

Circular from the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (5 March 1951)

Caption: Circular from Baron Hervé de Gruben, Secretary-General in the Belgian Foreign Ministry, setting out the stance taken by Belgium on the French plan for a European army.

Source: DE VOS, Luc; ROOMS, Etienne; DELOGE, Pascal; STERKENDRIES, Jean-Michel (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques belges 1941-1960, De l'indépendance à l'interdépendance. Tome II: Défense 1941-1960. Bruxelles: Académie royale de Belgique, 1998. 582 p. ISBN 90-6569-670-9. p. 296-297.

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1. For political reasons, the Belgian Government agrees with the principle of creating a European army and the political institutions that it would necessitate.
2. However, because of the drawbacks inherent in the military character of such an institution, especially as regards cohesion, and in view of the current situation, in which the security of Western Europe is under serious threat, the Belgian Government can allocate only limited resources for this purpose, in terms both of manpower and of the period of time for which it can commit itself.
3. In other words, the Belgian Government is willing to put a combat group at the disposal of the European army at the end of the first stage envisaged in the French memorandum. On the basis of an army of 100 000 men for a total population of 140 million of the countries represented here, the Belgian share would be 6 000; but since it is proposed that half the manpower of the European army should consist of Germans, the Belgian contingent will be reduced in the same proportion. Its contribution of one combat group remains proportional if the European army consists of 100 000 men.
4. Beyond this contribution, the Belgian Government can make no further firm commitment at this time. However, if the Belgian units in the European army were to be increased, it would like them to be incorporated in the same division, which is in accordance with the French Government's proposal.
5. As far as the political institutions are concerned, it agrees with the appointment of a European Defence Commissioner with the powers envisaged in the French memorandum for the first stage, and is willing to sign an agreement to that effect.
6. Beyond that stage, the Belgian Government is prepared to examine the nature of the institutions that would be needed in order to provide political support for the European army to be formed at that time, but not to be bound by the results of such examination.
7. It goes without saying that the Belgian Government has no objection to other governments making wider commitments, but for its part, it cannot commit itself any further at the present time.