

# Exchange of internal notes in the British Foreign Office on the limitations on German arms production (March 1959)

**Caption:** In March 1959, a series of internal notes from the British Foreign Office address the question of the request from the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to amend Protocol III of the Revised Brussels Treaty, which limits German arms production. The British originally delayed sending a reply because they did not want to jeopardise their bilateral discussions with the Soviet Union. But circumstances have now changed and the Foreign Office sees no further reason to resist the German request; it recommends that no objection be raised to SACEUR's proposal that it support this request for an amendment to the Treaty. This amendment would permit the FRG to undertake the joint production of surface-to-air guided missiles.

**Source:** The National Archives of the UK (TNA). Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1966. WESTERN ORGANISATIONS (WU): Western European Union-WEU (WUW). Limitations on FRG arms production. 01/01/1959-31/12/1959, FO 371/146464 (Former Reference Dep: File 1195).

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**URL:**  
[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/exchange\\_of\\_internal\\_notes\\_in\\_the\\_british\\_foreign\\_office\\_on\\_the\\_limitations\\_on\\_german\\_arms\\_production\\_march\\_1959-en-c3ffbefb-72cf-4bad-8410-89652b366f11.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/exchange_of_internal_notes_in_the_british_foreign_office_on_the_limitations_on_german_arms_production_march_1959-en-c3ffbefb-72cf-4bad-8410-89652b366f11.html)



**Last updated:** 25/10/2016

1959

W

WESTERN DEPARTMENT

WESTERN

EUROPEAN UNION

WUW1195/8

FROM

F.O. Minute  
let Hacock.

No.

Dated 5 March

Received 13 March

SUBJECT

Limitations on German Arms  
Productions in the revised Brussels  
Treaty: German request for  
Amendment

References

17.

MINUTES

Mr. Wright has cleared this  
with the Chiefs of Staff and  
Sir R. Parnell. He will write  
to the Sec, but meanwhile I  
have telegraphed.

(Printing Instructions)

(Outward Action)

Dft) C.W. Wright.  
Cdr Defcon from  
Mr. Parnell 11/3.

Dft Tel) L.H. Del. NATO.  
NOT 428 of 17/3

Ref'd) Bonn 396(s)

Paris 338(s) Hague 318(s)

Brussels 203(s) Paris

858(s) London 166(s)

(Action  
completed)

AK

17:7:59

(Main Indexed)

2/6/60

A) C.W. Wright, Mod. to Mr. Parnell - 713/02/58 - 18/3

(Initialled)

J86 54267-3c



SECRET

LIMITATIONS ON GERMAN ARMS PRODUCTIONS IN  
THE REVISED BRUSSELS TREATY

German Request for Amendment



Under Protocol III of the Revised Brussels Treaty Germany is forbidden to produce Atomic, Biological and Chemical Weapons, Long Range and Guided Missiles, Influence Mines, large Warships and Strategic Bomber Aircraft.

2. The W.E.U. Council can amend these restrictions (except for restrictions on production of atomic, biological and chemical weapons) by a two-thirds majority, on the recommendation of SACEUR. In the course of 1958 the Council agreed to two relatively unimportant amendments to permit Germany to manufacture, first, anti-tank guided missiles, and secondly one training ship with a displacement greater than the limits permitted in the Treaty. There have been Parliamentary Questions about these amendments but no adverse public reaction. ← B

3. On January 16 SACEUR asked if we had any objection to his supporting a German request to the W.E.U. Council for an amendment to the Treaty which would permit Germany to undertake, in concert with certain other W.E.U. countries, the joint production of surface-to-air guided missiles. We have delayed sending a reply because we thought that such a move to strengthen German armament might run counter to our line in any discussions taking place in Moscow. Those discussions touched upon German rearmament only in the context of a zone in which there would be restrictions applied to the forces of all nations. From that point of view there seems to be no reason, therefore, to try to impede German defensive rearmament. ← C

4. The background to the German request is an agreement between France, Italy, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, concluded within the framework of the N.A.T.O. Armaments Committee, to manufacture jointly the American HAWK surface-to-air missile. Production would be shared among the participating countries in proportion to their requirement for this missile. The requirements are:

Belgium	3 battalions
France	10 battalions
Germany	9 battalions
Italy	4 battalions
Netherlands	2 battalions.

Each battalion will be allowed 36 missiles. The HAWK is a defensive weapon and has no atomic capability (although a future development of it might have). ← D

5. The Foreign Office would give careful study to the terms of any amendment to the Treaty suggested by the Germans to ensure that:

- only defensive surface-to-air missiles were excluded from the restrictions;
- the provisions of the Treaty concerning the manufacture of nuclear devices, parts or assemblies were not affected;
- the joint manufacture with several countries of any prohibited weapon would not automatically entitle Germany to a further amendment of the Brussels Treaty enabling her to take part.

/6. From the

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6. From the political point of view we should find it difficult to object to an amendment which satisfied these conditions. The U.K. has been trying to get a British missile (either BLOODHOUND or THUNDERBIRD) adopted as a joint project by the continental countries in opposition to the HAWK. Any objection by the U.K. at this stage would give rise to the suspicion of trying to sabotage this project.
7. Moreover any objection would not necessarily be effective. The Germans will have the support of their partners in the project and this is sufficient to ensure a majority in favour of an amendment when it is discussed in the W.E.U. Council. As far as the recommendation from SACEUR is concerned the Americans have adopted a very strong sales drive with the HAWK missile and no doubt would exert pressure on SACEUR to help the project on its way.
8. Finally joint production by European countries including Germany of a weapon of this kind is a logical development of the concept of interdependence.
9. The Chiefs of Staff have asked to be consulted before a reply is sent to SACEUR. A copy of this submission is therefore being sent to the C.O.S. Secretariat.

Recommendation

10. It is recommended that we should raise no objection to SACEUR's supporting this German request for an amendment to the Brussels Treaty. When it is put to the Council we should wish to secure the safeguards in paragraph 5 above. Subject to the concurrence of the Chiefs of Staff, SACEUR should be informed accordingly.
11. P.U.S.D. and the Ministry of Defence concur.

*P. F. Hancock*

(P. F. Hancock)  
March 5, 1959

We have been stalling on this pending the visit to Moscow. Since the trend of the conversation in Moscow was in the direction of our reaching agreement with the Russians to preserve the status quo with each side of Germany a fully integrated member of its respective alliance, and since the question of arms limitation was only touched upon in the context of a zone in which there would be restrictions on the forces of all nations equally, there is no further reason why we should go on resisting the German request. It is moreover supported by the French and by all the other members of W.E.U. Failure to support it would be inconsistent with our own previous effort to get our own type of missile adopted as a joint project by the continental countries. I therefore agree with the recommendation. But it must be recognised that the public reaction is this time likely to be adverse. Altering

/the treaty..

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the treaty to enable the Germans to take part in the manufacture of guided missiles is a different matter to altering it to enable them to make anti-tank missiles and a training ship. This will have to be accepted.

*A. Rumbold*

A. Rumbold

March 6, 1959

Sir F. Hoyer Millar

The plain fact is that  
we can't stop a project like  
this if, as in the present case,  
there is a 2/3 majority in  
favour of it in the Western  
Council. So I think that  
despite the public opinion  
opinions, to which Sir A.

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*Rumbold*



Remember you, <sup>or</sup>  
made a virtue of necessity &  
~~there~~ we have better / agree to

Sacem's request. But we <sup>might</sup> try

to arrange things so that

his actual decision "which was

not taken ~~until~~ for a few months  
actually

or so, until we have /

fixed up a meeting with

the Russians.

Robertson

Mr. Ormsby-Joe

I agree that we cannot  
in the circumstances oppose SACEM's  
request on behalf of the Germans, but  
Sir F. Hoyer-Millars point is important and



no decision should become public knowledge until the Russians are firmly committed to the Foreign Ministers meeting. We do not want them to say that they will attend such a meeting only on condition that no decision to allow the Germans to manufacture guided missiles is taken. This would put us all in a highly embarrassing, not to say untenable, position.

allh.

10/3

I have told Sir A. Rumbold how things stand.

Please see now my letter to Mr. Wright of the Ministry of Defence asking him to clear the decision with the Chiefs of Staff.

I have also told a member of the French Embassy (M. de Folin) how we propose to proceed. I said that we were doing this as a matter of courtesy. On previous occasions we had consulted the French; but this time their views could be assumed from the fact that they were taking part in the Hawk group. We did not expect that the French would have any comments though we should of course be ready to receive them if they did. M. de Folin knew nothing about the question but took fairly careful notes and will presumably report accurately.

*[Signature]*

(A.D.F. Pemberton-Pigott)

March 11, 1959.