

(ii) had considerably strengthened several branches of its armed forces and also augmented its economic potential.

The dates at which these events would occur were unknown but it was considered that they were unlikely at least during 1950;

(f) the Korean incident indicated an increased willingness on both sides to take risks involving the possibility of war and that the risk of a major war was correspondingly greater; and

(g) while it was possible that the Soviet Union did not intentionally arrange the Korean campaign for the purpose of involving the immediately available reserves of the Western Powers, they would realize that this had been accomplished and would do everything possible to extend this process, perhaps to the extent of producing other incidents in areas where they could exploit the apparent military weaknesses of the Western Powers. This situation seriously affected our position in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, where we were partners with the United States in the role of reinforcing any of the areas under attack. It was obvious that the more U.S. troops that became involved in Korea, the less there would be available for immediate reinforcement of Western Europe, unless steps were taken to create a new reserve by mobilization of the National Guard or other reserves. Even if this course were followed, there would be a very dangerous gap between the time the majority of the regular forces left the United States and the time the reserves would be trained to replace them.

An explanatory memorandum was circulated.

(Military Secretary's memorandum, July 18, 1950 — Cabinet Document D248).†

2. *The Secretary of State for External Affairs* said that he thought the risk of a major war as a direct result of the Korean situation was somewhat greater than slight, the word used to describe it in the first paragraph of the paper.

3. *The Committee*, after further discussion, noted the views of the Chiefs of Staff on the imminence of a major war, as reported by the Minister of National Defence.

## II. THE KOREAN SITUATION; AVAILABILITY AND DISPOSITION OF CERTAIN ALLIED MILITARY FORCES

4. *The Chief of the General Staff* said that it was anticipated that the U.S. forces now engaged in Korea would be driven back to the southern tip of the peninsula to the Pusan area. There were differences of opinion as to whether the U.S. forces would be capable of holding the bridge-head in Korea. If the North Korean forces were unsuccessful in their attempt to drive the United States out of Korea, they would probably contain the U.S. bridge-head by the deployment of the minimum forces required. Meanwhile they would be in a position to withdraw the majority of their forces to the hill country, where they could be re-organized, re-equipped and re-grouped, protected (to a great extent) from U.S. air attack.

General MacArthur had estimated that it would require some four divisions, in addition to the two already committed, to drive the North Koreans back to the 38th parallel. To assemble and organize a force of this size would require two or three months, by which time the weather would be more favourable to the U.S. forces.