

Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff on the air force of Western Union (London, 25 August 1948)

Caption: In a memorandum dated 25 August 1948, the Chiefs of Staff of the Member States of Western Union recommend that the Defence Ministers approve the air defence plan and the programme of rearmament submitted by the Western Union Military Committee.

Source: National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>, Records of international organizations, DG. Copies of records of the Brussels Treaty Organisation and Western European Union. Brussels Treaty Organisations and Western European Union: Microfilm copies of files, DG 1.

Military Committee of the Five Powers. Air defence and Air force organisation. Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff, F.P. (48) 28. London: 25.08.1948. 10 p.

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URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/memorandum_by_the_chiefs_of_staff_on_the_air_force_of_western_union_london_25_august_1948-en-2bf99bf0-fa22-4c11-861c-d4cfd16bfdef.html

Publication date: 07/09/2012

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M E T R I CTOP SECRETCOPY NO. 11F.P.(48) 2825TH AUGUST, 1948.MILITARY COMMITTEE OF THE FIVE POWERSAIR DEFENCE AND AIR FORCE ORGANISATIONMemorandum by the Chiefs of Staff

At our Meeting on 24th August we considered the attached report^ø by the Military Committee on air defence and air force organisation.

2. We desire to emphasise our agreement with the arguments put forward by the Military Committee in the covering note to their report. We recommend therefore that Ministers of Defence should approve the air defence plan and the programme of rearmament which is an essential part of it and should accept the recommendations made in Annex I.

(Signed) TEDDER
C. LECHERES
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36, WHITEHALL, S.W.1.

25TH AUGUST, 1948.

ø F.P.(48) 20

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W.E.U. 1st MARCH 1984Copy No. 79F.P. (48) 2017TH AUGUST, 1948.MILITARY COMMITTEE OF THE FIVE POWERSAIR DEFENCE AND AIR FORCE ORGANISATIONReport by the Military Committee

We attach for the information of the Chiefs of Staff a report made to us by our Air Advisory Committee. This report is arranged in three parts :-

- Annex I. A list of recommendations for action required now.
- Annex II. A common air defence plan for Western Europe together with a programme of rearmament necessary to put the plan into operation.
- Annex III. The organisation of the Air Advisory Committee which is designed to enable the air problem of the Five Powers to be studied as a whole.

2. The Military Committee recommends that the Governments of the Five Powers should approve the air defence plan and the programme of rearmament which is an essential part of it. With regard to the programme of rearmament the Committee would like to emphasise :-

- (a) That it is in fact the only effective way, within the particular field of air defence, of increasing the overall military capabilities of the Five Powers by a distribution of available equipment, the launching of new production and the employment of all available trained personnel.
- (b) That the plan can be approved independently as a first part of any overall rearmament plan and before the overall conception of the defence of Western Europe has been finally worked out. A thorough examination shows that it is the minimum requirement for air defence, below which we should not in any circumstances drop, and which is therefore the nucleus of a much larger force which will have to be built up.

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- (c) That this plan can be adopted independently of external aid using existing industrial resources and because the equipment in question is in fact the best for interception tasks.
3. An examination of the report by the Air Advisory Committee reveals the fact that the adoption of the following equipment is in existing circumstances the best possible solution and will remain so for a period of five to six years :-
- (a) For France - to construct with the least possible delay with French industrial capacity the Vampire Nene; and to continue obtaining from British sources the Vampire Goblin until the Vampire Nene begins to come off production.
- (b) For the Netherlands and Belgium - to build the Meteor Derwent, the airframe in the Netherlands and the engine in Belgium; and in the meantime to continue obtaining this aircraft from British sources.
4. The Military Committee emphasises that the implementation of this programme does not adversely affect the potential of the aircraft industries of France, the Netherlands and Belgium. These countries must take a share in the common production of modern air equipment with the least possible delays compatible with the re-establishment of their industrial capacity.
5. The success of the radar plan depends upon the provision of the necessary communications system. In present circumstances the communications systems in the Netherlands and Belgium are unsuitable and it is urgently necessary that the required cable system should be provided in these two countries.
6. The main difficulty in the way of putting the proposals into immediate effect is the financial one. There is no comprehensive financial agreement which will allow the supply of necessary equipment to the French. While there is no immediate problem with regard to Belgium and the Netherlands, the Netherlands foresee financial difficulties in obtaining the necessary supplies and assistance from 1949 onwards.
7. Discussions are proceeding between the British and French Treasuries about the terms on which supplies of initial equipment may begin and these may achieve agreement on this particular point. What seems to be required in addition, however, is a broad financial agreement between the Five Powers which will allow the principle of mutual assistance, agreed in the Brussels Treaty, to be put into practice without the necessity for prolonged and complex negotiation over each separate requirement.

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8. The Military Committee feels it desirable therefore to emphasise :-

- (a) That the very existence of the Brussels Treaty implies an obligation to reach positive solutions.
- (b) That in any event the financial solution which is adopted must not be tied down to particular conditions and dates for the delivery of the equipment.

9. Consequently the Military Committee recommends - simply as a method of obtaining practical results forthwith - that the implementation of this programme and the first distribution of equipment should begin without delay :-

- (a) In order to enable the training of the necessary personnel to begin at once, and in order to avoid any reduction in the potential of trained personnel.
- (b) In order to re-emphasise in practical form our desire to proceed immediately with the pooling of our resources.
- (c) In order to achieve as soon as possible in Western Europe air defence for a system of bases and installations designed to facilitate the arrival of help from outside and its immediate use.

(Signed) E. C. HUDLESTON, United Kingdom

P. ELY, France

M. L. J. DELEVAL, Belgium

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17th AUGUST, 1948.

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ANNEX I.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that if the Chiefs of Staff approve the air defence plan and the rearmament programme as a whole they should put forward to Ministers of Defence the arguments in the cover note to this report and should recommend the following particular action which is the natural consequence of approving the plan:-

- (a) That Ministers of Defence should agree to adjust the reorganisation of their air forces to the approved air defence proposals.
- (b) That Ministers of Defence should impress upon their own governments the urgency of obtaining a comprehensive financial scheme covering military requirements.
- (c) That pending completion of a comprehensive financial scheme Ministers of Defence should authorise forthwith
 - (i) delivery of the necessary aircraft;
 - (ii) the training in the United Kingdom of air crew and maintenance personnel.
- (d) That the Ministers of Defence of Great Britain and France should instruct their appropriate officials to work out a scheme for the manufacture by French industry of Vampire airframes and Hene engines.
- (e) That the Ministers of Defence of Great Britain, the Netherlands and Belgium should instruct their appropriate officials to work out a joint scheme for the manufacture of Meteor airframes and Derwent engines.
- (f) That the Ministers of Defence of the Netherlands and Belgium should impress upon their governments the urgency of providing the necessary cable systems for the air defence plan.

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ANNEX

II

AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM

The agreed strategy of the Western Union is to hold the enemy as far to the East as possible. But wherever the land battle may take place, a first essential is to provide adequate defence of the metropolitan territories of the Five Powers against enemy air attack, and this must naturally be a part of the first stage in the build-up of the Armed Forces. A unified air defence system based on fighter aircraft, radar and anti-aircraft is required.

PROPOSED PLAN

2. An air defence plan has now been prepared under which the U.K., France, Belgium and Holland will each set up a number of sectors on the R.A.F. model and using British types of fighter aircraft and radar equipment. A similar plan for anti-aircraft should be produced as soon as possible in consultation between the Armies and Air Forces of the Five Powers, and the Military Committee has now put the necessary examination in hand.

3. The layout of an agreed Integrated Control and Reporting System covering South-East England, Holland, Belgium and North-East France is shown in the map at Appendix 'A'. (Cover is of course also needed for the rest of the United Kingdom and France. An examination of these requirements has been made, and the question of supply is now being dealt with.) Each of the circles has as centre a master radar station and a radius of 65 miles - this being the area over which the normal radar station, consisting of two equipments known as AMES Type 15 and AMES Type 21 can provide complete radar cover from 3,000 feet upwards. (Below 3,000 feet we depend on ground observers for reports of enemy aircraft.) Some overlap between the areas covered by different radar stations is needed in order to provide time for an enemy aircraft passing outside the control of one station to be handed over to the next station. The amount of overlap in each case depends on geographical and technical considerations.

4. Whilst the number of fighter wings required to defend any particular area depends upon the size of the threat, and the number of master radar stations required to provide complete cover for the area depends solely on the size of the area, R.A.F. experience shows that one master radar station can adequately control one fighter wing, whose optimum establishment is three day fighter squadrons, each with a unit establishment of 16 aircraft, and two night fighter squadrons, each with a unit establishment of 8 aircraft. The reason for the proportion of three day fighters to one night fighter is that fighters operate by day in formations and only the leader of each formation is controlled from the ground; while by night fighters operate singly, and each individual aircraft has to be controlled from the ground.

5. The radar stations are grouped into sectors, the Sector Operation Centre being located at one of the master radar stations. Each sector thus controls two or more fighter wings. The areas covered by each sector are also shown on Appendix 'A'.

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6. The following general principles have been borne in mind in preparing this plan:-

- (a) The main threat of attack would be from the Eastward.
- (b) In order to reduce the risk of the defences being outflanked, it is necessary to be prepared to meet a possible attack from any direction.
- (c) The size and lay-out of sectors should provide the greatest possible defence in depth against Eastward attacks.
- (d) Outer stations should be located as far out as possible to obtain maximum forward cover, even though the defence of these stations is thereby rendered more difficult.

7. Initially, the R.A.F. held separate discussions with each of the French, Dutch and Belgian Air Forces, as a result of which three separate Air Defence Plans were drawn up. Subsequently the three plans were combined into one and savings were thereby effected. The organisations now required are:-

<u>Country</u>	<u>Radar Stations</u>	<u>Fighter Wings</u>
France	21 Master Radar Stations, plus 8 Forward Cover Stations.	17
Holland	5 Master Radar Stations, plus 1 Forward Cover Station.	5
Belgium	2 Master Radar Stations.	4

8. Within the total plan, an interim plan known as Phase I has been accepted under which France will provide four fighter wings, Belgium two and Holland two.

Co-ordination of Air Defence

9. Arrangements have already been made for Belgium and Holland to form a Group consisting of one Sector from each country. The French Air Force will have a Fighter Command with an appropriate number of territorial Groups. The Air Advisory Committee is about to study the very important question of how a unified control of the whole air defence system can best be secured.

Rate at which the Plan may be completed

10. The immediate aim is to complete Phase I of the Plan, (see Appendix B) if possible by December 1949. The situation in the different countries as regards the fulfilment of Phase I is as follows:-

- | | |
|---------|--|
| France | December 1949 - Assuming training starts immediately and that all aircraft requirements are met. |
| Belgium | December 1949 - Two night fighter squadrons short and no backing for 3 Meteor squadrons. The latter will be provided in 1950. 3 day fighter squadrons will still be equipped with Spitfires. |

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Holland December 1950 - The present plan for the build-up of the Dutch Air Force envisages that 4 fully backed day fighter and 2 night fighter squadrons will be available at this date. The 6 day fighter and 4 night fighter squadrons called for in Phase I will according to this plan only be available at the end of 1951. Though the Netherlands representative considers that it might be possible, provided funds and manpower were made available, to speed up the original plan to a certain extent, it will be a physical impossibility to complete Phase I at the same time (end of 1949) as the other powers hope to do so.

11. The rate of subsequent expansion up to Phase II can not yet be finally laid down, but the French hope to complete a total of 18 day fighter squadrons and 12 night squadrons by December 1951. This would provide six wings of the North East region with two day squadrons and two night squadrons each, leaving six day squadrons over the other regions. By December 1952 Belgium expects to have four Wings minus two night fighter squadrons. She will thus have 12 day fighter squadrons but only six night fighter squadrons. Holland expects to have eight day fighter squadrons and eight night fighter squadrons by December 1953.

REQUIREMENTS

Aircraft Requirements

12. The day fighter squadrons will be equipped with either Meteors or Vampires and the night fighter squadrons with Mosquitos. Training aircraft are required in addition. A statement of the accepted aircraft requirements is at Appendix 'B'. This takes into account not only Unit Equipment of Squadrons, but also one month's war reserve, repair pool, working stock, wastage and operational conversion units. The French Air Force adopt the R.A.F. estimates of 9.8 aircraft backing for a day fighter squadron and 3.4 aircraft backing for a night fighter squadron. The Dutch and Belgian Air Forces provide a backing of 50% of unit establishment and provide separately for wastage. The backing behind all four Air Forces is virtually the same.

13. No supply difficulty is seen in meeting these requirements for types other than jets. Action has been taken to increase production of Vampires and Meteors, but the benefits will not be felt for some time. On present plans it appears that the number of Vampires available for France is 30 in 1948 and 77 in 1949, leaving her 153 short of her required 260 by December 1949. This deficiency should be made up by September or October, 1950.

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14. Delivery of aircraft to France under the plan has not yet begun, for lack of any agreement on finance. It has been proposed that, pending a complete financial settlement, authority should be given to supply the following initial quantities of aircraft from R.A.F. stocks:-

<u>Number and Type</u>	<u>Rate of Delivery</u>
30 Vampire I	5 per month from date the order is given.
30 Harvard IIB	12 per month in the first two months and the remainder in the third month after the order is given.
4 Mosquito T.III	2 per month from date the order is given.

Aircraft Manufacture on the Continent

15. The numbers of aircraft required from U.K. production in 1950 onwards depend on decisions yet to be taken about aircraft manufacture in France, Belgium and Holland. The Meteor requirements of Belgium and Holland can be met in total, provided a joint scheme under which Holland will manufacture the Meteor airframe and Belgium the Derwent engine meets with early agreement by all three Governments. We recommend that this scheme be given favourable and energetic treatment. The French Air Force has not yet decided what are to be its plans for aircraft manufacture. The alternatives lie between the Vampire with the Nene engine, the Vampire with the Goblin engine and the Meteor with the Derwent engine. After study by the Technical Supply Sub-Committee of the problem of manufacturing an interceptor for the French Air Force, the Committee consider:-

- (a) From the industrial point of view the building of the Vampire-Nene under licence in France is the best solution.
- (b) From the tactical point of view the Vampire-Goblin is a good interceptor for the next five or six years, and the Vampire-Nene has still better performance as an interceptor.

The Committee therefore recommend that the best solution in the present circumstances is that the Vampire-Nene should be built under licence in France.

Control and Reporting System

16. A statement of the numbers of radar sets required under the plan is at Appendix 'C'. The sets required to provide cover for North East France, Belgium and Holland can be supplied by the end of 1949. Subsequent requirements would involve new production, delivery from which is not expected to begin for two years. To enable the integrated control and reporting system to operate, an extensive communications network will have to be provided in all three countries. In Holland and Belgium, in particular, it will be difficult to fit this network into existing cable systems and there will be delay unless sufficiently high priority in the provision of cables is given. It will also be necessary to have radio links in reserve, but radio means of communication considerably lower the efficiency of the system. In our view the cable system is the only completely reliable system, and there is, therefore, an imperative need for the landlines to be provided without delay.

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Training

17. All three Air Forces have put forward their training requirements, which include converting flying instructors to jet aircraft, training fitters on jet airframes and engines, and courses for fighter controllers and radar personnel. A list of these requirements is at Appendix 'D' and it appears probable that these requirements can be met.

18. The Netherlands Air Force proposes to establish a school for pilot training, probably in the Caribbean area. If this does not materialise in time, the Netherlands will require training for about 150 pilots in 1950 and 1951, and it is unlikely that this training can be undertaken within the resources of the R.A.F. The Committee is considering how this possible commitment might be met. The French Air Force is undertaking training in North Africa and the Belgian Air Force is considering the transfer of part of its flying training to the Belgian Congo. Part of the flying training for the R.A.F. is already being done in Southern Rhodesia. We are now considering whether the overseas flying training organisation of the four Air Forces can usefully be concentrated into one or two places.