

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH
30th January, 1956

NATO CONFIDENTIAL
WORKING GROUP
AC/19-WP/5

ANNUAL REVIEW 1956

Note by the Acting Secretary

Attached is a slightly revised text of the informal communication sent to members of the Annual Review Committee on 24th January 1956. It contains tentative observations by the International Staff which could form a basis for the discussion on the 1956 Annual Review on Monday, 30th January.

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The procedures of the Annual Review have to be considered in relation to the Council's Resolution on Defence Planning (C-M(55)120(Final), paragraph 4). The Council have also directed (C-R(55)30) that the International Staff, in consultation with delegations, should examine the Canadian proposal, made in June 1955, for the Ministerial Meeting on the Annual Review to be held before the final stages of the Review.

Form, Timetable and Questionnaire

2. From the point of view of procedure, last year's Review marked a considerable improvement on that of previous years, and the preliminary feeling of the Staff and the NATO military authorities is that few changes need be made to meet the Council's Resolution on Defence Planning. Nor have any other reasons for important changes been advanced as yet. The Staff also consider that last year's questionnaire could be adopted without many changes; those countries who will be in a position to give an indication of their future plans for a longer period than the normal three years should be asked to do so in the General Memorandum.

3. Although the preference thus is for as little change as possible, it must be recognised that the comprehensive review of the future pattern of forces which, according to the Council's Resolution, may be undertaken by member governments, will perhaps pose certain problems this year which will have to be taken into account in drawing up the timetable and procedure. No problems will arise if the results of these comprehensive reviews are available sufficiently early to be reflected in the replies to the questionnaire to be submitted in July. It is more likely, however, that the results will only be available much later, (in some cases perhaps not until early next year). The solution seems to be to request replies to the questionnaire at the same time as last year, recognising, however, that those countries who are undertaking the comprehensive review of their forces may only be able to give tentative replies by that date. Supplementary information could be given in the course of the Annual Review as the results of their new planning become available. It is important for the International Staff and for the NATO military authorities that those countries who intend to undertake the comprehensive review of their defence planning this year should inform the Council as soon as possible about their intentions.

Military Guidance, Advice and Recommendations

4. Military guidance is issued by supreme commanders continuously; it is based on the threat, is broad in scope and indicates the tasks required by each country to implement the forward strategy. Detailed military advice is issued when requested in order to assist countries in adjusting their forces and in solving specific defence problems which will enable them to carry out the tasks indicated in the guidance. The military recommendations result from an analysis of countries' replies to the questionnaire and all other relevant sources of information. It is difficult to draw a clear distinction between these roles of the NATO military authorities in the Annual Review, since, in many cases, they will overlap and are in any event closely inter-related. Although the Council's Resolution on NATO Defence Planning will form the background for any type of advice,

recommendation or guidance to be given in 1956, it is primarily when detailed military advice is being requested and when the military recommendations of the Annual Review are being prepared that sufficient information will be available to take fully into account the resources likely to be available in men, money and matériel.

5. Paragraph 3(c) of the Council's Resolution will have an important effect on the whole character of the 1956 Annual Review, since it will not only apply where countries have requested detailed advice, but must also be reflected in the final military recommendations following the analysis of all countries' replies to the extent consistent with the information available.

6. With regard to visiting teams, no changes seem necessary at this stage. In any event, this is a matter to be considered in the light of developments following the February discussions, and the extent and scope of subsequent bilateral discussion.

7. Canadian Proposal. To the extent that it is possible, during 1956, to implement the principles outlined in C-M(55)120, important changes may occur which will affect the whole spirit of the Annual Review even though, in form, the procedures adopted may remain largely the same as in 1955. It would probably be unrealistic to assume that the effect of the new policy could be measured at all fully before the end of the year, and it may therefore be best to base our plans for 1956 on the assumption that a ministerial meeting will be held in December. If, however, it is found, as events develop during the first half of the year, that an earlier meeting might be useful, Ministers could no doubt be invited to take stock of the situation in the summer or the early autumn.