

MC 48/2 (Final Decision)  
23 May 1957

FINAL DECISION ON MC 48/2  
A Report by the Military Committee  
on  
MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT

1. On 9 May 1957 the North Atlantic Council approved MC 48/2.
2. The Council agreed that such approval would be without prejudice to the right of any delegation at a later stage to ask for reconsideration of any part of the report. The Council drew the attention of the NATO military authorities to the full record of its discussion on this matter (C-R(57)30).
3. The attention of Major NATO Commanders is drawn to this report which now becomes operative.
4. MC 3/5 (FINAL), MC 14/1 (FINAL), MC 48 (FINAL) and MC 48/1 (FINAL) are hereby superseded by MC 48/2 together with MC 14/2 (Revised).

FOR THE MILITARY COMMITTEE:

EUGENE A. SALET  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Secretary

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MC 48/2



MC 48/2 (Decision)

6 April 1957

NORTH ATLANTIC MILITARY COMMITTEE  
COMITE MILITAIRE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD

DECISION ON MC 48/2

A report by the Military Committee

on

MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT

1. At its Sixteenth Session on 6 April 1957 the Military Committee amended and approved MC 48/2.

2. Holders of MC 48/2 are requested to replace pages 3 through 12 with the attached pages and to destroy the removed pages by burning or reducing to pulp. Upon removal of the attached pages this Decision Sheet will be downgraded to RESTRICTED-NATO.

3. The North Atlantic Council is requested to give its consideration to the recommendations of this report.

FOR THE MILITARY COMMITTEE:

EUGENE A. SALET  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Secretary

MC 48/2



MC 48/2

15 March 1957

Pages 1 - 12, incl.

REPORT BY THE MILITARY COMMITTEE  
to the  
NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL  
on  
MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT  
Reference: MC 14/2 (Revised)

INTRODUCTION

1. Based on the strategic concept outlined in the referenced document, the Military Committee has derived a set of requirements which must be met in order that the concept may be implemented. The detailed report is at Enclosure. In this report, the Military Committee has dealt with the broad issues involved in NATO defense during approximately the next five years, and the measures evolved would seem to be generally applicable for the same period.

CONCLUSION

2. It is concluded that the measures developed in this report are those most necessary to implement the strategic concept.

RECOMMENDATION

3. It is recommended that the North Atlantic Council approve the attached report which, together with MC 14/2 (Revised), supersedes MC 3/5 (Final), MC 14/1 (Final), MC 48 (Final) and MC 48/1 (Final).

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MC 48/2 (Page revised by Corrig. No. 1, 18 Mar 57)



ENCLOSUREMEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT

Reference: MC 14/2 (Revised)

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this paper is to lay down the measures necessary to implement the Strategic Concept developed in the referenced document in sufficient detail to enable Major NATO Commanders and the nations of NATO to formulate their plans, and to develop the pattern of their defense effort.

2. The overall defensive concept of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is to promote the preservation of peace and to provide for the security of the North Atlantic Treaty area by confronting the potential aggressor with NATO forces which are so organized, disposed, trained and equipped that he will conclude that the chances of a favorable decision are too small to be acceptable and that fatal risks would be involved if he launched or supported an armed attack. Nevertheless, in the event of aggression the concept provides for the immediate application of the force required to maintain or, if necessary, to restore the integrity and security of the NATO area.

3. The Soviet Union is unlikely to resort to war so long as she can achieve her ends by other means. Nevertheless, with her growing armory of nuclear weapons\* and her formidable land, sea and air forces, she might turn to planned aggression to realize her aims if she misconstrued NATO intentions, if she believed that the forces of NATO were unprepared or incapable of effective retaliation, or if she believed that she alone had developed a scientific breakthrough which would reduce our retaliatory capability to an acceptable level. In

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\* The term "nuclear weapons" wherever appearing is understood to mean atomic and thermonuclear weapons regardless of the means of delivery.

this regard, the Soviets have the advantage of the initiative and surprise. This results from their monolithic political system, which, in contrast to the political systems of the West, gives them the power of immediate decision.

4. The USSR might take advantage of this to:
  - a. Launch an all-out nuclear attack on the West accompanied by land, sea and air campaigns, or
  - b. Undertake infiltrations, incursions, hostile local actions or other aggressions against NATO territory directly or by means of Satellite forces without necessarily employing nuclear weapons, or
  - c. Attack or threaten areas contiguous to NATO territory.

5. It must be realized that in a future war employing nuclear weapons the possession of the initiative will be even more important than it has been in the past. With respect to the element of surprise, the Military Committee considers that a surprise onslaught with nuclear weapons constitutes in the military sense the most dangerous threat the West has to face. The Soviets, if deliberately resorting to war, could be expected to avoid prejudicing surprise by any major pre-deployment of their forces.

#### MEASURES REQUIRED

6. In any examination of how these advantages can best be offset and overcome, it is essential to keep in mind that in the event of general war, the primary tasks of the NATO forces would be, while surviving the enemy's initial attacks, to retaliate immediately with nuclear weapons from the outset and to contain the enemy's onslaught without any intention to make a major withdrawal. To be able to carry out these tasks successfully, even in the face of a surprise nuclear attack, and to meet other threats to NATO security, the following measures are required:



a. Nuclear Retaliatory Measures

Fully effective nuclear retaliatory forces of all services, provided with all the necessary facilities and capable of the destruction of an aggressor in any circumstances, must be maintained and protected. Effective implementation procedures must be provided that will ensure the availability of nuclear weapons at the outset of hostilities. Of equal importance to the possession of these forces is the manifest determination to employ them from the outset of general war.

b. Shield Force Measures

In addition to our nuclear retaliatory measures, our land, sea and air forces must be developed also to respond immediately to the task of defending the sea areas and NATO territories as far forward as possible in order to maintain the integrity of the NATO area, counting on the use of their nuclear weapons at the outset. We must have the ability to continue these operations in combination with the nuclear counter-offensive until the ability and will of the enemy to pursue general war has been destroyed.

c. Security of the Rear Areas

In order to provide maximum freedom of action to the NATO forces, the NATO nations have the responsibility to set up adequate civil defense and internal security organizations and means, within their own resources, necessary to contend with an assault on national territories, sabotage and the like.

d. Measures for Sea and Air Lines of Communication

In preparation to meet a general war, we must provide throughout hostilities for the protection and maintenance of our sea and air communications and destruction of the enemy forces which threaten them.

e. Measures for Subsequent Operations

Though priority must be given to the provision of forces-in-being capable of effectively contributing to success in the initial phase, we must further be prepared for a period of reorganization, rehabilitation and the assembly of residual resources to accomplish the remaining necessary military tasks leading to a termination of hostilities. While the nature of such operations must be speculative, measures which take into account the resources likely to be available after the initial phase will include:

- (1) The assembly and deployment of reinforcements and reserve forces, for which purpose it is essential to keep the Atlantic lines of communication open.
- (2) Measures for resupply.

f. Intelligence

Our intelligence procedures must be geared to provide NATO with the best possible and timely analysis of Soviet capabilities, indications of probable courses of action, and operations. They must be organized so as to obtain the maximum possible advance warning of impending attack, and must have the means for rapid dissemination and exchange of vital information between NATO nations and commands.

g. Early Warning

Complementary to our intelligence, there must be a fully effective early warning system in continuous operation so as to provide an adequate warning of imminent air attack in peacetime and to support operations to the extent practicable during hostilities. In order to avoid surprise attack by ships and submarines and to give warning of the imminence of hostilities, an identification and warning system is also necessary.

h. Readiness

The maintenance at a high degree of readiness and effectiveness of our land, sea and air forces and their means of support and of civil defense and internal security organizations is required. Those NATO forces and facilities relating to early warning and nuclear retaliatory action must be kept in constant readiness at all times. All other NATO forces must be maintained at the highest degree of readiness commensurate with national capabilities, recognizing that the higher degree of readiness achieved, the greater will be the deterrent.

i. Alerts

An effective system of alerts is essential to provide the transition from our peacetime posture prior to hostilities to action in the face of attack. We must, therefore, exert maximum effort toward reaching agreement on alert measures which

would cover the steps to be taken should relations deteriorate between the Soviet Bloc and any or all NATO nations and toward establishing a military alert system designed to meet a surprise attack.

j. Command Organization

The operations in a nuclear war will be of such a nature that military command should be organized with a view to retaining the centralized direction and decentralized execution of operations, but the ability to perform tasks in the face of situations that would require delegations of authority must be provided (e.g., automatic delegation of authority when communications are disrupted).

k. Survival Measures

- (1) Active Air Defense. The capacity of our forces to survive and to retaliate, immediately and effectively, requires that we have an ability to oppose actively an initial Soviet nuclear attack. We must, therefore, develop and maintain an effective air defense system. This NATO system must provide for the coordination, and control as practicable, of all aircraft and missiles associated with air defense.
- (2) Dispersion of Forces. In view of the increasing Soviet nuclear capability and the probability of a future general war opening with surprise nuclear offensives, it is essential that the necessary dispersal and redeployment measures be taken to ensure the survival of NATO forces during the initial phase of hostilities. We must adjust our tactical disposition, improve and augment both passive and active defense measures, and increase unit dispersion and mobility. These measures apply to all forces, air, land and sea, together with their support. We must particularly guard our air forces against such attack by dispersing them to the maximum

extent practicable, by improving their ability to redeploy to and operate from alternate bases at immediate notice, or by any other method made possible by new techniques.

- (3) Decentralization of Government. The first intensive nuclear operations will create a situation which would challenge for a time the capacity of governments to perform their functions effectively. Plans for the decentralization of government must be made in order to ensure direction of the war effort and the impetus to prosecute the war to a successful conclusion.
- (4) Civil Defence. The disruption and disorganization of communications, transportation, medical services, utilities and food supplies in countries or regions singled out for nuclear attack would endanger civilian morale and seriously impede the ability of nations to sustain and reinforce their fighting forces. The burden of responsibility for resuscitation of stricken areas rests upon national civil defence organizations which must be established and trained in peacetime. However, it must be recognized that there is a probability that national military units other than M-Day and first echelon units might be called upon temporarily to assist in this task.

1. Logistic support

In light of the critical nature of operations in the initial phase of a general war and the strong possibility of a drastically reduced mobilization base, national logistic support of NATO forces must primarily be based on D-day force levels together with those

forces which could be mobilized and made combat-ready during the initial phase. In order to provide for these forces, a system of logistic support will be required: decentralized and protected to reduce vulnerability; designed to ensure independence and mobility of operations; and stocked and positioned prior to D-Day with supplies and equipment sufficient and readily available for sustained combat operations during the initial phase, and to support the accomplishment of the necessary military tasks of the subsequent phase, until resupply can be established. The logistic support system for a general war in NATO should also be designed to provide logistic support for NATO forces which might become engaged in limited military situations in the NATO area.

m. Flexibility

- (1) In order to ensure a capability to meet limited military situations in the NATO area which an aggressor might create in the belief that gains could be achieved without provoking NATO to general war, we must have flexibility in the NATO forces. This flexibility should be of a nature which would permit NATO forces to act promptly to restore and maintain the security of the NATO area, without necessarily having recourse to nuclear weapons. NATO must also be prepared to use nuclear weapons in such circumstances should the situation require it. In this latter respect, the Military Committee has stated that, if the Soviets were involved in a local hostile action and sought to broaden the scope of such an incident or to prolong it, the situation would call for the utilization of

all weapons and forces at NATO's disposal, since in no case is there a concept of limited war with the Soviets.

- (2) It is recognized that certain nations may have national requirements to employ, outside the NATO area, some of their forces assigned to or earmarked for NATO. In maintaining flexibility in their forces to meet such cases, these nations must harmonize such employments with the primary importance of protecting the NATO area.

n. Cooperative measures

As a prerequisite to the successful execution of common plans, certain cooperative measures must be undertaken in peacetime. These measures include encouragement of research and development; the provision of forces; the provision of facilities and the establishment of an adequate infrastructure; standardization of military doctrines; procedures and equipment insofar as practicable; and the conduct of combined training.

THE PATTERN OF FORCES

General

7. This concept requires two kinds of NATO forces which together form the deterrent to general war and should war be forced upon us ensure attainment of NATO objectives. There are powerful nuclear retaliatory forces, composed chiefly of long-range strategic air striking forces mainly under national command. There are also the land, sea and air shield forces which by their deployment and by their defensive capabilities demonstrate that aggression, no matter what the form, will be effectively opposed. It is apparent from the nature of the threat and from an examination of the strategic concept that priority must be given to forces-in-being. In consonance with the Council authorization to plan and make preparation on the assumption that nuclear weapons will be used from the outset (except in the case of certain incidents indicated below),

these forces must have an integrated nuclear capability. They must be in sufficient strength and must also be so organized, equipped, trained, deployed and logistically supported that they fulfil their role of deterring aggression. In the event of general war our forces must be capable of successfully executing their roles. They must also be capable of countering incidents such as infiltrations, incursions or hostile local actions in the NATO area, without necessarily having recourse to nuclear weapons. In addition, the forces of certain of the NATO nations must be capable of reacting to situations adjacent to and outside the NATO area. Thus, while our peacetime force pattern must be designed primarily to achieve success during the initial phase of a general war, it must be sufficiently flexible to meet the lesser threats envisaged in the strategic concept. The development of this pattern will likely be an evolutionary process and it must be based on continuing studies, experiments and operational tests.

#### Land Forces

8. The task of the NATO land forces in general war is to contain Soviet or Satellite aggression as far forward as possible to maintain the integrity of the NATO area until the will and ability of the enemy to pursue general war has been destroyed by our nuclear counter-offensive in combination with the operations of our land, sea and air forces. The forces required for this task must be highly trained, flexible forces, with an integrated nuclear capability, properly deployed and operationally ready to fight with full effectiveness on D-Day. These forces must simultaneously be capable of holding and protecting selected key areas for considerable periods of time without resupply or reinforcement.

9. Additionally, these forces bear the principal burden of maintaining the integrity of NATO's land borders in Europe under conditions less than general war. In this role they must be prepared to react immediately with the force required to meet

aggressions ranging from infiltrations through hostile local actions, short of general war, directed against the territory of NATO.

\*Naval Forces

10. NATO naval forces-in-being must be capable of controlling and exploiting vital sea areas and of taking their part in the initial nuclear exchange launching offensive operations against naval and other agreed targets and establishing Allied supremacy at sea. In addition, they must be capable of taking their part in support of the land and air battle. At the same time a forward defense at sea must be established against the incursion of Soviet submarine and surface forces into the NATO area. The ability of NATO naval forces successfully to undertake subsequent tasks could be greatly enhanced by the destruction of enemy naval power at its source.

11. NATO naval forces will be required to protect and maintain the flow of friendly shipping within the NATO area and to ensure the support and reinforcement of NATO forces in Europe. In harmony with NATO commitments, national and international measures will also be required to assist in maintaining the flow of Allied and friendly shipping outside the NATO area.

Air Forces

12. NATO's deterrent strategy and the defense of NATO territory require the capability and manifest determination to exploit nuclear destructive power through a swift and massive counter-offensive. NATO air forces play an important part in this strategy. Thus, the Allied air force structure in the foreseeable future must strongly emphasize offensive striking power and must include a proper balance of missiles and aircraft. The pattern and disposition of air forces must be such that they can survive an initial surprise attack and immediately strike back effectively.

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\* Includes maritime/patrol aircraft.



The initial task of NATO air forces in conjunction with air forces external to NATO control is to establish air supremacy. In addition to destroying the enemy's offensive air and missile forces, NATO air forces must be capable of conducting interdiction missions and providing support for the land and sea forces in all cases. We must have an effective system of rules of engagement, and the capability to be able to identify and instantly counter Soviet infiltration, incursion or hostile local action as contrasted to innocent overflight.

13. Within the next few years air defense alone will not provide a sufficiently effective defense against the scale of air attack which may be expected should war occur. The increasing capabilities of Soviet air power emphasize the interdependence of NATO commands for realization of effective air defense, which dictates the need for the highest degree of coordination of air activity, the integration of air defense effort, the introduction of air defense missiles, adequate passive preparations, and effective counter-air operations. The counter-air offensive, to destroy the enemy's means of delivery at source is likely to remain the most effective contribution to overall air defense for some years to come.

