

## Secretary-General's note on the activities of WEU in the field of defence (London, 13 February 1957)

**Caption:** On 13 February 1957, the Secretary-General of Western European Union (WEU) circulates a note containing an exchange of letters between Sir James Hutchison, Chairman of the Assembly's Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments, and Lord Samuel Hood. In his letter dated 9 February, Sir Hutchison requests an explanation of the automatic aid mechanism within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) so as to clarify whether there are any differences with WEU. In his reply, Lord Hood says that the United States Government has accepted the principle of a collective response in the event of an attack against a Member State, and so the differences in wording between Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty and Article V of the modified Brussels Treaty have only arisen as a result of constitutional reasons peculiar to the US: the practical effect of the two Articles is the same.

**Source:** Council of the Western European Union. Secretary-General's note. Questions concerning the Assembly. Activities of WEU in the field of defence. London: 13.02.1957. C (57) 30. Copy No 75. 3 p. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of the Western European Union. Year: 1956, 01/07/1956-30/12/1983. File 202.414.1. Volume 1/1.

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[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/secretary\\_general\\_s\\_note\\_on\\_the\\_activities\\_of\\_weu\\_in\\_the\\_field\\_of\\_defence\\_london\\_13\\_february\\_1957-en-000134d5-16a1-4553-88a8-fcd869af83b1.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/secretary_general_s_note_on_the_activities_of_weu_in_the_field_of_defence_london_13_february_1957-en-000134d5-16a1-4553-88a8-fcd869af83b1.html)



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# WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

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13th February 1957

## SECRETARY-GENERAL'S NOTE

### Questions concerning the Assembly Activities of W.E.U. in the field of defence

As agreed at the meeting of the Council of 13th February 1957, the Secretary-General circulates herewith the text of a personal letter dated 9th February 1957 from Sir James Hutchison, Chairman of the Assembly's Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments, to Lord Hood.

The text of the reply which Lord HOOD proposes to send is attached. If delegates have any comments to make on this reply, they are requested to communicate as soon as possible with the Secretariat-General.

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### Text of a letter from Sir James Hutchison to Lord Hood dated 9th February 1957

"In the meeting which we had in the afternoon, following an interesting one we had in the morning with you and your colleagues, the members of my Committee were still left puzzled by your reply to the question about automatic aid. You will remember that I had the impression that the United States Congress had to be consulted before it could take any action with its N.A.T.O. forces in the event of

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aggression against one of the Powers in the West. You replied that I was wrong in my assumption and I assumed, though the others did not, that this meant that no consultation was necessary and that reaction by N.A.T.O. forces, including Americans, would be as immediate as should be the action of Western European Union Powers under Article V of the Paris Treaties.

The Committee asked me to write to you to get your confirmation that my interpretation was the right one and an explanation as to why this was so.

Would you be very kind and drop me a note which will allow me to explain to them how it is that the N.A.T.O. forces must react at once."

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Text of reply from Lord Hood

"Thank you for your letter of February 9 arising from our joint meeting on February 8.

As I stated at the meeting, the Council cannot possibly pronounce on the workings of the U.S. constitution nor on the extent of the consultation which, in the event of an attack in Western Europe, the U.S. Government would see fit to conduct with the U.S. Congress. What I questioned was your assumption that there was bound to be delay before N.A.T.O. plans were put into effect. There was no delay after Pearl Harbour and in Korea. Whilst the formal declaration of war is a matter for Congress, the President as Commander-in-Chief can order immediate action by the U.S. armed forces. In the particular case which interests W.E.U., the U.S. Government have agreed in Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty to take action in the event of attack and have joined with the other N.A.T.O. members in establishing a permanent machinery for consultation (the Council in permanent session), in developing their collective capacity to resist attack (the establishment of integrated headquarters and command structure and the assignment of forces to those commands) and in drawing up plans for use in the event of attack. These arrangements should enable an immediate reaction to be

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made in the event of an attack upon any one of the Western European Union powers.

This is the basis of the W.E.U. Council's belief that, despite the difference in wording (mainly for constitutional reasons peculiar to the U.S.) between Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty and Article V of the revised Brussels Treaty, the practical effect of the two Articles is the same.

You will not find this matter explained at such length in that part of the Council's Annual Report which deals with Recommendation No. 6 because, for obvious reasons, the Council would consider it wrong and dangerous to encourage public discussion of the alleged difference between these two Articles."

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London, S.W. 1.