Origins of the Alliance

NATO was formed in response to concern about Soviet expansionary aims in Europe after the Second World War and as a result of the impasse that had developed in the United Nations. Through the use of its veto in the Security Council, the U.S.S.R. opposed efforts by many member nations to implement the collective security measures of the UN Charter. Faced with a threat to their security while Europe was still recovering from the ravages of the Second World War, the Western countries resolved to group themselves into an alliance which would give substance to their collective resolve to resist aggression.

Despite the fact that collective security had proved unattainable through the United Nations, the organization of the Atlantic Alliance was carried out within the framework of the UN Charter, Article 51 of which gives member nations the right of both individual and collective self-defence.

Canada was one of the 12 nations that signed the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949, in Washington. Three more nations, Greece, Turkey and the Federal Republic of Germany, joined some years later.
NATO Photo