

Extract from minutes of the 87th meeting of the WEU Council (17 April 1957)

Caption: On 17 April 1957, the extract from the minutes of the 87th meeting of the Council of Western European Union (WEU) outlines the address by Michael Cary, Chairman of the International Secretariat of the Standing Armaments Committee (SAC), on relations between FINABEL and the SAC, particularly the different views on the procedure for the development of weapons. FINABEL is willing to go ahead without the United Kingdom if the country is not prepared to examine the military characteristics established within FINABEL. British representative Lord Samuel Hood summarises the British position on this matter and affirms that his government is not prepared to join FINABEL, firstly because it does not share the view that the procedure for arms development should separate an examination of the military characteristics from the technical, economic and production considerations, and secondly because FINABEL contributes to the idea of duplication with the military structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The German representative, Ulrich Sahm, agrees with Lord Hood that the method adopted in the SAC of inviting military representatives to take part in the discussions is the best way of achieving closer cooperation between FINABEL and the SAC.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of the 87 meeting of WEU Council held on 17 April 1957. I. Verbal Statement by the chairman of the Standing Armaments Committee M. Cary (SAC). CR (57)16. pp. 1-4 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: 1967, 16/03/1956-30/04/1967. File 250.10. Volume 1/2.

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EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF 87th MEETING

OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON 17 April 1957

CR(57)16

I VERBAL STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THESTANDING ARMAMENTS COMMITTEEMr. HARY (SAC.)**DECLASSIFIED**

W.E.U. 1st MARCH 1989

(iii) The problem of relations with FINABEL.

There were two points of view: on one particular aspect of the general problem - that of the relationship between the two organisations so far as the procedure for the development of weapons was concerned - the members of FINABEL had reaffirmed that they would like to tackle the problem by an arrangement under which the military characteristics of the weapons required would first be discussed between the military staffs within FINABEL; their agreed views on these characteristics would then be referred to the S.A.C. with the request that production of a prototype be undertaken; this would be subjected to trials and, finally, recommendations made to Governments concerning the adoption of the equipment.

The United Kingdom was somewhat different.

They thought it was a mistake, on practical grounds, to divorce discussion of military characteristics from the general complex of technical, economic and production considerations and possibilities. They therefore considered that discussion of the military characteristics of equipment should take place within the ambit of the S.A.C. from the start; in other words, that such discussion should be a joint operation in which military staffs and technical and production experts would jointly examine requirements and possibilities with regard to army equipment.

The matter had been brought to a head because FINABEL had now finished their work on twelve ranges of army equipment; under the procedure described above, they now wanted to turn this into "hardware". If the United Kingdom Government were prepared to discuss their agreed views concerning military characteristics, it would clearly be possible to go ahead under the aegis of the S.A.C. If not, the members of FINABEL had given warning that they would go ahead without the United Kingdom.

The Committee were now faced, therefore, with the problem of settling once and for all the status and scope of FINABEL in connection with their own work. A representative of the United Kingdom General Staff had been present at the last meeting of the Committee and, by agreement with FINABEL, several other delegations included military representatives who were familiar with the work of FINABEL but had of course spoken as national delegates. A very useful exchange of views had been held concerning military characteristics in general. However, this was clearly a cumbrous procedure and the Committee had held a long and anxious discussion as to what the solution could be. Two possibilities had been suggested

Mr. Cary (cont'd)

a) The Committee were fully aware that one of the biggest difficulties for the United Kingdom Government was security: they had to have the agreement of certain countries before they could discuss military characteristics with others. However, the United Kingdom had informed the Committee that they hoped to be able to resolve the difficulty, at least for certain ranges of equipment, and would then be in a position, for the first time, to discuss the characteristics of the items concerned. It was proposed that the members of FINABEL should be asked to defer action for the time being; when the United Kingdom had received the necessary clearance for a particular range of equipment, the Committee would be informed and a special meeting might be convened with military representation to discuss the details and characteristics of that range, and to see if agreement could be reached with a view to the production of prototypes, the holding of trials and recommendations for adoption as described above.

This suggestion advocated solution by the case by case procedure. It did not involve recognition of FINABEL as such, but simply meant that that organisation should put their requirements to the S.A.C. for discussion under the aegis of the Committee, with suitable military representation.

b) The second solution proposed was much more far-reaching. It was based on the idea that the development of equipment could not proceed until the "philosophy" behind the armament of the land, sea and air forces had been discussed. For this purpose, a high-level meeting should be convened, perhaps even at Ministerial level, to take stock of the position as a whole, particularly in the light of what representatives on the Committee believed to be the rather more flexible United Kingdom position, and possibly to issue new directives to the Committee.

Mr. Cary thought he could be somewhat precise as to the views of representatives in this case: the United Kingdom and Federal German Governments favoured the case by case method, whereas the French and Italian Governments preferred the second solution.

The problem was clearly far from being resolved and was of great concern to the Committee. The members of FINABEL naturally wished to proceed as rapidly as possible to the next stage, and would like the United Kingdom to be associated therewith. It was, therefore, also a matter of urgency.

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W.E.U. 1st MARCH 1989

(Mr. CARY cont.)

3. Finally, the problem of FINABEL, on which Lord Hood thought it would be useful if he summarised the British position.

His Government did not feel they would wish to become a member of FINABEL, essentially for two reasons: the first, which Mr. Cary had already mentioned, was that they were doubtful whether the best results could be achieved by first undertaking a purely military study and then handing over the results to the production experts. They felt that valuable time could be lost in this way and that an exercise which was a joint military and civil undertaking from the start would give more satisfactory results. The S.A.C. could provide the forum for such exercises, where the military experts could discuss equipment with the technical, scientific, industrial and economic experts.

The second reason was political. Lord Hood recalled that at the time of the creation of W.E.U. there had been a strong feeling on the part, he thought, of all the seven Governments that there should be no W.E.U. military machinery in order to avoid duplicating or giving the impression that W.E.U. was duplicating the N.A.T.O. military structure. His Government felt that this argument still had great force;

the deliberations of the Council were regarded with some suspicion by certain of the allies who were not members of W.E.U.; his Government therefore considered it important to avoid doing anything which might appear to give foundation to those suspicions.

Lord Hood said that his Government's considered view was therefore that they should not join FINABEL; they thought that the necessary body already existed in the shape of the S.A.C.; it should be possible for the seven Governments to exchange therein views on the general "philosophy" underlying their opinions as to future requirements for new weapons. They had therefore welcomed the recent military/civilian discussions in the S.A.C., which had shown a uniformity of views in some cases and a rather different approach in others, and thought there would be every advantage in continuing such discussions, and in concentrating on this general "philosophy" - an exercise that would undoubtedly look a considerable way into the future. The United Kingdom Government would be prepared for this general survey to cover a very wide range of equipment; later on, when it was possible to pass from the general to the particular, he thought it might well be necessary to revert to bilateral or tripartite talks, since when the actual possibilities of co-operating over a particular weapon emerged, the security element came into play and the smaller group became more appropriate.

The United Kingdom Government therefore greatly preferred the case by case approach. Lord Hood added that he personally would hesitate before agreeing that a ministerial meeting be convened to discuss such problems; he doubted whether it was really required, if there was hope of making useful progress by the alternative method - the case by case procedure.

M. ZOPPI On the third problem, that of FINABEL, the views of Governments on the proposals now put forward would clearly have to be awaited; he personally felt that the evidence of co-operation in the S.A.C. by members of FINABEL was most satisfactory and that it should be possible to find a solution without too much difficulty.

Mr. STIKKER

3. So far as the FINABEL problem was concerned, his Government saw no objection to establishing a formal link between FINABEL and the S.A.C. and he was sorry to hear that the United Kingdom did not feel they could do likewise. He understood that at the present time all concerned were trying to devise working methods whereby, in particular, the United Kingdom

Government could be associated. He understood the difficulties of the U.K. over the ABC embargo. But a very serious problem was involved here: Mr. Stikker recalled the remarks made by M. Spaak at the last ministerial meeting of the Council, concerning the political issue that would arise if the United Kingdom forces were equipped with much more modern weapons than the others. He felt sure that the representatives on the Committee were fully

aware of the problem.

Dr. SAHM

So far as the FINABEL question was concerned,

Dr. Sahm said that his Government felt that the method recently tried out in the S.A.C., of inviting military representatives to take part in the discussions, was the best way of achieving co-operation between FINABEL and the S.A.C.; the same military experts should attend the meetings of FINABEL and of the S.A.C. thus establishing the same kind of personal link as between the S.A.C. and N.A.T.O.

Dr. Sahm said that his Government were in favour of the case by case procedure in this connection.

(Mr. CARY) On the FINABEL problem, Mr. Cary confirmed that the aim was to arrive at working arrangements. The presence of representatives of FINABEL as such in the Committee would present great difficulties; the idea was that national delegations would be supported by military experts - in fact, certain of these experts would also be members of FINABEL but would not attend the Committee formally in that capacity. The aim was to hold joint discussions in the S.A.C. of the military, and well as the production aspects of co-operation.

Mr. Cary said that he had taken note of Mr. Stikker's reference to the remarks made by the Belgian Foreign Minister at the last meeting of the Council at ministerial level. He stressed that it was without any doubt the intention to ensure that the W.E.U. forces as a whole had the best and most modern armaments possible.

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W.E.U. 1st MARCH 1989