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NATO: THE STATE OF THE ALLIANCE

Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, at the International Day Meeting of the Rotary Club of Windsor, November 23, 1964.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I welcome this opportunity of speaking to you on the state of the North Atlantic Alliance. Canada has a vital stake in the welfare of the Alliance. We are not only one of its founder members but played an acknowledged part in bringing it into being. As Lord Ismay, the first Secretary-General of NATO, once put it, it was Canada which was responsible for turning "a general reflection into a practical possibility". I would go beyond that and say that the North Atlantic Alliance represents a conception that is responsive in a special way to Canada's own historical experience and provides a framework in which Canada is able to play a useful independent role as a responsible middle power.

There is at present much talk of a crisis in the Alliance. But we must not be unmindful that there has been talk of a crisis in the Alliance, off and on, for a number of years. This is essentially a matter of semantics and, while I would not wish to discount in any way the seriousness of some recent developments, I do not think that talk of crisis helps us very much towards a practical appreciation of the state of the Alliance. Such an appreciation, in my view, must be based on two propositions:

First, the common interests of the members of the Alliance in the face of the major problems confronting us -- including those of defence -- continue to be preponderantly greater than the differences that separate us. I say this not in any spirit of complacency but as a statement of simple fact.

Second, there have inevitably been changes in the relationships within the Alliance over the 15 years in which it has been in existence. The changes, which are related essentially to the economic recovery and political resurgence of Western Europe, should not be looked at as being detrimental to the interests of the Alliance. On the contrary, they are calculated to increase its resilience and its strength. They do, however, point to the need for some rethinking of the arrangements of the Alliance, and that, as I see it, is the task upon which we must now embark as a matter of urgency.