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**SUPREME HEADQUARTERS ALLIED POWERS EUROPE
PARIS, FRANCE**

AG 1401 ~~SECRET~~

22 October 1956

SUBJECT: Allied Command Europe Counter-Surprise Military Alert System

**TO : Chairman
Standing Group
North Atlantic Treaty Organization
The Pentagon
Washington 25, D.C.**

CENTRAL REGISTRY CONTROL NUMBER	
06589	

27/01

1. It has been established in the Capabilities Plan, MC 48, and MC 49 that a system of military alert measures should be developed to prepare for an attempt by the Soviet Forces at a surprise attack of which the allies may have little, if any, advanced warning.

2. This paper describes such a military alert system which would enable NATO Forces to survive attack and to prepare counter action.

3. This system is intended to be one of purely military alerts, that is, one which will directly affect only military forces, will be implementable by military commanders, and will not be dependent upon prior negotiations and agreement at the time as to the degrees of implementation which will be achieved. It is basically a system whereby NATO Commanders (as defined in MC 57 of 15 Aug 56), declare, through the calling of these alerts, that a situation is believed to exist, either a suspected enemy attempt at surprise attack or an attack actually starting, which for valid reasons cannot be adequately met by the provisions of or the procedure for instituting SACEUR's formal alert system. The measures related to the two different stages of this alert system are those which should be taken when the appropriate alert is called to prepare military forces, as far as possible under these circumstances, to survive the enemy's first attack and to prepare for counter-action. The measures themselves are not provocative in nature. Rather they are military actions which might well be practised in connection with routine field exercises and manoeuvres. Furthermore, the frequent practice of them will not only make the system practicable and efficient, but will also preclude any possibility of heightening tension or exciting the civilian population when an actual counter-surprise alert is called. Such practice will be carried out to the extent practicable and as frequently as possible, taking into consideration financial possibilities, security, damage to private property etc.. Under certain circumstances, action can be limited to reconnaissance by a minimum of personnel.

4. As the first warning received may be penetration of the radar screen there must be provision for "crash" action by NATO Forces. This has been called the ALARM STAGE or SCARLET ALERT. There might also be a slightly less urgent situation in which advance warning of a few hours or days was received. This has been called the PRECAUTIONARY STAGE or ORANGE ALERT. In the very short time between receipt of warning and the arrival of enemy aircraft over target areas NATO military forces could do something to limit the damage likely to be caused by taking the action listed below. But the action listed could only be taken successfully if it had been organized and practised frequently in peacetime. The names SCARLET and ORANGE Alert can be replaced by code words, if considered necessary, to avoid misunderstanding with the procedure used for notifying air raid warnings.

5. NATO intelligence sources may provide indication of a threat of attack which in the military judgement could not be disregarded but on which, for

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political reasons, national governments might be unwilling to implement national emergency plans. In such cases the national commanders of forces assigned to and earmarked for NATO should be able to take the action listed in this Counter-Surprise Military Alert System on authority previously delegated to them by their governments.

6. The actions set out in Enclosure A hereto are the minimum which SACEUR considers essential and feasible of execution when the formal alert system cannot be implemented. If the Alarm Stage is reached it will be vital for these survival actions to be taken regardless of consequences; however, it is considered that these last minute vital measures would not precipitate a crisis even if the warning should, by some rare chance, prove to be a faint or erroneous.

7. If there should be a gradual increase in tension with a declaration of the Simple Alert of the formal Alert System there may still be need for the Alarm Stage and Scarlet Alert if a sudden attack is launched.

8. In the following paragraphs the actions required are set out :

a. PRECAUTIONARY STAGE - ORANGE ALERT

(1) The warning which will allow this stage to be put into operation will almost certainly come from Intelligence sources. It will show that the Soviet Forces are in a position to launch an attack at very short notice and that there are strong indications that an attack will be launched or that there is some unusual activity which might be the beginning of an attack.

(2) The measures which should be taken will be ones which do not take much time.

(3) All military forces are capable of swift action if they have plans prepared and practised, and they receive their orders in time. Under peace conditions all forces have their emergency schemes. It is necessary to ensure that these schemes in all the forces assigned to and earmarked for NATO have the same scope and are equally effective.

(4) On the Orange Alert all forces must be brought to as high a state of operational readiness as is possible in the short time available. This includes the manning of all communications networks to ensure that information and orders can be passed with the least possible delay. In many cases this will involve taking personnel who are off duty to man additional equipment. It will also include full manning of the C & R system without calling up reserves. As it will not be possible at this stage to use reservists existing personnel will have to be used, working longer hours if necessary, or on sites other than their usual ones. Also included will be the final preparation and manning of all local weapons, unit weapons, and weapons on vital points.

(5) War Hq Command Posts must be manned.

(6) In peacetime many units are concentrated in garrisons, harbours and airbases. Even in a matter of a few hours disciplined mobile forces can move to dispersal areas or to areas from which they can operate in the defensive or in the counter offensive role.

(7) Under normal conditions there is always equipment temporarily unserviceable which can be made serviceable in a few hours. Normally combat loads are not carried on vehicles but these can be loaded in a very short time.

(8) For economy stocks are normally concentrated. Dispersion of forces calls for immediate dispersion of some supporting stocks.

(9) Under signals measures the move of mobile equipment to operational locations requires preparation and practice. Implementation of additional telephone circuits and partial activation of wartime radio networks may become possible at short notice after considerable practice.

(10) For the Air Forces the most important measures will be to disperse aircraft to squadron airfields, to bring them to full combat alertness, to ensure the defense of airfields, to disperse essential equipment and supplies, and to ensure the survival of personnel. By continual exercises in dispersing aircraft by air and moving stores the troops will become highly trained and the civilian population will become accustomed to such moves.

(11) For the ground forces dispersion for survival will be important, and the AA and Atomic counter offensive units must move to sites from which they can carry out their roles.

(12) Naval forces will need to disperse such of their ships, salvage and port-operating equipment as they can, and will need to take steps to prevent clandestine operations with atomic weapons.

b. ALARM STAGE - SCARLET ALERT

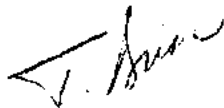
(1) In this stage the amount that can be done will vary greatly between units, and will depend on whether there has been a Precautionary Stage. The measures will be similar to those for the Precautionary Stage but more streamlined. They are designed to prepare for imminent attack.

9. The proposed actions are tabulated in Enclosure A. This list is to be regarded as a preliminary one. The full list of measures and their assignment to either the Scarlet or Orange Alert will be decided in close liaison with Major Subordinate Commands and national authorities.

10. For the benefit of those not familiar with SACEUR Alert System and the problem in detail a Staff Study on the whole subject is attached at Enclosure B.

11. Approval is requested by the Standing Group and, as deemed necessary, by the Military Committee and Council, of the concept of this Counter Surprise Military Alert System and authority for SACEUR to proceed with the establishment of the system in conjunction with the Subordinate NATO Commands, and working in close coordination with National Authorities. The proposed system is complementary to the formal alert system on which negotiations with National Authorities are still continuing.

FOR THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER EUROPE:


PIERRE DRISAC
Lt Gen, French Army
Acting Chief of Staff

2 Encls:

1. Table of the Outline of
ACE Counter-Surprise Military Alert System (Encl A)
2. SHAPE Staff Study on the Counter-Surprise
Military Alert System (Encl B)

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OUTLINE OF ACE COUNTER-SURPRISE MILITARY ALERT SYSTEM

SUBJECT : ACE Counter-Surprise
Military Alert System

SACEUR considers that in order to insure survival in the case of attempted surprise attack by the Soviet Bloc with atomic and/or conventional weapons, and to preserve NATO Forces' counter-action capability, the following counter-surprise measures should be implemented by NATO and National Commands echelons when any NATO Command echelon issues either of the counter-surprise military alert warnings.

Note - These measures are considered to be capable of implementation without mobilization or calling up of reserves.

BASIS OF WARNING	ADVANCE INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION	RADAR OR LOCAL OVERT ACT
SPEED OF REACTION	AS SOON AS POSSIBLE - WITHIN A FEW HOURS	ON A CRASH BASIS
ALERT STAGE	PRECAUTIONARY STAGE - ORANGE ALERT	ALARM STAGE - SCARLET ALERT
GENERAL MEASURES RECOMMENDED	<p>a. All forces to be brought to full state of operational alertness including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Manning of communications networks. (2) Putting of C & R System on a fully operational basis. (3) Appropriate manning of armament. <p>b. Manning of Command Post at War Hq if not manned permanently in peacetime.</p> <p>c. Dispersion of units from garrison, harbour, airbase or other dangerously concentrated areas.</p> <p>d. Making all aircraft, vehicles, ships, weapons, etc. combat ready to maximum practical extent.</p> <p>e. Making logistic preparations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) For survival of stocks. (2) To support forces dispersed or in counter-action role. <p>f. Making signals preparations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Move of certain earmarked active military personnel, with their equipment, to operational locations (including move of mobile means of communications). (2) Implementation of additional telephone and telegraph Bl (New Uo) circuits with a minimum of delay. (3) Partial activation of wartime radio networks. (4) Implementation of wartime Signal Centers on a 24 hours basis. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Manning of maximum C & R Operating Capacity. b. Establishment of line circuits. c. Movement of maximum personnel to War Headquarters and other operational combat stations. d. Manning of local A.A. weapons. e. Dispersion and/or sheltering personnel not required for initial action.
AIR FORCES MEASURES RECOMMENDED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Bring squadrons to full combat alertness. b. Order security and active defense on airfields. c. Disperse to squadron airfields. d. Disperse off-base essential equipment and supplies. e. Disperse or shelter personnel not required initially. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Combat ready aircraft take-off to await combat orders. b. Other flyable aircraft take-off. c. General measures as above.
LAND FORCES MEASURES RECOMMENDED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Deploy atomic counter-action units to alternative operational positions. b. Deploy AA units to operational positions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. General measures as above. b. Deploy atomic counter-action forces and bring to full operational readiness.
NAVAL FORCES MEASURES RECOMMENDED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Disperse military rescue and salvage and portoperating parties. b. Institute means to prevent the enemy planting atomic weapons in ports by unorthodox means. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. General measures as above. b. Disperse ships and aircraft.

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ENCLOSURE B

FP 1401

SHAPE STAFF STUDY

to: AG 1401 FP 2/22 Oct 56

ON

1 October 1956

ALLIED COMMAND EUROPE COUNTER-SURPRISE MILITARY ALERT SYSTEM

REFERENCES : a. Capabilities Plan ACE, 1957, SHAPE 330/54, (SGM 600-54)
b. Program Recommendations, SHAPE/384/54
c. MC 48
d. MC 49
e. SG 129/4, Revised Final

I. THE PROBLEM

1. To develop a system of military alerts to counter any Soviet attempt at surprise attack, adequate to enable the forces committed to SACEUR both to survive and to be capable of immediate retaliation.

II. BACKGROUND (all documents quoted are in the hands of NATO and National Authorities).

2. The Capabilities Plan, ACE 1957 (SHAPE 330/54) states:

a. Under areas of Risk and Weakness: "the following are considered to be the major areas of risk and weakness which require early corrective action :

"c. The unsuitability of SHAPE's Alert System to quick response to warnings, and of alert plans and organization to respond so as to get maximum benefit from any warning obtained, even if equivocal or limited to a matter of hours or minutes". (Paragraph 79c. of Enclosure A).

b. Under Alert Considerations. (Enclosure J. Appendix A. Annex D).

(1) "Analysis indicates that there is little likelihood of a NATO Reinforced Alert being in effect, should hostilities - which might be initiated by Soviet Surprise attack - occur in mid-1957. A new Alert must be introduced on top of the present alert structure, especially tailored to respond to equivocal warning and implementable on unilateral military decision. This alert should be characterized by the following :

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- "a. It should be subject to frequent practice on equivocal indicators of Soviet threat, political indicators, and at times of the year when the threat is greatest.
- "b. It should exclude, to the extent possible, all alert actions which involve civilian populations and governments. It must be purely military. (para 15).

(2) "In connection with such a military alert, major considerations are :

- "a. The nature of the information on which the Command places the alert into effect.
- "b. The facilities for transmitting alert orders.
- "c. The type of alert measures adopted." (para 16).

(3) "Adequate survival against D-Day attack clearly requires two steps :

- "a. Take preparatory measures, on any form of warning, necessary to allow:
- "b. Evacuation, dispersal, etc., to be implemented immediately upon notice of overt aggression, including first radar reports of Soviet penetration anywhere in the NATO areas". (para 18).

3. The Program Recommendations document suggests that a study should be done "to determine what measures can be practised and implemented by unilateral military actions at command level and below, and to supplement SHAPE alert plans accordingly". (Chapter 3 A.6b. SHAPE 384/54 of 1 July 1954).

4. MC 49 states : "Surprise will be a major factor in any future war involving NATO, and the degree of surprise attained by the enemy could greatly influence the outcome of the war. The ability of NATO to withstand and react to the first blow will depend on the extent to which our forces are in effective alert status at the time of the enemy's surprise attack". (Paragraph 38b, MC 49).

5. MC 48 states, under the "Minimum Measures necessary to Increase the Deterrent and Defensive Value of NATO Forces", and under "The Alert System" : "A fully effective alert system must be provided, as surprise will be extremely important in an atomic war. NATO must be able to react immediately to a warning by initiating all possible passive defense measures and by preparing to launch counter-offensive operations against the enemy's air complex the moment after positive evaluation of attack has been made. The effectiveness of this alert system will be a major factor in the initial phase of a war". (paragraph 2. Encl to MC 48).

III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FACTORS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

SACEUR's Alert Measures. SHAPE 70/54.

6. In accordance with SG 129/4, SACEUR established a formal alert system including detailed measures related to progressive stages of alerts, based primarily upon the development of a period of serious political tension leading up to general war. This formal system and these measures are designed to facilitate the orderly transition from peace to war under such circumstances. They were published in SHAPE 70/54, dated 12 February 1954. On instructions of the NATO Council SACEUR entered into negotiations, through his Major Subordinate Commanders, with National Authorities to seek their agreement to the implementation of these measures, at the appropriate time, on the declaration by an authorized NATO commander of a Simple or Reinforced Alert.

7. The existing system would not adequately cover the possible situation envisaged by the "New Approach" documents for the following reasons :

a. Valid intelligence information might be received forecasting an attempt at surprise attack but the political climate at the time might preclude the implementation of the formal alert system.

b. Equivocal intelligence might be received which might not justify the implementation of a formal alert but which should not, in the military judgment, be disregarded.

c. Information might be received of the penetration of the radar

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person by numbers of aircraft but that would not constitute an overt act of aggression justifying the General Alert until a hostile act was actually committed, penetration of borders by aircraft not constituting, in itself, an overt act of aggression against NATO.

8. The existing formal alert system is, however, still valid for the conditions of mounting tension for which it was designed. It forms the basis for the national alert systems, and it is considered that to change it radically at present, while some governments are still discussing their national positions on SACEUR's alert measures would be most unwise.

9. It would be desirable, if it were possible, to adapt the existing formal system to meet the conditions under which the Soviet Bloc may attempt a surprise attack upon NATO Forces, but this is not thought to be possible for the following reasons :

a. SACEUR's Alert System deals with conditions in which political considerations are in some respects paramount so that it has become, of necessity, bound up with restrictions to ensure that national governments will retain the right and power to authorize or not authorize SACEUR normally to declare formal alerts. Any adequate modification in the formal alert system to include measures to meet a suspected attempt of surprise attack would certainly cause confusion between the formal alert measures to be taken normally with political agreement and the purely military measures now being considered, which of necessity must be taken without political agreement at the time.

b. On receipt of equivocal information only some of the measures of the Simple or Reinforced Alert will need to be taken. It is not practical to order these measures from the formal alerts because of the political implications mentioned above.

10. It is necessary therefore, as stated in the documents relating to the Capabilities Plan, to develop a new Alert System complementary to the existing formal system to meet the new conditions.

11. An early effective military warning and alert system depends on the receipt of information of the enemy's intentions or actions, it is essential that the system for obtaining and transmitting such information should be highly developed and quick. For the purpose of this study it is sufficient to recognize that such information may consist of :

a. Advance intelligence information, received by SHAPE, of the possibility or probability of a Soviet attempt at surprise attack. This information probably will not be able to specify the exact date or time.

b. Alternatively, the first information of attack may come from the early warning radar network.

12. Advance Intelligence Information. As the collection of intelligence information is done through many national channels, and passed to SHAPE, it may well happen that SACEUR will have more indications of the impending surprise attack than individual national governments. In addition, SACEUR and Subordinate Commanders may, in their capacities as NATO Commanders, be in a better position than national governments to estimate the military threat to assigned and earmarked NATO Forces and the Counter-surprise measures necessary. It is most unlikely that intelligence will ever be able to forecast exactly the date and time at which an attack will take place. The information given by intelligence will probably be that the enemy has the capacity to launch an attack at any time or within so many days or hours. Under the best circumstances this might be followed by a more precise time.

13. Radar Information. The first information of the exact time of attack may come from the early warning radar network. In this case there would be reports of crossing of the radar screen, probably from a number of sources at the same or nearly the same time.

14. The time available for action after receipt of warning will therefore vary with the type of warning. This leads to the view that there may be a need for a choice of actions to be taken on receipt of warning.

15. Feasibility of Survival Actions. If the warning time is very short

it will clearly be extremely difficult to do much, but there are always some things which can be done, and every formation and unit has its own scheme for use in case of emergency. The schemes already in existence should be coordinated to ensure that they meet the requirements of the new system called for in the Capabilities Plan, and that, while being practical, they achieve as much as can possibly be done.

16. Military Decision. Documents relating to the Capabilities Plan state that the new alert system must be implemented on military decision. The power of military decision in peacetime is restricted for NATO Commanders to assigned forces and even then their powers are very limited. Until the NATO Council declares that a state of war exists the authority of the NATO Commanders is very restricted. Only in cases of "sudden and extreme emergency" can NATO Military Commanders give operational orders to National Forces, even those assigned, and then the execution of those orders by the commanders of National Forces would be based on military necessity rather than on any authority given by the NATO Council to NATO Commanders. To overcome this difficulty the following procedure could be followed :

SACEUR would establish on broad lines a number of measures which he considered essential to be taken under certain conditions. NATO Subordinate Commanders would work out with local National Commanders the details of the measures in their own areas. The measures would be implemented by the authority having the power to implement them, whether NATO or national, at the time SACEUR or his NATO Commanders or the National Commanders issued the warning that the conditions for which the measures were designed existed.

17. Military Measures. To enable the measures to be taken on military decision they must be essentially military measures and hence they must not, of themselves :

- a. Increase political tension.
- b. Be capable of being interpreted as a warlike act.
- c. Involve civilian populations.

18. Practice of Military Alert Measures. To be effective in emergency, alert measures should be practised. Measures involving civilians, politics and economics are difficult to practise but measures which are purely military present far fewer problems. It is therefore valuable to have a system less than the formal alert system which, even though it does not constitute complete preparation for war, can be practised. Practices could at first be scheduled as part of NATO military training, then later they could be provided for in the training budget but not scheduled for particular dates. By this means a cover plan would be provided for the actual implementation in time of real emergency because political and civilian elements would be accustomed to these measures being carried out on an exercise basis.

19. Security. The security of NATO Defensive Plans must be considered in practising alert measures. Limited military practices should not endanger security. Commanders at all levels are responsible for any security, camouflage and deception measures compatible with the requirements of training.

20. Basic Objectives. In any new military alert system the basic objectives must be to provide for the survival of NATO Forces and potential in case of an attempted surprise attack and to place NATO Forces in a position from which counter-action against the enemy can be taken immediately when such action is authorized.

21. Types of Measures. For survival the most valuable measures will be the provision of early warning, evacuation of forces from principal target areas, dispersion, and local active defense. For counter-action the measures will include the arming, fueling and tactical redeployment of forces. However, the latter measures must be preparatory only, and can be carried only far enough to enable counter-offensive action to be taken or withheld according to the decision of SACEUR within the authority granted to him by higher NATO authority. Among the most important of these measures will be preparation by the air forces to launch air strikes, and the deployment of the ground atomic forces to operational sites.

22. Initiation of Measures. To be effective the measures considered above must be completed in the shortest possible time and the method of ordering the system into effect must be extremely simple, such as a plain language message with authentication.

23. Time for Implementation. From paragraphs 12 and 13 above, it will be seen that even though the attack may be planned as a surprise some warning may still be received by NATO Forces. The time for reaction may vary from a matter of minutes in forward areas on early warning radar information to hours or days for advance intelligence information. The emergency plans should not be the same for both cases.

24. Two Stage Counter-Surprise Military Alert System. For the case of warning of only a few minutes, the only possible reaction plan must be on a "crash" basis, and such plans must be prepared for all units. If, however, there is longer warning based on intelligence information another reaction plan is possible. These two stages can be complementary and compatible with the formal alert system. For the counter-surprise system the "crash" basis alarm based on radar penetration information might be called the "Alarm Stage-Scarlet Alert" and the longer warning based on intelligence information called the "Precautionary Stage-Orange Alert". Measures which might be included in the Counter-Surprise Military Alert System under the Precautionary and Alarm Stages are shown in Enclosure A.

25. Relationship of the Counter-Surprise System with SACEUR's Alert Measures. The measures to be taken under the Counter-Surprise System would generally be taken on the declaration of Simple or Reinforced Alert but as has been shown they may well have to be taken without the calling of a formal Simple or Reinforced Alert. The two systems can very well exist together and each can be used for the appropriate conditions. In a period of mounting tension the normal procedure would be for a Simple Alert to be declared and then Reinforced Alert. In case of attempted surprise attack from an apparently calm situation, or on receipt of equivocal warning of such an attempt, the Counter-Surprise System would be used. There could also be occasions when a

Scarlet Alarm would be essential after the Simple Alert had been declared.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

26. The concept of increasing Soviet capability to launch a surprise attack establishes a clear need for a Counter-Surprise Military Alert System in Allied Command Europe in addition to the existing formal Alert Measures.

27. The amount of warning received and the difference in time, reckoned in minutes or hours, available for implementation of measures under a new system call for a two stage system with survival and preparation for counter actions as the objectives. To achieve the necessary speed of decision the new system must consist of purely military measures, established on broad lines by SACEUR to ensure coordination, worked out in detail by NATO Commanders with local National Commanders if necessary, and implemented:

- a. For NATO Forces, by NATO Commanders either
 - (1) On their own initiative, or
 - (2) On information received from above, and
- b. For National Forces
 - (1) By decision of local National Commanders on notification from NATO Commanders that the time and conditions for such implementation have arrived, or
 - (2) On their own initiative, or
 - (3) On orders from their national authorities.
- c. For practice purposes
 - (1) On orders of NATO or National Military Commanders, or
 - (2) On orders of both in conjunction.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

28. It is recommended :
 - a. That a Counter-Surprise Military Alert System should be set up in addition and complementary to the existing formal alert system appearing in SHAPE 76/56 (which superseded SHAPE 70/54 on 15 June 1956).
 - b. That the system should consist of two stages of Alert, a

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Precautionary Stage to be known as Orange Alert and an Alarm Stage to be known as Scarlet Alert.

c. That SHAPE should issue on broad lines the measures considered essential to be taken under Orange Alert and Scarlet Alert.

d. That Subordinate Commanders should work out in detail the measures, coordinating them with local National Commanders.

e. That the communications system throughout ACE should be checked and if necessary improved, to ensure that all commanders at all levels could receive notification, when necessary, that the conditions for which the Orange Alert and Scarlet Alert were designed had arrived.

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