

*Alleged Lack of Government Leadership*

supreme allied commander of allied forces in Europe. We were briefed by Admiral Smeeton, deputy commander of the Atlantic fleet, by General Calmel deputy chief of staff of supreme allied headquarters. We were given more useful and up to date information on the military situation in NATO, including the Canadian commitment in one week than the Canadian government has given to the people of this country in the last five years. A number of questions have been asked as to what our commitments to NATO are. I realize that this information is presumably classified, but I could never understand why it was, so I am going to take the responsibility tonight of saying what they are.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to supplying one division of the army, with one third of it in Europe. The definition of "division" has never been completely agreed upon between Canada and NATO. The NATO definition is two mechanized infantry brigades and one armoured brigade. Our definition is two brigade groups. This is not really a very great difference of opinion in so far as total men and firepower are concerned, and is not very important.

We have agreed, and have maintained for some time in Europe, one brigade group. We have committed one air division which until recently consisted of 12 squadrons representing four wings, two in France and two in Germany. This is now being reduced to eight squadrons in agreement with the NATO council. We have also committed to NATO a number of naval units in the north Atlantic, an aircraft carrier and destroyer escorts. These are made available to the supreme allied commander in the Atlantic when required.

Each of these units, each of these commitments, is assigned a role, a specific job to do. Our brigade group is part of the British army of the Rhine, right in the front line of the defence of the free world, right up next to the line of demarcation between the communist world and our own. This is a section of the front that is not as well reinforced as it should be. One of the most recent suggestions we heard when we were there I should like to repeat for the benefit of the house. It is this: that in respect of the remainder of our commitment in the army, the remainder of our division which is on reserve in Canada, in order to make it effective the heavy equipment and supplies should be stockpiled in Europe where they are readily available. The supreme allied commander said that in his opinion we could not get our reinforcements there in sufficient time in case of an emergency to be of any real use, particularly in those first few critical days when

[Mr. Hellyer.]

there might be a conventional intervention and when reinforcements would definitely be required.

He has proposed, therefore, and his proposal was adopted at the NATO parliamentary conference, that equipment and supplies for the reserve forces be stockpiled in Europe. I am told by a senior official of the Department of National Defence here that we have been requested to do that. The former minister of national defence said in the house in reply to a question that he had not heard of it. Perhaps this was when the suggestion was coming through official channels. The United States has already undertaken this in respect of its reserves, that is in respect of one division and it proposes to do it for a second.

As an experiment, Mr. Speaker, the United States tried taking one reserve division over to Europe during an exercise last year. They seconded transport aircraft and flew soldiers from the state of Washington and had them on the ground in Frankfurt, Germany in ten and a half hours. This is really a remarkable achievement. It is this type of capacity that the supreme allied commander, now retired, feels is absolutely essential if we are going to have in Europe the strength of forces we really need. This is particularly true in view of the change in strategy in NATO, now referred to as a forward strategy. This means, in effect, that NATO no longer will retire to a prescribed line of defence at the outset of hostilities but will make its best effort to defend every square inch of territory in the free world, including the northern part of Germany, Hamburg and that area.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are not really doing all we can to make our non-nuclear commitment to NATO effective. Here is a suggestion which would not cost very much. It is urgently recommended by the supreme allied commander, and has not, in fact, been acted upon by the Canadian government. As a matter of fact, it has never been mentioned by the Canadian government and I am sure that most Canadian people have not even heard of it.

The equipment of our brigade group overseas, by and large, was very good. Some of it is getting old, however, and will soon have to be replaced. This is going to involve the expenditure of a considerable amount of money. There were, however, two serious deficiencies. One is an anti-tank missile, which is now on order and the other, which is a very critical deficiency, is an armoured personnel carrier. This is desperately needed because in the exercises last fall the Canadian brigade group found it was unable to go through the fields to operate efficiently against attacking forces which had a tracked capacity, but