

## Letter from Kit Dodds to Sir A. David S. Goodall on the WEU Standing Armaments Committee (London, 10 November 1975)

**Caption:** On 10 November 1975, Kit Dodds, Assistant Under Secretary in the British Ministry of Defence, writes to Sir Arthur David Saunders Goodall, Head of the Western European Department in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), in reply to a letter of 6 October 1975 from Sir John William Denys Margetson, Head of Chancery at the United Kingdom delegation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), on the future of Western European Union's Standing Armaments Committee (SAC). Kit Dodds supports Margetson's position that at present, SAC is a waste of money and manpower. He also states that if the British cannot succeed in having SAC dissolved, then they should at least press to reduce the number of times it meets.

**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). Future of Standing Armaments Committee of Western European Union. 01/01/1975-31/12/1975, FCO 41/1749 (Former Reference Dep: WDU 11/1 PART B).

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Dear Goodall,

WEU STANDING ARMAMENTS COMMITTEE

I have seen with some concern the replies from Bonn and Paris to Margetson's letter of the 6th October on the SAC of WEU.

2. Our Departments have already been in correspondence about the need to replace Group Captain Kelly on the SAC Secretariat, and our views on that subject of course apply to the future of the SAC itself. I heartily endorse Margetson's line that SAC at the moment is a waste of money and manpower from the point of view of the MOD. Put very simply, the SAC meets because it exists - not because it has any work to do.

3. Margetson's letter contains a number of useful suggestions on ways in which we might reduce the burden of the SAC: and I would like to add some thoughts of my own.

a. As far as the MOD is concerned, we should be quite content to be represented at the SAC by someone from the Embassy in Paris. I understand from Lush's letter that he too would be prepared to go along with this and, given the recent French practice of sending Brindeau from their MOD, I believe we have an adequate precedent. The argument that "other nations could not fall in with this practice" does not seem to me to be very strong.

b. If, as seems to be the general opinion, we cannot kill off the SAC completely, can we turn our attention to reducing the number of meetings? One meeting a year is presumably the minimum necessary to sustain life; the work available does not justify anything more than this, but any reduction would be an improvement and therefore welcome.

? | c. A useful step towards achieving b. would be a reduction in the number of reports made by the SAC to WEU. At the moment, discussion of the report takes up the major part of two of the four meetings a year. This is clearly ridiculous, especially when much that goes into the report merely concerns the various perambulations of the Secretariat - eg Plantey's recent trip to Tyneside.

| d. We already have taken action to delay replacement of Group Captain Kelly. I gather that Plantey is not in a position to take any action to recruit on his own without the say so of Von Plehwe, and that this will not be forthcoming without our knowledge. It continues to be our intention to block any replacement for Kelly; compared to the workload of the Eurogroup Secretariat, the SAC is grossly overstuffed.

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4. It is becoming increasingly difficult to see any valid argument for maintaining the pretence that the SAC performs any useful function, or indeed that there is any scope for it to do so. Let us be rid of it as soon as this is politically possible, but since clean killing is not allowed, the present policy of hoping to starve the SAC should be continued and enhanced by a reduction in the number of diners and dinners.

Yours sincerely  
Kit Dodds.

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G C B DODDS