M.C. 48/1(FINAL)
9 December 1955

NORTH ATLANTIC MILITARY COMMITTEE

DECISION ON M.C. 48/1`

A report by the Military Committee

on

THE MOST EFFECTIVE PATTERN OF NATO MILITARY STRENGTH FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS - REPORT No. 2

(Note by the Secretary)

1. At its 104th Meeting on 14 November 1955 the Military Representatives Committee, acting on behalf of the North Atlantic Military Committee, amended and approved M.C. 48/1 for transmission to the North Atlantic Council.

2. The Belgian, Italian and Norwegian Military Representatives reserved their positions pending the receipt of further guidance from their national authorities.

3. Subsequently at its 12th Session on 9 December 1955 the Military Committee approved M.C. 48/1, subject to one amendment.

4. Holders of M.C. 48/1 are requested to replace the Decision Sheet issued on 14 November 1955 by this Decision Sheet, and to replace pages 10, 12 and 14 with the attached pages 10, 12 and 14. The removed pages should be destroyed by burning or reducing to pulp.

5. This decision now becomes a part of and shall be attached as the top sheet of M.C. 48/1.

FOR THE MILITARY COMMITTEE:

EUGENE A. SALET
Colonel, U.S. Army
Secretary, SGN

M.C. 48/1 (FINAL)
14 November 1955

NORTH ATLANTIC MILITARY COMMITTEE

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2. The Belgian, Italian and Norwegian Military Representatives reserved their positions pending the receipt of further guidance from their national authorities.

3. Holders of M.C. 48/1 are requested to replace it by the attached complete document and to destroy the original document by burning.

4. This decision now becomes a part of and shall be attached as the top sheet of M.C. 48/1.

FOR THE MILITARY COMMITTEE:

EUGENE A. SALET
Colonel, USA
Secretary

M.C. 48/1

M.C. 48/1
26 September 1955

REPORT BY THE MILITARY COMMITTEE

to the

NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL

on

THE MOST EFFECTIVE PATTERN OF NATO MILITARY STRENGTH

FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS - REPORT NO. 2

References : a. M.C. 48 (FINAL)
b. C-M(54)118(Final)

I. THE PROBLEM

1. To submit to the North Atlantic Council a second report on the assessment of "The Most Effective Pattern of NATO Military Strength for the Next Few Years".

II. INTRODUCTION

2. The Council approved M.C. 48 on 17 December 1954, and in its Resolution on the 1955 Annual Review invited the Military Committee:

a. To continue to examine, in conformity with the agreed strategic concept and within the resources which it is anticipated may be made available, the most effective pattern of military strength for the next few years required to deter aggression and to defend the NATO area, taking account of developments in military technology and of Soviet capabilities in order to provide general guidance for NATO defense planning.

b. To submit to the Council, as soon as possible, the conclusions of the current Air Defense Study.

c. To furnish further guidance in the course of the 1955 Annual Review and, in particular, to indicate to member governments, as early as possible, how the reassessment in M.C. 48 of the pattern of military strength should affect national defense programs.

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3. The results of our continuing capabilities and other special studies and of available 1955 estimates of Soviet bloc capabilities form a sound basis for the Military Committee to reaffirm to the Council the validity of the broad concept and conclusions of M.C. 48. It must be recalled that the strategy and force patterns described in M.C. 48 were based on guidance given by the North Atlantic Council. M.C. 48 was, in itself, incomplete and required a further report in the shape of M.C. 48/1, again based on the same guidance. This guidance led to certain assumptions, including the force goals proposed by Nations for 1956 and endorsed by the Council in the 1953 and 1954 Annual Reviews. The Military Committee desires to point out that since the adoption of M.C. 48 there will be a delay in effective implementation of a forward strategy of possibly as much as two years beyond mid-1957.

III. SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

4. The scope of this report is as follows:

To advise the Council of the status of NATO military planning and preparations under the new concept, to make some additional recommendations on the NATO Force Pattern to supplement material now in M.C. 48, and to single out those problems in which priority effort is required in the future.

IV. PREFACE TO THE REPORT

5. The Council’s action on M.C. 48 had several principal implications of far-reaching impact, namely:

a. The implementation of a forward strategy as one of the chief goals of the Alliance.

b. The approval in principle of certain measures as being those most necessary to adapt our NATO military forces for a future major war.

c. The necessity for a general transition of NATO civil and military planning to the new concept.

d. The delineation of new, complex and very challenging problems for future consideration.

6. This report will be presented under the following principal headings:

a. Ability to Implement the Forward Strategy.

b. The Air Defense of Europe.

c. Factors Affecting Operations in the Subsequent Phase.*

d. The NATO Naval Force Pattern.

e. Logistic Support.

There are additional problems which were not presented in M.C. 48 and which are of sufficient importance to be brought to the attention of the Council in this report, such as civil defense, as it affects military operations, and maritime shipping problems.

7. It is impossible as yet to define fully the future pattern for the forces which we will require. The development of this pattern must be an evolutionary process based on continuing studies, experiments, and operational tests. However, advice and specific recommendations are made in SACEUR's annual assessment of the combat effectiveness of forces assigned or earmarked for Allied Command Europe. Similar guidance is given the Nations by the NATO Military Authorities during the course of the Annual Review. This advice is for the specific purpose of assisting and guiding Nations in formulating long term improvements of their forces to ensure NATO of the best possible defense within the forces and resources made available. Further consideration is being given to the possibility of expanding these methods of presenting advice on the various military problems.

V. PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS

A. ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT THE FORWARD STRATEGY

8. Date for Implementing the Strategy. The SACEUR and Channel Committee Capabilities Studies for the year 1957 have been made contingent on implementation of a forward strategy in Allied Command

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* See paragraph 18 below

Europe by mid-1957. It now appears that due to circumstances the effective implementation of the forward strategy will be delayed for possibly as much as two years. The Military Committee reiterates that the evolutionary implementation of the various elements of the new concept will be progressively applied. But the forward strategy will not be effective until the German contribution becomes available and the minimum measures outlined in the Enclosure to M.C. 48 are put into effect.

9. Atomic Capability. In approving M.C. 48 the Council gave authority for the NATO Supreme Commanders "to plan and make preparations on the assumption that atomic and thermonuclear weapons will be used in defense from the outset." This authorization was a major step forward and made it possible to develop and coordinate Atomic Strike Plans which will enable the NATO forces to move progressively toward the state of readiness envisaged in M.C. 48. The Supreme Commanders in their 1956 Emergency Defense Plans are moving toward the concept of a forward strategy on land and at sea as the forces and resources available to them make this possible.

10. Early Warning. The Military Committee again stresses the extreme importance of the factor of surprise in future war. Systems in operation designed to ensure early warning of attack are therefore essential. In particular the Military Committee considers that first priority must be placed on the fulfilment of the requirements which will ensure the manning and operation at all times of the NATO Early Warning Radar System. The improvement and expansion of our radar cover is mandatory.

11. The Alert System. NATO Commanders' actions in the event of an Alert will be adversely affected until ratification of the Alert Measures by Nations. Only five Nations have officially ratified SACEUR's measures. Even less progress has been made toward completion of negotiations on measures required by other commanders. SACLANT has pointed out that, whereas certain Allied Nations have

firm obligations concerning the presence and availability of ground and air forces, the same situation does not obtain in respect of naval forces. He recommends the assignment of earmarked forces to his operational command upon the declaration of any Alert. The Military Committee points out that the decision to assign forces must rest with Governments but, recognizing the desirability of this action, urges Nations concerned to make arrangements with Major NATO Commanders regarding the assignment of D-Day earmarked naval forces in order that these Commanders may exercise effective operational command immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities.

12. Readiness. The risk of surprise attack makes a strong case for the maintenance at a high degree of readiness of our land, sea and air forces and of those civil defense organizations necessary to contend with an assault on national territories. Nations must maintain the highest degree of readiness commensurate with national capabilities, recognizing that the higher the degree of readiness achieved, the greater will be NATO's deterrent.

13. Forces-in-Being. The Military Committee has noted that the Soviets have announced their intention to make a significant reduction in the strength of their armed forces. Even if this announced reduction is made effective, Soviet forces, from mid-1957 onwards, will still be numerically superior over-all to NATO forces and it is expected that the Soviets will continue to improve the capability of their forces-in-being for atomic war. It is the conviction of the Military Committee that the strength of NATO, which has considerably increased since its foundation, has served as a major deterrent to USSR aims and has contributed significantly to the apparent change in tactics of Soviet foreign policy. NATO should continue to develop its strength. Therefore, it is still vital that the Force Goals for forces assigned or earmarked for NATO not be reduced below the general order of magnitude* of the 1956 planned goals established in the 1953 Annual Review. The delay in

* The term "the general order of magnitude" implies sufficient latitude in the adjustment of force goals should the composition of forces require such changes in light of evolutionary developments provided these forces retain an equivalent fighting value.

obtaining the German contribution and the announced intention of some Nations to reduce their forces below the agreed goals, coupled with temporary redeployments of other D-day forces, have created a serious deficiency which will jeopardize NATO's military position and delay implementation of a forward strategy.

14. Measures to Enable NATO Forces to Survive Soviet Atomic Attack. Experiments are being conducted this year on the best form of land force organization and tactical disposition for land warfare. Recommendations for solutions to the problem of dispersing and improving the defense posture of air units will continue to be made as rapidly as the study is processed.

B. THE AIR DEFENSE OF EUROPE

15. The Military Committee is greatly concerned over the slow progress being made in developing a sound system of Air Defense of Europe. The problem is complicated by many technical and political factors. Some of these difficulties should be overcome by means of the SHAPE Directorate on Air Defense and the Air Defense Technical Center at The Hague, both of which were established by SACEUR during the past year to study the problem of Air Defense.

16. The first task has been to review the existent structure for command and control of Air Defense efforts and development of a basis for effective coordination. The Military Committee has submitted its recommendations in this connection (M.C. 54) to the Council. It is too early to forecast when the remaining SHAPE Studies will be completed or to define their influence on the pattern of NATO military strength.

17. It is expected that approval of M.C. 54 will assist in the development of the Air Defense capability on an evolutionary basis, within existing command structures and with a minimum loss of national prerogatives in the control of their resources.

C. FACTORS AFFECTING OPERATIONS IN THE SUBSEQUENT PHASE

18. Background. The use of the terms “initital phase” and “subsequent phase” of a future war involving NATO were introduced in M.C. 48 as follows:

“Should war occur, it will most likely consist of two phases:

- a relatively short initial phase of intensive atomic exchange.
- a subsequent phase involving operations of indeterminable length and lesser intensity.

The ultimate victory, however, would probably have been determined by the outcome of the initial phase.”

19. The initial phase has been visualized by the Military Committee as being of approximately thirty days or less. The duration and outcome of the subsequent phase will depend on the relative advantage achieved in the initial phase and NATO’s ability to supply and re-enforce our forces. The relative advantage achieved will be conditioned not only by the success of our military operations but also by the capacity of Nations to absorb and survive the initial atomic onslaught.

20. Since there is no practical experience or precedent for hostilities of such violence, the Military Committee considers that a definite assessment of the probable conditions under which the subsequent phase will be fought would be most difficult to accomplish.

21. Military Considerations. Our military studies and plans, however, take account of the following:

a. The possibility of the capitulation by a loser in an initial intensive atomic exchange. Despite this possibility, it is probable that operations would continue and, therefore, our forces, land, sea and air, must be prepared to conduct subsequent operations of a much longer duration. It is expected

that air atomic operations would be considerably reduced in intensity after the initial phase, but other operations might reach their greatest intensity in the subsequent phase.

b. The importance of the survival and dispersal measures which are currently under examination by the NATO Military Authorities.

22. Governmental Considerations. In addition to the problems confronting the Military Committee, there is a need for Nations to develop effective measures to ensure their ability to prosecute the war. The first intensive atomic operations may create a situation which might challenge for a time the capacity of governments to perform their functions effectively. The disruption and disorganization of communications, transportation, medical services, water and food supplies in countries or regions singled out for attack might temporarily endanger civilian morale and threaten the capacity of Nations to sustain and re-enforce their fighting forces.

23. It must be recognized that there is a probability that national reserve military units not earmarked for NATO might be called upon temporarily to assist in the resuscitation of stricken areas. The burden of this responsibility must rest on national civil defense organizations which should be established and trained in peacetime. These organizations would be required immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities.

24. In addition, plans for the decentralization of government must be made in order to maintain direction of the war effort and the impetus to prosecute it to a successful conclusion.

D. NATO NAVAL FORCE PATTERN

25. Background. M.C. 48 advised the Council that the Military Committee was initiating further studies dealing with NATO naval problems. It was stated also that, until these studies were completed and assessed, it would be necessary for the Military

Committee to defer final conclusions on the Capabilities Studies submitted in 1954 by the NATO Naval Commanders.

26. Soviet Naval Strategy and Capability. Soviet naval strategy would probably be to conduct offensive operations, particularly with submarines, against Allied naval forces, ports and merchant shipping and to participate in the defense of the USSR. The capability of Soviet naval forces is diverse and formidable, constituting a serious threat to NATO. The core of this strength in mid-1957 is estimated as follows:

a. Thirty-three cruisers and 160 destroyers, supplemented by large numbers of naval aircraft, escorts, patrol and mine ships. These will have extensive mining capabilities.

b. Approximately 500 submarines, of which about 350 will be long-range or modern types capable of carrying torpedoes or mines, and possibly guided missiles. It is estimated that the Northern Fleet will have 140 and the Black Sea Fleet approximately 60 of the latter.

27. NATO Naval Strategy and Basic Tasks. NATO naval strategy must be designed to secure our sea communications from the outset of hostilities by establishing, maintaining and exploiting Allied control of the seas. To achieve this, the basic tasks are:

a. To conduct offensive operations in support of Allied strategy and to further NATO war objectives.

b. To establish a forward defense at sea against the incursion of Soviet submarine and surface forces into the NATO area, particularly from the Soviet Arctic, Baltic and Black Sea bases.

c. To protect and maintain the flow of shipping in the NATO area.

d. To deny to the enemy sea areas essential to his operations.

e. To support and ensure the re-enforcement of NATO forces.

f. To counter enemy surface or amphibious threats.

28. NATO Naval Concept of Operations. The most effective strategy to control sea areas vital to NATO and to deny the seas to the Soviets would be to remove at source, through early offensive operations, the threats to that control. The ability of NATO naval forces to undertake successfully their subsequent tasks would depend largely upon the destruction of enemy forces and their bases. Offensive operations to this end would be conducted mainly by the two Striking Fleets, one earmarked for SACLANT and the other for SACEUR. SACLANT would employ his striking fleet in attacking Soviet naval bases and countering any enemy surface or amphibious threat which might develop. SACEUR intends to use this fleet in counter-air operations, support of the land battle and participation in interdiction operations.

29. Effort should be devoted to the establishment of a forward defense at sea against the incursion of Soviet submarine and surface forces into the NATO area, particularly from the Soviet Arctic, Baltic and Black Sea bases. Other defensive measures, within capabilities, must also be taken to reduce losses and to ensure the necessary flow of shipping while the major threats to allied control of the seas are being eliminated. Plans call for the use of both anti-submarine carrier groups and close surface and aerial escorts. This protection of shipping would be augmented as practicable by local offensive operations in focal sea areas or other areas of Soviet submarine concentration.

30. Merchant Shipping Problems. The Military Committee recognizes that our present arrangements for obtaining naval control of shipping on the outbreak of war are insufficient to cope with wide-spread atomic attacks with little or no warning. New agreed national policies and procedures must be developed to remedy this situation and to ensure dispersion of shipping within or from major port areas in event of emergency. It follows that there is a requirement for the development of emergency berthing and unloading facilities for merchant shipping.

31. NATO Naval Force Pattern. The pattern of NATO naval forces must be such as to accomplish the basic tasks described above and to provide a naval component of NATO forces-in-being which will act as a deterrent. This calls for effective modernized naval forces with characteristics described for forces-in-being in the Enclosure to M.C. 48 and of a general order of magnitude not lower than the 1956 planned goals established in the 1953 Annual Review.

32. In order to improve our maritime capabilities to ensure NATO success in war, additional measures are indicated which should be developed into specific programs by Supreme Commanders, the Channel Committee and Nations concerned. They include:

a. An assured capability to deny egress of Soviet naval forces through the Baltic and Black Sea exits.

b. Assurance of logistic support and provision of adequate base and mobile support facilities.

c. Development and installation of improved detection equipment and modern weapons for escorts.

d. Correction of communication deficiencies and provision of alternate emergency headquarters.

e. Development of minor ports, estuaries and dispersed anchorages suitable for emergency berthing and provision of facilities for unloading merchant shipping.

f. The development of arrangements by Nations for the assignment of earmarked D-day naval forces which will enable Major NATO Commanders to exercise effective operational command immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities.

g. Development of arrangements by Nations for bringing merchant shipping rapidly under Allied naval control upon the outset of hostilities.

h. An increase in escorts, minesweepers and maritime/patrol aircraft, especially in the early stages of war.

i. Dispersal of post D-day naval forces in peacetime in and from exposed target areas.

33. The Military Committee will continue to examine the optimum pattern for NATO naval forces within the resources likely to be available an to ensure that NATO naval forces are kept abreast of new developments.

E. LOGISTIC SUPPORT

34. Background. In the conditions envisaged in this paper the logistic support of our forces must remain based on the principles which are now clearly established; but it is vital to the efficient conduct of NATO military operations that each Nation:

a. Reach the agreed levels of War Reserve stocks*.

b. Provide for the dispersion of its stocks.

c. Provide for the adequate resupply of its forces.

35. War Reserve Stocks. Most of the NATO countries are deficient in providing stocks for the various categories of their forces in accordance with agreed stock
levels. In particular, critical deficiencies exist in the war reserve stocks for D-day forces which, at the present rate of provisioning, will not be remedied during the period under discussion. Although resupply action would be initiated upon the outbreak of hostilities, it is vital that all countries attain at the earliest possible date the agreed level of reserves, which is the minimum acceptable, in order that our D-day forces could continue to fight until resupply can be established.

36. Redistribution and Dispersion of Stocks. Since the lines of communication to support a forward strategy will be subject to serious atomic attack, consideration is being given to reorganization of logistic support required by forward units. Ability to withstand initial atomic attack and subsequent regrouping requires considerable inherent mobility of units and reliance on readily available logistic reserves. Thus, some redistribution of logistic reserves as between

* As set forth in M.C. 55(Final)

forward and rear areas becomes essential. Provision must also be made for dispersal of reserve stocks primarily to avoid concentration of any item in one area, thereby reducing its vulnerability.

37. Resupply. As noted above, action to initiate resupply would commence immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities. Since great difficulties will be encountered in the initial phase of an atomic conflict, it is most essential that Nations give attention to this problem now so that resupply can be effected with minimum delay through national or other sources. The operations required in the subsequent phase will be in part dependent upon the availability of logistics resources. Each side will probably suffer the loss of a substantial portion of its production base for mobilization. Maximum use must be made of the production base in Europe for the essential military and civilian requirements due to the vulnerability of the lines of communications and inability of the production of North American facilities to meet all of the estimated requirements.

CONCLUSIONS

38. As a result of its further studies of the most effective pattern of NATO military strength for the next few years, the Military Committee:

a. Reaffirms that:

(1) The broad concept and conclusions of M.C. 48 are still valid.

(2) The minimum measures contained in the Enclosure to M.C. 48 are the most necessary measures to adapt NATO military forces for a future war.

(3) Within these minimum measures the improvement, manning and operation of our early warning system is mandatory and of first priority.

(4) Early agreement on Alert Measures between National Authorities and NATO Commanders is essential.

b. Concludes that additional minimum measures are essential, namely:

(1) Improvement of our maritime capabilities, generally as indicated in paragraph 32, to ensure successful accomplishment of our maritime missions.

(2) Establishment of a practical Air Defense system.

(3) The agreed levels of war reserve stocks as approved by the North Atlantic Council in M.C. 55 (Final) should be established as soon as practicable and an effective plan of resupply should be developed by each Nation.

(4) Nations should develop in peacetime plans and measures which will ensure (a) the continuity of governmental control following a sudden outbreak of hostilities, and (b) the maintenance of civilian morale and the ability to prosecute the war to a successful conclusion.

39. The Military Committee further concludes that the date for effective implementation of a forward strategy will be delayed beyond mid-1957 for possibly as much as two years. During this delay period the USSR will continue to improve the capability of its forces-in-being for atomic war. This delay creates the requirement for developing NATO forces capable of accomplishing the defensive aims of NATO under conditions both of Allied atomic superiority and Soviet bloc atomic plenty. Hence it is most important that Nations should maintain their defense efforts and improve the state of readiness and effectiveness of their forces. These forces should be of a general order of magnitude* not lower than the 1956 planned goals established in the 1953 Annual Review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

40. It is recommended that the North Atlantic Council:

a. Approve the above Conclusions.

b. Note that the NATO Military Authorities will press on during the coming year with the studies concerning the air Defense of Europe.

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* The term “the general order of magnitude” implies sufficient latitude in the adjustment of force goals should the composition of forces require such changes in light of evolutionary developments provided these forces retain an equivalent fighting value.