



CANADA'S ROLE IN NATO

Context

Canada is one of the founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and one of the first countries to sign the Treaty in 1949. Since the creation of the Alliance, established for the common defence of North America and of the 14 European members, Canada has maintained troops in Europe and has been represented at the NATO headquarters in Brussels. Canada was the main proponent of Article 2 of the Washington Treaty which provides for the promotion of conditions of stability and well-being, and for economic collaboration among NATO member countries.

Until 1970, Canadian troops were stationed mainly in northern Germany. Before that, and until France withdrew from the integrated military structure of NATO in 1966, Canada had a military presence at an airforce base in Metz, France. In 1970, Canada reduced the size of its contingent in Europe: the bulk of Canadian forces consisted of a mechanized brigade group in Lahr, West Germany and three fighter squadrons in Baden-Soellingen, southern Germany.

The dramatic reduction in the risk of conflict in Europe, and a difficult economic situation at home, forced the Canadian government, like those of its Allies who had troops stationed in Central Europe, to reduce its presence there over the past few years. Canada closed its military bases in Germany and stopped providing NATO with ground and aerial troops in Europe.

Current Situation

Despite the repatriation of its troops, Canada's commitment to NATO and to the collective defence of Europe and of North America remains unchanged. Canada's current commitment to European security includes the contribution of:

- an infantry battalion group, with pre-positioned equipment, to serve in crisis or in war with either the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Composite Force or the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force (Land) in northern Norway;
- naval and air forces to NATO operations, including the Standing Naval Force Atlantic and the NATO Airborne Warning Force;
- a mechanized brigade group and two squadrons with up to 36 CF-18 aircraft based in Canada and available to NATO in the event of a crisis or war in Europe;

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