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## THE NATO NUCLEAR PLANNING GROUP

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Of all the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's institutions, committees and commissions the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) is without a doubt the least well known. Apart from rare references to its activities in alliance publications and from the press communiqué which is released after each NPG meeting, little information is to be had about the work of the Group, although the future of the West may depend on what it does.

The members of the NPG work on the nuclear plans for the alliance. They analyze the proposals put forward by political and military officials for the development, deployment, modernization or withdrawal of nuclear weapons from the European theatre. Their debates, which are held *in camera*, are subject to review by the defence ministers who, in the final analysis, make the decisions.

The last important meeting of the NPG took place in Stavanger, Norway, on 14 and 15 May 1987. The object of the meeting was to examine the "double-zero" option for the elimination of short- and intermediate-range nuclear missiles, an option to which the two superpowers had agreed in principle at their meeting in Moscow in April. The NATO defence ministers, except for those of France and Iceland (the latter has only observer status), spent their time considering the practical results which the withdrawal of these nuclear weapons could have and how this would affect the strategic situation in Europe.

### NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE

Nuclear arms were not introduced into Europe until well after the signing of the treaty which gave birth to NATO in 1949. Even if this agreement implied that the

alliance could rely on being defended by nuclear weapons if necessary, it was only the United States which then possessed such arms and initially it had no intention of deploying them in Europe. On the one hand, the United States did not attach any great priority to producing such weapons, and on the other, it was the intention of the alliance to build up an adequate conventional defence which would allow it to stand up to the Soviet Union and its allies in Eastern Europe. At the Lisbon meeting in 1952, which adopted a plan for reorganizing the structure of NATO, member countries expressed their eagerness to rapidly build up their conventional defence by increasing the number of divisions from twenty-five to ninety-six in two years.

The question of nuclear weapons had not yet arisen. However, the allies, especially the strategists at the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE), soon realized that the Lisbon objectives would never be achieved and that it would be necessary to make up for NATO inadequacies in conventional weapons by resorting to nuclear arms. The Eisenhower administration decided to equip the US army with nuclear weapons in 1953, and the following year nuclear weapons were deployed for the first time in Europe. It was not, however, until 15 December 1955 that NATO officially ratified this decision and gave orders that the NATO forces should receive nuclear arms.<sup>1</sup>

The "nuclearization" of the alliance took place in two phases: 1) France and Britain acquired nuclear arms — this paper does not deal with that aspect of the issue; and, 2) the US forces in Europe were equipped with nuclear arms as were the forces of certain members of NATO. Starting in 1954 the United States began equipping its units in Europe with nuclear weapons of various kinds: atomic land-mines, nuclear-

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