air defence arrangements, he said that all United Kingdom missiles were at a higher state of readiness than demanded by the measure ; he would have no objection to other countries applying the measure as appropriate. He looked forward to confirming the position of his country later that day.

21. The GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE said that his Authorities' views had not changed since that morning. He felt that some of the preliminary measures (i.e. the first six) listed under measure 4 (1) could be accommodated under measures 1 - 3 but these would not include, for example, electronic warfare support measures. He could not therefore give his full agreement to measures 4 and 5, although he had no objection to the AWACS plan.

22. The NETHERLANDS REPRESENTATIVE said that he would be ready to accept all five of the measures plus the AWACS, and that they should be taken in as covert a form as possible. He would be happy to leave full discretion to SACEUR, and looked forward to a decision on STANAVFORLANT the following day. On the question of statements, whilst welcoming the warnings which had been issued from Washington, he did not think that the Alliance as such should begin a counter-productive crescendo of warnings, and would therefore not support a NATO declaration on Poland.

23. The NORWEGIAN REPRESENTATIVE gave his full approval to measures 1 - 3. He had some hesitation on measures 4 and 5, which were perhaps too overt and could provide the Soviet Union with a pretext for aggressive action. He would have no objection to the AWACS measure if, as it seemed, a general consensus existed.

(1) See paragraph 10. above.

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On the question of the value of statements by the Alliance, he supported the view of his Netherlands colleague ; it might be of use for Foreign Ministers to discuss the question further later that week.

24. The CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE accepted the AWACS measure, but added that he was still without instructions from Copenhagen on all the other measures.

25. The CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE, whilst voicing approval of measures 1-3, expressed some hesitation on measures 4 and 5 and the AWACS because of the problem of keeping such measures covert. Nevertheless, he would have no wish to stand in the way of a consensus on pre-delegated authority. He shared the deep concern of the Chairman of the STANAVFORLANT leak ; perhaps a press line could usefully be agreed at the forthcoming Ministerial Session. Whilst declarations on the situation from individual countries could prove useful, he would not advocate any declaration by the Alliance, as that could give rise to speculation. Prime Minister Trudeau had sent a confidential message to Mr. Brezhnev the previous Saturday stressing the serious consequences of any Soviet intervention.

26. The CHAIRMAN deduced that no firm decision could be taken on the question of timing for the implementation of the measures at that meeting, apart from the AWACS issue ; SACEUR could not therefore begin to apply the measures at will. He added that he had understood that Germany would have no objection to a number of the items in measure 4.

27. The GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE reiterated that, whilst his country thought it possible for some of the steps listed under measure 4 to be accommodated under measures 1 - 3, his view of measures 4 and 5 remained unchanged.

28. The CHAIRMAN, urging the Representatives of Denmark, Norway, and Germany to seek from their capitals the necessary authorisation for SACEUR, concluded that at this stage SACEUR had no authority to cancel Christmas leave.

29. The SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER EUROPE said that he had the authority to decide on the levels of manning at Major Subordinate and Principal Subordinate Commands in ACE at any time. He was not, however, suggesting that the current precautionary measures be raised above existing levels. If, however, the Council were to give the necessary signal, appropriate alert measures existed and could be implemented ; similarly SACEUR had the right to come back to the Council and suggest the taking of alert measures. For the time being he had no intention to cancel leaves.

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30. The GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE, replying to a question from his United States colleague on whether he would support measures 4 and 5 in the event of an overt Soviet invasion, said that the Council was discussing only the question of pre-delegation of authority to SACEUR without time constraints. His country had agreed to such pre-delegation with regard to measures 1 - 3, and he had clearly stated that some of the items listed under measure 4 could instead be implemented under measures 1 - 3. He was not prepared to pre-delegate on the remainder of measure 4 or on measure 5 ; there would, in the event of an invasion, be a clear need for a further round of discussion when, perhaps, setps beyond those envisaged in the latter two measures might have to be taken.

31. The CHAIRMAN of the MILITARY COMMITTEE informed the Council that the consensus of views in the Military Committee was that whatever precautions were taken to render NATO military measures as covert as possible, it was impossible to prevent the other side from receiving signals of one kind or another. With this concern in mind, the Military Committee would prepare in about a week's time a matrix of military measures and actions which could be taken both before and after a possible invasion of Poland.

32. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE called the attention of the Council to a Tass dispatch that morning referring to counter-revolutionary activities in Poland, which were leading, it said, to an explosive situation. This was extremely serious language in Soviet terms, and suggested to him that a Soviet invasion of Poland might be imminent. His intelligence sources confirmed that the use of the term "counter-revolutionary" was extremely grave, and he recalled that the same phrase had been used in 1968 before the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

33. The CHAIRMAN concluded that the question of authorisation to SACEUR would be confirmed by Ministers the following morning. Norway had accepted measures 1 - 3 and AWACS, and Denmark, whilst confirming its acceptance of AWACS, would provide further information on the other measures. The item would be laid before Defence Ministers the following day.