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C.O.S. (40) 131ST MTG.

C.V.
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WAR CABINET.

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE.

MINUTES of the 131st Meeting held on
TUESDAY, 14TH MAY, 1940 at 6.0 p.m.

PRESENT :-

General Sir John G. Dill, Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff. (Representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.) (In the Chair).	Air Vice-Marshal Sholto Douglas, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (representing the Chief of the Air Staff.)
Vice-Admiral T.S.V. Phillips, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff. (representing The Chief of Naval Staff.)	

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:

Vice-Admiral Sir G. Blake,
Admiralty. (For Item 1)

SECRETARIAT:

Colonel Hollis.
Major W.G. Stirling.

1. ALLIED MILITARY ACTION IN THE EVENT OF WAR WITH ITALY.

(Reference: Paper No. C.O.S. (40) 351).

THE COMMITTEE had before them -

- (a) A report by the British Representatives on the Allied Military Committee. (Paper No. C.O.S. (40) 351).
- (b) A short memorandum on the above paper together with a draft telegraphic Directive to the Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East prepared by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee. (Paper No. C.O.S. (40) 353 (J.P.))

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The Committee considered that it would be unwise, in present circumstances, to send a liaison officer by air to Cairo with copies of Paper No. C.O.S. (40)351. The Directive prepared by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee covered this Paper adequately and that the few days saved by sending this Paper by air could not be offset by the danger of it falling into enemy hands.

The Committee next considered the question of Allied policy in regard to air attack on the area Turin Milan, Genoa. It was felt that recent events in France and Belgium justified an air attack on factories and war industries at any time which suited us. In fact this was the only method by which we could hit the Italians hard. It was agreed that it would be more satisfactory for these operations to be a French responsibility.

A few amendments were agreed in the text of the draft telegram prepared by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee.

It was agreed:-

- (a) To approve the telegram^{*} as amended at the meeting and to authorise its despatch to the Commanders-in-Chief, Mediterranean and Middle East.
- (b) That it was of great importance to initiate air action against Italian war industries immediately Italy entered the war, and that the Secretary should take the necessary steps towards putting this matter to the French.

2. INVASION.

(Papers Nos. C.O.S. (40)349 and C.O.S. (40)353.)

THE COMMITTEE considered a report by the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces on the above subject and a summary of the points requiring a decision, set out in Paper No. C.O.S. (40)353.

- (a) Air reconnaissances. The Committee considered the question of air reconnaissances. It was felt that Germany was unlikely to undertake the invasion of this country at the present juncture. It was thought that they would concentrate the whole of their energies on either a land battle or on clearing the Netherlands and possibly the Dutch coast before trying to invade this country. To use aircraft for reconnaissances would be to divert them from our main effort on the Western Front. The Committee, therefore, considered it unsound to divert any aircraft at the present moment for this purpose,

*Subsequently circulated as Paper No. C.O.S. (40)354.

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but that reconnaissances will be initiated when German attacks appear more imminent. It was confirmed that every effort would be made to give the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces warning when the situation might be regarded as critical.

- (b) Areas subject to attack. The Committee confirmed that the more probable areas for seaborne attack are -
- (i) The Shetlands.
 - (ii) The Yorkshire coast from Sunderland to Flamborough Head.
 - (iii) East Anglian Coast from Sherringham to Clacton.
- (c) Mine-laying policy. THE VICE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF said that mine-laying was being carried out as suggested in paragraph 2 (d) of the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces letter.
- (d) Protection of Aerodromes. It was felt very strongly that this problem should be regarded on the largest possible scale. As was seen in the German invasion of Holland very large numbers of troops were landed in a short space of time; furthermore in many parts of England, there are a number of places in which carrier borne troops might be landed. On the other hand it was pointed out that the shortage of equipment limited the number of men who could be put under arms. It was thought that this was not a case for the enlistment of a special corps, but rather for an increase in the forces considered necessary to defend the aerodromes.

The Committee felt that the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces should review the situation as regards the protection of aerodromes to ensure that there were sufficient numbers available and that the figure of 20,000 should only be regarded as a first step towards the much larger figure which the Committee considered was required before the situation could be thought satisfactory.

- (e) Demolitions. The Committee agreed that this question was the responsibility of the Ministry of Home Security, in consultation with the Ministry of Transport and the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces and recommended that immediate reconnaissances should be carried out in the more likely areas of attack, and that arrangements should be made to prepare the demolitions and plans for the blowing up of these should be complete.

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- (f) Shetlands. In view of the possibility of Germany establishing air bases in the north of Scotland from Stavanger the Chiefs of Staff expressed some concern at the forces available for the defence of that area. If the Shetlands were occupied by the enemy, it would mean a difficult combined operation to turn them out; the Committee wished therefore to stress the importance of the defence of these Islands.
- (g) German parachute troops. The Committee considered a further note from Sir Walter Kirke on the question of dealing with Germans landed from the air other than in German uniform, suggesting that this should be notified to the public through the B.B.C. The Committee approved the notification in principle and agreed to instruct the Secretary to submit the notification to the Foreign Office for legal advice on the exact wording.

THE COMMITTEE agreed:-

"to instruct the Secretary to prepare a memorandum^a based on the above discussion for the approval of the Chiefs of Staff and despatch to the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces".

3. TOPOGRAPHICAL INTELLIGENCE.

(Reference: Paper No. C.O.S.(40)347).

THE COMMITTEE had before them a note by General Ismay. After a short discussion it was agreed:-

- (a) To instruct the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee to examine and report^b on topographical information in other potential theatres of war.
- (b) That the Joint Planning Sub-Committee should give the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee a priority of points to which special attention should be given e.g. landing grounds, roads, railways etc., in this task.

4. THE COMMITTEE took note of the following papers:-

POSSIBLE GERMAN MOVES IN SCANDINAVIA.

Report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee.
(Paper No. C.O.S.(40)333(J.I.C.) - already circulated).

LANDING OPERATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

Note by Secretary covering draft telegram.
(Paper No. C.O.S.(40)337 - already circulated).

NETHERLANDS - PLANS AND REQUIREMENTS.

Communication from the Dutch Minister to the Foreign Secretary.
(Paper No. C.O.S.(40)336 - already circulated).

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND TROOP MOVEMENTS.

Copy of a telegram to Australia and New Zealand.
(Paper No. C.O.S.(40)317 - already circulated).

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

14TH MAY, 1940.

^a Subsequently circulated as Paper No. C.O.S.(40)355.
^b The Prime Minister has asked for this report in a week's time.

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