INTRODUCTION

The Civil Defence Committee have had the question of air raid warnings before them at their meetings held on 16th/17th June 1953 (AC/23(CD)R/2, Item 1), and 3rd/4th November 1953 (AC/23(CD)R/3, Item 3), to which the following documents are relevant: AC/23(CD)R/4, of 28th May 1953, AC/23-D/39 of 7th August 1953, and AC/23(CD)D/72 of 21st October 1953.

2. I have recently had discussions with members of the Staff at SHAPE and of the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Air Forces Central Europe, who are concerned with the military aspects of this problem. As a result, I am submitting this memorandum for consideration by the Civil Defence Committee.

THE NATIONAL PROBLEM

3. The issue of air raid warnings to the general public is a matter of national responsibility, as are any other special warnings which a country may think desirable or which may be practicable.

4. It is the normal practice in NATO countries for the Civil Defence authorities to rely on the military or air authorities' aircraft detection organization, and the methods by which the necessary information is obtained from these authorities and disseminated on the civil side are, again, national matters.

5. In the minutes of the Committee's meeting of 16th/17th June 1953 (AC/23(CD)R/2, Item 1, paragraph 17), it was emphasised that "all NATO European countries were in agreement on the usefulness of a common signal system". But no further action appears to have been taken.

THE INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM

General Considerations

6. The great increases in the speed of modern bombing aircraft, which must inevitably result in an ever-increasing inter-relation of the West European area, together with the fact that they can now carry atomic and thermo-nuclear weapons with enormous destructive capabilities over long distances, adds greatly to the importance of securing the best warning arrangements in the NATO countries.

7. One of the paramount considerations on the civil side is to enable the civilian population to survive these attacks; and ability to plan, and execute the plans successfully, depends in
certain most important respects on getting the earliest possible
warning of impending air attack.

8. Sole dependence on any national warning intelligence net-
work may not today enable this essential requirement to be met on
either side of the Atlantic. And it appears to be important, there-
fore, to consider whether anything further can be done on an inter-
national basis to extend the range of national warning systems and
so to increase, where it is practicable, the length of national
warning a country may be able to provide.

Source of the Warning

9. It would, at first sight, appear to be out of the question
to attempt to set up an independent international organization to
serve civil needs alone, in which case reliance must be placed as
at present on the "military" networks which exist today, or as they
may be developed in the future.

10. It would appear to be of particular importance, at the
present stage of development, to state the civil requirements so
that they may be taken into consideration.

Civil Air Raid Warning Needs

11. The primary military objective must obviously be to
organize a warning network as far forward as circumstances permit,
so as to provide the longest possible warning; and to try so to
locate the system that it cannot be outflanked, which might enable
hostile aircraft to approach their objectives with little or no
warning.

12. The civil requirements are substantially the same and the
problem is to ensure that they are integrated with the military net-
work.

13. There would appear to be two possible methods of operation:

(a) the military authorities should be responsible for pro-
viding information to the national warning systems.

(b) The military authorities would agree to permit civil
warning officers to form part of the staff of filter or
other centres, on an international as opposed to a national
basis, where they would be responsible for the issue of
civil warnings.

14. It is important to set out the implications of those
alternatives, and especially the extent to which requirements are
covered at the present time or could be improved as the military
warning screen develops.

(a) The military authorities should be responsible for getting the
information to the national systems

15. The active defences of each NATO country depend on the
early receipt of information of enemy air attacks by whatever means,
in order that they may be ready to take counter-action. It is normal
practice for the Civil Defence or other authorities to have access
to this information, to enable them to issue warnings to the civil
population.

16. It is important in the first place to ensure that these
arrangements, where they exist, are satisfactory and guarantee, so
far as is practicable, that the civil air raid warning organization obtains the necessary information at the earliest available moment. This is a matter for each country to arrange for itself, and is generally achieved by stationing Civil Defence or other specially trained personnel in the filter or other centres, with suitable means of issuing the warning signals either by wireless, teleprinter or telephone; or some suitable combination.

17. It may be found that this system is satisfactory and that no other arrangements are required. But it is suggested that each NATO country might like to check on these arrangements to ensure that they are the best possible in the circumstances, and especially that all time-lags are cut down to the minimum, remembering that in most European NATO countries every second is valuable.

18. If it should be found that there are gaps, or that assistance is required in any form on an international basis, then the matter should be referred to NATO. In this connection, it is particularly important to verify that the information from military channels comes not only from as far forward as possible, but that the flanks are also covered. With the range and speed of modern aircraft, flank attacks, or even attacks coming in from behind, may be quite practicable.

(b) The military authorities would agree to permit civil warning officers to be located in their centres on an international as opposed to a national basis.

19. If it should be found that any existing national arrangements are not satisfactory or could be improved in any way, or that it is not possible under present conditions to arrange an effective national link-up, then other arrangements might have to be explored.

20. It might be found that as the present military systems expand or are re-orientated, better arrangements could be made.

21. "It is suggested that the possibility of providing personnel of the Civil Defence Service for warning officers might be found necessary. There would be a number of matters to be settled if any such arrangement was to operate internationally instead of nationally, such as the method of their provision, the communications which could be at their disposal, their areas of responsibility, etc. Such things could be discussed if the necessity arose.

GENERAL POINTS

22. A joint system is already being developed by the United States and Canada, which encourages the hope that such a scheme might be practical in other parts of the NATO organization if it should be found necessary and desirable.

23. It would seem to be important to ensure that, information of impending air attacks should be made available from Norwegian, Danish and Western German territory to the United Kingdom, Iceland, Greenland and Canada, as well as to the Netherlands, Belgium and France. The needs of the North African and Mediterranean bases, including of course Italy, Greece and Turkey, would equally have to be met.

SUMMARY

24. It is suggested that, in view of the paramount importance of ensuring the longest possible civil warning of impending hostile air attack, European NATO countries should:
(a) satisfy themselves that the present arrangements under which they receive information on which to issue civil warnings will:

(i) give them the necessary information at the earliest available moment;

(ii) ensure that the arrangements cover also attacks which might be delivered from the flank or rear;

(iii) ensure that full advantage is obtained from any new or projected developments or improvements in the military warning organization;

(b) inform NATO (Senior Civil Defence Advisor) of any help that they might require on an international basis, in order to improve or facilitate the existing arrangements for the receipt of information on which to issue national warnings.

25. On receipt of information furnished as a result of the suggestions in paragraph 24, the NATO Civil Defence staff would consult with SHAPE as to any action which could be taken to assist in improving existing arrangements.

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