



Source 2

Extracts from the minutes of a meeting in 1911 of the Imperial Defence Committee setting out British Army preparations for war

(Catalogue ref: CAB 38/19)



How to use this source:

Study this source carefully. There are details in this source that will help you to answer the key question. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- Does this document give the impression that the British regard Germany as a threat?
- Does this document suggest that the British knew about the Schlieffen Plan?
- Do you get the impression that the British government is expecting war with Germany - or simply being cautious?
- How important is Belgium in the British plans?
- How big was the British army compared to the German army that might invade France?
- What would be the main value of the British forces that might go to France?
- Does there appear to be any doubt that Britain would oppose Germany if it invaded France?



Source 2a

APPRECIATION OF THE MILITARY SITUATION ON THE OUTBREAK
OF A FRANCO-GERMAN WAR.

Strength of the
British Army.

GENERAL WILSON said that our Expeditionary Force consisted of—

1 Cavalry Division ;
6 Divisions ;
Army Troops ;

a total of about 160,000 men.

Disregard of the
neutrality of
Belgium and
Luxemburg.

Continuing, he referred to a large-scale map and stated that for the purposes of war Luxemburg might be regarded as German and that there was reason to suppose that Germany would not hesitate to march through Southern Belgium.

Strength of the
German Army.

The total number of German divisions which could be considered as mobile and able to take and keep the field has been estimated at 121. These would probably be distributed as follows :—

								Divisions.
French frontier	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	84
Russian frontier	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	27
Sea coast	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	10
Total	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	121

In present circumstances, he thought that 84 divisions the limit of a German Army invading France.



Source 2b

Moreover, although the Belgians would possibly be content to protest against the violation of their southern provinces, they would almost certainly fight if the Germans were to invade northern Belgium as well. The Belgian field army would number 80,000 men.

On the whole from the broad result was that, although the Germans could deploy 84 divisions against the French 66 and the garrisons of their frontier fortresses, the Germans could not concentrate their superior force against any one point. Our 6 divisions would therefore be a material factor in the decision. Their material value, however, was far less than their moral value, which was perhaps as great as an addition of more than double their number of French troops to the French Army would be. This view was shared by the French General Staff.

Value of the intervention of the British Army.

SIR EDWARD GREY agreed that our military support would be of great moral value to the French.

As to the Belgians, he thought that they would avoid committing themselves as long as possible in order to try and make certain of being on the winning side.