

# Note by the Foreign Office on the expansion of Soviet activity in the Mediterranean (December 1968)


**Caption:** From November to December 1968, in the British House of Commons, MPs raise the question of the expansion of Soviet activity in the Mediterranean. The Foreign Office prepares a series of notes on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) response to Soviet penetration in the region and highlights the United Kingdom’s position on this issue. This note recalls the communiqué issued after the NATO Ministerial Meeting in Reykjavik in June 1968, which stated that the ministers had given instructions for the study of measures to safeguard the security interests of NATO members in the area and to improve the effectiveness of allied forces there.

**Source:** The National Archives of the UK (TNA). Foreign Office, Western Organisations and Co-ordination Department and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Western Organisations Department: Registered Files (W and WD Series). WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION (WEU). Defence. Attitudes to Soviet penetration in Mediterranean. 01/01/1968-31/12/1969, FCO 41/535 (Former Reference Dep: WDU 11/10).

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**URL:**  
[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/note\\_by\\_the\\_foreign\\_office\\_on\\_the\\_expansion\\_of\\_soviet\\_activity\\_in\\_the\\_mediterranean\\_december\\_1968-en-2e49485a-b09b-43c0-a085-6b5035cd529e.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/note_by_the_foreign_office_on_the_expansion_of_soviet_activity_in_the_mediterranean_december_1968-en-2e49485a-b09b-43c0-a085-6b5035cd529e.html)

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PREVIOUS  
REFERENCES

4/6

16

Flag A

4 December, 1968: Mr. Dodds-Parker (Hansard Col. 488).

Flag B

14 November, 1968: Mr. Lyon (Hansard Cols. 146 - 7).

Flag C

18 November, 1968: Mr. Allaun and others (Hansard Cols. 857 - 864).

NOTES FOR SUPPLEMENTARIES

1. Work in NATO on the Mediterranean

NATO has for some time been concerned at the expansion of Soviet activity in the Mediterranean and is reviewing possible courses of action. In the communiqué issued after the Ministerial meeting in Reykjavik in June, it was stated that Ministers had given instructions for the study of measures to safeguard the security interests of NATO members in the area and to improve the effectiveness of allied forces there. This work has been going forward and is still in train.

2. Maritime Air Forces, Mediterranean (MARAIMED)

One action taken by NATO in the light of the increased Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean has been to improve the effectiveness and coordination of allied surveillance activities there. To this end a new headquarters organisation, MARAIMED, was activated in Naples on 21 November.

3. The effect of the Czech crisis

NATO Ministers met in Brussels last month to consider the implications of the Czech crisis for NATO. They noted that the uncertainties resulting from the Soviet action extend to the

Mediterranean basin and drew attention to the need for continued vigilance.

4. Soviet representations about NATO surveillance

We have made it clear to the Russians that the Mediterranean is an area of legitimate interest to NATO. The Russians have themselves been conducting surveillance operations in the Mediterranean for a number of years.

5. A European Naval Force within NATO

We want to see the European members of NATO including this country working more closely together within the alliance and to this end are trying to establish an identity of views among them. The form which this can take is of course for discussion among the countries concerned.

6. A European Naval Force outside NATO

Our defence efforts are concentrated in NATO and we should not want to divide the alliance by setting up new groupings outside it.

7. French participation

I know of nothing to suggest that the French would be prepared to contribute to an integrated European naval force.