TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

It is requested that special care may be taken to ensure the secrecy of this document.

CABINET.

ITALO-ABYSSINIAN DISPUTE.

The accompanying memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee (C.O.S. Paper No. 392), covering a report by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee, on the Italo-Abyssinian dispute has been prepared in accordance with conclusion (f) of the Conference of Ministers held on the 6th August last, recorded in a note that has already been circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 159(35). This memorandum is the document referred to in the penultimate paragraph of the secret and personal telegram from the Minister for League of Nations Affairs circulated yesterday as C.P. 163(35).

This memorandum is now circulated for the consideration of the Cabinet by direction of the Acting Prime Minister.

(Sgd.) FRANCIS HEMMING.

For Secretary to the Cabinet.

8, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.

19th August, 1935.
At a meeting held on the 6th August, 1935, at which the Prime Minister was in the Chair, the following conclusion was recorded:

"(f) That the Secretary to the Cabinet and Committee of Imperial Defence should inform the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee that the Prime Minister would be glad if they would consider the following questions:

(i) At once to examine the question of what the position would be if Italy took the bit between her teeth.

(ii) On the assumption that the contingency referred to in (i) might take place, are there any steps that ought to be taken at once to provide against it."

In this latter connection the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the Foreign Office would have no objection to any relatively quiet steps being taken, such as, for example, the raising of the anti-aircraft defences of Malta to the approved scale. They would not even object if the movement of anti-aircraft guns became public.

8. We have already prepared an Interim Memorandum (Paper No. C.O.S. 388) dealing with the military implications of the application of Article 16 of the Covenant of the
League of Nations, which has been forwarded to certain
Ministers who have been present in London. In paragraph 3
we stated that we had directed a Sub-Committee to prepare
a detailed Report dealing with the situation from the Naval,
Military and Air points of view.

3. The Report of that Sub-Committee — the Joint Planning
Sub-Committee — has now been drawn up and we considered it
at a meeting held on 8th August, 1935. Their Report, as
amended and approved by us, is attached as an Annex to this
Memorandum. We have the following observations to which
we wish to draw the immediate attention of Ministers.

4. Part V of the Report deals with Precautionary measures
which should be taken before initiating any action which
may involve a state of war; paragraph 71 et seq deals with
interim measures, for the most part unobtrusive, which
should be taken on the assumption that Italy may take
the bit between her teeth. The following is the position
at the moment regarding the measures recommended.

Naval Measures.

5. The Admiralty are taking the following steps to
improve the state of readiness of the Navy. These measures
are comparatively unobtrusive and it is hoped that they will
not cause undue comment.

(a) The second half of the summer cruise programme
of the Mediterranean Fleet is being re-arranged and
instead of cruising in Aegean and Adriatic Waters
(including visits to Italy) the Fleet will proceed
to Egypt and adjacent harbours about the end of
August.

(b) Such minor steps as are possible without
publicity are being taken to expedite the bringing
forward of the Reserve Fleet.
(c) The provision of anti-submarine apparatus for fitting to small craft is being accelerated.

(d) The net defences and A.A. defences which would be required to protect the harbour which will have to be used in Greek territory are being despatched to Malta.

(e) The question of the suspension of British trade in the Mediterranean and its possible diversion round the Cape in the event of war with Italy is being discussed with the Board of Trade.

6. In addition to the measures mentioned above, those enumerated below are of great importance, but since they would be almost certain to lead to considerable comment, the Admiralty consider that Cabinet authority is necessary before taking them.

(a) The present programme of the Home Fleet is to leave its Home ports on 9th September and cruise in British waters - this programme is common knowledge. Unless after the discussion with France next week there is no chance of action being required against Italy, the Admiralty propose that the Home Fleet shall leave their Home Ports as soon as the leave period is over (August 29th), and concentrate at Portland ready to sail for Gibraltar and certain units to join the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean. In order that this may be done it would be necessary to inform the Fleet by 23rd August and certain earlier steps in connection with particular
vessels would have to be taken as soon as possible—these earlier steps would not necessarily cause much comment.

(b) It has been shown that in the event of serious action against Italy it would be necessary to complete the Home and Mediterranean Fleets to full complement and to bring forward the Reserve Fleet. This involves mobilisation which process takes about 7 days and would inevitably cause much comment.

The Admiralty however attach great importance to an early decision to mobilise should the situation become menacing, as until this is done all Naval measures must be incomplete.

Army Measures.

7. In paragraph 73 of the Report there is a recommendation for the despatch of anti-aircraft guns, searchlights, personnel and ammunition to Malta and Aden. The number of guns and searchlights involved is stated in paragraphs 67 and 68. Whilst certain preliminary steps in this country and the despatch of the material could no doubt be effected secretly, the move of the essential personnel, especially at this season of the year, would certainly become known.

8. A period of about three weeks would probably elapse between the issue of the orders and the arrival of the personnel and material at Malta. If therefore it is considered that the situation is such as to make this action advisable then a very early decision is required in order that the moves can be completed early in September.

9. It will be noted that it is not proposed to despatch any anti-aircraft guns or lights to Egypt. This is partly due to the fact that we do not possess at the present time enough anti-aircraft units to be able to create an
adequate defence over so considerable an area. Moreover, the distance from Italian territory in Libya is considerable, so that attacks on Egypt and the Suez Canal are not likely to be more than sporadic and our own aircraft, when reinforced, should be capable of dealing with the situation.

10. The War Office proposals for reinforcing Malta by an additional two Battalions are contained in paragraph 67. This is a step which, of course, would immediately receive the fullest publicity as it would involve calling up Section A of the Reserve. It is estimated that it would take three weeks for the move to be completed.

Air Force Measures.

11. The interim measures for the Royal Air Force are dealt with in paragraph 74. The second of the measures, the collection and despatch of supplies to selected bases, could be carried out unobtrusively. But to make ready, in all respects, the reinforcing air contingents would inevitably lead to publicity. Certain measures could be taken quietly, but not all; for example, many of the personnel are on leave at the present time and would have to be recalled.

12. These air contingents are destined in the first instance for Malta and Egypt and though the two emergency squadrons could be ready for despatch in one week, it would take two months before the remainder of the contingents from this country were ready to leave; to these periods, the duration of the voyage must be added.

General Observations.

13. We think it necessary to call attention to the general strategical situation which may arise as the consequence of war against Italy. If the Fleet is involved in active operations, in spite of the co-operation of the French and other Navies it must be expected that losses will ensue, and the resultant situation will be that the British Fleet, already weak, will be still further reduced.
There is bound to be a danger, therefore, that the results of a war with Italy would be to leave the British Fleet temporarily weakened to such an extent as to be unable to fulfil its world-wide responsibilities.

Similarly, the despatch of an air contingent from this country and the possible losses it may suffer will materially affect the air defence of Great Britain and disjoint the arrangements at present in hand for attaining air parity with Germany by April 1937; moreover the existing arrangements for the reinforcement of Singapore could not be counted upon in case of an emergency of the kind now under consideration.

14. We desire most clearly to emphasise the statement in paragraph 75 (b):-

"At least two months' notice is required before all our forces can be considered as able effectively to co-operate ... on a war basis".

It is of the utmost importance that in our future negotiations with France and Italy, and at the forthcoming League meeting, no action should be taken likely to precipitate hostilities, and that the application of the Covenant of the League, or indeed any action likely to cause Italy to take the bit between her teeth, should be delayed until the Services have had sufficient warning in which to make their preparations.

Any idea that sanctions can be enforced whenever diplomatically desirable is highly dangerous from the point of view of the Services, and we urge that no
measures almost certain to lead to war, such as the closing of the Suez Canal, should be taken until the Services are prepared.

15. In view of the length of time which will inevitably elapse before all the Services are ready, and having in view the publicity which will inevitably accompany some of the steps to be taken, we ask for decisions at the earliest possible date as to when the recommended measures are to be taken.

16. Finally, we desire to stress that the moral and political co-operation of France is not sufficient. Her assured military support, concerted with ourselves before the League Council meeting of the 4th September, is essential. Without that, there is great risk of all active measures, together with the onus which they will carry with them, falling on ourselves alone with serious consequences.

(Signed) ERNLE CHATFIELD,

C.L. COURTNEY,
Air Vice-Marshal
(For C.A.S.)

D.F. ANDERSON,
Brigadier
(For C.I.G.S.)

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1,
9th August, 1935.
ANNEX.

C.C.S. 390 (J.P.)
(Also Paper No. J.P. 115).

COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

CHIEFS OF STAFF SUB-COMMITTEE.

MILITARY IMPLICATIONS OF THE APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 16 OF THE COVENANT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

REPORT BY THE JOINT PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE.

PART I. INTRODUCTION.

The Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee at their 147th Meeting directed that the Joint Planning Sub-Committee should prepare a detailed Report on the military implications of the application of Article 16 of the Covenant and, to assist us, drew attention to the existence of their Interim Memorandum on this subject circulated as Paper No. C.O.S.-388.

2. It will be convenient to examine the action that might be taken under the two following heads, since different considerations arise under each:

(a) The exercise of general economic pressure on Italy (Part II);

(b) The interruption of the sea communications of the Italian Expeditionary Force in East Africa (Part III).

3. We have also considered the possible reactions of Italy to the application of general Economic Pressure and the precautionary measures necessary on our part to guard against these reactions, to which the Chiefs of Staff referred in general terms in C.O.S.-388.
PART II. THE EXERCISE OF ECONOMIC PRESSURE.

First Stage.

4. Article 16 has never yet been applied, and it is understood that some doubt exists as to the actual interpretation that might be adopted in its practical application. Assuming, however, that the situation is reached when it is decided that Article 16 has become applicable, the obligation on the Members of the League is to take the economic and financial measures mentioned in paragraph 1 of Article 16.

5. These measures do not involve the use of belligerent rights but could (subject to any questions as to the rights of Non-Members of the League) be applied by steps, taken within our own jurisdiction, which may be described as being in the nature of a prohibition of "trading with the enemy".

6. The States which are not Members of the League would be under no obligation to co-operate. The most important of these are the United States, Japan, Brazil and Germany (who must be so treated from the practical point of view).

Military Implications of Situation in First Stage.

7. Beyond the steps referred to in paragraph 5, action could also, in theory, be taken at sea against Italian shipping without declarations of war on Italy. It must be emphasised, however, that in practice any attempt to enforce such a policy would inevitably lead to active hostilities. Italy could, and undoubtedly would, provide naval escorts for her shipping and the naval forces of the participating Powers would either have to let them pass unmolested or to attack the escorting man-of-war.

8. Even if the measures taken were restricted to those mentioned in paragraph 5, they would be bitterly resented by Italy. In the inflamed state of Italian opinion some incident might easily occur or Italy might even retaliate by attacking some vulnerable and
9. Non-Member States. With regard to the position vis-a-vis the Non-Member States, in spite of the wording of paragraph 1 of Article 16, it is understood to be generally accepted internationally that there is at this stage no obligation to take forcible measures to prevent intercourse between them and the Covenant-breaking State. It follows that if the Non-Member States did not voluntarily take steps to prohibit commercial intercourse between their own nationals and Italy, such intercourse could only be prevented by the Naval Powers (Member States) declaring themselves to be in a state of war with Italy and thus acquiring belligerent rights.

10. Assuming, however, that such action was not taken, the situation would be that trade would continue between Italy and those States (whether Members of the League or not) which declined to cooperate or acquiesce in the application of economic pressure. The question arises, therefore, whether such pressure as it would be possible to apply in these conditions would be likely to be effective.

11. The answer involves consideration of a number of uncertain factors and from such study of the problem as it has been possible for us to make, it appears to be very doubtful whether effective pressure on Italy could be brought to bear within a reasonable time without the stoppage of Italy's seaborne trade,

We have not in this Report considered the position of our nationals and those of other participatory States who are resident in Italy.
and this, as has been pointed out, cannot be ensured
without the acquisition of belligerent rights.

Second Stage.

12. The second stage of economic pressure would
be reached when and if it were decided, for the
reasons outlined above, to treat Italy as actually
at war with Great Britain and other Members of the
League, so that by declaring war upon her and thus
acquiring belligerent rights action could be taken
to control her trade in contraband with non-co-
operating countries.

13. Under paragraph 2 of Article 16 it is the
"duty of the Council" to recommend to the Governments
concerned what forces they should "contribute to
the armed forces to be used to protect the Covenants
of the League".

14. Although the Council may recommend certain
action it is for each Government to decide what it
will do. It is of great importance to this
country that the active co-operation of the principal
Member States should be assured. This point is
further developed in Part III, and also in Part IV,
where the situation in the event of war is dealt
with.

The possible reactions of the non-co-operating
countries to the stoppage of their trade with Italy
are, in the first place, political questions to which
no doubt His Majesty's Government would give the
fullest consideration if the occasion arose. It is
understood that in the case of measures at
sea being applied which went beyond the American
conception of belligerent rights there would be some
danger of the United States becoming definitely
obstructive. Should this be the case, we should be
at once faced with the problem of maintaining our
historic attitude in this matter.

16. Another serious consideration which cannot be
lost sight of is the possibility that Japan might take
the opportunity of our being embroiled in Europe to
take action in the Far East contrary to our own and
League interests. The gravity of the threat to
our security in these circumstances has been so
frequently stated by the Chiefs of Staff and is so
well known to His Majesty's Government that it need
not be reiterated here.

Conclusions as regards the exercise of Economic
Pressure.

17. (a) The measures contemplated in the first
stage of the application of economic pressure to Italy
need not involve the use of belligerent rights but
there is a distinct risk that even these measures
might lead to war. Italy would bitterly resent the
application of such pressure and might retaliate by
an act of war against a participating State. Apart
from this, there is the danger that the measures
contemplated would not prove effective and, being
committed, the League would then try to set in
motion the more serious steps which would necessitate
a declaration of war against Italy by the Naval
Powers that were co-operating.

(b) It would be necessary, therefore, from the
military point of view, to take full military pre-
cautions in the event of it being decided to
participate in the exercise of economic pressure.
(c) It is presumed that His Majesty's Government would not contemplate the exercise of such pressure without the active co-operation of France and at least the passive support of other Mediterranean Powers. The importance of this is further developed later in this Report.

(d) The attitude of the United States of America would be of the greatest importance and might raise in an acute form the vexed question of the "Freedom of the Seas".

PART III. INTERRUPTION OF SEA COMMUNICATIONS OF ITALIAN FORCES IN EAST AFRICA.

18. The means by which the sea communications of the Italian Expeditionary Force in East Africa could be interrupted are:

(a) By controlling the passage of the Suez Canal;

(b) By establishing a contraband control organisation.

Control of passage of Suez Canal.

19. Under Article 1 of the Suez Canal Convention, Italy has the right of free passage for her warships and her merchant ships in time of war. The Signatory Powers agreed "not in any way to interfere with the free use of the Canal in time of war as in time of peace", and the Canal is never to be blockaded.

20. Nevertheless, the view has been expressed that action might legitimately be taken to deny the use of the Canal to Italian shipping at the request of the Council of the League acting under Article 16.

21. If this is accepted, it is regarded as of the utmost
importance that the collective nature of the action should be emphasised by the association of other Powers with us in this action as it is essential that Japan's apprehensions should not be aroused by single-handed action on our part.

23. From the practical point of view, the willing co-operation of the officials of the Suez Canal Company, who are predominantly of French nationality, is required. In the circumstances contemplated this will presumably be forthcoming but the corollary is that action could not be taken without the sympathetic co-operation of France.

24. The next and most important point is that should an Italian man-of-war, or a merchant ship escorted by a man-of-war, attempt the passage of the Canal, it could only be prevented by the use of force. In other words, unless Italy capitulated under the threat, the closing of the Canal involves war with Italy. It would be necessary, therefore, for full military precautions to be taken before any such action were taken.

24. The situation has so far been considered in relation only to Italian shipping, but it is necessary also to consider the position in regard to the ships of other nationalities since these might be employed in the transport of supplies for the Italian forces. No serious difficulties seem likely to arise in respect of the Members of the League, whether they were actively co-operating in the exercise of pressure or not.

The position vis-à-vis the Non-Member States is, however, different. The most important are the United States of America, Japan and Germany, and though the first two are not parties to the Suez Canal
Convention, it is understood that no legal justification could be found for denying the use of the Canal to their ships engaged on the traffic in question. It appears, therefore, that such traffic on the part of the Non-Members of the League could only be effectively stopped by the adoption of the measures described under the next heading. (Paragraphs 28-29.)

25. A draft plan has been prepared for ensuring the safety of the Canal in certain circumstances and the local authorities are in possession of the requisite instructions. Although it would not be necessary to implement the whole of this plan at the outset, the measures required to meet the contingency above could be applied without delay.

26. The attitude of the Egyptian Government cannot be left out of consideration though we have every reason to suppose that it would be sympathetic, and our High Commissioner in Cairo has reported that Mohammedan opinion in that part of the world is turning against Italy.

27. Action in the Canal area alone would not stop supplies reaching East Africa from the eastward. It is improbable, however, that the Italian forces could be maintained by supplies from Eastern sources or via the Cape, unless Italy has anticipated the need and made the necessary arrangements in advance. This it would be difficult for her to do.

Establishment of Contraband Control Organisation.

28. This necessitates the exercise of belligerent rights and could, therefore, only be undertaken after a declaration of war on Italy. The necessary steps could be taken in the Aden area, in the Gulf of Suez, clear
of the Canal Zone, and if necessary at Gibraltar. In this connection, however, the action of Italian air forces acting from Eritrea may render difficult our naval action in the Red Sea; this question is referred to in paragraph 58 below.

29. Action in the Canal area would not be necessary thus avoiding possible complications vis-à-vis the non-Member States.

Conclusions as to the interruption of sea communications of Italian forces in Africa:

30. (a) If the Council of the League decided to deny the use of the Suez Canal to Italian shipping, it would be of the utmost importance that other Powers should be associated with us in the necessary action, and the active co-operation of France is regarded as essential.

(b) Such action involves the probability of war with Italy and full military precautions by the co-operating Powers would, therefore, have to be concerted in advance and the requisite action taken.

(c) The attitude of the United States of America, Japan and Germany would be an important factor in determining the effectiveness of the pressure since their ships could not be denied the use of the Suez Canal. If these Powers did not supply Italian East African ports, the stoppage of other sea transport through the Canal would make it extremely difficult for Italy to maintain her forces in East Africa.

(d) If a state of war is reached it will be preferable to interrupt the sea communications of the Italian
forces by the establishment of a contraband control organisation thus avoiding the special difficulties involved in the use of the Canal zone.

(e) If contraband control is established, this would probably result after a short time not only in Italy having to abandon her military operations in East Africa but would also necessitate the evacuation of the troops already there.

PART IV. PRINCIPAL STRATEGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The Object.

31. Assuming that the Powers have become engaged in war, the object will be the limited one of forcing Italy to desist from aggressive action against Abyssinia. Although it would not presumably be the desire of the League, nor the intention of His Majesty's Government, to employ more force than was necessary to achieve the limited object set out above, it is necessary to recall that, as already suggested, if matters reach this stage the scope of the operations will not necessarily be within the control of the League but may be determined by possible action on the part of Italy. The strategical situation must, therefore, be considered on this basis.

Contraband Control.

32. The establishment of a contraband control organisation in the Red Sea would necessitate the provision of the necessary craft for patrol and interception in the Gulf of Suez, and at Aden. A covering force sufficient to deal with an attack by the Italian naval forces would
be required. Air reconnaissance would be desirable in each area to facilitate the work of the patrols and of the covering force.

33. Should the naval operations include the exercise of economic pressure on Italy the establishment of further Contraband Control Bases at Gibraltar (if not already established) and in the Aegean would be necessary. The former calls for no special comment but the latter raises questions of some importance in the present connection.

34. Owing to the many exits from the Aegean effective control could not be established without the use of bases in Greek and Turkish waters for the patrolling forces. Suda Bay in Crete and Mityleni would be suitable. That is to say, at least the passive co-operation of Greece and Turkey is required, and it is assumed that the territorial waters and harbours of these States would be available for use.

General Naval Dispositions.

35. The task of containing the main Italian fleet in the central Mediterranean area will fall to the combined International fleets. The most satisfactory dispositions would probably be that the French should work mainly in the Western Basin and the British Fleet mainly in the central area.

36. Covering forces based on Port Said and Alexandria would be required to prevent any attempt by Italy to reinforce her forces (at present small) in the Red Sea and at Gibraltar to cover the Western exit of the Mediterranean.
A summary is given in Appendix I of the British Naval Forces that would be available in the Mediterranean and Home Fleets early in September, together with the French forces maintained in commission in Home Waters in comparison with the total strength of the Italian forces at home and in the Red Sea. Although the combined British and French Fleets are markedly superior in all types of vessels, the naval dispositions already discussed show that it will not be possible to maintain them as a single force. Italy will be operating on interior lines and may concentrate against the British Fleet in the central area or the French Fleet in the western area. It will be seen from the table in Appendix I that Italy will possess a superiority in destroyer forces over ourselves and has also a very large submarine force.

**Army.**

It is considered that, in spite of the recent increase in her land forces, the Italian Army will be counter-balanced by the Armies of Yugoslavia and France. No Italian troops could be moved from Italian soil in view of threat to her frontiers.

**Air.**

A comparison of British, French and Italian Air Forces available, or which can be made available, is given in Appendix II. We are now drawing on our reserves to meet the requirements of expansion and our ability to despatch and maintain a force overseas has therefore been reduced to a minimum. The two emergency squadrons are the only squadrons that could be despatched on a mobile basis to operate independently of existing Royal Air Force technical maintenance organisations in the Mediterranean and Middle East. Assuming that mobilisation is not...
declared the preparation of squadrons additional to the
two emergency squadrons would seriously affect our
expansion arrangements in regard to the provision of
personnel.

POSSIBLE ITALIAN REACTIONS.

40. Italy's possible aggressive reactions may
take some or all of the following forms, and of the
objectives to which she might choose to direct her
attention Malta seems to take first place.

Malta.

41. With the British and French Fleets actively
co-operating in the Mediterranean it is unlikely that
Italy would attempt a military landing on the Island
of Malta or that she would undertake naval bombardment
operations of a greater scale than in the form of
sporadic raids, but it is well within Italy's power
to concentrate a heavy scale of air attack on Malta.

42. In consequence of the Government's decision not
to incur expenditure on measures of defence required to
provide exclusively against attack by the United States
of America, France or Italy, the modernisation of the
local defences of Malta has not progressed to any
appreciable extent, and these defences are far from
adequate to deal with present-day forms of attack by
Italy. The Island's defences may be able to counter
sporadic naval raids, but Malta's air defence can only be
achieved by counter offensive measures in the form of air
attack against suitable objectives in Italy calculated to
prevent her concentrating her air forces against Malta.
As matters stand, such increases in local air and A.A.
defence as could be achieved at short notice without,
in addition, effective support from other air bases would be wholly inadequate to defend an island area, such as Malta, against the metropolitan air forces of a great Power.

43. The first essential, therefore, would be adequate bases in European and North African territory from which our air forces, and the air forces of our Allies, could operate against objectives in Italian territory. So far as we are concerned, this postulates the necessity of operating from French territory in Europe and North Africa.

44. Some augmentation of the military garrison in Malta would be necessary, principally for internal security, ammunition reserves for the coast defences would have to be increased and any additions possible made to the local air and A.A. defences.

45. Finally, it would seem that unless counter air action by us could be undertaken simultaneously with, if not before, Italy's air concentration against Malta, the Mediterranean Fleet would have to consider an alternative base to Malta from which to carry out its operations in the Mediterranean.

Attack on Merchant Shipping.

46. The maintenance of our shipping through the Mediterranean would present very serious difficulties in the face of attack by Italian forces especially should Italy decide to use her submarines and aircraft in an unrestricted manner. The provision of adequate anti-submarine vessels and aircraft would take considerable time.

In the event of the situation reaching actual hostilities we consider that until the necessary counter measures could be improvised and the situation is clearer, British trade in the Mediterranean should be suspended and it might be necessary subsequently to divert it round the Cape and accept the resultant dislocation of shipping.
Egypt and the Suez Canal.

47. The Italian troops in Libya have been heavily drawn upon for Eritrea and could not be reinforced from Italy whilst we exercise naval control of the Mediterranean; consequently, no land threat is to be expected on Egypt from the West. In the air, however, the position is different. Aircraft can easily be flown from Italy to Libya, and with difficulty from Eritrea to Libya. Consequently, it will be possible for Italy to carry out sporadic attacks from Libya on the Suez Canal with such force as she may possess in Libya at any one time and provided that the air units there located have the necessary maintenance facilities.

48. The object of air attack on Egypt might be to cause alarm in the minds of the inhabitants and so increase the internal security problem especially in view of the large Italian community; or against definitely military objectives such as barracks and depots; or it might be done simply to cause us general embarrassment at a time when our difficulties would already be great.

49. The closing of the Suez Canal to Italian shipping might lead to retaliatory air action on the part of Italy who might attempt attacks on British shipping in the Canal with the intention of denying it to our own use.
50. Whatever the objects of Italian air action from Libya may be it is clear that the air defence of Egypt, and particularly the Canal Zone, would be a commitment for which our existing resources in the Middle East are entirely inadequate. Our air forces would have to be increased and adequate reserves provided and this would take from 1 to 3 months depending on the reinforcements sent. It is considered, however, that the British troops in Egypt are in general sufficient for its probable tasks.

East of Suez.

51. In East Africa, Italy could overrun British Somaliland without great difficulty, provided she were not closely engaged with the Abyssinians. In Sudan and Kenya we have but few troops to meet Italian aggression but the difficulties of communications are great and the Italians could not hope to get any important results before contraband control proved effective in reducing her forces to immobility. A battalion from West Africa has been warned to be in readiness to support our forces in Somaliland, and a battalion from Tanganyika is prepared to reinforce Kenya. The question of air reinforcements is under active discussion.

52. Action by Italian air forces would not be affected in the initial stages by the severance of Italian sea communications. The extent to which Italian air forces could be diverted from action against Abyssinia would, however, depend largely on the degree to which her land forces are committed. If these are heavily engaged, and especially if they are conducting a retreat, it is to be anticipated that the Italian air forces would not lightly be diverted to tasks against ourselves.
53. Assuming, however, that Italy would be able to divert her air forces from their tasks in Abyssinia, the most effective action she could take would be attacks against British ships in the Straits of Babel Mandeb and against Aden. Attacks against shipping would, however, only be serious if Italy decided to adopt unrestricted measures and, in any case, if trade had been diverted from the Mediterranean route the amount of shipping passing would be small.

54. Other objectives are within range of Italian air forces, namely, Mombasa, Nairobi, Khartoum, Port Sudan and railway communications generally. Although attacks on these would have little military significance, the possibility of their occurrence cannot be ruled out, since they would tend to disturb the internal security in our possessions and possess a general "diversionary value".

55. In the circumstances visualised in which Italy might divert aircraft for attack on ourselves, there is no doubt that we are very exposed to possible air attack. Passive defence in so large an area would be impossible, and if adequate provision is to be made to meet the eventuality, it will be necessary to establish our own air forces within range of the relevant Italian bases.
56. In their interim memorandum (C.0.S. 388) the Chiefs of Staff in paragraph 4 (3) stated that the possibility of war resulting from any attempt to exercise economic pressure or interrupt Italy's communications with Abyssinia necessitates preparations in anticipation, and in this part of the Report the measures which should be taken before initiating any action which may involve a state of war are dealt with.

NAVAL.

Reserve Fleet.

57. The whole of the Reserve fleet would be required as soon as possible in the circumstances visualised.

The present situation of the Reserve Fleet is:

**Cruisers.**

- 4 - 7.5 Cruisers, 4 - 6" Cruisers at 14 days' notice.
- 4 - 6" - at 4 months' notice.

**Aircraft Carriers.**

- 1 - at 14 days' notice.

**Destroyers.**

- 16 in commission with 3/4 complement.
- 7 - at 14 days' notice.
- 18 - " 42 " "
- 9 - " 56 " "

**Minesweepers.**

- 9 Home - at 14 days' notice.
- Malta " 14 " "

A reserve ship on being brought forward requires some three weeks to work up efficiency before she can be
considered fit for service. It will consequently be clear that if ships remain at present notice some five weeks must elapse after the order to mobilise before any of the reserve fleet (with the possible exception of the 16 destroyers in commission with $\frac{3}{5}$ complement) can be available and it would be from 2 to 3 months before the bulk of our reserve destroyers, of which type of vessel we should be in particular need, could be brought forward.

58. It is considered that if there is any prospect of active measures being taken against Italy, action should be taken to reduce the notice at which all ships at more than 14 days are kept to that figure. Such action would involve certain expense and no doubt could not be kept secret.

Personnel.

59. The majority of the Home and Mediterranean Fleet Ships are not fully manned. They could not carry out war duties at full efficiency and it would be necessary for them to be brought up to war complement. In order to complete these fleets and to man the Reserve Fleet it would be necessary to "mobilise", which process takes about 7 days.

A/S Measures.

60. A/S measures may be divided into those required for the protection of the fleet and its bases against S/M attack and those required for the protection of trade should Italy adopt unrestricted warfare against shipping which contingency we feel cannot in the circumstances visualised be ruled out.

61. The Fleet depends primarily for its A/S protection on destroyers and the small total (50) of our destroyers which are fitted with A/S apparatus (of which 9 are in the Far East and 4 in reserve) leaves no margin whatever.
At the present moment only some 30 - 40 sets of Asdic apparatus are available for fitting to the small craft which would have to be taken up in emergency. It is considered that all possible steps should be taken to accelerate the building up of this reserve of A/S apparatus as quickly as possible.

Movements.

62. This report does not deal in detail with possible preliminary movements of the Fleet but examination of the subject has led to the conclusion that in any such movements the following should be considered:

1. The necessity for reinforcing the Mediterranean Fleet.

2. The possibility that Italy might despatch forces to the Suez Canal in order to forestall the closing of the Canal against her by direction of the Council of the League.

3. The possibility that Italy might take very early air action against Malta and the fleet there if it appeared probable that pressure was to be applied to her.

4. The possibility that Italy might reinforce her forces in the Red Sea by surface or submarine forces.

Co-operation of Greece and Turkey.

63. As has been previously mentioned the use of a Greek port or ports and possibly a Turkish port would be necessary to the operations of the Fleet. Attention is drawn to this point again so that the question of regularizing such use may be fully considered.

Diversion of Shipping.

64. As has been mentioned it may be necessary in certain circumstances to divert British shipping from the Mediterranean to the Cape Route. It is suggested that this matter should be discussed in detail between the Admiralty and the Board of Trade with a view to rapid action should the occasion arise.
Contraband Control.

65. The organisation of Contraband Control Bases will take some time, especially that at Aden. While it is not suggested that any action, other than the adjustment of existing plans, should be taken now, it is considered that the organisation of these bases should commence before it is decided to exercise economic pressure, so that in the very likely event of a state of war following they may be ready without delay.

Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation.

66. It is estimated that extemporised arrangements could be made for net defences to be sent out and laid at a selected anchorage in Greek waters in 48 days which might be reduced to 16 if the material were moved to Malta before. Details of the organisation are contained in Appendix III. 6 A.A. guns and 12 searchlights, with their personnel, will be required from Army sources to complete the A.A. defence of the mobile base organisation.
Malta.

67. The garrison of Malta should be 4 Battalions. For several years the strength has been 2 Battalions owing to the necessity of providing troops for Palestine, and it is considered that the garrison should be increased to its proper strength by the despatch of 2 Battalions from Great Britain. The strength of A.A. Defence has not been considered in relation to attack by Italy. This would involve reconsideration of the whole problem and in the meantime it is suggested that the defence should be brought up to the approved interim scale (C.I.D. Paper No. 402-C) by the despatch of 15 A.A. guns, 12 A.A. search-lights together with the necessary personnel from the Field Force or other resources in Great Britain. In addition it will be necessary to augment the ammunition for A.A. and coast defence guns, and it will be necessary to increase the personnel for coast defence guns to Higher Colonial Establishment.

Aden.

68. At present 4 A.A. guns are in position but only 2 of them are manned. It will be necessary to send out personnel from Great Britain to man the additional A.A. guns and personnel will also be required for the coast defence armament and electric lights. A.A. and coast defence ammunition is also necessary.

Sudan and East Africa.

69. Sufficient troops are available in the Sudan to meet any likely threat from Italy. A Battalion from West Africa and a Battalion from Tanganyika should be despatched to reinforce the troops in Somaliland and Kenya respectively.

-22-
AIR.

70. It will be necessary to increase the Air Forces and to build up a reserve of supplies in Malta, Aden, Egypt (especially in the Canal Zone), the Sudan, East Africa and Somaliland. The forces available are shown in Appendix II. Their disposition must remain a matter for later decision depending upon the development of the situation and the effect upon Italian forces of the interruption of their sea communications. When the air reinforcements are available in the Middle East (and Malta) and adequate supplies have been laid down in probable theatres of operations, the mobility of the Squadrons will permit of rapid concentration at the required point as the circumstances of the moment dictate. At least two months notice is required to enable the reinforcing contingent to be prepared and despatched and the necessary supplies laid down. Plans must be concerted with the French for the operation of our Air Forces from South East France and French North Africa prior to any risk of Italian air attacks on Malta developing.

INTERIM MEASURES.

71. On the assumption that Italy may take the bit between her teeth, but that only unobtrusive measures will be permitted by His Majesty's Government at the present stage, it is suggested that the following action should be taken by the Services,

NAVY.

72. To increase, as far as possible, within the above limitation, the state of readiness of the Fleet.

To accelerate provision of anti-submarine apparatus.
To discuss with the Board of Trade regarding the possible diversion of Mediterranean shipping.

To despatch net defences etc., of the Mobile Naval Base to Malta.

**ARMY.**

73. To despatch Anti-aircraft guns, searchlights, personnel and ammunition to Malta and Aden.

To despatch to Malta additional Anti-aircraft guns, searchlights and personnel to co-operate with the Mobile Naval Base organisation.

**AIR FORCE.**

74. To place the reinforcing air contingent from the United Kingdom referred to in Appendix II on a mobile basis.

To collect and despatch supplies to selected bases referred to in paragraph 70.

Depending on the method of despatch eventually decided upon it may be necessary to commence despatch of aircraft of the United Kingdom contingent to Malta and the Middle East for re-erection locally and to despatch extra personnel to the Middle East to deal with reserve supply and aircraft re-erection problems.

75. In conclusion, it is desired to draw attention to the following matters of highest importance -

(a) It is essential that we should have the active co-operation of the other League Powers and that concerted war plans should be drawn up in conjunction with, at least, the major Powers concerned.

(b) At least two months' notice is required before all our forces can be considered as able effectively to co-operate in those plans on a war basis.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1,
7th August, 1935.
APPENDIX I.

COMPARISON OF NAVAL FORCES.

A summary is given in the following table of the British forces that would be available in the Mediterranean and Home Fleets early in September, together with the French forces maintained in commission in Home Waters in comparison with the total strength of the Italian forces at home and in the Red Sea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Ship</th>
<th>British Mediterranean and Home Fleets, in commission.</th>
<th>French Forces Maintained in Home Waters</th>
<th>Total Italian Forces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Battleships</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle-cruisers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft Carriers</td>
<td>3 (Seaplane)</td>
<td>1 (Seaplane)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8&quot; Cruisers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7 old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6 old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control-Torpileurs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Large Leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destroyers</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submarines</td>
<td>25 (includes 2nd, 5th and 6th Flotillas)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-25-
APPENDIX II.
BRITISH, ITALIAN AND FRENCH AIR FORCES AVAILABLE.

UNITED KINGDOM:

AVAILABILITY OF R.A.F. AND F.A.A. AIRCRAFT IN MEDITERRANEAN
AND MIDDLE EAST, AUGUST, 1939.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R.A.F.</th>
<th>F.A.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bombers</td>
<td>Bomber Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine and T.J.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available from Home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available from U.K.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Z + 1 week</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z + 4 weeks</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z + 8 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: 120 16 48 36 4 17 32 12 42 36 364

(Nota: F.A.A. numbers are for September)

ITALY:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L A N D.</th>
<th>S E A.</th>
<th>TOTAL.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: 207 270 286 113 55 147 1,080

1. The above are normal peace time figures of first line aircraft and make no allowances for movements of aircraft to the E A S T AFRICAN colonies, concerning which we have no definite information.

2. It is estimated that there are at present between 286 and 304 aircraft in SOMALIA and E R I T R E A. The majority of these have been withdrawn from the Metropolitan Air Force but somewhere between 9 and 36 have been withdrawn from LIBYA. It is known that the Italians have started to make good these discrepancies in their home strength by forming "Reserve" units but so far insufficient information has reached us to form an estimate of the extent to which replacement aircraft have actually reached units. It is therefore impossible to give figures of present actual disposition of aircraft.

3. Types in E A S T AFRICA. As far as can be judged from the meagre information available, about half the aircraft already arrived in E A S T AFRICA are 3-engined multi-seater medium bombers and about half 2 or 3-seater single-engined General Purpose aircraft.

FRANCE: (Excluding Indo-China).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Bombers</th>
<th>Fighters</th>
<th>Recon. or G.P.</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALTA</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGYPT</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUDAN</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALESTINE AND T.J.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEN</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.A.A. Mediterranean Available from Home.</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVAILABLE FROM U.K.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Z + 1 week</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; Z + 4 weeks</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; Z + 6 weeks</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVAILABLE FROM IRAQ</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: P.A.A. numbers are for September)

ITALY:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L A N D.</th>
<th>S E A.</th>
<th>TOTAL.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bombers</td>
<td>Fighters</td>
<td>Recon. or G.P.</td>
<td>Bombers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METROPOLITAN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBYA</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMALIA*</td>
<td>See note 2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eритrea*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL.</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The above are normal peace time figures of first line aircraft and make no allowances for movements of aircraft to the EAST AFRICAN colonies, concerning which we have no definite information.

2. It is estimated that there are at present between 366 and 304 aircraft in SOMALIA and Eритrea*. The majority of these have been withdrawn from the Metropolitan Air Force but somewhere between 9 and 36 have been withdrawn from LIBYA. It is known that the Italians have started to make good these discrepancies in their home strength by forming "Reserve" units but so far insufficient information has reached us to form an estimate of the extent to which replacement aircraft have actually reached units. It is therefore impossible to give figures of present actual disposition of aircraft.

3. Types in EAST AFRICA. As far as can be judged from the meagre information available, about half the aircraft already arrived in EAST AFRICA are 3-engined multi-seater medium bombers and about half 2 or 3-seater single-engined General Purpose aircraft.

FRANCE: (Excluding Indo-China).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L A N D.</th>
<th>S E A.</th>
<th>TOTAL.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bombers</td>
<td>Fighters</td>
<td>Recon. or G.P.</td>
<td>Bombers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METROPOLITAN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. AFRICA</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMALILAND</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MADAGASCAR</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST AFRICA</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL.</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>664</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Excluding Indo-China)
The full M.N.B.D.O. equipment is on a five years' development programme and will not be complete until 1939, at the present rate of progress. Such elements as have been assembled are at two months' notice. During this period the base ship is taken up and equipped, stores are purchased and assembled, and the necessary reserve personnel trained.

On the above footing, the organisation is not one that can be inaugurated in peace time, but should an extemporised organisation be required in preparation for hostilities which may break out in, say, two months' time, the following steps would have to be taken.

2. Personnel.

700 to 900 marines are required. To produce these without calling up reserves it would be necessary to stop all drafting, to stop all leave, including foreign service leave, to stop courses of instruction, and possibly to relieve the London Guards.


It is proposed to use the IRON DUKE as a base ship and to transport the residue of the equipment in one of H.M. Ships. PEGASUS could be used for a nine depot ship, but this would entail cessation of catapult trials for new construction.

The A/S boom is at Rosyth, and would need a cargo steamer to transport it, together with the A/T baffles, and an extemporised C.H.B. boom equipment, to the selected base.

The A/S boom is the most important element of the defence, and the following is an approximate time programme for
transporting and laying it at a base in the Eastern or Central Mediterranean:

Zero day ... Orders issued to despatch the boom.
Z + 2 days ... Merchant vessel taken up.
Z + 16 " ... Vessel completes loading boom material at Rosyth.
Z + 33 " ... Vessel arrives Navarin.
Z + 42 " ... Boom laid.

This period of 42 days would be reduced to 16 days if the material were transported in a cargo steamer to Malta in anticipation of trouble.

4. (a) Seafort Defences.
1 6" battery equipped for indirect fire.
1 4" close defence battery.
3 Defence electric lights.
4 3" A/A guns.

No more A/A guns or searchlights are available, and the old ones held in reserve at Woolwich are probably useless.

(b) Under-water Defences.
7 miles of indicator loop, two miles of A/S boom and controlled mines to provide a single line for an entrance two miles in width are available.

GUARDIAN can lay two miles of A/T net and another 3 miles could be held in reserve.

(c) C.M.B. defences could be improvised and sent out in the ship carrying the boom material, but a proper A/C.M.B. boom would take at least 4 months to make and lay.

(d) Pier landing transport and workshop material.
Sufficient material is available.

(e) Local patrols, boom craft, etc.

The Portland A/S Flotilla and Minesweeping Flotilla and the Fishery patrol trawlers could be sent out without touching reserves.

CORONET, from Rosyth, could go out in fine weather.
MOY and OUSE, target towing craft at Malta, could be converted into gate vessels in a fortnight.

IRON DUKE and a selected man-of-war could probably embark material in a fortnight and reach Navarin in zero + 25 days. A/S boom and A/T baffles could be on the spot and laid in Z + 48 days, which might be reduced to Z + 16 days if gear were moved to Malta before the situation became critical.

Navarin lends itself fairly well to defence against submarine attack by A/S boom, A/T baffles and an extemporised C.K.B. defence. Indicator loops are of doubtful value and it is not recommended to lay a controlled minefield due to the depth of the water.

A/A defence would have to be provided by the Fleet.

Plans Division.
7th August, 1935.