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NORTH ATLANTIC MILITARY COMMITTEE

COMITE MILITAIRE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD

Standing Group

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**CANCELLED**

SGM-479-62

Per Authority IMSM-431-99

28 August 1962

By JACOLINE Date 2-2-00

DOCUMENT DESTRUCTION MEMO. # 1/74  
dated 7 August 74

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary General, North Atlantic Treaty Organization

SUBJECT: Appraisal of Berlin Contingency Plans

- References:
- a. C-M(61)104, 9 November 1961
  - b. SACLANT Ser. 3011/C-982, 15 August 1962
  - c. SHAPE/70/62, 24 March 1962 *revised*
  - d. CINCHAN Ch.001107/8, 2 April 1962

*ref STRASBURG  
SHAPE/70/62  
20 Sept 62*

INTRODUCTION

1. In reference a, the North Atlantic Council instructed the Major NATO Commanders to prepare military plans covering broad land, air and naval measures to supplement the Tripartite Berlin Contingency Plans and to insure full coordination between LIVE OAK and NATO planning. Plans were to include appropriate alert measures for NATO forces prior to initiation of any Tripartite military measures, expanded non-nuclear air and/or naval operations, expanded non-nuclear ground operations with necessary air support and selective use of nuclear weapons to demonstrate the will and ability of the Alliance to use them. In each plan, the expected advantages and estimated risks were to be set out. The plans were to be sent to the Standing Group for appraisal in consultation with the Military Committee and forwarded to the North Atlantic Council for approval by governments.

REGRADED To NATO secret  
Per Authority IMSM - YMA-439-94  
By WOJ CAPUTO (TAR) date 15 Nov 96

3 ENCLOSURES

- 1. Detailed Military Appraisal
- 2. Italian Comments
- 3. Netherlands Comments

DISTRIBUTION: A1-10, 12, 17, B1, 4, 7, D, E10, F, G1-3, J1, L

IMS Control N° 1455

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This document consists of  
-1- 20 pages.

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2. In accordance with these instructions, SACEUR and SACLANT have submitted their outline Berlin Contingency Plans and their assessments of advantages and risks in references b and c. By reference d, CINCHAN has indicated that he is prepared to adopt the SACLANT plans and considers it unnecessary to submit separate plans from his command. The Standing Group, taking into consideration national comments, has made the following appraisal of these plans in consultation with the Military Committee in accordance with the Council's instructions.

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

3. The purpose of Allied actions should be to make the Soviet Government change those policies or actions which would be inimical to the basic NATO objectives set forth in paragraph 2, reference a, without having to overpower the Soviet Union or disintegrate the Satellite area.

4. Implementation of any of these plans must not prejudice the overall capability of defending the NATO area.

5. The success of any of the plans depends on whether or not the Soviet Union correctly interprets and responds to the message which the actions are meant to convey.

6. No NATO military operations undertaken would appear convincing to the Soviets unless preceded or accompanied by NATO action in implementing alert measures leading to full readiness for general war. Indeed, the placing of NATO on a war footing is an important aspect of NATO action which would be one of the best means to convey to the Soviets NATO determination. Constitutional and legal complications which now

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restrict implementation of Simple and Reinforced alert measures in several nations might significantly restrict the ability of the Alliance to carry out the plans successfully.

7. Military operations conducted on territory controlled by the Soviet Union could pose the problem of handling the population in the affected areas and would be likely to create major refugee movements, local uprisings and, possibly, general revolt. As such developments could become largely uncontrollable and thus markedly change the situation, due consideration of this possibility should be taken in the selection and execution of plans. The full implications are being further examined by SACEUR who, upon completion, intends to request appropriate political guidance.

8. The national composition of NATO forces committed to these plans could have a significant political and possibly psychological effect on the Soviet Union, on the members of the Alliance and on the population of the affected areas.

9. The choice of the appropriate time for implementing any particular plan could be very important.

10. No military measures, in themselves, are likely to succeed in reopening Western access to Berlin by force should the Soviets choose adequately to oppose them.

11. Implementation of the different plans, decided in response to or reprisal for Soviet action, might have legal implications, for instance in the cases of MARCON FOUR, FIVE and SIX in relation to International Maritime Law; these implications have not been examined.

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### GENERAL APPRAISAL BY CATEGORIES OF PLANS

#### 12. Air Plans.

a. The air operations envisaged have the inherent advantage of permitting flexibility in the control of engagement and disengagement. Additionally they do not involve seizure of Soviet Bloc territory and the direct force engagement and difficulty of disengagement entailed therein. They involve far less risk of unintentionally provoking an uprising.

b. Large scale air operations could give NATO initial advantages but in their execution there could be difficulty in clearly conveying their limited intent and scope and preventing the launching of the poised nuclear strike forces by miscalculation.

#### 13. Ground Plans.

a. Certain of the ground operations have the advantage of being directly related to Berlin access and some, if militarily successful, could improve the overall defense posture in Central Europe; however, some might be interpreted by the Soviets as an attack on the stability of the Soviet Satellite system. Further, they might generate major and uncontrollable population problems in areas occupied by the Soviets. With the unlikelihood of gaining tactical surprise, they might also be easily countered by the Soviets. Extensive air support would be required for these operations involving a considerable risk of degradation of the general war posture of Allied Command Europe.

b. Military defeat of these operations by larger Soviet forces would significantly degrade the general war posture of NATO forces in the sector involved. There is also the

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risk of aggressive acts elsewhere such as attacks designed to seize Hamburg or Munich. These risks would be materially lessened by the adoption of a true forward defense posture.

14. Maritime Plans.

a. Maritime plans are essentially measures to exert indirect pressures on the Soviets. Their immediate military advantages are limited.

b. These measures would engage the enemy in a field where there could be certain advantages to NATO, and where possibilities exist to assert the determination of the Alliance in a flexible and, if desired, progressive manner.

c. However, if the Soviets respond to the more severe measures by submarine attacks on shipping, the implications are assessed as follows: sporadic submarine warfare would not be crippling but could be a severe strain militarily and economically, but Soviet submarines would suffer substantial attrition over a period of time. All-out submarine attack would probably cause heavy shipping losses which could result in the military need to use nuclear weapons at sea and possibly to launch attacks on Soviet submarine bases. In either case, some of the wartime organizations of shipping should be instituted.

d. Escalation toward general war through operation at sea would probably be slower than in some other forms of operations.

15. Nuclear Plans.

a. Selective use of nuclear weapons for demonstration of will to use them would be primarily political and psychological in nature intended to persuade the Soviets

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of NATO determination in order to obtain a political decision. These demonstration plans are not currently designed to have significantly military value. However, selective use of nuclear weapons in connection with a particular plan, for both demonstration purposes and direct military value, could be an optional course of action.

b. Under certain circumstances, it might be advisable to adopt a very graduated sequence from no targets to limited military targets or possibly to execute a demonstration in support of a ground operation. In the case of a "no target" demonstration, NATO intentions should be clearly made manifest to the Soviet authorities, including the fact that this is a deliberate use and not an error.

c. Beyond the nuclear demonstration plan (BERCON BRAVO) limited use of nuclear weapons has been provided for in the plans when circumstances so warrant and authorization therefor is obtained. SACEUR has indicated that the circumstances under which he would consider recommending such use would include the military need to extricate BERCON forces faced with annihilation or to insure the achievement of the aims of a specific operation which clearly would not be achieved without the use of nuclear weapons. (It should be noted by the political authorities that use of nuclear weapons under some of these circumstances would go beyond those envisaged in paragraph 6(d) of reference a for planned recourse to nuclear weapons.)

16. A detailed appraisal of each plan is set out in Enclosure 1.

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IMPROVEMENTS TO POSTURE NEEDED

17. Should the necessity arise, the plans would, of course, be implemented from present positions and with existing forces, even though the foundation offered by the present force posture is not strong enough to support these plans satisfactorily. Therefore, it is important to improve this posture so as materially to reduce some of the risks associated with the implementation of the plans. These improvements would basically be best made by implementing MC 26/4 requirements and correcting the major equipment deficiencies. Moreover, since the only sound foundation for implementation of the BERCON plans is a true forward strategy, the following further improvements should be initiated immediately:

a. Forces should be deployed in the forward areas and their logistic support reoriented to support forward deployments;

b. Stronger covering forces should be deployed along the Iron Curtain;

c. Dispersal airfields in Europe should be prepared to receive nuclear strike forces when dispersal is deemed necessary.

18. NATO and national efforts should be intensified to resolve the problems which now restrict adequate implementation of the alert measures which are the essential basis for the execution of these plans.

OVERALL APPRAISAL

19. From a military viewpoint, the BERCON and MARCON plans appear to be responsive to the instructions of the North Atlantic Council and to the needs which these instructions

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sought to fill. These plans have been developed to provide a choice of possible action or actions, as deemed appropriate under the circumstances.

20. All plans have advantages and risks in varying degrees and must be appraised in the light of their likelihood of achieving the object set out in paragraph 3 without ultimate involvement in general war. Further, the affect on the posture of NATO for general war must be judged.

21. For this appraisal, the advantages and risks of the plans have been assessed in relation to one another and to the catalogue as a whole, with particular reference to their potential affect on the NATO general war posture. The advantages include broadly their feasibility, their direct or indirect relation to the basic aim, and the improvement which might be brought about to the NATO military posture by their successful implementation. The risks include the implications of military failure of individual plans which would present these NATO courses of action; to disengage from the particular action, to increase conventionally the scope of the action, to add another action, or to use nuclear weapons in support of the action. The second, third and fourth courses in some circumstances could involve degradation of the posture of the NATO forces for general war in the area concerned.

22. It is recognized that the military risks must be weighed against the political and psychological background and there is little doubt that if the NATO objectives are to be achieved certain calculated risks will have to be taken. The military part of the game should not be played without continuous political action, both diplomatic and psychological, in order to be able

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at any suitable time to negotiate or to raise the scale of military pressure. Further, the timeliness of political decisions in circumstances which might arise could be of crucial importance from the military, as well as political and psychological, aspects of these operations.

FOR THE STANDING GROUP:

*Maurice E. Kaiser*

MAURICE E. KAISER  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Secretary

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ENCLOSURE 1

DETAILED MILITARY APPRAISAL

1 AIR PLANS

2 1. BERCON ALPHA ONE

3 a. Description. This plan envisages employing maximum  
4 scale fighter escort for the protection of Allied transport  
5 aircraft within the Berlin air corridors, the fighters being  
6 free to attack any Soviet planes or SAM batteries which take  
7 offensive action against the transport aircraft.

8 b. Advantages. This operation would be directly related  
9 to Berlin access and would not involve seizure or occupation  
10 of Satellite territory. This is a comparatively limited  
11 operation involving small forces and their loss would have  
12 little affect on the general war posture.

13 c. Risks. This operation could be opposed by superior  
14 Soviet forces very soon after initiation and would take  
15 place in airspace essentially controlled by the Soviets.  
16 Therefore, this operation could lead to engagements at con-  
17 siderable tactical disadvantage and could involve NATO in  
18 much wider air operations.

19 2. BERCON ALPHA TWO

20 a. Description. This plan consists of a major air  
21 battle, initiated with conventional weapons, to gain, and  
22 maintain during a critical period, local air superiority  
23 over East Germany. It includes the attack of Soviet and  
24 East German airfields and SAM sites in East Germany and  
25 selected Communist airfields and SAM sites in the Satellite  
26 countries.

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1           **b. Advantages.** This operation appears to have an  
2 excellent probability of achieving local air superiority  
3 for a limited period. It would have the added advantage  
4 of reducing significantly the capability of Soviet forces  
5 to initiate an offensive against Western Europe with either  
6 nuclear or conventional forces.

7           **c. Risks.** The magnitude of the forces involved in  
8 this operation might result in Soviet misunderstanding of  
9 its scope, perhaps thus precipitating major Soviet reaction,  
10 beyond an attempt at equivalent response, even up to general  
11 war. Further, unless its scope and intent is correctly  
12 assessed by the Soviets, such a large air strike could create  
13 a tense and delicate situation in the poised nuclear strike  
14 forces on both sides, at least for a transitory period.  
15 Also, if this operation should set off a series of like  
16 exchanges on both sides, the capability of the NATO air  
17 forces to implement their nuclear strike plans would be  
18 severely degraded since NATO air forces are not now  
19 primarily equipped or deployed to fight a protracted con-  
20 ventional air battle.

21 GROUND PLANS

22 3. BERCON CHARLIE ONE

23           **a. Description.** This plan is an attack by a  
24 reinforced division on the axis Helmstedt/Berlin to seize  
25 and hold a salient into East Germany in the vicinity of  
26 Rottmersleben. NATO air units, operating in a close  
27 support role, would support this attack in the first  
28 24 hours with an estimated 240 close air support sorties

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1 and an estimated 180 reconnaissance sorties. Subsequent  
2 air support requirements depend on further developments.

3 b. Advantages. This operation has the advantage of  
4 being directly related to ground access to Berlin.  
5 Furthermore, relatively fewer forces are involved and  
6 the possibility of affecting adversely the general war  
7 posture in the area is less likely.

8 c. Risks. Until forward deployments can be realized,  
9 this operation would require initiating ground combat  
10 forward of defensive positions with the consequent diffi-  
11 culties in providing logistical support and reinforcement.  
12 A more limited military objective on the Autobahn which  
13 might demonstrate the determination of NATO with less risk  
14 to the flanks of the force is currently under study by  
15 SACEUR.

16 4. BERCON CHARLIES TWO

17 a. Description. This is a two-division attack to  
18 pinch off and hold the salient east of Kassel up to the  
19 line Duderstadt-Worbis-Wanfried. The attack would be  
20 supported in the first 24 hours with an estimated 450  
21 close air support sorties and an estimated 200 recon-  
22 naissance sorties. Subsequent air support requirements  
23 depend on further developments.

24 b. Advantages. This operation is comparatively  
25 simple to execute and, if a forward strategy were  
26 implemented, reinforcements would be readily available.  
27 The probability of initial success is high and should it  
28 succeed by conventional means, it would improve the  
29 overall defensive position of Allied Command Europe.

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1           c. Risks. This operation has the risk of possibly  
2 being interpreted by the Soviets as the start of an  
3 offensive on East Germany. The loss of these forces  
4 would seriously degrade the general war posture in the  
5 area concerned.

6           5. BERCON CHARLIE THREE

7           a. Description. This is a corps attack by up to four  
8 divisions along the Berlin-Helmstedt Autobahn to seize  
9 and hold a salient up to line Mittelland Kanal-Elbe River.  
10 The scope and magnitude of this plan requires maximum air  
11 support available in Central European Command in order  
12 to insure success.

13           b. Advantages. This operation has the advantage of  
14 being directly related to ground access to Berlin. In  
15 addition, the size of the force provides a greater capa-  
16 bility to penetrate toward Berlin and to deal with  
17 substantial opposition.

18           c. Risks. This operation would involve holding a  
19 salient in enemy territory which could result in the loss  
20 of a sizeable force and which would thereby seriously  
21 degrade the general war posture in that area. Moreover,  
22 the above scale of conventional air support would absorb  
23 forces earmarked to support the nuclear strike plan which  
24 would, therefore, in varying degrees, be adversely affected  
25 if required to be implemented at short notice.

26           6. BERCON CHARLIE FOUR

27           a. Description. This is a corps attack of up to four  
28 divisions to seize and hold the high ground areas of the  
29 Thuringer Wald. The scope and magnitude of this plan



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1 requires maximum air support available in Central European  
2 Command in order to insure success.

3 b. Advantages. Accomplishment of the military objective  
4 of this plan would result in gaining an area of strategic  
5 importance and which would significantly strengthen a  
6 forward defense in this sector.

7 c. Risks. This operation, even more than BERCON CHARLIE  
8 TWO, risks being interpreted by the Soviets as the start of  
9 large scale operations against East Germany. This could  
10 result in the loss of a sizeable force which would affect  
11 the general war posture in Central Europe. Moreover, the  
12 above scale of conventional air support would absorb forces  
13 earmarked to support the nuclear strike plan which would,  
14 therefore, in varying degrees, be adversely affected if  
15 required to be implemented at short notice.

## 16 MARITIME PLANS

### 17 7. GENERAL

18 a. When any one, or a combination, of the maritime  
19 military measures are ordered, a politico/military decision  
20 will be required specifying the following:

- 21 (1) The area limits of the task;  
22 (2) The duration of the task;  
23 (3) The type and nationality of Soviet Bloc ships,  
24 e.g. destroyers, ELINT trawlers, tankers;  
25 (4) The applicable rule of conduct, e.g. use of  
26 armament, boarding parties, communications and  
27 movements.

28 b. Although the amount of force would be the minimum  
29 to achieve the desired aims, the Force Commander must be

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1 authorized to defend his command against enemy attack. In  
2 this regard, specific political authority to use tactical  
3 nuclear weapons at sea, for immediate self-defense, should  
4 be considered concurrently with political decisions in those  
5 maritime measures containing a high risk of reprisal,  
6 since the Major NATO Commanders have expressed a need for  
7 this authority. (It should be noted by the political  
8 authorities that some circumstances of use of tactical  
9 nuclear weapons at sea for immediate self-defense would  
10 go beyond those envisaged in paragraph 6(d) of reference  
11 a for planned recourse to nuclear weapons.)

12 c. The following specific appraisals must be con-  
13 sidered in the light of paragraphs 11 and 14 of the covering  
14 memorandum.

15 8. MARCON ONE

16 a. Description. Track designated Soviet Bloc merchant  
17 ships in specific areas, this being the least severe of  
18 maritime measures.

19 b. Advantages. It would have the advantage of deter-  
20 mining to some extent the pattern of movement of Soviet  
21 merchant shipping in specific areas.

22 c. Risks. The risk is considered to be very slight  
23 except in waters contiguous to the Soviet Bloc.

24 9. MARCON TWO

25 a. Description. Track Soviet Bloc warships (ELINT  
26 trawlers or other suspicious ships included) in specified  
27 areas.

28 b. Advantages. This operation would provide knowledge  
29 of the positions of these ships thus lessening the threat

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1 to the sea lines of communications.

2 c. Risks. A maximum, continuous effort over a long  
3 period could reduce the general war readiness of the  
4 maritime forces. However, the risks are considered slight.

5 10. MARCON THREE

6 a. Description. Hinder and directly annoy designated  
7 Soviet Bloc ships in the conduct of their activities.

8 b. Advantages. Little military advantage can be  
9 foreseen in conducting these operations.

10 c. Risks. It is possible that the Soviet ships would  
11 respond by firing on our ships and aircraft.

12 11. MARCON FOUR

13 a. Description. To board and search designated Soviet  
14 Bloc merchant ships.

15 b. Advantages. A military advantage would be to deter-  
16 mine if special nuclear devices and other war materials were  
17 on board.

18 c. Risks. Counteraction in some form is highly likely  
19 with a consequent risk of some degree of escalation.

20 12. MARCON FIVE

21 a. Description. Seize designated Soviet Bloc merchant  
22 ships.

23 b. Advantages. A military advantage could be to stop  
24 delivery of war materials to certain countries, and to reduce  
25 Soviet Bloc gross shipping capability.

26 c. Risks. Counteraction in some form is highly likely,  
27 with a consequent risk of escalation.

28 13. MARCON SIX

29 a. Description. Blockade or enforce diversion and

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1 exclusion of Soviet Bloc ships from specified areas.

2 b. Advantages. It would reduce Soviet seaborne  
3 traffic and result in some economic deterioration within  
4 the Soviet Bloc. Being a denial of access, it could have  
5 more psychological relationship to Berlin than the other  
6 MARCON measures.

7 c. Risks. Counteraction in some form is highly  
8 probable with an even greater risk of escalation.

9 14. BERCON DELTA. These measures, planned for execution in  
10 SACEUR's area, are comparable to the above MARCON plans of  
11 SACLANT's area and the same appraisals apply. BERCON DELTA  
12 plans would be executed at shipping focal points in the sea  
13 areas of Allied Command Europe by NATO maritime forces assigned  
14 those areas. (Specific political consideration would be  
15 needed in the authorization for execution of BERCON DELTA measures  
16 in the waters governed by international treaties, i.e. Turkish  
17 and Baltic Straits.)

18 PLAN FOR SELECTIVE USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

19 15. BERCON BRAVO

20 a. Description. This plan is designed to implement  
21 the concept of selective use of nuclear weapons on land, sea  
22 or in the air for psychological purposes, to demonstrate  
23 the will and ability of the Alliance to use nuclear weapons.  
24 It includes the use of approximately five low-yield air  
25 bursts on strictly military targets away from built-up  
26 areas.

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1            b. Advantages. This plan would be relatively simple  
2 to execute and should entail a lesser risk of escalation to  
3 general war than the nuclear versions of other plans which  
4 would be directly related to purposeful combat.

5            c. Risks. This could set off a series of selective  
6 nuclear exchanges which might be difficult to terminate.

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## ENCLOSURE 2

The following comments have been received by the Standing Group from the Italian Military Authorities:

"SUBJECT: Berlin Contingency Planning.

Ref.: MCM-94-62 dated 3 August 1962

"1. I wish to inform you that the Italian General Staff of Defence:

"a. concurs in principle with the appraisal of Berlin Contingency Plans made by the Standing Group with document 94-62;

"b. feels that the alert measures to be taken prior to the implementation of BERCON plans are so serious in nature as to jeopardize the gradual and flexible aspects of the plans themselves.

"2. The Italian General Staff of Defence feels that this comment should be appended to the document prepared for the Atlantic Council."

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## ENCLOSURE 3

The following comments have been received by the Standing Group from the Netherlands Military Authorities:

"SUBJECT: Appraisal of Berlin Contingency Plans

"Reference: SGM-479-62 dated 28 August 1962

- "1. From a purely military point of view, considering the grave situation at the moment of execution of NATO contingency plans, the appraisal as given in reference document can be concurred with in principle.
- "2. In the opinion of the Netherlands military authorities the proposed extent of execution of alert measures may however have a tendency to surpass the contingency-aim, in particular in case of maritime and to a lesser extent air-plans. It is recognized that before execution of any ground-plan a state of full preparedness for war is essential, as ground operations by the very nature involve a greater risk of escalation. The consequences on military and civil matters following a political decision to bring NATO on a certain alert footing, might be considered too grave and not in consonance with the situation. For the greater part the formal alert system is now coupled to the contingency-plans. Moreover the danger arises that the Soviets - by again and again deliberately heightening the tension - might compel the Alliance to reveal its formal alert system to them. Consideration should therefore be given to the possibility to execute, at least partly, special selected measures for assigned and earmarked forces only, with the aim of extending the range of graduation and flexibility of the plans as well as of reducing the possibility of compromising the NATO alert systems.
- "3. Notwithstanding the fact that the Council gave instructions to that purpose, no plans are incorporated in ref. document as to the appropriate alert measures for NATO forces, prior to initiation of any tripartite military plans. The requirements can only be appraised from the given references.
- "4. In case of implementation of major tripartite plans, the measures required from NATO are so extensive that the contents of para 2 above apply to that situation in even higher degree."

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NORTH ATLANTIC MILITARY COMMITTEE

COMITE MILITAIRE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD

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28 August 1962

CORRIGENDUM NO. 1

to SGM-479-62

1. Holders of SGM-479-62 (Berlin Contingency Planning) are requested to make the following changes:

a. Page 1:

Change "1 ENCLOSURE" to read "2 ENCLOSURES" and add:

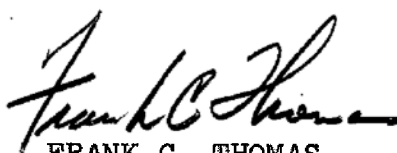
"2. Italian Comments".

Change the total number of pages of the document from "18" to "19".

b. Add the attached new page 19.

2. This cover page is regraded NATO CONFIDENTIAL when attached page has been removed.

FOR THE STANDING GROUP:



FRANK C. THOMAS  
Lt Colonel, USMC  
Assistant Secretary

1 ENCLOSURE (1 page added)  
Page 19 of SGM-479-62

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CORRIGENDUM NO. 2

to SGM-479-62

1. Holders of SGM-479-62 (Appraisal of Berlin Contingency Plans) are requested to replace pages 1-2, 10-11, 16-17 with the attached pages and to add the attached new page 20.
2. The removed pages will be destroyed by burning or reducing to pulp.
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FOR THE STANDING GROUP:



P. W. JAMIESON  
Group Captain, RAF  
Deputy Secretary

1 ENCLOSURE (7 pages)  
Pages 1-2, 10-11, 16-17, and 20  
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CORRIGENDUM NO. 3

to SGM-479-62

Holders of SGM-479-62 (Appraisal of Berlin Contingency Plans) are requested amend reference g to read as follows:

"SHAPE/70/62, 24 March 1962 (as revised by SHAPE/70-A/62, 10 September 1962)".

FOR THE STANDING GROUP:



FRANK C. THOMAS  
Lt Colonel, USMC  
Assistant Secretary

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